



Foundations

SURVEY OF LUKE AND JOHN

STUDY BOOKLET

Chapter One

"Some Perspective on the Gospel of Luke"

The author of the Gospel of Luke was not Jewish and was not one of the twelve apostles. He was Greek and addressed his Gospel to a man who was also Greek. Scholars believe Luke had Mary, the mother of Jesus, James, the brother of Jesus, and many other eyewitnesses for sources as he did his research and wrote this Gospel. Paul referred to Luke as his "beloved physician" and traveling companion. He obviously traveled with Paul to treat the physical symptoms of the apostle's "thorn in the flesh". (II Corinthians 12) Paul made reference to Luke three times in his inspired letters (Colossians 4:14; II Timothy 4:11; Philemon 24).

Luke is also the author of the Book of Acts, which he also addressed to this same man, Theophilus. Since this name means "lover of God", some scholars believe these two books are addressed to any lover of God, while others believe Theophilus was a man known to Luke.

The author of this Gospel was a well-educated man. He would have been considered a scientist in his day. He used more medical terms than Hippocrates, the "father of modern medicine", and he used the best Greek grammar of all the New Testament writers, including Paul. He was a gifted writer and a very accurate historian.

When Luke records the missionary journeys of Paul he uses the pronouns, "we" and "they" interchangeably. A careful study of these "we" passages in the Book of Acts will show us when Luke accompanied Paul on those missionary journeys. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that God does not call to salvation many people the world considers wise (I Corinthians 1:26-29). He and

Gospels of Luke and John

Luke were exceptions to that rule, which may be another explanation of their close relationship.

Luke records twenty miracles, six of which are only recorded in his Gospel. He records twenty-three parables, eighteen of which are only found in his Gospel.

Luke is the favorite Gospel of many because the Christ profiled for us by Luke is so human, so compassionate, so caring, and so completely identified with our humanity. As a physician, Luke had a great social conscience, and he gives us a biography of a Christ Who had a great social consciousness. Always emphasizing the human touch, Luke tells us Martha was angry because Mary would not help with the preparations and serving when Jesus was their dinner Guest (10:38-42). With the eye an accurate historian has for details, and the heart of a compassionate physician, Luke is the one who tells us the Lord's eyes met Peter's eyes precisely when the cock crowed and Peter had just denied His Lord for the third time (22:60,61).

All the way through Luke's Gospel we see the human touch of Jesus. When you add it all up, you have a description and a mental picture of Jesus Christ that contributes so very much to the record of the Son of God and the Son of Man as He truly was, and as He really is today. The message of the third Gospel is the humanity of the God-Man. The emphasis is that this Man, Who was God, identified Himself with our humanity.

As an accurate historian and an excellent writer, he sets forth "an orderly account" for his friend Theophilus, whom I am convinced was a real person of great eminence who loved God and was loved by Luke (1:3). In his introduction to the only inspired history book of the New Testament, he describes this third Gospel as a record of "All that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day in which He ascended." (Acts 1:1, 2)

This inspired historian tells us more about the birth and the first thirty years of the life of Jesus than any of the other Gospel writers. His first two chapters devote one hundred and thirty-two verses to breaking that silence. The Gospel of Luke is an orderly, historically accurate account of the things Jesus did and taught from His birth to His ascension. Many scholars believe this is the definitive and key verse of this Gospel: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (19:10)

Chapter Two

"Christmas Thinking"

According to Luke, when God intersected human history and became a man, He invited certain people to participate in His great miracle. Though there were only a few of them, by their examples they each have something to teach us.

The Virgin Mary

The angel Gabriel visited Mary, a virgin who was engaged to a man named Joseph. Gabriel told Mary the same news he had told Zacharias - a priest who was the father of John the Baptist - that God was going to become a man. The priest did not believe the angel and for that unbelief, the angel told him that his mouth would be shut with dumbness and he would not be permitted to tell anybody about this great miracle as it came to pass. The angel Gabriel told Mary that she would actually conceive and carry the Son of God in her womb. Mary asked the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" (1:34)

Though Mary questioned the angel about how a virgin birth was going to be, she did not respond with the unbelief of Zacharias. The priest did not believe the miracle of his son's birth was possible, in light of his wife's barrenness and their advanced ages. Mary did not doubt but merely wondered how God would make her virgin birth possible. Indeed, we find that Mary did believe the words of the angel when Elizabeth says to her: "Blessed is she who believed that there would be fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord." (45)

The Faith of the Shepherds

Angels appeared to some shepherds who were watching their flocks at night. The angels told them the Good News of Christ's birth (2:10,11). Make the observation that the Good News announced by the angels was to be for everybody. After receiving this message - before and after they saw this miracle - the shepherds told everybody what the angels had told them.

Have you ever wondered why God told the shepherds about the miracle of the first Christmas? All the others who were told of this miracle played a vital role and God seems to tell them on a need-to-know basis. The priest and his wife Elizabeth - the parents of John the Baptist - needed to know. Mary and Joseph needed to know, and believed, but we read that Mary "Treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart." (19)

The shepherds, on the other hand, told everyone what they had seen and heard, both before and after they saw this great miracle. Why did God include the shepherds in His great miracle? Because He knew they would believe and tell everyone about the miracle of a Savior, Who is Christ - the Promised Messiah, and the Lord.

The Twelve Year Old Jesus in the Temple

Luke breaks the silence and tells us the only thing we know about the thirty years Jesus lived between His birth and the beginning of His three years of public ministry. This is an incident that took place when He was twelve years old. His parents took Him to Jerusalem with what was apparently a large traveling group of religious pilgrims.

On the way home it takes them three days to realize that He is not with them. They frantically retrace their steps back to Jerusalem and find Him in the Temple asking the religious leaders questions. When His parents describe their frantic search for Him, He responds: "Why did you look for Me? Did you not realize that I must be about My Father's business?" (1:49)

This makes the parents of Jesus look very human - losing their child and apparently finding Him in the last place they thought He would be. Then to hear from Him that they should have realized that He would be about His Father's business in the Temple, where they found Him asking learned scribes and Rabbis questions, makes this a remarkable event.

Personal Applications

The Old and New Testaments tell us that Jesus will physically intersect human history again in the miracle of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The essence of the first Christmas is that God became human flesh for our salvation. The essence of the Second Coming of Christ is the same. In other words, God is going to do Christmas again - there is another Christmas coming. Just as the first Christmas was the only hope we had for salvation, His Second Coming is the blessed hope of the church and the only hope of the world.

God has given us knowledge of this blessed and only hope through His Word. He wants to use us to proclaim the Good News

of His Son's Return to a world that is filled with people who have no hope. If like Zacharias, we doubt this miracle, our unbelief shuts our mouths and we are not sharing this hope with anyone. If like Mary we question and analyze all the details of His return, we are probably pondering these things in our hearts and we are not telling hopeless people about their only hope.

We must follow the example of the shepherds and tell everyone this Good News before we see it for ourselves. Will you follow the example of the shepherds and tell everyone you know about the blessed hope you have as a believer and what is literally the only hope of this world?

Chapter Three

"The Manifesto of the Messiah"

There are actually two passages that open our understanding of the Gospel of Luke. I have already mentioned the first one (19:10). Jesus gives us the second one when He goes into His hometown synagogue and reads from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah (4:18). If you will compare these two passages, you will see that they both clearly state the purpose for which Jesus came.

Considered in its context, the first verse pictures the Savior of the world, as He truly was so much of the time - seeking out and saving the lost (19:10). However, when the other passage is considered in its context, it serves as the "Manifesto of the Messiah." (4:18) This Manifesto is a more comprehensive statement from Jesus as to why He came and what He was doing here. It is sometimes called, "The Nazareth

Manifesto," because it was announced in His hometown at the outset of His three years of public ministry.

The Manifesto Proclaimed

"Then He came to Nazareth where He had been brought up and, according to His custom, went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read the Scriptures and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. He opened the scroll and found the place where these words are written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor: He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised..

"Then He shut the book, handed it back to the attendant and resumed His seat. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed upon Him and He began to tell them, 'This very day this Scripture has been fulfilled, while you have been listening to it!'" (Luke 4:16-21)

Many world leaders have begun their mission by writing a Manifesto that is a declaration of the answers and solutions they claim to have to the problems people have in this world. When we hear Jesus begin His three years of public ministry by announcing the Nazareth Manifesto, we should realize that we are hearing the greatest Manifesto the world has ever heard. This is not only true because the content of that Manifesto is inspired Scripture and the fulfillment of prophecy. The Nazareth Manifesto is the greatest Manifesto this world has ever heard because it was implemented perfectly by the One Who declared it.

We should also realize that Jesus was announcing the Manifesto of the Church today by the way Luke tells us His ministry began. The Nazareth Manifesto not only shows us what

Jesus Christ was doing when He lived out His life here in the flesh, but it also shows us what He desires to do through those of us today who call ourselves "The Body of Christ."

One world movement had very few members for many years after their Manifesto had been written. Then one member wrote a little pamphlet entitled, "What Is To Be Done?" The thrust of this little tract was, "What should be done by those who believe the Manifesto? That little pamphlet mobilized millions of people into that movement.

The life and teachings of Jesus Christ are the Manifesto of the disciple of Jesus Christ. Authentic followers of Jesus Christ believe that the risen, living Christ has the only solutions to the needs and problems of the people of this world. This declaration of purpose by Jesus at the outset of His ministry is His little capsule Manifesto that not only tells us what He purposed to do. This mission statement tells us what is to be done by every disciple of His in this world today.

This brief yet comprehensive declaration of the mission objectives of Jesus will outline my brief survey of the Gospel of Luke. As we survey the third Gospel together, I will show how Jesus proclaimed His Manifesto when He read from that scroll of Isaiah in Nazareth, then proved to the religious leaders of His day that He had the authority to implement His Manifesto. The Gospel of Luke goes on to show us how Jesus practiced the Manifesto He proclaimed and proved. Finally, I will show how Luke will paint a portrait of Jesus inviting and challenging others (including you and me), to become partners with Him in the implementation of His Manifesto and His mission in this world.

The way Luke presents his biography of Jesus gives us another essential definition of what it means to be a disciple

of Jesus Christ. He shows us what is to be done by the Church of Jesus Christ in the world today.

I have often thought it would be wonderful if a disciple of Jesus would read our Manifesto and then write a pamphlet entitled, "What is to be done by a disciple who believes the Manifesto of Jesus?" Eventually, I realized that no one disciple could write that pamphlet for all of us, because God has arranged His will for our individual lives, and His revelation of that will, in such a way that we must all come before Him, as Paul did on the Damascus Road, and ask, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6)

If you are not a follower of Jesus, I pray that this booklet will introduce you the One Who intersected humanity in a personal way and proved He was the promised One Who wants to touch your life too. If you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, I pray that this survey of the Gospel of Luke will show you what He wants you to do. May each of us hear the still, small voice of our risen, living Lord, making us know what He wants us to do as we become partners with Him and He implements His Manifesto in and through our mortal flesh today.

The Manifesto of the Messiah Proven

Jesus is healing and teaching in a house in Capernaum. The religious leaders, who were described as "doctors of the Law," had traveled the entire length of Israel, from Jerusalem to Galilee, to investigate the undeniable miracle that Jesus had healed a leper. This provides the context in which Jesus proves the Manifesto He had proclaimed in Nazareth. He performs another miraculous healing in this setting, which was "To prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins!" (Luke 5:17-26)

While Jesus was teaching, four men literally broke up the roof and using ropes, lowered a friend who was paralyzed on a pallet and placed him before Jesus. Jesus never had interruptions, only opportunities. He used this opportunity to prove His Manifesto when He said to the man before Him, "Your sins are forgiven!" The distinguished religious leaders were appalled and asked, "Who can forgive sins but God only?"

He answered them with a question: "Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins have been forgiven' or to say, 'Get up and walk?' But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins' - He said to the paralytic - 'I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.' Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God." (5:23-25)

When Jesus told the man that his sins were forgiven, these distinguished visitors might have been thinking, "We only have your word for that!" He agreed with these theologians that only God forgives sins. Through this miracle He proved that He was God with us and that He had the same authority to forgive sins on earth that God has in heaven. He thus proved He had the power and the authority to implement His Manifesto.

The Nazareth Manifesto Practiced

Jesus proclaimed that the Spirit of God had anointed Him for a purpose. "He has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor." He was not referring to the economically poor in this passage, but to the spiritually poor, those who had never heard the Good News of salvation. They were poor in the sense that they were spiritually blind, bound and broken-hearted people.

The blind poor were those people who did not know their right hand from their left, who were like sheep without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36). They were spiritually blind. His

mission objective was to preach the Gospel and teach with the objective that these spiritually blind people would see. He used His teaching in discourses, parables, interviews, and actions to bring sight to the spiritually blind.

Jesus also addressed His Good News to those who were bound. He was sent "To proclaim release to the captives." In other words, to set free those who were bound (Luke 4:18). Observe in all the Gospels that He could never find a person who was not free and leave that person in what He described as bondage. This phenomenon is beautifully illustrated in the case of the woman who was bound by Satan for eighteen years and set free by Jesus (Luke 13:16). He also clarified this mission objective in a hostile dialogue He had with the religious leaders (John 5:8:30-35).

Jesus described the hard realities of life as storms. He proclaimed that the storms come into all our lives. When those storms beat down on people, some of them stagger, and some collapse. What Isaiah and Jesus described as bruised and broken-hearted people were those who collapse from their storms. The compassion of Jesus for these broken people is one of the most touching dimensions of His life and ministry. As a compassionate physician, Luke emphasizes the social conscience and compassion of Jesus for the broken people of this world.

Are you spiritually blind? Do you feel so lost that you have no idea which way to turn? Are you free? Do you do what you want to do or what you must do? Are you in bondage to sin or a habit and unable to do anything other than those things that control you? Are you broken and bruised, and unable to find healing for your brokenness?

If your answers to any or all of these question were in the affirmative, Luke presents his biography of Jesus in a way that shows and tells you and me that we are exactly the kind of

persons for whom Jesus Christ came into this world. He came to bring sight to you in your blindness, to set you free from your bondage, and bring healing to your brokenness. Make the decision to trust and receive the Christ you meet in Luke's Gospel. Make the commitment to follow Him as His disciple and He will make you whole in all these ways.

Chapter Four

"Manifesto Partnership"

A final observation about the way this Manifesto outlines the Gospel of Luke is to realize that Jesus is continuously teaching and apprenticing His apostles and challenging others to become partners with Him in the implementation of His mission objectives as He declared them in Nazareth. The first clear example of this is the way He recruits Peter to partner with Him in the implementation of His Manifesto.

Very early one morning on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, while Jesus was teaching a large crowd of people, He asked Peter, who had just returned from an unsuccessful night of fishing, if He could use his boat for a pulpit. Jesus apparently needed some elevation so He could communicate more effectively with a large crowd of people which had backed Him up to the edge of the water (Luke 5:1-11).

This was not the first time Jesus met Peter. That happened when Peter's brother Andrew introduced them (John 1:41,42). We are told that Jesus issued an invitation to these brothers, and their partners in the fishing business, James and John, who were also brothers. That invitation was, "Follow Me and I will make

you fishers of men." (Matthew 4:19) This could be Luke's expanded version of what Matthew describes in one verse. Or it may be Luke is telling us that Jesus is repeating and reinforcing His invitation and demonstrating what Peter must learn if he is to become a fisher of men.

After the teaching session, He essentially says to Peter, "I would like for you to take Me fishing!" He challenges Peter to take his boat out again to where the water is deep. Then He asked him to throw his nets into the water for a big catch of fish! (4)

While Jesus was teaching that crowd, we read that Peter was washing his nets and doing the clean up from his fruitless night of fishing. I imagine that Peter was not in a very good mood that morning. I also imagine, that as Jesus taught that large crowd of people, He was more interested in this big fisherman than He was in that large crowd of people.

Jesus knows that in three short years, this man, who could not even catch fish, will preach a sermon on the Day of Pentecost that will result in the conversion of three thousand people, and that thousands will be saved every time he preaches the Gospel in the days following Pentecost (Acts 2:14-42).

He also knows that three years from that morning, when the shadow of this big fisherman falls across the bodies of hopelessly crippled people, they will be miraculously healed! (Acts 5:12-16). That is why I believe He was more interested in Peter that day than He was in all those other people.

How does Jesus convert this man, who is not able to catch fish, into the man who along with Paul will be the greatest fisher of men this world has ever known? The spiritual dynamics that answer my question are taking place in this encounter Jesus has with Peter. Jesus is challenging Peter to partner with Him

in the implementation of His mission objectives as they are declared in His Nazareth Manifesto.

When Jesus and Peter were out where the water was deep, Jesus told Peter to lower his nets into the water. Peter responded, "Teacher, we have fished all night and caught nothing.. " Again, I use my imagination and think there could have been a brief pause in the middle of Peter's response when the eyes of Peter and Jesus met after which Peter continues, "But I will do as You say and let down the nets." (5)

When those nets came back up, they were filled with fish! (6-7) In response to this great miracle, Peter fell at the feet of Jesus and said, "Go away from me for I am a sinful man, Oh Lord!" (8) Jesus responded, "Do not be afraid, Peter. From now on you will catch men." (10)

Before he met Jesus, Peter's life had one all-consuming priority and that was to catch fish. These two words Jesus spoke to Peter are my favorite version of what is called the Great Commission: "Catch men!" Many in the church have a tendency to evangelize women and children because that is easier. But, Jesus knew that women and children follow men and that if we catch men we will reach entire households for Him.

Why did Peter react to the miraculous catch of fish by calling himself a sinner, and by essentially telling the Lord to have nothing to do with him? Some scholars suggest that Christ had been preaching to the crowd about the sinfulness of man, that Peter was experiencing conviction of sin, and that this was actually the conversion of Simon Peter.

Other scholars believe Jesus was recruiting Peter to partner with Him and help Him implement His Manifesto. Peter may have realized that Christ was asking him, "Will you partner with Me in giving sight to the blind, freedom to the bound, and healing to the broken? Will you change your priority from

catching fish to catching men?" These scholars believe Peter was expressing the intense conviction that he felt totally unworthy of that call.

He may have been essentially saying, "Lord, You have the wrong man. You could not possibly be calling me to catch men, because I am so completely unworthy and unqualified!" If that is the essence of what Peter was saying he was then demonstrating the first beatitude Jesus prescribed for every disciple of His: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." (Matthew 5:3)

To convert Peter from an unsuccessful catcher of fish to a successful catcher of men, Jesus first had to teach Peter Who the fisherman was in Peter's boat that day. When Peter called Jesus "Teacher," he was hinting that Jesus was the Teacher, but he was the fisherman. He then proceeds to instruct the Lord about fishing - "Every fisherman knows that if you are not successful at night you will never catch fish in broad daylight" - seems to be the spirit of Peter's objection.

Secondly, Jesus had to teach Peter that he would never catch men until he learned that the risen, living Christ is the only true Fisher of men. These two fishing trips of Peter - one very unsuccessful and the other supernaturally successful - convinced Peter forever of some spiritual secrets:

"Fishing for men is not a matter of who I am but of Who He is. Catching men for Jesus is not a matter of what I can do but of what He can do. Becoming a fisher of men does not involve what I want but what He wants. And when there are miraculous catches of men, I must always remember that all those miraculous conversions were not something I did but a supernatural miracle He worked through my weak and mortal flesh."

Can you see why the risen, living Christ chose Peter to preach that sermon on the Day of Pentecost and sermons after Pentecost that led thousands to salvation? It was because Peter

had learned these spiritual secrets more than any of the other apostles. On the Day of Pentecost, when all the miracles, signs and wonders were happening, Peter announced that the risen, living Christ was responsible for all that was taking place that day (Acts 2:32,33).

By Christ, In Christ, and for Christ

After this encounter, we read that Peter and his business partners "Left everything and followed Him." (11) This chapter in the spiritual journey of Peter shows us several levels of relationship in our walk with Christ. The first level is living by Christ - which means receiving and being greatly blessed by all the wonderful ways He gloriously saves and transforms our lives. Peter experienced this first level of relationship with Christ when he was blessed by that supernatural catch of fish.

The second level of relationship to Christ is when we enter into His plans for our lives, and abandon our own plans. Have you ever heard people say, "I have decided to take Jesus Christ into my plans?" That may sound noble at first, but if you think about it, we are not to graciously invite Jesus into our plans. It is He Who wants to graciously invite us into His plans.

There is a phrase in the New Testament that is the favorite choice of the apostles as they describe this second level of relationship to Christ. That phrase is simply the two words: "In Christ." Jesus described this level of relationship in a beautiful metaphor. According to Jesus, we are to be in relationship with Him the way a branch is in alignment with a vine (John 15:1-16). Fruit is growing in great abundance on the branches in this metaphor of Jesus. This teaches us that these two words, "In Christ," also mean to be the human vehicle through whom the work of Christ is done in this world because we are properly "in" - alignment with the risen, living Christ.

The third level of relationship to Christ is living for Christ (11). This level of relationship focuses our motivation for following and serving Christ as He takes us into His plans for reaching our world with His Gospel of salvation. At this level of relationship we become partners with Christ as He gives sight to the spiritually blind, sets the captives free, and heals the brokenhearted and bruised people of this world. By Christ, in Christ, and for Christ, we are His partners as He accomplishes the mission objectives He declared in His Nazareth Manifesto. In this beautiful story, Peter moves through and models these three levels of relationship to Christ.

Have you been blessed by Christ? Are you in Christ? Are you being fruitful? Are you living for yourself or for Christ?

Chapter Five

"Partnership Parables"

When you read Chapter Fifteen of the Gospel of Luke, realize that you are reading one of the most magnificent parables Jesus ever taught. The whole thrust of this parable teaches the same truth that we have observed in this chapter in the spiritual journey of Peter. Jesus is recruiting partners who will work with Him as He achieves His mission objectives in this world. Chapter Fourteen concluded with Jesus preaching one of His most hard-hitting sermons, which is known as one of the hard sayings of Jesus. In that sermon Jesus asked for a total commitment from those who would become His disciples.

The Parable of the Lost Things

The Fifteenth Chapter begins by telling us there were two very different responses to His powerful sermon. The publicans and sinners responded warmly to His preaching. They drew close to Jesus and formed an inner circle around Him. But the Pharisees and the scribes withdrew about twenty steps and formed an outer circle. Jesus addressed what may be His greatest parable to two concentric circles of two very different kinds of people: Around Jesus, there was a tight circle of sinners and publicans who were being saved. Then, there was a larger circle of religious people stepping back and asking, "Why is He having anything to do with sinners and publicans?"

This great teaching of Jesus is not as some think a series of several parables, but one continuous "Parable of the Lost Things." This parable is addressed primarily to that outer circle, explaining to them what is going on in the inner circle. In this context, Jesus is also pleading with those in that outer circle to partner with Him in what is going on in the inner circle.

Jesus begins the parable this way: "There was a man who had a hundred sheep and one of them got lost. He left the ninety-nine sheep that were not lost and went out and looked for the one sheep that was lost. When he found that sheep, he said, 'Rejoice with me, I have found my sheep which was lost. Likewise, there is rejoicing in heaven every time a sinner repents.'"

Jesus is saying to those in the outer circle: "You look at this inner circle of people and all you see are publicans and sinners, pimps, prostitutes, crooks and thieves. But let Me tell you what God sees. God sees these people as lost sheep. Any time a lost sheep is found, there is rejoicing in heaven." Jesus is challenging that outer circle this way: "God values

lost sinners. Why are you not rejoicing when these lost sheep are being found?"

Then Jesus told the story about a lost coin. He said a woman had ten coins and she lost one. She got a broom and a light and swept and looked all day until she found that coin that she had lost. When she found her coin, she said to her friends, "Rejoice with me, I have found the coin that I had lost!" There are several possible interpretations to this part of the parable. The essential teaching is that the coin had been owned by the woman, was lost and then it was recovered again.

I lost a valuable coin when I was a child. It rolled into a drainage ditch, which was covered by an iron grill. My coin was about forty centimeters from me but I could not reach it because the openings in the iron grill were too small for my hand and arm to reach through. I was frantic.

An old man with an umbrella was passing by and offered to help me. He took chewing gum out of his mouth and attached it to the end of his umbrella. Then he slipped the umbrella down in the drain, got the coin stuck to the chewing gum, pulled it out and gave the coin back to me. That coin was twice as valuable because I lost it and I got it back again.

To "redeem" means "to buy back" and "to bring back" that which has been lost. You and I are more precious to the Lord because we are like that lost coin when He recovers us through the redemption that is made possible by the death and resurrection of His Son.

That is the essence of the concept of redemption and of this coin that was lost and found again in the parable of Jesus. This is obviously a metaphor of the redemption that is taught throughout the Bible in books like Exodus, Deuteronomy, Ruth, and by the apostles in their New Testament writings (I Peter

1:18,19). Jesus is obviously saying to the outer circle, "These people are lost but they are being redeemed. All the angels in heaven are rejoicing! Why are you not rejoicing?"

Then Jesus said, "A certain man had two sons. The younger son came to him and said, 'Give me everything I have coming to me, because I am going to go out into the far country and spend it all.'" This is the very familiar story of the prodigal son. These concentric circles are the context in which Jesus tells that story. He is explaining to that outer circle what is going on in the inner circle when He teaches the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Jesus is saying to the self-righteous Pharisees, "Some of these people are prodigal sons and they are coming back home again. All the angels in heaven are rejoicing. Why are you not rejoicing when prodigal sons are coming home?"

In summary, the context of this great parable is a portrait of Jesus saying to that outer circle, "All you see is publicans and sinners. Let Me tell you what God sees. God sees people who are like lost sheep. They do not know their right hand from their left, but they are being found and all heaven is rejoicing. God sees people who are lost like that coin. God is redeeming and reclaiming these who have lost their way. God sees people who may look like hogs, and they may even smell like hogs, but they are not hogs simply because they have been living in the hog pens of this world. They are coming back from the hog pens of this world because they are sons! All heaven rejoices when the lost are found. Why are you not rejoicing?"

When we appreciate the context in which this Parable of the Prodigal Son was taught we should realize that the heart of the parable is when the prodigal son returns. There is a big party with dancing and great feasting. The fatted calf is killed. The prodigal son's older brother comes in from his hard workday. He has always worked hard all day long, every day, for his

father. He asks one of the servants, "Why is my father having all this celebration?" The servant essentially responds, "Oh, your brother has come home and your father has killed the fatted calf, and he is so happy he cannot hold back his joy."

Then we read that this older brother was angry and would not go in and join his father and his returned brother in their time of celebration. However, the father, who is pictured as an old man running to and throwing his arms around the prodigal son, loves his older son also. The father comes out and entreats that older son, essentially saying, "Son, you are always with me and faithful to me, and everything I have is yours, but your brother was lost, do you not understand? Now he is found. He was dead and now he is alive. Why will you not come in and participate in the celebration of this glorious miracle?"

This profound parable demonstrates the context in which this great parable is taught. The older brother in this parable is that outer circle of Pharisees and scribes who will not come in and participate with the angels in the heavenly celebration because the lost are being found. The Father pleading with the older brother to join in the celebration is Jesus inviting these religious leaders to partner with Him in His great mission objective of seeking and saving those who are lost as proclaimed in the key verses of this Gospel (Luke 4:18; 19:10).

There is a sense in which Jesus is doing the same thing here that He was doing when He asked Peter to take Him fishing (Luke 5:1-11). Even though I cannot prove this, I believe it is possible that the greatest missionary Jesus ever called could have been one of those religious leaders in that outer circle - Saul of Tarsus.

As you picture Jesus standing in that inner circle surrounded by publicans and sinners, inviting the religious

establishment to participate in the salvation of lost souls, the personal, devotional application of this beautiful parable is that Jesus is also inviting you and me to be partners with Him in the implementation of His Nazareth Manifesto. There is a sense in which we could say that Jesus is explaining to all the various denominations of those who profess to be His Church today why we Evangelicals value evangelism - the sharing of the Good News with those who are lost.

Two Parables about Rich Men

In Chapter Sixteen, we read two awesome parables of Jesus about rich men. Both these parables should be seen in the context in which Jesus taught the Parable of the Lost Things in Chapter Fifteen. Jesus addressed these two parables to His disciples but when He finished the first one the Pharisees were offended. This means that they heard these teachings and that the Lord obviously intended these two stories for them as well.

The first Parable about a rich man, known as "The Parable of the Unjust Steward," seems like a negative illustration, but it is really a positive statement about participating with Christ in His Nazareth Manifesto. The second story, "The Rich Man and Lazarus" is a very negative statement about a man who was the absolute opposite of the partner Jesus was recruiting.

The first parable confuses some people because they believe that in this parable Jesus is approving of the shady actions of an embezzler. But they are not interpreting the parable correctly. The parable is about a man who has a steward, which means a manager or a treasurer for his corporation. This is where we find one of the most important words in the New Testament. The Old Testament teaches tithing, giving offerings, which are beyond the tithe, and the Old Testament teaches God's people to make sacrifices that cost them something (II Samuel

24:24). But when you get to the New Testament, the operative word is "steward". The concept of "stewardship" is not that you give God ten percent of what you have or what you gain. Stewardship means that everything you are and everything you have belongs to Him. The issue is really management. Are you managing what He has committed to your trust? This includes your money but it also includes your talent, your time, your energy, your gifts and talents. In other words, everything you are and have.

Remember that a parable (para = alongside of; ballo = to throw), is a story that is thrown alongside a truth Jesus wants to teach. The truth Jesus wants to teach is stewardship. The story He throws alongside that truth is essentially the story of a very wealthy man has a steward, or a manager. He hears that his steward is not being a good manager, wasting, or perhaps even embezzling his money. He tells the steward that he is calling in the auditors and they are going to check the books.

The steward then sits down and has a little talk with himself. He says to himself, "Right now I have control over my master's money. But as soon as those auditors check the books, I am going to be fired and I am going to lose the control I have over my master's money. What can I do?" He thinks about his options and then he plans visits with the people who are indebted to his master.

His strategy is that he is looking out for his future. He is saying, "Right now I am living in one sphere where I am employed and have control over money and assets that are not mine. I am going to use these assets, which are not mine, in such a way that when I am fired into that next dimension, and lose control of my master's money and assets, I will have made friends who will gladly receive me into their houses. They will show me hospitality when I have no place to go."

When his lord (his employer - not the Lord Jesus), hears about what his steward has done, he does not commend him because he is an embezzler. One translation reads, "He was commended because he thought about his future."

Personal Application

What is the truth Jesus wants to teach when He tells this story? The interpretation and application of the parable is truly profound. Jesus is teaching: "You are just like that steward. Everything you have really belongs to God. You are simply managing what you have been given. As that steward knew he was going to be fired, you should know that one day you are going to die and you are then going to lose control of all the money and assets God has given you to manage. Then you will hear those sobering words, 'You may no longer be steward. Now, give an account of your stewardship.'"

The essence of this parable is that the steward lived in two dimensions. In the first dimension he had control of his master's money and assets, but he knew he was soon going to move into another dimension when he would lose that control. While he was in dimension number one, he used his control over that wealth in such a way that he made friends who were willing to receive him when he got into the second dimension.

Just as the unjust steward used wealth that was not his to make friends in the next dimension, we should use what we have to make friends in the next dimension, meaning the eternal state. When we are "fired" or die, we will have friends who will be waiting to welcome us into their eternal habitations, or living places.

"He who wins souls is wise." (Proverbs 11:30) That is what this parable is essentially teaching. Use what you have been given in this dimension in such a way that when you die there

will be people in the eternal state who will say to you, "You gave money to a missionary that made it possible for that missionary to make a missionary journey. On that missionary journey, I found Christ. I would not be here in this eternal state if you had not been a faithful steward."

In other words, this parable is saying, all you have is not really yours and you cannot take it with you. But, you can buy shares in heaven. One way you buy shares in heaven is to manage your money and assets in such a way that the kingdom of God is extended and Jesus Christ builds His Church. People can come to a saving knowledge of Christ because you faithfully manage that which God has entrusted to you.

After Jesus tells this story, He makes this somber application. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much. And he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If, therefore, you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon (which means money), how will you commit to your trust the true riches?"

This application means essentially that God will not bless us spiritually if we are not faithful in the way we manage money. This is not really a focus on how much we give but how well we manage what we have been given. Faithful, responsible management or stewardship is the thrust of this teaching.

Are you participating with Jesus in the implementation of His Manifesto? Are you partnering with Christ in the application and implementation of His great ministry in and to this world? You can do that as a missionary, evangelist, pastor, or as a faithful witness for Jesus Christ. According to this parable, you can also do that by faithfully investing what God has committed to your trust to finance those who are partnering with Christ as missionaries, evangelists, pastors, and faithful witnesses for Christ.

There are many ways to partner with Christ, but the question I must ask you is, are you in fact and in reality partnering with Christ, as the risen, living Christ carries out His mission objectives in our world today? Many of the teachings of Jesus tell us that we are going to live for all eternity in the eternal state with the awesome reality of how we answer that question today.

In His second story about a rich man, He essentially said, "There was a certain rich man who fared sumptuously every day: he was clothed in purple and fine linen, lived in a mansion and could not have had it better in this life. Lying at his gate, there was a man named Lazarus. Lazarus could not have had it worse in this life."

If you think of this story as if it were a three-act play, in Act One, you have the rich man sleeping between silk sheets every night, and feasting at his banquet table every day. And every day, when he goes out through his gate, there is a beggar lying there with dogs licking his sores. The rich man could not have it better in this life; the poor man Lazarus could not have it worse. That is Act One.

Act Two is the death of both men. They both die. Death is the great common denominator. The rich man dies between silk sheets in his mansion and is buried with great pomp and ceremony. Lazarus dies lying at the gate of this rich man. We do not read that he is buried. We can assume that the sanitation crew comes, picks up his carcass and throws it on a cart. His body is probably dumped on the great garbage dump, outside Jerusalem, that was known as "Gehenna". Act Two is the death of both men.

When the curtain goes up on Act Three, we discover the truth Jesus wants to teach as He tells this story. Now both men are in the eternal state. The beggar, Lazarus, could not have it

better. He is in Abraham's bosom, which means he is in intimate fellowship with Abraham. The rich man is in hell. He could not have it worse.

We read that he is in torment. There is a great separation, a great abyss fixed between these two men and that abyss is final and permanent. Nothing can be done about it. When the rich man is told that, he says, "Oh, Father Abraham, let Lazarus dip his finger in water and come and touch my tongue. I am tormented in this great flame." But he is told, "No, there is a great abyss fixed between you and Lazarus, and those that would come from where Lazarus is to you, cannot. And those that would go from where you are to Lazarus cannot. It is fixed."

Now, when he understands this, he has great concern for his five brothers. He says, "Oh, Father Abraham, let Lazarus be raised from the dead and let him go tell my five brothers so that they will not come to this place of torment." He is told, "They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." The rich man responds, "Oh, but if somebody were raised from the dead, they would believe."

Jesus places great value on the inspired writings of Moses and the Prophets when the word comes back to the rich man, "If they will not believe Moses and the prophets, they would not believe somebody who was raised from the dead." This is literally fulfilled when Jesus is raised from the dead and He is not believed when He proclaims the Gospel that can keep people from the fate of the rich man.

This is an awesome story! This is the most graphic picture of the eternal state in the Bible. This is where we get the concepts of hellfire, eternal damnation, eternal retribution, and eternal torment. This is not the only teaching of Jesus about Hell. That awful place of refuse outside the city of

Jerusalem, which was called, "Gehenna" represents the favorite word of Jesus for His concept of Hell. The word represents a huge valley right outside Jerusalem where every kind of garbage was discarded, including the bodies of animals and poor people. When some very dark chapters of Hebrew history were being written, Jewish parents offered their children as human sacrifices to pagan Gods in that valley. When Jesus taught that if we call our brother a fool, we are in danger of Hell, He used the word, "Gehenna". The word conveys the concept of waste. According to Jesus, being saved from Hell means being saved from a wasted life.

However, this story about the rich man and Lazarus is His most definitive description of the eternal fate of those who are not saved. One of the worst things about this vivid profile of the eternal state is that the rich man has a memory. He has an endless eternity to remember his lifetime, the fifty or sixty or seventy years that he lived out his life here on earth. What did he do with his lifetime? He exists eternally tormented with that question.

This story follows the Parable of the Unjust Steward. God gives each of us a lifetime and we are managers of that lifetime - not only our money, which may actually be the least important dimension of our stewardship. Our life, our time, our energy, our gifts, our talents, our health - these are the essence of our lifetime. The eternal question facing this rich man is, "What did you do with your lifetime?"

In The Parable of the Unjust Steward, Jesus is asking you and me, "Will you partner with Me in the implementation and the application of My Manifesto by faithfully managing your life and everything that is entrusted to you?" This second story about a rich man is the awesome illustration of the man who answered that question of Jesus with a resounding, "No!"

The application of this second rich man story also focuses the social conscience of Jesus and of the compassionate, beloved physician Luke. When we read this story, the details about the eternal state are so graphic and tragic we might miss the social applications.

A man named Albert Schweitzer said that it was this teaching of Jesus that changed his life forever. He gave up all the status symbols and creature comforts he enjoyed as one of the greatest organists, philosophers, medical doctors, and theologians in Europe, and went to Africa to be a medical missionary. He practiced medicine in a remote part of Africa where those who were sick would not have any medical care at all if he had not provided that care for them. Schweitzer said that when he read this story of Jesus, it did not take him long to realize that the Lazarus lying at the gate of the rich man is a hurting world lying at the gates of our lives.

As Schweitzer went to Africa, he said, "Africa is Lazarus." He also said, "Your life is your argument." I think that is a very profound statement. With his life he made the statement, "What we really believe, we do. All the rest is just religious talk." I wonder if you and I know who Lazarus is?

I believe the challenge of this great teaching is to consider the graphic and tragic portrait Jesus paints of the eternal state of the lost. This perspective of eternal condemnation should motivate us to present the Gospel to all those who have never heard that Gospel. Like the Apostle Paul, we should be motivated by the three mission absolutes: One died for all, all are lost, and all must hear the Good News (II Corinthians 5:13-6:2).

Another application of this story, however, is the application that is thrust and theme of the Gospel of Luke. That application is this: will you and I become partners with

Jesus in the implementation and the application of His mission objectives in this world as they are profiled in His Nazareth Manifesto? Will we partner with Him in giving sight to the blind, freedom to the bound and healing to the broken and bruised people of this world?

Three Philosophies of Life

In the Gospel of Luke, observe how many times and in how many places Jesus is challenging us to become partners with Him in the implementation of His Manifesto. It may be because Luke is a physician that he is the only writer who gives us The Parable of the Good Samaritan. Jesus tells the story of a man who is robbed and left to die by the side of the road. After he has been robbed and left wounded and dying, three different people come by and see him lying helpless and hopeless by the side of the road (10:25-37).

The road in this story leads from Jerusalem to Jericho. Priests often traveled that road to retreat in Jericho from their duties in the Temple of Solomon. One at a time, two of these priests come by and observe the awful condition of this dying and helpless man. They each essentially say, "You have really got a problem there, but, I am not going to get involved." We read that they passed by on the other side.

However, a Samaritan is also traveling that road. When he sees the dying man, he stops and treats his wounds, puts him on his animal, and takes him to an inn. After giving the innkeeper money, he says, "If you need more, when I come back again I will pay it."

This parable was taught in answer to a question Jesus was asked by a lawyer: "Who is my neighbor?" This profound answer of Jesus presents three philosophies of life or of neighbor.

After telling this story, Jesus answers the lawyer's question with a question: "Which of these three was a true neighbor?"

Jesus first answers the lawyer's question with the example of the bandits who robbed and mortally wounded this man. Their philosophy is, "What is mine is mine, and what is yours will be mine just as soon as I can take it." There are many people in the world with that philosophy of life. That is why we have government, police, and a military.

The priest and the Levite - the religious people in the story - profile a second answer to this question and philosophy of neighbor: "What is mine is mine and what is yours is yours. I have my blessings and you have your blessings. I have my problems and you have your problems. You really do have a problem, but my philosophy of life is 'Live and let live. Mine is mine; yours is yours. I am not going to get involved!'" Too many religious people have that philosophy of life and neighbor today.

There is a third answer in this story to the question of Jesus about our philosophy of life and neighbor. The absolute Master of the use of the parable threw this story alongside a truth He wanted to teach us. That truth is expressed in the way the Samaritan answers the question of Jesus. The Samaritan's philosophy of life and neighbor was: "What is yours is yours and what is mine is yours any time you need it."

That philosophy of life and neighbor will not make you rich, but that is the philosophy of Jesus about the Lazarus lying at our gates - a world of people who are spiritually poor because they are blind, bound, and broken-hearted.

As you move among people each day, learn to view all the people who intersect your life as the blind, bound, and broken people for whom Jesus came. Learn to see the people of this world as the lost sheep, coins, sons, and the great "Lazarus"

lying at the gates of the Church. Then realize that the Christ Who lives in you would like to reach out to them through you, and make you part of the solution and answer to their needs in this life and in eternity.

It has been said that the Church today is like a World Cup Soccer match. When you attend or watch the World Cup on television, you see thousands of spectators who desperately need exercise, getting more rest, while they watch twenty-two men, who desperately need rest get more exercise! As you consider the world mission of Jesus today, make the deliberate commitment to the risen, living Christ that you are not going to be a spectator but a participant and an impact player in making disciples for Him in every nation beginning with your neighbors.

Chapter Six

"The Seeking Savior"

A Beautiful Story of Healing (Luke 8:26-39)

Those who have worked in mental hospitals before tranquilizers can appreciate this touching story. Anyone who has committed to mental hospitals family members, or those they love with these terrible symptoms, would give everything they have to see those they love in their right minds again. The health professionals who work with those we consider mentally ill should give much to know how Jesus accomplished this miraculous healing.

When Jesus and His disciples went to the land of the Gadarenes they were met by a demon possessed man. This pathetic man asked Jesus a touching question when they met: "Jesus, what

have You got to do with me?" (8:28) There are many people in this world who have so many problems they do not think Jesus and His salvation could possibly have any relevance for them. They are so victimized by their horrible symptoms they cannot imagine that Jesus would care, or could possibly relate to them and their problems. In this beautiful story, a man who is possessed by many demons discovers that Jesus and salvation have everything to do with him and the tragic circumstances of his life.

There is another important message in this beautiful story. After he has been healed, when Jesus is about to leave, the man wants to get in the boat and leave with Jesus. We can easily imagine why he would want to leave this place where everybody knows the tragic symptoms of his years of torment. We can also realize why he would want to be with Jesus.

But, he is told, "Return to your own house and tell what great things God has done for you!" (8:39) Another translation reads that he was to show what great things God had done for him. This man who is a miracle of Jesus is now a missionary for Jesus to those in his own home who know him best.

This gives us a definition of a missionary. If God has done great things for you, then you are a missionary. Like that candle on a candlestick, or that city set on a hill that cannot be hid, we are to show and tell what great things God has done for us. This missionary assignment is to begin where it is hardest, where they know us best, and where it will mean the most - in our own homes.

This miracle of healing is actually an exorcism. Jesus addresses and deals directly with the demons in this man. Would Jesus treat such a man in a different way if He were here today? Would He call this man's condition, "Schizophrenic with Paranoid

Overtone", institutionalize him, and put him in a tranquilized stupor for the rest of his life? What do you think?

The Pharisee and the Publican (Luke 18:9-14)

Here we have two men, two prayers, two postures, and two pronouncements. The important thing about these two men is that at the end of the story, one of them was declared by Jesus to be, "justified" and the other was not - or one of them was saved and the other was not. Another way of saying the same thing is to say that one of them was in a state of grace and the other was not.

The word "justified" means, "just-as-if-I had never sinned." In addition to that, it means that God has declared us to be righteous. The Book of Romans will tell us, in a very comprehensive way, how God does this. In this parable Jesus tells us the Good News that it is true. According to Jesus, the way to be justified is to pray as this publican prayed: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

We read that the Pharisee prayed "with himself". His prayer began with himself, it was all about himself, and it ended with himself. It never went beyond himself. To "pray" literally means, "to ask". By this definition, the Pharisee did not pray at all because he did not ask God for anything.

This parable was addressed to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. How does one who is a sinner become righteous? How can God declare a sinner to be righteous? Is it the result of self-effort? Am I righteous or justified because I trust in my own efforts to be righteous? This parable says "No!" God will declare me "just-as-if-I had never sinned," when I confess that I am a sinner, that I cannot save myself, and ask God for mercy.

In this parable, Jesus declares the Good News that it is true! Every man, woman, boy, or girl in this world can be justified if they will just assume a posture of humility, contrition, confession, and repentance as they pray, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" The posture assumed by the Pharisee was the absolute opposite of the posture of prayer, humility, contrition, confession, and repentance that places us and keeps us in a state of grace.

One devout scholar believed that Zacchaeus, the Chief of the Publicans, whom we meet in the next chapter, was the publican described in this parable. This is based on the fact that Jesus called him by name, suggesting that they knew each other. This would then also suggest that Jesus went to Jericho to "follow-up" the prayer of Zacchaeus - to explain to him just what repentance meant and how it should be worked out in his life. This apparently involved giving away his money, which he had come by dishonestly. Although this is largely conjecture, it does increase our interest in one of the most beautiful stories in the New Testament.

Jesus and the Chief of the Publicans (Luke 19:1-10)

When we read the Eighteenth and Nineteenth chapters of Luke, we discover two more stories about rich men. We could also consider the interview of Jesus with this Chief Publican like a play with three Acts. Act I is where Jesus greets Zacchaeus. Act Two takes place in the home of Zacchaeus, where Jesus spent the entire day in conversation and interaction with this man who was disliked by everyone in Jericho.

When the curtain goes up on Act Three, Jesus and Zacchaeus are coming out of the home of Zacchaeus after they have spent the entire day together. The first words are spoken by Zacchaeus. He calls Jesus "Lord" and announces that he is going

to give half of his money to the poor and use the other half to repay 400% to those he has cheated in Jericho. (If he had not cheated anybody, he would not have assumed that it would require half of his wealth to resolve the problem.)

Act Two is the most important part of this "play." We know nothing at all about what took place in Act Two, or in the home of Zacchaeus. What did they talk about all day? They must have discussed what it meant to repent, be forgiven and to follow Jesus. That discussion must have involved money, because of those first spoken words of Zacchaeus. It is when Jesus hears those words from the biggest sinner in Jericho that He declares him to be a son of Abraham, and announces that salvation has come to his house that day.

My favorite part of this story is when Jesus goes to spend His only day in Jericho with this little crook, and all the people are griping about it. I would like to commission an artist to paint Jesus, Who according to the Jewish historian Josephus was a big man, walking home with His arm around little Zacchaeus, while all the self-righteous people were griping because Jesus was spending His one day in Jericho with the Chief of the Publicans.

The beautiful words with which this story ends could be engraved on a brass plaque mounted under that painting: "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost!" These words are one of the definitive verses of this third Gospel that give us a capsule mission statement of the most important life ever lived on earth (19:10).

We also see the strategy of Jesus in this interview. He is only passing through Jericho, and His strategy is obviously to reach the man who can impact and reach Jericho for Him after He has passed through and beyond the city limits.

Try to imagine the impact on the city when Zacchaeus started calling in the people he had over-taxed in Jericho, probably adding a healthy percentage for himself as the publicans did regularly. Imagine their surprise, joy, and awe when they, thinking he was going to get into their purses even deeper, discovered that he only wanted to pay them back four times what he had taken from them because he had met Jesus! I imagine that was the biggest event that happened there since the walls of the city collapsed in the day of Joshua.

Another Interview with a Rich Man (Luke 18:18-27)

There is another story about a rich man in the previous chapter that should be placed next to this story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. When you compare and especially when you contrast these two rich men, first observe what they had in common:

They were both rich. They were both Jews. They were both anxious to see Jesus. Zacchaeus climbed a tree, while the man we call the rich, young ruler came running to Jesus and knelt down before Him. They both came to Jesus publicly. They were both apparently interested in knowing how to be saved, or how to have eternal life. Jesus obviously loved both of these men. Jesus apparently told them both to repent and to demonstrate their repentance by getting rid of their money.

When you contrast them, observe their amazing differences: The young man was moral and religious, while Zacchaeus was not moral or religious. The young man would have been admired and respected by the community, while we are plainly told that Zacchaeus was not.

The most important difference between these two men is that Zacchaeus did repent and give away his money, while the religious and moral rich man did not repent. Even though the young man had integrity, was moral and religious, he was not

saved, but Zacchaeus was saved! Unless the young man repented later, we can assume that he died a moral and religious, but a lost man. That means that even though Zacchaeus was a crook and was not religious or moral before he met Jesus, Zacchaeus is in heaven today, and the rich, young ruler, is in Hell!

We must not misunderstand this story. Jesus is not telling us we are saved by what we do, or what we stop doing. He is teaching that, when we are truly saved, we will repent and turn away from our sins. We see this vividly illustrated in the contrast of how these two men responded to Jesus.

The story of Jesus and Zacchaeus actually begins with the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. When we read the sequel to that parable, we discover the other definitive verse that profiles Jesus as the seeking Savior He truly was. We see that portrait of Jesus and His Manifesto one last time when Luke gives us his version of the Great Commission at the conclusion of this Gospel (Luke 24:46-49).

Epilogue

"Christian Thinking"

Jesus gave many teachings like His "Parable of the Sower," which tell us how to approach and how to respond to His teaching. Luke records three metaphors Jesus used for that purpose (Luke 5:36-39; 7:31-35). The first two are about a piece of new cloth patched on an old garment, and new (unfermented) wine that has been poured into old wineskins.

The people listening to Jesus understood these metaphors because they were common, everyday, and profound illustrations.

Every woman who sewed patches on clothes knew that you never sew a patch of new material on an old garment. The strong new material would pull away from the old cloth and make a bigger hole in the garment.

Many of His hearers had probably also made the mistake of pouring new, or unfermented wine into an old, brittle wineskin. As the new wine fermented, the old, brittle wineskin, being rigid, would not yield to this internal pressure. One day they would hear a loud popping sound and see wine running down the wall where they had hung that wineskin. They would then have realized that their mistake had led to an explosion - the destruction of the wineskin, and the loss of the wine.

The application is that the teaching of Jesus (like the new cloth and new wine) will put pressure on us when we take it into our minds. Those who are new creatures as a result of the new birth are obviously "the new wineskins" into which "the new wine" of His teaching must be poured (II Corinthians 5:17). Only these new creatures will be able to understand, accept, and apply His teaching, seems to be the application of this metaphor.

If we do not yield to the pressure His teaching places on our wills, our minds will literally explode! This is why Jesus tells us not to be "spiritual schizophrenics" by trying to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). If we do not approach and respond to the teaching of Jesus with the commitment to obey His teaching, what the Apostle John calls our "lukewarm" profession of faith in Christ will make us sick, and make the risen Christ sick when He thinks of us (Revelation 3:15,16).

Jesus used the third metaphor to comment on the way the religious leaders rejected His teaching and the preaching of John the Baptist (7:31-35). Children played games in the marketplace like "wedding" and "funeral" because they had

observed these events. They would ask busy merchants to stop and play their little games with them.

By these metaphors, Jesus was saying that the scribes and Pharisees were like little children asking Him to play "funeral" because He presented the image of the blessed, or the happy man. They were asking John the Baptist to play "wedding" because he was so serious, lived a spiritually disciplined life in the desert, and preached repentance.

The point Jesus was making was that He and John had not come to play their little games. He and John were not going to conform to their teaching but had come to revolutionize the established religious teaching.

You have now been exposed to some dynamic teaching of Jesus Christ. How are you going to respond to what you have learned in this brief survey of the Gospel of Luke? What are you going to do about what you now know about the mission objectives of the risen Christ, Who lives in you? His teaching is intended to revolutionize your mind, your life, and your values. Jesus warned you and me that if we do nothing about His teaching, our "spiritual double vision" will literally explode our minds.

The Gospel of John gives the most thorough record of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Since I have six booklets that provide commentary on one hundred and thirty radio programs on the Gospel of John, I will reserve my commentary on that vital part of His life and ministry for those booklets. The most significant insight into His death we gain from Luke is where Jesus tells the apostles that the Passover will be fulfilled when He dies on the cross (22:16). With the exception of John, the Gospel authors simply tell us "They crucified Him" when they report the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

If you do not know Christ personally as your Savior, as a minister of the Gospel of Christ, I plead with you to realize

that Jesus came to bring sight to you in your spiritual blindness, and to set you free from your addiction to the many forms of sin. He wants to heal your broken heart and life, as He becomes your personal Savior. He then wants to bring great purpose into your life as He makes you a partner with Him in His great mission of seeking and saving those who are lost. Trust Him now to be your Savior. Make Him your Lord, and then spend the rest of your life in relationship with the risen, living Christ, fulfilling the greatest Manifesto in the world.

The Gospel of John

Chapter Seven

"The Sign Language of John"

In six other booklets I am providing notes for our listeners who have heard one hundred and thirty radio programs that teach The Gospel of John, verse by verse. In this booklet I want to provide some notes for those who have heard the broadcasts that give a brief summary survey of the fourth Gospel as part of our New Testament survey.

We are now approaching my favorite of the four Gospels. The Gospel of John is the favorite Gospel of millions because God has used this Gospel to bring them to faith in Christ. I love the inspired literary form in which John has written his Gospel. This has also become my favorite Gospel because the purposes for which John has written this Gospel, and the systematic argument he presents throughout his twenty-one chapters tell me that this Gospel is all about Jesus Christ.

Gospels of Luke and John

This is my favorite Gospel because John not only shows me how to be saved, but through reading his Gospel I also get to know the Savior Who has saved me.

The Apostle John, the same man who wrote the Book of Revelation, is the author of this Gospel. If you are familiar with the last book in the Bible, you have some insight into the writing style and literary form of John. When John wrote the Book of Revelation, he used a word that helps us understand his literary form and writing style. As he begins the last book in the New Testament, he writes: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass. And He sent and signified it by His angel, unto His servant John."

This very interesting word "signified" John uses when he writes the Revelation and this Gospel is telling us that John wrote in a beautiful and biblical "sign language".

The Apostle Paul wrote that the Gospel was foolishness to the Greeks because they were on an intellectual quest, and that the Jews "require a sign". Paul meant that the Jews frequently asked God for signs to prove that He was with them and was leading them (Matthew 12:38-42). He also meant that the Jews sometimes thought and communicated by way of a beautiful "sign language".

The entire Book of Revelation is inspired, profound, and written in Hebrew sign language. Although the sign language is not as obvious, John is using that same literary form in this Gospel.

Keys to the Gospel of John

When John contributes these two inspired books to the New Testament (The Gospel of John and the Book Revelation), it is almost as if he is writing messages to the people of God in an

inspired code. As they read these messages, God's people need "The keys that break the code." Here are some "keys" that will help you to "break the code" of the profound sign language John uses in this Gospel.

Key Number One

The first key to understanding this Gospel is to realize that ninety percent of its content is not found in the first three Gospels. As we read this Gospel, we should realize that John has a perspective to share with us about the life of Christ that is not found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We should therefore expect to read a biography of Jesus that is very different from the biographies we have read in the first three Gospels.

Key Number Two

A second key that will help us break the code of the message of this unique Gospel is to realize that the Gospel of John is the only book in the Bible that is specifically addressed to the unbeliever to bring them to faith and eternal life.

The Apostle Paul writes that the purpose of the entire Bible is "... That the man of God might be perfect, thoroughly equipped for everything God wants him to do." (II Timothy 3:16, 17) The Bible is therefore not generally addressed to the unbeliever, but to the believer.

In the Bible, God really only has one message for the unbeliever: that message is to repent and believe the Gospel. However, when unbelievers do repent and believe, God then has sixty-six inspired books that are filled with truth for them, because God wants believers to be equipped for every good work He plans to accomplish through their lives. God wills that all

believers grow spiritually and be perfected into the people He created, and has recreated them to become (Ephesians 2:10; 4:12).

The Gospel of John is that one message of God to the unbeliever, which is a prerequisite to all that He wants to say to them in the other sixty-five books of the Bible. Although there is much profound truth in the fourth Gospel that perfects the believer, this is the only book in the Bible that is clearly and specifically addressed to unbelievers with the objective of bringing them to faith in Jesus Christ.

John tells us why he wrote this profound Gospel: "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name." (John 20:30,31)

One modern translation has a footnote that reads: "A sign is a miraculous evidence that points to the power of God in redeeming grace." A sign is therefore a miracle that proves Jesus was the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world.

In the last verse of this Gospel, John wrote that if all these signs of Jesus were recorded, the world could not hold the books that would have to be written. Try to discover how many books have been written about the life, works, and influence of Jesus Christ, and you will appreciate the truth of John's closing observation about Jesus.

John wants us to examine his record of these signs that prove His claims about Jesus. He is essentially writing: "From among all the many miraculous signs Jesus performed, consider - with an open mind - the ones I have recorded in this book. They should convince you that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the

Son of God. I want you to believe this because, when you believe these truths about Jesus Christ, you will be born again and you will receive eternal life." (20:30,31; 1:12,13)

When people tell a pastor they would like to begin reading the Bible, and ask where they should start, the pastor may ask, "Are you a believer?" Since John wrote to the person who does not yet believe, when they reply, "No, but I am interested," the pastor will often say, "Begin your reading of the Bible with the Gospel of John." Pastors will consistently give that advice because John's stated purpose for writing his Gospel was that the unbeliever might become a believer and experience eternal life.

Key Number Three

Another key to understanding the Gospel of John is to realize that this Gospel presents a theological argument about Jesus. The Gospels of Matthew and Luke present ministry strategies of Jesus as they record their inspired biographies. However, the logical, systematic argument presented by John in his Gospel is specific, continuous and consistent throughout each of his twenty-one chapters.

The purpose of the four Gospels is to tell us that Jesus came. While Matthew presented Jesus as the King of the kingdom of heaven, Mark presented Him as the Servant and Son of man, and Luke emphasized His humanity, John primarily wanted to tell us that He was God.

The systematic argument of John is that Jesus is the Christ, the promised Messiah, the Son of God. Trace that truth through the Gospel of John, beginning in chapter one, all the way to the end of the Gospel, and you will see that in chapter after chapter of his Gospel, John is continuously emphasizing

this argument: the historical Jesus of Nazareth, is the Christ, the Son of God and the Savior of the world.

Jesus Christ did not have two names like a man whose name is "John Brown". Jesus was His name; Christ was His title. When we refer to Him as "Jesus Christ" we are saying that Jesus, the historical Jesus of Nazareth, is the Christ. The Greek word "Christ" is the Greek way of saying the Hebrew word "Messiah". When John tells us that Jesus is the Christ, he is telling us that the Jesus we meet in the New Testament is the Messiah Who is prophesied and promised in the Old Testament.

In the Book of Acts, we are told that on his missionary journeys the Apostle Paul, who was a Rabbi, went into the synagogues in city after city and reasoned from the Scriptures with the Jewish Rabbis he met there, that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 17:2,3). In the letters of the Apostle Paul, he tells us that the basic doctrinal basis of fellowship in the New Testament Church was that "Jesus is Lord." (1 Corinthians 12:3)

In the first of the three inspired letters written by John, which you will find near the end of the New Testament, the Apostle John writes that the doctrinal basis of fellowship in the New Testament Church was that "Jesus is the Christ". (I John 2:22; 5:1) The argument John expresses in two short verses in his first letter is the same argument he presents systematically in this Gospel.

Key Number Four

Based on the first three keys to this Gospel, this is the way I am convinced that we should read the Gospel of John. We should read all twenty-one chapters looking for the answers to these three questions: Who is Jesus? What is faith? What is life?

John wrote his Gospel to give us a record of the signs, or miraculous evidences Jesus performed, which he has selected because he wants to convince us that the answer to that first question is that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. In chapter after chapter, John will show and tell us in many beautiful ways that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the only begotten Son of God. John will express this basic truth in different ways in each of his twenty-one chapters.

In every chapter, we should also look for the answer to the question: What is faith? John wrote, in effect, "I am going to tell you these things about Jesus. If you believe these truths about Jesus, you will be born again and receive eternal life." (20:30,31; 1:12,13) In every chapter, John is not only going to challenge us to believe his systematic argument about Jesus. He is also going to show us what he means by faith when he exhorts us to believe his argument about Who Jesus is.

What is faith, anyway? Faith is a very difficult concept to define and to keep in focus. Therefore, in chapter after chapter, and in many beautiful ways, John will illustrate for us what it means to believe that Jesus is the Christ.

In every chapter John will also show and tell us what he means by eternal life. Eternal life is not only everlasting life. He will use that term also, but eternal life is not merely a quantity of life, but also and primarily a quality of life. John will write that Jesus said, "I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly." (John 10:10) What is this quality of abundant life God has designed and, therefore, expects human beings to experience?

The quality of life John is profiling when he uses the expression "eternal life is an eternal quality and quantity of life. Eternal life is an abundant quality of life that begins in this life, and continues into the eternal state.

John tells us that we do not experience this quality of eternal life as a consequence of our physical birth. But, if we will experience another birth, which he calls "being born from above", as a result of that second birth, we will live a greater quality of life on a higher level. We will have "life more abundantly," or "eternal life".

In chapter after chapter of this Gospel, John is not only going to tell us, he is going to show us what he means when he refers to eternal life. Therefore, as we read every chapter of this Gospel, we should ask the question, "What is eternal life in this chapter, John?" As you read each chapter, prayerfully ask: "In this chapter of John, Who is Jesus, what is faith, and what is life?" Make the observation that John will profoundly answer those three questions in every chapter of his Gospel.

Key Number Five

Another key to understanding the Gospel of John is that beautiful, inspired sign language in which John writes. The Gospel of John is written on two levels. A child can understand the first level. You can use this Gospel to teach your children to read, because John uses more simple words than the authors of the other Gospels. A child can read and understand the Gospel of John on level one. Yet, there is always that deeper level of meaning in this Gospel. The most mature and devout saint of God will never reach the depths of that second level of meaning in this Gospel.

The Gospel of John is my favorite Gospel because of that second level on which John writes his beautiful, inspired, allegorical, and spiritual sign language. I have been told that we need at least a Masters degree in theology and philosophy to understand the deeper level of meaning in this Gospel. I disagree. I believe we need the Holy Spirit to show us that

deeper meaning as we read the Gospel of John. As you read this Gospel, ask the Holy Spirit to show you that deeper level of meaning in every chapter.

Key Number Six

There is one other perspective I want to share with you as we read the Gospel of John together. In the twelfth chapter, some Greeks approach the Apostle Philip with this request: "Sir, we would see Jesus." Make the request of those Greeks your personal and devotional prayer as you read this Gospel. My final key that breaks the code of this sign language of John is to challenge you to read through this Gospel praying, "Father, I want to see Jesus."

If you do this you will discover that the Gospel of John is like a "spiritual art gallery". Each chapter is like a "room" in that art gallery. Hanging on the "walls" (verses) of each one of those rooms (chapters), you will find beautiful "portraits" of Jesus Christ. The apostle of love exhibits these inspired "portraits" of Jesus Christ in all the chapters of this Gospel.

I found fifteen portraits of Christ in the first chapter and fourteen in the fourth chapter. See how many you can find as you read through the Gospel of John. Then, select one portrait of Jesus for every chapter in the Gospel of John. Imagine a brass label under each of your portraits. Memorize your twenty-one portrait labels. Now fall asleep at night while worshipping through the Gospel of John, meditating on the portraits of Christ you have selected for each chapter of this Gospel.

These are the "brass labels" under my portraits of Christ for each chapter: In Chapters One through Seven;

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The Lamb of God - The One Who Can Turn Your Water into Wine
- God's Only Savior - The Living Water - The Key to the
Scriptures - The Bread of Life - The Teacher Come from God.

In Chapters Eight through Fourteen;

The Son Who Makes Us Free Indeed - The Light of the World -
The Great Shepherd of the Sheep - The Resurrection and the Life
- The Kernel of Wheat that Falls into the Ground and Dies to
Glorify His Father - The Servant Who took up the Towel - The
Way, the Truth and the Life."

In Chapters Fifteen through Twenty-one;

A Vine Looking for Branches - The Sender of the Holy Spirit
- The Praying High Priest - The Perfect Witness - The Crucified
Christ - The Risen Christ, and The Commissioning Christ.

These are my favorite portraits of Christ in the twenty-one
chapters of the Gospel of John. As you study this Gospel of
John write down the portraits you find in each of the chapters,
for your own personal portraits of Christ will mean far more to
you than mine will.

The elders of my first church put the request of those
Greeks on a little brass plate and cemented it to the inside of
the pulpit, so that every Sunday when I stepped into the pulpit,
I would see: "Sir, we would see Jesus." They not only wanted me
to see those words when I preached, but when we had a guest
speaker, they also wanted the visitor to see: "Sir, we would see
Jesus." The elders were saying, "We want to see Jesus every
time the Word of God is preached from this pulpit."

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a composite revelation of
Jesus Christ as you read the Gospel of John. Then answer those
other two questions: "What is faith, and what is eternal life?"
When you see Jesus, believe, be born again, and receive eternal
life!

Chapter Eight

"An Overview of the Gospel of John"

When preachers are learning how to preach a sermon they are told to do three things. "First, tell them what you are going to tell them. Then, tell them. Then tell them what you have told them!" When John writes his Gospel, his first eighteen verses are considered a prologue in which he tells us what he is going to tell us. Then, from verse nineteen of Chapter One through verse twenty-nine of Chapter Twenty, he tells us. Finally, in verses thirty and thirty-one of that chapter he tells us what he has told us.

When he tells us what he is going to tell us, among other truths, he tells us that when the living Word of God became flesh and lived among us, when people received Him (believed in Him), or responded properly to Him, they were born again. They experienced a birth that was not physical or natural birth. They were born of God.

Having told us what he is going to tell us, he then gives examples of what he wrote that those who responded properly to Jesus were born from above. In chapter after chapter, he will give us examples of how people were born again when they responded in the right ways to Jesus Christ. He begins by telling us how some of His apostles first met their Lord and Savior. They asked Him where He lived. He invited them to come and see where and how He lived. Since their decision to come and see where and how He lived led them to live for Him and die for Him, they obviously experienced what it means to be born of God when they lived with Jesus.

In Chapter Two, the new birth is pictured allegorically when Jesus is profiled as the One Who can turn our water into wine. The steps that lead to this miracle, and by application, to the new birth, are pictured for us allegorically. First, by the words of Mary: "They have no wine." (2:3) Since wine is a symbol of joy in the Scripture, by devotional application, these words of Mary are like a confession that we have no joy, or that we have not been born again.

Water is sometimes a symbol that represents Scripture. We also read that the Word of God is the "seed" that generates the new birth, and we are told that faith comes while we are hearing the Word. Some see in the large 70 liter water jars that are being filled with water, a picture of our lives being filled with the Word of God as a step that leads to the new birth (2:7; Ephesians 5:26; I Peter 1:23; Romans 10:17).

The words of Mary to the servants represent the key to making the Word of God a power in our lives: "Whatever He tells you to do, do it!" (2:5) While you are filling your mind and heart with the Word of God, whatever He tells you to do, always do it. These steps that lead to the new birth can also be applied as a formula for a personal spiritual revival, when spiritual renewal is needed.

Those who are familiar with the Gospel of John know that Chapter Three is where Jesus tells the Rabbi Nicodemus that he must be born again. We should make the observation that the only time Jesus used this expression was when He was in dialogue with one of the most outstanding teachers in Israel. Even though Jesus does not use the expression "born again" with others, according to John, that is what is happening to those who respond in the right way to Jesus.

Nicodemus affirms Jesus by declaring Him to be a Teacher, Who has come from God. Someone has said, "All that we really

believe, we do. All the rest is only religious talk." It is as if this interview begins with Nicodemus saying to Jesus, "I have seen what you do and I have therefore come to hear your religious talk." Having received that affirmation, the Lord then essentially tells this distinguished Rabbi, "You must begin again. You must begin another way, and you must begin with Me."

Jesus tells this teacher in Israel that he should not marvel that he must be born again, as if it were incomprehensible, unnecessary, or impossible. According to Jesus, the purpose of this new birth is to see and then enter into the Kingdom of God. This is simply the teaching that God is a King and we are to become His subjects. This is simply the emphasis we have seen throughout the Bible that is focused in those two words: "God first!"

In this conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus makes His most dogmatic claims about Himself. He claims that He is God's only Son, God's only Solution to the problem of sin, and God's only Savior. He also states that believing Him when He makes these claims about Himself means eternal salvation, and not believing Him means eternal condemnation (3:14-21).

These claims were made in answer to a question Nicodemus asked twice. That question was, "How?" In one word the answer of Jesus was "Believe." Our part in the new birth experience is to believe. God's part is like the wind. We cannot see or predict the wind. "So is everyone who is born of the Spirit," according to Jesus. Although there is no profession of faith on the part of Nicodemus in this interview, other references to him in this Gospel, and tradition, convince us that he was eventually born again (7:50; 19:38-42).

The Fourth Chapter tells the story of a simple, sinful, Samaritan woman who is born again. Although Jesus does not use those two words with her, as He adapts His metaphors to the

needs of this woman, we realize this is another example of a person who was born again because she responded properly to Jesus. He presents Himself as Living Water and tells her that one drink of this Living Water will quench her thirst forever.

She is told that her drink of this Living Water will become in her a spring from which others will come to drink. This is fulfilled when she is obviously born again and reaches the men of Samaria for Christ. She discovers the two greatest experiences in life: being born again yourself, and becoming the human vessel through which others are born again.

Consider the answers to our three questions in the first four chapters in this Gospel. Who is Jesus? He is the Living Word of God Who became flesh and lived with us that we might be born again. He is the One Who can turn our water into wine. He is our only hope of a Savior. He is the Living Water that can quench our thirst for life, and become in us a spring from which others can drink and be born again.

What is faith? Faith is responding properly to the claims of Jesus about Who He is. Faith is "Come and see where and how He lives." Faith is hearing and obeying the Word of God. Faith is as simple as taking a drink of water that you believe will quench your thirst.

And what is life? Life is being born again. Life is having your water turned into wine. Life is seeing and entering into the eternal Kingdom of God. Life is one drink of Living Water that quenches your life thirsts, and becomes in you a spring from which others quench the deep, spiritual thirsts of their lives.

The Claims of Christ

The next four chapters of this Gospel record a long and hostile dialogue between Jesus and the religious authorities.

This dialogue breaks off and changes locations at times, but it continues until some of these leaders believe and others try to stone Him for blasphemy - because He claimed to be equal with God and to actually be God. Jesus obviously wants this confrontation to take place. He establishes His hearing with these religious leaders by deliberately breaking the Sabbath Law.

He healed a man on the Sabbath at the Pool of Bethesda, which was very near the Temple. He ordered the man to pick up his bedroll and carry it in front of the Temple. It was against the Sabbath Laws to carry a burden on the Sabbath. This healing was the catalyst for the hostile dialogue that continues through the end of Chapter Eight.

The healing of this man continues John's examples of people who were born again when they responded properly to Jesus. On this occasion, there is a great multitude of sick people and Jesus only heals one man. He may have healed this particular man because he had given up on the pool, and what may have been a superstitious belief about the healing powers of the pool. In this story, faith becomes a matter of giving up on all those things that cannot make us whole.

When the dialogue begins, Jesus begins by making claims that make Him supernatural: He claims that God has committed all judgment to Him. He boldly claims that He can do what God can do. If we get a notebook and jot down all these claims of Jesus, we will see that He leaves us with those same choices of believing in Him or stoning Him out of our lives forever. In the words of an English author, either we must call Him a Liar, be kind and call Him a Lunatic, or call Him our Lord, then worship and follow Him.

After making these amazing claims, Jesus tells the religious leaders they do not lack evidence for believing His

claims. They highly honored Moses, so Jesus claimed that Moses wrote of Him. They could not deny that John the Baptist was a prophet. Jesus therefore quotes the words of affirmation John spoke of his Lord. He cites the words of God the Father at His baptism as an evidence of the truth of His claims. He also gives us the key verses of the entire Bible when He tells them that all the Scriptures testify of Him and verify the truth of His claims (5:39, 40).

In Chapter Six, He follows the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand with His most profound and difficult discourse. The Bread of Life Discourse is really about meaningful work. He begins that part of the dialogue by telling the religious authorities they are doing meaningless work. When they ask what He does all day, He tells them about His work.

Essentially, He claims that He speaks words that are Spirit and life, which God tells Him to speak. When people respond positively to these words, they discover that He is the Bread of Life, Who has come down from heaven. In Chapter Four, He is Living Water. In this chapter, He is Living Bread.

Many professing disciples refused to follow Him after this discourse because He said that they "must eat His flesh and drink His blood" to have the eternal life made possible by the Living Bread He claimed to be. In this context, Peter gives us a good answer to the question, "What is faith?" When Jesus asks Peter if he will also leave Him, in so many words, Peter says, that even though he does not understand, he believes. Like Peter, we must believe and follow Jesus even when we do not understand.

Jesus was actually teaching that drinking and eating are illustrations of faith. You believe a glass of water can quench your thirst and save your life. You demonstrate your belief when you drink that glass of water. You believe that bread will

keep you from starving and so you eat that bread. Faith is drinking and eating, according to Jesus.

To eat His flesh means to believe everything He taught and modeled when the eternal Word became flesh. To drink His blood means to believe in the meaning of His death on the cross - that He was the Lamb of God when He died there. On this side of the communion table and the cross for which it stands, it is much easier to understand this very difficult metaphor. The apostles and disciples did not have the advantage of that perspective.

In Chapter Seven, His claim is that His teaching is the teaching of God. When that claim is questioned, He gives us another good answer to the question of what faith is. He tells that those who come to His teaching with the will to do what it teaches will know that His teaching is the teaching of God (7:17). The world's intellectual approach is "When I know, then I will do." The knowing leads to the doing. According to Jesus, the doing leads to the knowing.

Chapter Eight brings the dialogue to a dynamic conclusion. Jesus preaches very forcefully as He tells these religious authorities they are the children of the Devil and they are in bondage to their evil father. He tells them they are the slaves of sin and they are going to die in their sins if they do not believe. He claims that He is from heaven, but they are from hell, and they are going to hell if they do not believe.

When He finishes this awesome sermon, many of these religious leaders believe (8:30-36). When He responds to their profession of faith, He presents three phases of the new birth.

The first step toward the new birth is to believe. He tells those who profess to believe in Him to continue in His Word and become His disciples indeed. He explains that phase two is to continue in His Word and become His disciple indeed.

He then describes phase three when He promises that they will have an experience that will make them free indeed. Phase three is that continuing in His Word will lead them to know, by relationship, the One Who is the Truth. His promise is that when the Son makes them free they will be free indeed. The third phase of the new birth will be like getting out of prison, according to the promise of Jesus (8:30-36).

His final claim in this dialogue is when those Jews who do not believe, accuse Him of implying that He knows Abraham. He replies, "Before Abraham was, I am!" That is when some of them attempt to stone Him. Consider all these claims of Jesus and then prayerfully answer this question Jesus once asked His apostles, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15)

Chapter nine begins with a miracle of healing, which is followed by another strong discourse from Jesus. Preachers today usually present the truth they want to preach and then illustrate that truth. Like the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who began their sermons with symbolic acts, or pantomimes, that captured the attention of their hearers, Jesus precedes His discourses about being Living Water, the Bread of Life, and the Light of the world, with events that illustrated His message before it was preached.

After giving sight to a forty-year-old man, who was born blind, Jesus preached that He was the Light of the world. He claimed that He was a special kind of Light that revealed the blindness of those who professed to see, and gave sight to those who knew they were blind.

Coal miners who were trapped for three days and nights as the result of an explosion that caused a cave in, were finally rescued. When one of the miners asked the rescuers why they had brought no lights with them, miners and rescuers alike realized that he had been blinded by the explosion. He had been blind

for three days, but he had not known he was blind until the rescuers came, who actually had many lights with them. Jesus was claiming that He was that kind of Light - the Light of the World that gives light to those who are spiritually blind and reveals the blindness of those who do not know they are blind.

When the religious leaders realized what He was saying, they asked Him if He was telling them they were spiritually blind. He responded by telling them, that if they were blind, they would have no sin. But because they are proud of the fact that they see, they had no excuse for their sin. The theological conclusions are, no light, no sin, and the essence of sin is the rejection of Light, according to Jesus (9:40, 41; 15:22).

Chapter Ten is like a sequel to the Shepherd Psalm of David. Jesus clearly claims to be the Good Shepherd of which David wrote in that Psalm. The metaphors He uses declare that He is leading devout Jews out from the established religion to follow Him to salvation. This has a literal application to the blind man He healed, who was put out of the Synagogue because he professed Jesus to be his Lord.

Chapter Eleven is the great resurrection chapter of this Gospel. This beautiful story shows how Jesus permits three people to experience life's two most unsolvable problems of sickness and death, precisely because He loves them. He wants them to learn that He Himself is the Resurrection (victory over death), and the key to eternal life. They learn through this experience of the death of Lazarus, that he who believes and lives in union with Christ will never die (11:25, 26). This miraculous story has brought inspiration and eternal life to millions who have heard the story preached throughout the centuries of Church history.

Chapter Twelve divides the Gospel of John into two sections. Approximately half the chapters in this Gospel cover the first thirty-three years of the life of Christ, and the other half cover the last week of His life. Throughout this Gospel, we read the phrase, "His hour had not yet come." In this chapter we hear Jesus pray, "Father, the hour has come. And what shall I say? Deliver Me from this hour? But for this hour I have come into the world. Father, glorify Your name." A voice spoke from heaven and said essentially, "I have glorified My name before through Your life, and I will glorify it again."

Jesus then retreats to an upper room with the twelve apostles. He holds what I like to call "The Last Christian Retreat". He began His ministry with "The First Christian Retreat" when He taught the Sermon on the Mount. That was where He recruited these apostles. He has taught them, showed them, and coached them for three years. His last retreat with them is their "graduation" from three years of "seminary".

In this setting, He gives His longest recorded discourse, which is called, "The Upper Room Discourse". It is recorded in chapters Thirteen through Sixteen of this Gospel. Some include Chapter Seventeen where Jesus prays a magnificent prayer for the apostles, and those who will believe through them, which includes you and me.

This discourse is actually an intimate dialogue with these men. They ask Him questions, and much of this discourse is given in response to their questions. In Chapter Thirteen, we read that He began this discourse with the symbolic act of washing their feet. Luke tells us that on the way to the upper room they were arguing about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom they believed He was going to soon establish (Luke 22:24-30). How it must have impacted them when He, their Master and Lord, assumed the role of a slave and washed all their feet.

When He finished washing their feet, He asked, "Do you know what I have done to you?" (12) That question is answered in the first verse of the chapter where we read, "Having loved His own who were in the world, He now showed them the full extent of His love." He made the application, "I have given you an example. If I have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet."

Later, He really answers this question and makes a dynamic application when He teaches: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples." (13:34,35)

He had loved these men for three years in ways they had never been loved before. They were all in that upper room because He had loved them and they were doing their best to return that love. They had all made a covenant and a commitment to Christ as they met one last time with Him before His death. This new commandment challenged them to make a new covenant and a new commitment - a commitment to one another. This new commandment also created a new community, which was to become His church. He wanted that new community to be a community of people who loved one another - a colony of love.

In Chapter Fourteen He preached His "funeral sermon" in advance of His death. He told them He was leaving them (meaning that He was going to die), but that their hearts should not be troubled, because there is a place, and He is preparing that place for them. Their hearts should not be troubled because there is a Person, Who will comfort them. And because of this Comforter, they will always have a supernatural Peace in their hearts, which He tells them is "My Peace".

He also comforted them by telling them that their relationship with Him will be even more intimate after His

death. He told them that the key to that relationship would be their obedience to Him and His teaching, which the Holy Spirit will bless by making possible an intimacy with their risen Savior. The key to His words and His works had been His intimacy with the Father, and the key to their words and works would be their intimacy with Him through the Comforter, the Holy Spirit (10:30; 14:22, 23).

Having taught these things in the Upper Room, He led them into a garden and gave them His commencement address. He lowered a vine with many branches that were loaded with fruit. He then illustrated what He had already taught them in the upper room, with a profound metaphor. Having pointed out the truth that the fruit was growing in abundance on the branches because the branches were attached and in alignment with the vine, He exhorted them to abide in alignment with Him, and promised that they would be fruitful if they did.

He then gave them six reasons why they simply must be fruitful. They must be fruitful because this is another way they show the world that they are His disciples. They must be fruitful because this is how they glorify God, this will bring them great joy, He chose them and appointed them to be fruitful, He has commanded them to be fruitful, and they must be fruitful because He has no other way to reach the world but through them (15:1-16).

A poem has been written which pictures Jesus on a cloud after His death and resurrection. He discusses His life and work with the angels, including His plan to reach the world through the apostles. One of the angels asks what He will do if the apostles do not reach the world for Him? His reply is, "Then I have no other plan!"

His last reason why the apostles must be fruitful is, that He is the Vine and they are the only branches He has. This

metaphor is an exhortation to be fruitful, His commencement address to the apostles, and presents Christ as He was and as He is today: a Vine looking for branches.

In Chapter Sixteen, He promises to send them the Holy Spirit, Whom He calls the Comforter. He profiles the nature and function of the ministry of the Holy Spirit when He comes to them. This chapter is literally fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

In Chapter Seventeen He prays an inspired and profound prayer for these apostles. All the way through the Gospel of John, He has made reference to the works He must accomplish. When you study this prayer, it becomes obvious that these apostles have been one His most important works. In the first third this prayer, He prays for His own work and makes the claim that He has glorified the Father by finishing the work the Father assigned to Him.

Then He prays for the work of the apostles in whom He has invested so much of His three years of ministry. The final third of this prayer is for those who will believe the Good News through the apostles. That means He is praying for His Church. He prays that we will live in such a supernatural oneness with Him, and at one with each other, that the world will know and believe, that God the Father loves them as much as He loves His Son.

When you add some verses from Chapter Twenty to this concept in His inspired prayer, you have John's version of the Great Commission. (20:21) To that end, He cannot pray that the Father will take the apostles or His Church out of this world, because He has sent us into the world, even as the Father has sent Him into the world, to seek and to save the lost (17:18).

Epilogue

Most scholars believe the Gospel of John ends at verse thirty-one of chapter twenty. Chapter twenty-one has been a part of this Gospel since it was written, but scholars believe it was added as a postscript. In this epilogue chapter, Jesus reminds seven of the twelve apostles - and Peter - that He did not commission them to catch fish, but men! (21:1-14)

These apostles have been involved in a fruitless all-night fishing expedition. From the beach, the resurrected Jesus directed them to cast their nets on the other side of their boat. As soon as the net was filled with fish, John knew the Stranger on the beach was the Lord.

This is another post-resurrection appearance of Jesus where He is not recognized by disciples who knew and loved Him (Luke 24:30,31). It was the supernatural catch of fish that made them know that the Stranger on the beach was their Lord. When Peter realized it was the Lord, he immediately dived into the water and swam toward the beach. Their Lord served them a breakfast of fish and bread, which He has already prepared.

Jesus has an intriguing interview with Peter in this setting in which He is teaching this man, who will be the primary leader of the Church, three more vital lessons about catching men like those we considered when we surveyed his interview with Peter that was recorded by Luke (Luke 5:1-11). We might say that in this interview, Jesus was making somebody out of nobody (21:15-17).

From the day they met, Jesus was teaching Peter three lessons: that he was nobody, that he was somebody, and what Jesus can do with somebody who has learned that he is nobody.

Peter was learning that first lesson from the time he met Jesus until he went out into the darkness, and wept bitterly, because he had denied his Lord three times.

In this interview, Jesus was attempting to teach Peter the second lesson: that he was somebody. On the day of Pentecost, Peter, the Church, and the whole world learned the third lesson: what the risen, living Christ can do with somebody who has learned that he is nobody.

Seven of the men who were there that morning were also present in the upper room, when Peter boasted that he loved the Lord more than they did. In the presence of those seven men, Jesus enters into this profound dialogue with Peter. There are several possible interpretations of the profound meaning of the questions and answers that Jesus and Peter exchanged in this interview. One possibility is that Jesus is asking Peter if he truly loves his Lord more than the other men who joined Jesus and Peter for that breakfast on the beach.

Another interpretation is that Jesus is asking Peter if he loves his Lord more than the fish he has just caught. This could include the fishing business itself. As we learned in a previous interview Peter had with his Lord, Jesus had commissioned Peter to "Catch men" and Peter has now gone back to trying to catch fish (Luke 5:1-11).

To appreciate the intense drama of what Jesus and Peter are saying to each other, it is critically important to understand, in the language in which that dialogue is recorded for us, the meaning of the words for love that passed between them. For example, when Jesus asked Peter in the presence of those seven men, if his love for his Lord was greater than their love, Jesus used the Greek word "agape".

This means Jesus was asking Peter if his love for his Lord was a total commitment, unconditional, kind of love (I

Corinthians 13:4-7). When Peter answers that he does love the Lord, Peter uses the Greek word "phileo". The significance of this is that he is confessing his love for Jesus to be simply a superficial friendship.

Jesus asks Peter a second time if he truly loves his Lord. Again Jesus uses the word "agape". But, this time He does not ask Peter if his love for his Lord is greater than the love of these other seven apostles. Peter again responds using the word "phileo". Peter is again confessing that his love for Jesus is only a friendship kind of love.

For the third time, Jesus asks Peter if he loves his Lord, only this time Jesus uses the word "phileo". Jesus is now asking Peter if his love for his Lord even amounts to a friendship. Peter appears to be deeply hurt and responds, "Lord, You know all things. You know that I love You," and for the third time, Peter uses the Greek word "phileo". Peter was then saying to Jesus, "You know that I am at least Your friend."

This Greek word study tells us that Peter is a broken man. He is not boasting now as he had in the upper room. Now he is confessing and experiencing the first two beatitudes: He is mourning because he is learning that he is indeed poor in spirit.

This dialogue between Jesus and Peter is touching when we realize, that each time Peter confesses his inferior love for the Lord, in response to Peter's transparent confessions, the Lord commissions Peter to feed and shepherd His sheep. The Great Shepherd of the sheep is making the clear statement that He wants a man who has experienced failure to feed and shepherd His sheep. The Lord obviously does not want a perfectionist shepherd making insensitive, unrealistic demands on His sheep.

Why did the risen Christ break out in great power on the Day of Pentecost through this man Peter? When we understand the

dynamics of this interview on the beach that morning, we will have the answer to that question. More than any of the other apostles, Peter had learned what Christ could do through somebody who has learned that he is nobody.

In this setting, Jesus also teaches a vital lesson about the will of God for the life of a disciple (21:18-23). Peter was often boasting about the fact that he was willing to die for Jesus. In this epilogue chapter of this Gospel, we read that the risen Jesus decides to tell Peter the manner of his death. If tradition is accurate, this means that Jesus told Peter that he was going to have the privilege of being crucified upside down for his Lord.

When Peter hears this, he still shows his humanity by pointing his thumb over his shoulder at John, who was his partner in the fishing business, and essentially asking Jesus, "What about him? What is your will for his life and death?" Jesus responds by telling Peter that His will for John's life and death is none of Peter's business. Our Lord's word for Peter is, "What is that to you? You follow Me!"

In the Providence of God we are all designed to be unique and distinct from every other person on earth. We recover that unique individuality through our salvation. Why would we then expect to find God's will for our lives, which will make us distinct from every other person on earth, by comparing ourselves with His will for other believers?

In this post-resurrection appearance, Jesus is clearly reminding the apostles that they have been commissioned by their Lord to catch men. He is also exhorting them to shepherd and nurture those lost sheep who are going to be reached through the great harvest that is to come.

In His dialogue with Peter, Jesus is challenging the apostles to discover His will for their individual lives as to

what specific role He would have them play in the harvesting and nurturing ministry that will begin on the day of Pentecost when the Church will be born.

This last chapter of the Gospel of John is like a symphony in three movements. The first movement is the challenge of Jesus to these apostles to be involved in the great harvest that is coming, and to be sure to cast a big net. The second movement is His challenge to Peter and the seven to be involved in the nurturing and shepherding of those who are sure to be harvested. The third movement is for them, and by application for you and me, to discover God's individual will for our lives as we obey His Great Commission.

When the authors of the first three Gospels report the death of Jesus on the cross, they simply write three words: "They crucified Him." Since approximately half the chapters of the Gospel of John are dedicated to the last week of His life, when He died and was raised from the dead, this Gospel has the most thorough record of this greatest crisis in the life of the Christ. As I have already explained, I have six other booklets that provide a more in depth commentary on more than one hundred radio broadcasts of this Gospel of John. I will reserve for those booklets my commentary regarding John's perspective on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I conclude this brief survey of the Gospel of John with a challenge. When you finish your reading of this profound Gospel, reflect on all your portraits of Christ and ask yourself; Who is Jesus, and What is faith? Then prayerfully ask yourself if, by faith, you know the Jesus Christ you have read about in this Gospel. If you know Him by faith, then you have eternal life because, like a branch in vital union with a Vine, you are in relationship with the risen, living Christ Who is eternal.

A disciple of the risen Christ who has that kind of relationship with Him, reflected on modern, liberal views of Christ and said, "I believe that He is, while they are not even sure that He was. And while they are not even sure that He did, I know that He still does." Another great old soul said, "The risen Christ is Who He says He is, and He can do anything He says He can do. You are who He says you are, and you can do anything He says you can do because He is, and He is with you."

That is what Peter learned from his Lord on the beach that morning. My sincere and fervent prayer is that you will learn these same eternal values as you experience eternal life because you have surveyed my favorite Gospel with me.