

Chapter 3

True Discipleship



How to Be Connected to God
Being 'Born Again'
Three Possible Apostles
Peter Was the First Disciple to Recognize Jesus as the Messiah
Jesus Then Rebuked Peter
Communion--"the Lord's Supper"
Sending out His Disciples without Him
Obeying Man's Laws as well as God's Law

How to Be Connected to God

Jesus told His listeners that in God's Kingdom He was the Vine that connected them to God--the Vinedresser. Therefore, in order for people to maintain a link to God the Father, they would have to be associated with God the Son first. Otherwise they would lose their source of nourishment, cease to grow, and eventually dry up and wither. Jesus reiterated this principle in His parable of the Sower when He spoke about people living among "thorns". Desires or concerns for worldly things would influence them like leaven and eventually erode their spiritual connection to God in some way, increasingly choke His Word working in them.

"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away and every branch that bears fruit He prunes so that it can bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me and I in you. As a branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the true Vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing."

If anyone does not abide in Me he is cast out as a branch and is withered, and they gather them, and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified--that you bear much fruit so you will be My disciples. As the Father loved Me so I also have loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments you will abide in My

love just as I have kept My Father's and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you and your joy may be full.

This is My commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. But, I have called you friends for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose Me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My Name He may give you. These things I command you, that you love one another.

If the world hates you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world it would love its own. Yet, because you are not of the world but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me they will also persecute you. If they kept My word they will keep yours also. But, all these things they will do to you for My Name's sake because they do not know him Who sent Me.

If I had not come and spoken to them they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did they would have no sin, but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father. But, this happened that the Word might be fulfilled which is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause.' But when the Helper comes Whom I shall send to you from My Father--the Spirit of Truth Who proceeds from the Father--He will testify of Me and you also bear witness because you have been with Me from the beginning." (John 15:1-27)

Once again Jesus used earthly examples to explain Heavenly principles, and likewise employed the notion of a seed growing to explain His model. This time however, He did not focus on the inception of growth, but at its coming to *maturity*. That is, Jesus directed His listeners to concentrate on what happens to the plant that a seed has generated. Like the seed itself, its product must be maintained for it to be useful. Just because a seed has generated a good yield does not imply that its outgrowth is free from negative influences that would try to harm it. It, too, must be cared for to allow it to produce more good seeds.

Notice that once fruit is obtained, the vine from which it came must be pruned. After the desirable fruit has been harvested its source has to be tended properly in order for it to keep growing and producing more "fruit". Jesus explained to His listeners that this already was done in the invisible spiritual realm by the word of God. Also, when His Word abided in them they would be able to ask God for anything that was in agreement with it and it eventually would come to pass, depending upon how carefully and consistently it was tended in faith.

What did Jesus say was necessary for any individual to accomplish this? Live exactly as He did, without any deviation ever. He unceasingly demonstrated the unceasing and unqualified love that God has for His creation and commanded us to

imitate this when we dealt with other people, whatever their station in this world. Jesus said that when we did so we would begin to know, appreciate, and benefit from God's influence, power, as well as healing and continual physical fitness just as He did. Jesus even told that when He went back to reside in Heaven, He would send the Holy Spirit to dwell among and help people continue to achieve this goal. The Spirit would confirm and testify about Jesus so humanity likewise would be able to witness about Him, too.

Being 'Born Again'

"There was a man named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, 'Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs You do unless God is with him.'

Jesus answered and said, 'Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'

Nicodemus said to Him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'

Jesus answered, 'Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you can hear the sound of it but cannot tell where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.'

Nicodemus answered and said, 'How can these things be?'

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Are you the teacher of Israel and do not know these things? Most assuredly I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen and you do not receive Our witness. If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe how will you believe if I tell you Heavenly things? No one has ascended into Heaven but He Who came down from Heaven, that is, the Son of Man Who is in Heaven.'

'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life, for God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned but he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God. And, this is the condemnation: that the Light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than the Light because their deeds were evil, for everyone who practices evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light lest his deeds should be exposed, but he who does the truth comes to the Light that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.'" (John 3:1-21)

Jesus explained this renewal of the human spirit when He spoke with a certain

religious ruler. All human beings were, and still are, born physically into this world from a protective womb of water. When this water broke in a pregnant woman the process within the mother's body had finished and her child soon would arrive. However, in order to become the complete person that God originally intended he/she had to undergo a re-birth of the spirit once rebellion, a.k.a. sin, was allowed to enter and interfere with God's creation. That phenomenon did not happen automatically though. It only took place when an individual made a conscious decision to receive Jesus' blood ransom individually.

An earthly seed reproduces another being like itself. We are born into the earth as physical creatures under the limitations and constraints of the first Adam. When he and the woman (only called Eve after they sinned and separated themselves from God and each other) had children, who had children, who had children, etc. every new conception perpetuated the bloodline and inheritance of his/her earthly parents. Therefore, all of mankind's seeds conceived under Satan's dominion instead of God's were imperfect and reproduced themselves increasingly as such. As mentioned, because of the Adams' treacherous decision God became severed from His Own children as soon as they let themselves become polluted. If allowed to remain within the Garden, since it was a part of His Kingdom they would have corrupted it and ultimately even Him, too. Additionally, if God had let them eat from the Tree of Everlasting Life, mankind would have remained distorted forever, with no remedy whatsoever capable of nullifying their disobedience.

All human beings are born to their natural parents under identical conditions, and a flawed seed generates another flawed seed. We are reborn--born again Spiritually, into God's Kingdom solely by individual choice. Someone else planted the embryo that later became our bodies with souls onto this planet. We had no input whatsoever in the matter. It even may have been that we were conceived without care or even under duress--like rape. We could be children, natural or adopted, of a closely-knit family. Or, we might not have any knowledge of our blood parents, even who they were.

However, if we decide to receive the gift of Jesus' death/Death and subsequent Spiritual resurrection in exchange for our non-renewed spirits, we will know exactly who our Father is, have a swell Big Brother, as well as be assured that we are wanted and loved unconditionally. No matter who we are or what we ever do, God desires to be with and help us. He does not necessarily approve of our behavior at times, but He still always loves us and hopes that we will return that love. (If you will not accept this notion yet you have not been paying attention.)

Since the Bible says that as well as being our parents' child we are God's, it must be almost unbearable for Him to watch us when we are sick and/or unsaved. Consider how even several centuries pale in comparison to forever. In Jesus Christ we can witness how God wants us to live--completely healthy, energetic, and strong.

"He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' (Hebrews 13:5b)

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow." (Hebrews 13:8)

When Jesus was in Heaven in a spirit form like His Father, not only was He

invisible, He was Eternal, and everything else that makes up the Godly Trinity. When God the Father chose to send His Son on a mission of mercy to the earth, He had to be born as an authentic human being to be able to fulfill it. In other words, He had to exist like Someone capable of being killed. On the earth as a Man, God the Son's life was sustained with blood and it could become an offering to God the Father to undo the damage of sin. (*Leviticus 11:17*) Jesus literally was the Lamb of God. He was God's offering to people, just as they had sacrificed the blood of unblemished animals to Him for centuries. The difference was that individuals had to offer sacrifices regularly. God the Father and God the Son only had to do it for mankind once.

"The Father loves the Son and has given all things into His hand. He who believes in the Son has everlasting Life and he who does not believe in the Son shall not see Life, but the wrath of God abides in him." (John 3:35-36)

Three Possible Apostles

"It happened as they journeyed on the road that a certain scribe came and said, 'Teacher/Lord, I will follow You wherever you go,' and Jesus said to him, 'Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests but the Son of Man has nowhere (permanent) to lay His head.'

Then He said to another of his disciples, 'Follow Me,' but he said, 'Let me go first and bury my father.' But Jesus said to him, 'Follow Me. Let the dead (spiritually) bury their own dead, but you go and preach the Kingdom of God.'

And, another also said, 'Lord, I will follow You but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house (Matthew 10:37)," but Jesus said to him, "No one having put his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God.'" (Matthew 8:19-22 & Luke 9:57-62)

These three men may have been traveling with Jesus for awhile, but not as long as the twelve. They indeed were disciples and we can infer this because Jesus alluded to that fact when He talked about people who already had put their "hand", or dedication, to something. As well, the first man pledged what was to him eternal loyalty to Jesus. The second straightforwardly was referred to as a disciple of Jesus and His ministry. Because of Jesus' individual reactions to all three men, He had to have sensed something deficient in each--a lack of endurance over the long haul. Whereas, when Jesus invited Peter and his brother Andrew to accompany him in the midst of casting their nets for fish, they instantly stopped what they were doing and complied. Additionally, when Jesus also called James and his brother John, they left instantly, even though they were in the midst of mending their fishing nets after working. They even left their father alone to finish their work, their professions and homes, not knowing what lay ahead.

It is likely that the first individual, the scribe, had a high position in that society, as well as possessions and a settled home that he felt he needed to provide him stability and security. Apparently, if he left them he eventually would miss the respect that his rank and worldly things brought too much to be an effective disciple at that time. Jesus

recognized that he needed to be able to let go of his *earthly* treasure and learn to trust that God understood and would provide for all of his future needs. In the parable of the Sower, this man would fit into the category of those living among "thorns".

We are not given the background of the second man, but he likewise may have been living among "thorns". He also seemed to need human validation, more than Godly approval because he wanted to go and bury his father before He went with Jesus. This also would categorize him spiritually as being on the wayside where the Word was preached. That means that Jesus knew that this man would receive His teachings gladly with an open heart up until a certain point but would follow only for awhile for he, too, needed *human* approval more than God's did.

There are numerous reasons why we give in to pressure and stress. In this man's case, people probably tried to convince him that he would be demonstrating God's love more to the rest of the world by paying his respects to his father and family. They would be looking at and considering outward things more than what was not physically visible to them. Jesus, however, already had taught that our traditions actually could nullify what God actually desires by becoming habits and strongholds in our lives to the point that we can even ignore God in favor of them.

"Why do you also transgress the commandments of God because of your tradition? ... You have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition." (Matthew 15:3-6)

The above comments are not designed in any way to negate God's commandments concerning honoring our parents. Remember that Jesus did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it and the fifth commandment of the Law states that we are to honor our fathers and mothers. Therefore, holding services to commemorate their lives obeys, not denies that decree. In addition, we are to obey our parents. Even Jesus Himself did so, like when He turned water into wine. Even though He protested, since His mother told Him to do it, He did. (

Why then would Jesus say what He did to the man who wanted to follow him, but only after he had buried his father? He had his priorities reversed because he put his earthly father before Heavenly One. He wanted to give his time and energy to a branch not the Vine or Vinedresser. This man did not even say that he desired to accompany Jesus when invited the only thing he mentioned was his earthly father. It was possible that, given the context, he felt pressured to follow Jesus even when he himself recognized in his heart that he was not ready to be fully dedicated to His teaching and cause.

It seemed as if this man was almost surprised at Jesus question since right beforehand another person specifically requested to follow Him but had been dissuaded. The second man could have been merely responding to the looks that the others present gave him because they felt the Lord was presenting him with a great opportunity Himself. This guy's reaction almost seems to be more of a desire to politely get out of a predicament than a direct and sincere refusal.

Interestingly, if this man honestly had wanted and asked to follow Jesus, He very well might have instructed him to wrap things up with his family first. When God asked Solomon what he wanted from Him he did not ask for long life, riches, or the destruction

of his enemies, rather an understanding heart to be able to govern his people wisely. This unselfish request pleased the Lord so much that He gave Solomon much, much more. In fact, according to the Bible Solomon turned out to be the richest man ever born up until the ministry of Jesus.

The third man seemed to demonstrate a mixture of the reactions of the other two. He declares his loyalty to Jesus, but... This man desired to follow Jesus more closely and intimately, yet he, too, must have sensed enough peer pressure around him that he felt more of a responsibility to be polite to his family than to God. He evidently was not a person who would stand up to the pressures that his family, and probably his friends, too, would convince him were more of an obligation than following Jesus completely either.

"If anyone comes to Me and does not forsake his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple and whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple, for which of you, intending to build a tower does not sit down first and count the cost whether he has enough to finish it-lest after he has laid the foundation and is not able to finish all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build, but was not able to finish. Or, what king going to make war against another king does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him with twenty thousand? Or else while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. So, likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:26-33)

Peter Was the First Disciple to Recognize Jesus as the Messiah

"Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi and went out to the towns and on the road. As He was done praying, His disciples joined Him and He asked His disciples, 'Who do the crowds say that I am?'

So they said. 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elija, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets who has risen again'.

He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?'

Simon Peter answered and said to Him, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!'

Jesus answered and said to him, 'Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but My Father Who is in Heaven. And, I also say to you that you are Peter (in Greek, "Petros"), and on this rock (in Greek, "petra") I will build My Church and (even) the gates of Hell shall not prevail against It. And, I give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven (likewise) and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in Heaven (as well).'

Then, He strictly warned and commanded His disciples/them that they should tell no one about Him that He was Jesus the Christ." (Matthew 16:13-2, Mark 8:27-30, & Luke 9:18-21)

Why did Jesus ask His disciples Whom they thought He was? Why not just tell them instead? They had to discover it for themselves through the witness of the Holy Spirit as Peter did. Otherwise, they would not have to use their faith, only their physical, human, fleshly senses. *"We walk by faith, not by sight."* (*II Corinthians 5:7*) Evidently, this tangible "soil" is not the "good" ground mentioned in the parable of the Sower, and is not sufficient for constant and everlasting faith and obedience to God.

Plus, why did Jesus warn and even command His disciples not to tell anyone else Who He was? It was, and still is, imperative that each of us come to recognize and accept Him as our Savior and Lord individually through the work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, not gossip no matter how reliable. Otherwise that invisible seed of faith that has been planted will last only temporarily not having any root but wonder which cannot be the same as genuine faith because it does not endure. The Bible records that innumerable people were amazed at Jesus' deeds, yet only some of them ever committed their lives to His message. Wonderment falls, as the parable of the Sower likewise teaches, "by the wayside".

Jesus did similar things on several occasions. As examples: He warned a leper not to relate that He had healed him, but to go directly and show himself to the priest as Moses had commanded. However, this man did the opposite, he blabbed it freely. The Bible states that because of this reckless, although well intended behavior in one individual Jesus could no longer walk unhindered through the city. He was from then on limited to preaching in the outskirts where people had to come to Him. By not following Jesus' instructions precisely, this single person unknowingly restricted His entire ministry right from the start. Imagine the consequences to all of mankind over centuries after multitudes of us have not followed His commands. Additionally, Jesus commanded a father and mother not to discuss with anyone how He healed their daughter. This is especially interesting because Jesus did this in the private home of a very prominent and public figure with his friends and family waiting outside. So, they indeed would realize that Jesus not only healed her but raised her from recently dying.

Plus, although John the Baptist recognized Jesus as being God's Son when he baptized Him to begin His earthly ministry, John later sent some of His disciples to ask Jesus if He was indeed "the Coming One", or should they be on the lookout for Another. Jesus responded by telling them to return and tell John the things that they heard and watched Him say and do. Jesus never once told these men either Who He was. Just like everyone else, these disciples had to discover enduring knowledge about Jesus in their hearts by the witness of the Holy Spirit, not Jesus' Own testimony.

Notice the difference between "Petros", an individual stone versus "petra", a huge bolder. They both are comprised of the same genetic material, but the latter is far stronger because has not been broken apart into smaller pieces. The massive rock on which Jesus builds God's Church is through the insight that enters our hearts only by way of God the Father Himself through His Spirit. God may use other people to transmit His knowledge, but we have to consciously and deliberately receive it for ourselves for us ever to benefit from its influence and power.

Consider the reactions Jesus' disciples other than Peter. They evidently tried to answer His question without committing themselves too much, so they told Him what other people thought. They never revealed their own thoughts but were quite evasive about answering Him directly. It was apparent that they not only had posed the

question before among themselves previously, and probably often, but they had listened to gossip as well. Jesus' followers had allowed hearsay and defamation contribute to their own evaluations, thus leading them to doubt Jesus' identity. Consequently, the rest of Jesus' disciples were not yet fully convinced that He was their long awaited Savior of prophesy, not enough to bet their lives on anyway.

Why did Jesus pledge to give His followers the "keys" to the Kingdom, not the "key"? You would think that once inside Heaven everything there automatically would be available to us; so, what's the difference? If I give you the key to my house, you indeed can enter it, but you do not have complete access to all of my possessions. For example, you don't have my ignition or trunk keys for my car. Neither can you open any strong boxes in my home, safety deposit boxes, or bank accounts. Neither do you possess the password, or "key" to my computer. Therefore, Jesus saying the "keys" to the Kingdom was very significant: Whenever we follow Him, and are ready, He will let us see and manipulate everything to which God the Father has given Him access.

Also, consider the ramifications of "binding" and "loosing" things and our responsibilities to oversee and let God direct us so that He can guide us how to react to any circumstance whatsoever. While the first couple lived in the Garden of Eden before their rebellion against the Trinity the earth was a perfect extenuation of God's Kingdom in Heaven. Therefore, at the beginning the Adams were capable of behaving just as Jesus could while He lived as a human being. Jesus specifically commanded His disciples to imitate Him in this conduct. His allowing them likewise transferred this ability to the rest of mankind, forever, for God treats everyone equally.

Therefore, what should we do with this authority? What does the Bible teach that God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit want us to bind and loose nowadays? Should we bind or loose love, joy, peace, perseverance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, stability, generosity, prosperity, and health? What about anger, dissension, hatred, war, disease, poverty, crime, immorality, idolatry, envy, and self-centeredness? (*Galatians 5:18-25*) God gave all of us the freewill to choose any or all of both lists. He also will reveal in His Word and Jesus' life which decisions They will support.

Jesus Then Rebuked Peter

"From that time, Jesus began to teach (and) show His disciples that He--the Son of Man--must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again/be raised on the third day. He spoke this word openly.

Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!', but when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, 'Get thee behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me for you are not mindful of/setting your mind on the things of God but the things of men.'

When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, 'Whoever desires to come after Me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me, for whoever desires to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will find/save it. For, what

does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul, and is himself destroyed or lost? Or, what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

For, whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels, for the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste Death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom." (Matthew 16:21-28, Mark 8:31-38 & Luke 9:22-

Evidently this was when Jesus first began teaching His followers the climax of His mission on earth entailed: His predicted rejection, suffering, and death/Death for them (and us). Although His disciples had the Scriptures of the Old Covenant and knew of the prophesies concerning the Messiah, they did not want to believe that *all* of these reports were true: They rejected the idea that their Messiah most literally was God's "Sacrificial Lamb", given as an offering to redeem mankind from the consequences of sin. Jesus taught that each individual must likewise carry his own cross, or load, in order to indeed follow His example. As well, they must bear it as He did, with faith, love, forgiveness, and dignity. We never should ever doubt or flinch, rather always trust and imitate what Jesus Himself had or would have done when faced with any situation.

Jesus was not pleased at all about Peter's concern and worry; for it showed fear, something from Satan's earthly influence, not God's at all. In fact, Peter, the only disciple to declare straightforwardly what he believed. He also tried to persuade Jesus from His goal so strongly that Jesus even called his interference satanic. Curiously, Peter was the disciple who later even denied that he even *knew* Jesus, much less was a *follower* of His. It is interesting to see how he reacted when "push came to shove". Jesus' other disciples vacillated when it came to standing with or disavowing Him also. We easily can see their change of heart when they decided to accompany Him once to be near Jerusalem, versus their opposite behavior when He finally was arrested.

What really would a people possess if they gained this entire world? Seemingly, lots of wealth, power, and fame; but for how long? Is a human lifetime, no matter how easy or long it may be, worth the consequences of perpetual condemnation afterward? What percentage of forever are 100 years, let alone 1000? Compare what Jesus said about being ashamed either of Him, or His words, to how Peter denied even knowing Him while Jesus was on trial. Yet, Jesus must have forgiven Peter after he repented. We can deduce that he did so from *Mark 16:7* wherein an angel pointedly commands the women seeking Jesus' dead body to tell His disciples, *and* Peter, that He has risen from the dead/Dead.

--"The Lord's Supper"

"On the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread when they had killed the Passover lamb the disciples came to Jesus saying to Him, 'Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?' and He sent out two of His disciples, Peter and John, and said to them, 'Go into the city and, behold, when you have entered the city a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of

water. Follow him. Wherever he goes say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher/Master says to you, 'My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples. Where is the guestroom in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?' Then he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared, there make ready for us.'

So the disciples did and found it just as Jesus had directed/said to them and they prepared the Passover. When evening/the hour had come He came and sat down with the twelve apostles. Then He said to them, 'With earnest desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say to you I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God,' and as they were eating Jesus took bread, gave thanks, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My body. Do this in remembrance of Me.'

Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them saying, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves. Drink from it all of you, for this is My blood of the New covenant which is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins. Assuredly I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom/the Kingdom of God,' and when they had sung a hymn they went out to the Mount of Olives." (Matthew 26:17-20, 26-29, Mark 14:12-17, 22-26 & Luke 22:7-20)

Jesus' initiated communion--the ceremony to remember, appreciate, and honor what He did to retrieve humanity out of Satan's authority during the Jewish Passover--the ritual to observe God the Father's liberation of those people out of bondage in Egypt. This new ceremony was intended to continue a righteous custom under the Law, not to break away from or nullify it. Communion is the homage of God's *final* covenant with mankind. Jesus is the *new* Lamb Whose blood does not have to be offered repeatedly any longer to cover sin.

Jesus demonstrated His knowledge of God's will for the future when He told His men where to go to find a location for their last meal all together, what and whom they would find there and what would transpire between them. There is no record that Jesus could have learned this information by any earthly means so His Father must have revealed it to Him through the Holy Spirit.

The disciples had to follow Jesus' directions without any deviation whatsoever because they indeed found the things that He told them about and were able to prepare for the gathering as instructed. It was evident that Jesus placed great importance on what He already knew would be their last meeting together before He was arrested, disgraced, tortured, and crucified. He recognized that they had to be with Him not only to celebrate the Passover and initiate communion but also to have a lengthy intimate contact that would sustain them for the next few days while they were separated and He was being tortured and eventually killed. Although Jesus had told His disciples repeatedly what had to transpire for Him to be able to *complete* His Father's mission they had not grasped the enormity of maintaining their faith in Him and His words yet.

Jesus took bread and wine, common foods that anyone would have at a normal meal and used these in the communion. Thus, whether people were rich or poor they

easily would have had access to these substances. Jesus had set part of this ceremony up before when He referred to Himself as the *Bread of life/Life* and that He would give them Living water to drink. Using wine instead of water for communion demonstrated more clearly an image of the red blood that He would shed for mankind's deliverance from the curse of the Law. (*Galatians 3:13-29*) Additionally, the Living water to which He alluded was the Holy Spirit Whom they had seen work in Jesus but not yet experienced dwelling inside themselves yet. They would not meet Him until Pentecost.

The disciples and Jesus sang a hymn of praise and worship to God before they left to pray at the Mount of Olives in the Garden of Gethsemene. This part of the ceremony was vital because it showed the recognition of the connection to God the Father. It is also important to point out that even though communion was a vital ceremony, the Bible warns that it never was to be taken unless a person was in the right frame of mind, as well as spirit because doing otherwise was an insult to Jesus' sacrifice. Ultimately, practicing communion unwisely was only seemingly devout, but in reality only a pretense of being completely sincere in their devotion to God. Evidently, in the early church, some believers were taking communion as sort of a "pot luck" dinner and not treating it as a separate and extremely important ceremony--a link to Jesus' sacrifice as a ransom for them from Satan's kingdom back to God's.

"When you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you and in part I believe it, for there must also be factions among you that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore, when you come together in one place it is not to eat the Lord's supper, for in eating each one takes his own supper ahead of the others and one is hungry and another drunk.

What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or, do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you, for I received from the Lord Jesus in the same night in which He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, broke it and said, 'Take, eat, for this is My body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner, He also took the cup after supper saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me,' for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

*Therefore, whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But, let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup, for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many of you are weak and sick among you and many die, for if we would judge ourselves we would not be judged. But, when we are judged we are chastened by the Lord that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another, but if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home lest you come together for judgment." (*I Corinthians 11:18-34*)*

Sending His apostles out without Him

"When He had called His twelve disciples to Him together He sent them out two by two. He gave them power and authority over unclean spirits/demons to cast them out and to cure all kinds of disease. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus and Lebbaeus whose surname was Thaddaeus, Simon the Caananite, and Judas Iscariot who also betrayed Him. He sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying, 'Do not go into the way of the Gentiles and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of Israel and as you go preach, saying, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.'

He commanded them to take nothing for the journey, except a staff. 'Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor bread, nor money, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, (only two) sandals for a worker is worthy of his food. Now, whatever city or town or place you enter inquire who in it is worthy and stay there till you depart and when you go into a household greet it. If the household is worthy let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy let your peace return to you and whoever will not receive nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly I say to you it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that city!'

'Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, but beware of men, for they will deliver you up to councils and scourge you in their synagogues. You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles but when they deliver you up do not worry about how or what you should speak, for it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak for it is not you who speak but the Spirit of My Father Who speaks in you.'

'Now brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death, and you will be hated by all for My Name's sake but he who endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in this city flee to another, for assuredly I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.'

'A disciple is not above his teacher nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher and a servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub how much more will they call those of his household! Therefore, do not fear them for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden which will not be known. Whatever I tell you in the dark speak in the light and whatever you

hear in the ear preach on the housetops and do not fear those who can kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, fear Him Who is able to kill both soul and body in hell.

'Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And, not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will, but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear, therefore. You are of more value than many sparrows. Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father. But, whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father. Do not think that I came to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword, for I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be those of his household.

'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me and he who does not take up his cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me. He who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for My sake will find it. He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him Who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward, and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward, and whoever gives one of these little ones a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.'

So they departed and went out through the towns and preached the Gospel that people should repent, and cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them everywhere." (Matthew 10:1-42, Mark 6:7-13 & Luke 9:1-10)

Jesus sent His disciples out without Him before He died and was resurrected in order to practice preaching the Kingdom of God and healing the sick. He instructed them to do this among their own people only and not go to others yet. Why would He add this command when He Himself ministered to those people whom He did not allow His own disciples to help? This was their first time going forth in His Name and Jesus wanted His men to start with only a select group of people because they were not equipped yet to minister to individuals who did not recognize God's Law and the importance of the Scriptures. Thus, everyone to whom they preached or cured would be cognizant of from Whom and Where their authority originated. There would be no disputes concerning multiple gods, only the power of Jesus and His being God's Son, their Messiah.

Jesus commanded His disciples not to rely on tangible goods to sustain them throughout the duration of their mission for God. They needed to recognize that God would go before them invisibly and take care of all of their needs, including shelter and food. Jesus also warned His men to be wary of people for they would say things but act contrary to their words. He assured the disciples not to be afraid even if someone denounced them and had them brought before *any* earthly authorities. God Himself, through His Holy Spirit not only would take care of believers but also instruct them how to speak towards all accusers and accusations.

Jesus assured His disciples that many people would not understand or believe that they, like He, were directed by God. However, they needed to remember that the Trinity would be with them always, no matter what anyone reproach them for saying, doing, or even being. These men were not to consider themselves to be above any prosecution to which He Himself was or would be subject. They should maintain their faith that God saw absolutely everything that happened in the world and was indeed in control of it. People might slander them and even kill their bodies, but they only could do temporary harm. God was the *ultimate* authority and He even cared about life's infinitesimal and seemingly insignificant details, like hair.

Therefore, whoever accepted Jesus would embrace by His Father, but whoever denied the Son rejected the Father as well. Jesus' appearance on the earth as a human being would shine such a light on people's hearts and actions that many would try to hide from His teachings. Although God's intention in sending His Son was to unite Them and mankind, He realized that it would have the opposite reaction from many people. Jesus' advent would stir up the *divisions* between God the Father and mankind in those who refused to adhere to His message, even within families. The sword He brought would be that of the Holy Spirit. According to the Kingdom of God it was necessary for everyone to relinquish all self-centered authority and recognize God's supremacy and accept Jesus as their Savior and Lord in order to Live forever.

Obeying Man's Laws as well as God's "Law"

"Then the Pharisees went and plotted how they might entangle Him in His talk and they went to Him, their disciples with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that You are true and teach the way of God in truth. Nor do you care about anyone for You do not regard the person of men. Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it Lawful to pay taxes to Caesar or not?'

But Jesus perceived their wickedness and said, 'Why do you test Me, you hypocrites? Show Me the tax money.'

So they brought Him a denarius and He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription is this?'

They said to him, 'Caesar's,' and He said to them, 'Render, therefore, unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.' (Matthew 6:19-34)

When they heard these words they marveled and left Him and went their way." (Matthew 22:15-22)

After watching Jesus minister to and heal many people the Pharisees evidently had listened to enough of His teachings to observe the importance that He placed on words. Consequently, they figured out that one of the best ways to entrap and denounce Him would be to get Him to lie. If Jesus ever said anything that contradicted any of His previous statements they could expose Him as a fraud and validate their own ways of living and attending to their congregations.

The Pharisees approached Jesus in this instance by first telling Him that they recognized this conduct in Him in a way that appeared to be complimentary instead of accusatory. They also added that they appreciated that since He had taught that God

did not favor any single individuals, Jesus as the Son of God always had to act in the same way. These men tried to establish a false rapport which would deceive the people present into thinking that their next question to Jesus was not to ambush Him but earnestly seek His counsel on a certain matter important to them all--Roman taxation. Apparently, they reasoned that this tribute to the emperor Caesar would appall Jesus. If they were right they would win favor with the population. If the Pharisees were wrong though, Jesus, not they would bear the brunt of the peoples' disfavor so they would begin to reject instead of following His teachings. The Pharisees clearly had considered how to trip up Jesus for a long time and here seemed to be a wonderful and win-win situation for them.

Once again, through the Holy Spirit guiding Him, Jesus was able to discern people's thoughts (*Matthew 9:4, 1 Corinthians 3:19-20*) and therefore the *true* intentions behind their words. He never was deceived by things that He could not see because He always was moved to respond by faith only. Jesus never was deceived by anyone. He even knew way beforehand that one of His trusted disciples would be the cause of Him being betrayed, captured, and crucified. Even though that individual did not recognize the direction and wavering of his own heart, Jesus did.

As He did when other Pharisees tried to test His reaction toward a woman caught committing adultery, Jesus turned their duplicity against them. He asked to see a Roman coin with Caesar's image stamped on it and said that people should treat their obligations to things of this world by obeying whatever earthly laws applied to them. Jesus added that God's Laws were a separate case and should be followed under God's terms. With only one statement, Jesus reinforced the difference between the two authorities. The Bible records this same attitude in John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin who preceded the advent of His ministry.

"Then the tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?' and he said to them, 'Collect no more than is appointed for you.'

Likewise, the soldiers asked, saying, 'And what shall we do?'

'Do not intimidate anyone or accuse falsely and be content with your wages.' (Luke 3:12-14)

Finally, when the Pharisees realized that they could not trip Jesus up in His words so they departed. Interestingly, but sadly, although they marveled at how He was able to outmaneuver them all and extricate Himself from their ambush, they went away still unbelieving in Who He was, as well as His connection to their God and Holy Scriptures.