

Chapter 1

Who Was Jesus of Nazareth?



The Four Gospels

(1) MATTHEW

(2) MARK

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The Son of God

The Son of Man

The Relationship between Son and Father

The Four Gospels

Jesus of Nazareth has sparked more interest and debate than any other person in history. Even today, centuries after His death, people continue to study His words and deeds. Why? Because among other things, He claimed to be the Son of and equal to God. Was He? Or, was He insane or a liar? What exactly was His true agenda and why was He willing to suffer and even die for it?

This book will present evidence that Jesus of Nazareth was not only the Son of God, but also the Son of Man. He came to the earth as an Ambassador to demonstrate the way God the Father wants mankind to exist and deal with any situations that arise. Jesus' life not only was controversial but He truly was the most important human being ever born. Therefore, in order to draw closer to God the Father, we must begin to copy Jesus' behavior as much as possible.

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life/Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me you would have known My Father also and from now on you know Him and have seen Him'"
(John 14:6-7)

Jesus' ministry only lasted approximately three years. However, they were filled with so many teachings, healings, wonders, and miracles that it was impossible for a single individual to chronicle all of them. Therefore, God instructed the Holy Spirit to

direct manuscripts of several versions of Jesus' life.

*"This is the disciple who testifies of these things and wrote these things and we know his testimony is true. There are also many other things that Jesus did, which if these were written down one by one, I suppose that even the whole world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen."
(John 21:24-25)*

The four books in the Bible concerning the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth are all different, yet they enhance each other by highlighting what most influenced each composer about His persona. Two of the authors traveled with and knew Jesus personally--Matthew and John. Mark and Luke were followers of the next wave of believers; those people who experienced Him only through their invisible faith, not their five physical senses. The Holy Spirit directed each man to concentrate on those situations that emphasized what he perceived to be the most important situations in Jesus' life. It is good to know something about each to be able to understand his approach: (a) what he included, (b) his style of communication, as well as (c) how he sequenced Jesus' teachings and events in his narrative.

Below is a synopsis of each gospel. The text of this book includes examples about Jesus that coincide with the premise of all four manuscripts taken together as a whole. Whenever authors were led by the Holy Spirit to impart the same situations I have combined them in order to present a broader picture of an event than each gospel does individually. The breakdown is offered at the end of this book, along with where each word or phase was taken, as well as its location within the New Testament.

MATTHEW

Matthew was a tax collector by profession before Jesus called him to be a disciple. He was one of Jesus' original twelve main followers who lived with, traveled alongside, and knew Jesus personality and actions intimately. Matthew was a man whom the Jews would have considered to be a traitor to his own people because he worked for their hated conquerors--the Romans. However, believing in Jesus changed him radically and he became a major voice to transmit Jesus' gospel of God's love and liberation from hate and oppression.

Matthew's manuscript is the longest and was not designed to be chronological but thematic. His writing accented the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of prophesy--the Christ, or Anointed One, the Savior of the world and eternal King. It specifically was addressed to a Jewish audience who would understand its value and authority as an extenuation of Scriptural revelations given before Jesus' earthly life. Matthew's intention was to point out the links between God's Old and New Covenants with mankind. He emphasized the predictions fulfilled in Jesus and gave numerous references and quotes from Old Testament. Matthew made references linking Jesus to the God of the Hebrews. He likewise referred to Jesus coming from the lineage of King David, or the "Son of David," thus enhancing Jesus' connection to those people. However, Matthew also demonstrated that Jesus was not an earthly king. Rather, His Kingdom was greater than David's was because it was not limited to temporary or

visible things. Jesus did not come to rescue the Jews from their Roman oppressors as they imagined, but from a worse, far greater, and invisible enemy, the devil.

Information mentioned in only Matthew's gospel includes:

- (1) Jesus' ancestry,
- (2) an angel's appearing to Joseph (Jesus' earthly father),
- (3) the eastern kings visiting the manger,
- (4) the escape to Egypt and return to Nazareth,
- (5) the Sermon on the Mount,
- (6) religious leaders asking to see a miracle,
- (7) the parables of the weeds, the hidden treasure, the pearl merchant, the fishing net, the unforgiving debtor, the two bridesmaids, the workers paid equally, the two sons, the wedding feast, the ten bridesmaids, and the loaned money
- (8) Jesus' command to pray for workers to spread His Gospel,
- (9) preparing His disciples for persecution after His death,
- (10) Peter finding a coin in a fish's mouth,
- (11) warning about feeling superior to others,
- (12) teaching how to treat a believer who sins,
- (13) the cost of following Him,
- (14) warning about the Final Judgment,
- (15) the suicide of His betrayer (Judas),
- (16) the posting of Roman guards at His tomb,
- (17) religious leaders bribing the soldier's to keep quiet about Jesus' resurrection, and
- (18) the great commission to spread the Gospel throughout the entire earth.

MARK

Mark emphasized Jesus as the Son of God, and like Matthew the fulfillment of prophecies. Mark stressed Jesus as being a true human being, a Servant, and a Role model for people to imitate to draw ever closer to God. (10:42-45) Likewise, it painted a vivid picture of Jesus as a man of power and action, not primarily a teacher. As mentioned above, Mark was not one of Jesus' original twelve main disciples. He traveled with Paul and learned about Jesus' life and gospel second-hand. Mark's version of Jesus' life and message was addressed to the Christians living in Rome. Interestingly, it has been dated around 55-65 AD, making it probably first written of the four Biblical accounts of Jesus' ministry. Evidence that supports this conclusion is that all but thirty-one verses in it were quoted by the other gospels, especially Matthew and Luke. It is important to notice that Matthew, who indeed knew Jesus first-hand, duplicated many situations from Mark's gospel. If his versions had been erroneous, most certainly Matthew would not have corroborated them. Mark's is also the shortest gospel. There are no stories found only in it except for the parable of a seed growing. However, the book does contain insight and information that adds new dimensions or knowledge to the others.

LUKE

Luke's is the most comprehensive gospel. It also claims to have been researched and written to be a careful, precise, and historical account of Jesus' life and ministry. Luke's writing style clearly demonstrated that he was an educated man. By profession he was a physician and in line with his career, he included frequent references to illnesses and diagnoses. His gospel also stressed Jesus' relationships with people, prayer, miracles, angels, and women. Luke portrayed Jesus as being truly human, yet still fully God.

Luke was a Greek, and the only non-Jewish author in all of the New Testament writings. He was a close friend and companion to the apostle Paul (formerly names Saul), which probably was the main influence for him to research Jesus' life. And, he did it like a reporter interviewing witnesses. Luke never met Jesus in person. Luke also wrote Acts, as a follow up to his gospel account of Jesus' earthly ministry. Both manuscripts were letters addressed to a man named Theophilus/Silvanus and the first book straightforwardly claimed to be an orderly account. It was composed around 60 AD, most likely after Mark's gospel.

Testimonies unique to Luke are:

- (1) a statement of his intentions as an author,
- (2) the circumstances surrounding the birth of John the Baptist,
- (3) God's angel visiting Jesus' future mother (Mary),
- (4) the events preceding and including Jesus' birth in Bethlehem,
- (5) angels appearing to shepherds on the night of His delivery,
- (6) Jesus as a child in the temple in Jerusalem,
- (7) His physical and mental development as a normal boy,
- (8) His cousin, John the Baptist teaching about Him,
- (9) Jesus being rejected in His home town (Nazareth),
- (10) a miraculous catch of fish,
- (11) raising a widow's dead son,
- (12) a woman anointing His feet,
- (13) women beginning to accompany Jesus and the disciples as they minister,
- (14) sending out seventy disciples to teach and heal,
- (15) the parables of the good Samaritan, the rich fool, the great feast, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, the shrewd accountant, the persistent widow, the prayers of the tax collector and the religious leader, the king's ten servants
- (16) Jesus visiting two sisters (Mary and Martha),
- (17) answering accusations about His power coming from Satan,
- (18) warning against the consequences of unbelief,
- (19) speech about hypocrisy,
- (20) grief over Jerusalem,
- (21) the deaths of the beggar and the rich man, and
- (22) Jesus on trial before king Herod.

JOHN

Like Matthew, John was one of Jesus' principle followers. John alluded to the fact that he wrote his gospel to prove that Jesus was the only Son of God, and eternal life to all who believe in Him. It was written about 85-90 AD and specifically seemed to be addressed to new Christians and searching non-Christians. Over 90% of this gospel is unique, giving information not found in the other three. It includes no genealogy whatsoever, nor any record of Jesus' birth or childhood. It does not mention Jesus' temptation by Satan, any appointments of the first twelve disciples, no parables, nothing about Jesus' ascension into Heaven, nor the great commission that He charged mankind to spread the good news and continue His ministry.

However, John's gospel also has several major events not even alluded to in any of the others:

- (1) God being born as a true human being,
- (2) John the Baptist announcing his mission and proclaims Jesus of Nazareth to be the long awaited Messiah,
- (3) Jesus turning water into wine,
- (4) a Pharisee (Nicodemus) visiting Jesus secretly at night,
- (5) King Herod imprisoning John the Baptist,
- (6) Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman at a well,
- (7) many Samaritans believing in Him,
- (8) teaching about fasting,
- (9) coming in His Father's Name,
- (10) His being the true Bread from Heaven, the Light of the world, Eternal, the Good Shepherd, the only Way to the Father,
- (11) Jews disagreeing that He is from Heaven,
- (12) many disciples deserting Him,
- (13) His brothers not believing in Him,
- (14) religious leaders attempting to arrest Him,
- (15) forgiving a woman caught committing adultery,
- (16) who were God's true children,
- (17) teaching about spiritual versus physical blindness,
- (18) religious leaders surrounding Him in the temple,
- (19) His friend Lazarus dying and Jesus raising him from death,
- (20) religious leaders plotting to kill them both,
- (21) washing His disciple's feet,
- (22) promising to send the Helper (Holy Spirit),
- (23) teaching about the vine and its branches,
- (24) warning about hatred from non-believers,
- (25) commanding to use His Name in prayer,
- (26) praying for Himself,
- (27) praying for all of His disciples (and everyone who believed in Him in the future),
- (28) Thomas denying the resurrection until he sees and touches Jesus,
- (29) appearing to several disciples on the beach after His resurrection,
- (30) speaking privately with Peter about how to treat future believers.

The Son of God

Jesus of Nazareth never said straightforwardly that He was the Son of God. He acknowledged that God indeed had a Son, but waited for others state that it was He. This revelation came from varied sources: God the Father Himself, angels and demons, as well as other human beings. Jesus asked individuals Who they thought He was, answered earnest inquiries put to Him by confirming suspicions, spoke about the Son of God, and called God His Father. Yet, in all of the testimonies given in the Bible, Jesus did not ever say, 'I am the Son of God', not even once.

Why not? He told both Peter and Thomas that only revelation by God the Father and the Holy Spirit activated and perpetuated people's faith in Him, not knowledge gained through their five physical senses. Jesus demonstrated over and over Who He was, and it was up to each individual to make the connection. In fact, He would not even answer direct questions put to Him by John the Baptist's disciples, even though that man was Jesus' cousin, in prison, and more than likely they would never see each other again. Nevertheless, Jesus refused to confirm to John's followers if He was the Christ--the Son of God. Rather, Jesus directed them to see the fruits of His ministry because they should have been able to deduce the correct answer from His works.

"When John (the Baptist) heard in prison about the works of Christ he sent two of his disciples and said to Him, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for Another?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up and the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is he who is not offended by Me.'"
(Matthew 11:2-6)

References that demonstrated God the Father's relationship to Jesus can be located in these verses of Scripture wherein He clearly referred to the Man called Jesus of Nazareth as His Son.

"You are My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:1)

"This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!" (Matthew 17:5)

Angels and demons likewise recognized Who Jesus was, and they obeyed His authority and power.

"He will be called the Son of the Highest..." (Luke 1:32-35, the angel Gabriel)

"What do we have to do with You, Jesus, the Son of God?" (Matthew 8:29, multiple demons in Gergesenes)

"Demons also came out of many crying out and saying, 'You are the Christ, the Son of God!' and He rebuking them did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ." (Luke 4:41)

"If You are the Son of God" (Matthew 4:3, (Satan while trying to tempt Him))

The following are quotes cited by human beings believing that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. The gospels show that they usually did so after witnessing something fantastic, as like right after He walked on the Sea of Galilee. Nevertheless, they still doubted in His absolute care and abilities. He had to verify His identity over and over, even to His most intimate followers. They, too, disbelieved and often gave in to the social pressure of their peers. However, after Jesus' death and resurrection, His disciples became increasingly confident of Who He was, so much so that once they, too, were empowered by the Holy Spirit as Jesus had been, they spread His message to the entire world. This has endured for centuries.

"The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ--the Son of God." (Mark 1:1, Mark)

"I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God." (John 1:34, John the Baptist)

"You are the Son of God!" (John 1:49, Nathaniel)

"Truly, You are the Son of God." (Matthew 14:33, the disciples after seeing Him walk on water)

"We have come to know that You are the Christ--the Son of the Living God." (John 6:69, Peter)

"Truly this Man was the Son of God." (Mark 15:39, a Roman centurion at the crucifixion)

"Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ--the Son of God--and that believing you may have life/Life in His Name." (John 20:30-31, John)

However, there also were many people who scoffed at Him being the Son of God and denied that He was the Christ right up until His death on the cross.

"The high priest arose up in the midst and said to Him, 'Do you answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' but Jesus kept silent and answered nothing and the high priest answered, and said to Him, 'I put You under oath by the living God: Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God! If You are the Christ, tell us!'

Jesus said to him, 'I am. It is as you say.'" (Matthew 26:62-64)

"Then they all said, 'Are You then the Son of God?'

So He said to them, "You rightly say that I am,' and they said, 'What further testimony do we need, for we have heard it ourselves from His Own mouth?'" (Luke 22:70)

"The Jews answered him, 'We have a Law, and according to our Law He ought to die because He made Himself the Son of God.'" (John 19:7)

"Those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You Who destroy the temple and build in three days save Yourself! If You are the Son of God come down from the cross!'

Even the rulers with them sneered, 'He saved others. Let Him save Himself if He is the Christ--the Chosen of God!'" (Matthew 27:40-43)

Remember, Jesus never said, 'I am the Son of God' to anyone, even privately. At the end of His mission, when taunted by the highest Jewish leaders, He gave the most direct confirmation that He had so far. However, afterward, when hanging and dying on the cross He kept silent. Although many pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover passed by and ridiculed Jesus, He never allowed His pride to overrule His Father's plan that He humble Himself and die as a sacrifice for humanity. Jesus easily could have done what they dared Him to do. To do so though, would have nullified completely what He was born to accomplish.

The Son of Man

As discussed, Jesus did not specifically mention that He was the Son of God. So, what did He like to call Himself? He, and only He, referred to Himself, and quite often, as the Son of Man. No other human being or spirit ever called Him that. Why? Because that's why He came to the earth. Jesus as conceived and born to live life as a Servant to mankind Whose death and resurrection would become a Ransom from the kingdom of death/Death back into the Kingdom of life/Life.

"Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and those who are great exercise authority over them, yet it shall not be so among you. Let him be your servant and whoever desires to be first among you let him be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:25-28)

"The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10)

"For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them."

(Luke 9:56)

"Do not labor for the food that perishes but for the food which endures, for everlasting Life which the Son of Man will give you because the Father has set His seal on Him." (John 6:27)

"Whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. He who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God." (Luke 12:8-9)

"Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood you have no Life in you.'" (John 6:53)

Jesus also taught that the mission of the Son of Man was to show God's final and everlasting judgments to humanity, just as He had forewarned the first man and woman centuries beforehand in the Garden of Eden.

"For as the Father has Life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have Life in Himself and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man." (John 5:26-27)

"The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." (Matthew 9:6b)

"Jesus said to them, 'When you crucify the Son of Man then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself but as My Father has taught Me I speak these things, and He Who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.'" (John 8:28-29)

"We are going up to Jerusalem and all things that were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man will be fulfilled." (Luke 18:31)

How did Jesus always please God the Father? Jesus constantly had to have acknowledged several things in every situation that confronted Him. He had to believe and accept God's absolute supremacy over His life. He also had to live totally by faith even if that information disagreed with what His physical senses informed Him. As well, Jesus had to believe that God not only heard every one of His prayers, but also would bring about those in line with His Word. No matter where Jesus went, or with whom He came into contact, He had to keep Himself in line only with God's thinking and always resist the devil's, no matter how persuasive.

"The Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." (Matthew 8:20b)

"The Son of Man came eating and drinking...." (Matthew 11:19a)

"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8)

In order to fulfill His earthly mission as a human being, the Son of Man had to undergo the ultimate test of love--betrayal by one of His closest friends without condemning him for the treason.

"Jesus said to him, 'Judas, are you now betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?'" (Luke 22:48)

"The Son of Man indeed goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." (Matthew 26:24)

Not only was Jesus delivered into the hands of His enemies who had sought to discredit or kill Him; He had to undergo many indignities and torture, too. He likewise had to pardon everyone else who took part in His suffering after He was captured.

"The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." (Luke 24:7)

"Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil for the Son of Man's sake" (Luke 6:22)

Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the Son of Man finally surrendered His Own life to accomplish His mission to redeem humanity from Satan's influences on the earth.

"As Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation." (Luke 11:30)

"Jesus answered them, 'The hour has come when the Son of Man may be glorified.'" (John 12:23)

"The people answered Him, 'We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever and how can you say, 'The Son of Man must be crucified?' Who is this Son of Man?'" (John 12:34)

"When (Judas) had gone out Jesus said, 'Now, the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in Him.'" (John 13:31)

"No one has ascended to heaven but He Who came down from Heaven, that is the Son of Man Who is in Heaven, and 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." (John 3:13-14)

"Hereafter, the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God." (Luke 22:69)

When all of the above had been fulfilled, Jesus mission was indeed a complete

success. Presently He is in Heaven with His Father again, waiting patiently and preparing places for us until God calls upon Him again to come to the earth in His Second Coming. This time, however, Jesus will not appear as a Servant, rather as a King.

"(Jesus) said to His disciples, 'The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man and you will not see it, and they will say to you, 'Look here!', or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them. For as the lightening that flashes out of one part under heaven shines on the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His day. But first He must suffer and be rejected by this generation and as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man. They ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, as it was also in the days of Lot. They ate, they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed. In that day he who is on the housetop and his goods are in the house, let him come down and take them away, and likewise the one who is in the field, let him not turn back. Remember Lot's wife.

Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, in that night there will be two people in one bed: the one will be taken and the other left. Two people will be grinding together: the one will be taken and the other left. Two people will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left,' and they answered and said to Him, 'Where, Lord?' So He said to them, 'Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together.'" (Luke 17:22-37)

"Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see Heaven open and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." (John 1:51)

"They will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory." (Mark 13:26)

"When the Son of Man comes will He really find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

"Watch, therefore, for you do not know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming." (Matthew 25:13)

"Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36)

The Relationship between Son and Father

"Therefore, the Jews sought all the more to kill Him because He not only broke the Sabbath, but said that God was His Father, making Himself equal to God.

Then Jesus answered and said, 'Most assuredly I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself but what He sees the Father do. For, whatever He does the Son does also in like manne. For the Father loves the Son and shows Him all things that He Himself does and He will show him greater works than these [healing a lame man] that you may marvel. For as the Father raised the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives Life to whomever He will. For the Father judges no one but has committed all judgment to the Son, that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father Who sent Him.

Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him Who sent Me has everlasting Life and shall not come into judgment but has passed through Death into Life. Most assuredly I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the Dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will Live. For, as the Father has Life in Himself so He has granted the Son to have Life in Himself and has given Him authority to execute judgment also because He is the Son of Man.

Do not be astonished at this for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth. Those who have done good to the resurrection of Life and those who have done evil to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear I judge and My judgment is righteous because I do not seek My Own will but of the Father Who sent Me. If I bear witness of Myself My witness is not valid as testimony. There is Another [the Holy Spirit] Who bears witness of Me, and I know that the witness that He witness of Me is true.

You have sent to John (the Baptist) and he has born witness to the truth. Yet I do not receive witness from man but I say these things to you that you may be saved. (John) was the burning and shining lamp and you were willing for a time to rejoice in his light. But, I have a greater witness than John's, for the works that the Father has given Me to finish--the very works that I do bear witness of Me--that the Father has sent Me and the Father Himself Who sent Me has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form, but you do not have His word abiding in you because Whom He sent Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures for in them you think you have eternal Life and these are they who testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have Life.

I do not receive honor from men, but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in you. I have come in My Father's Name and you do not receive Me. If another comes in his own name him you will receive. How can you believe who receive honor from one another and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father;

(however) there is one who accuses you--Moses in whom you trust--for if you believe Moses you would also believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But, if you do not believe his writings how will you believe My words?" (John 5:18-47)

Although innumerable people heard and received Jesus' teachings and healing many still became greatly offended at what He did. Those who scorned Him did so for a number of reasons. For example, whenever He cured a person on the Sabbath people considered that He was not recognizing it as a day of rest as mandated by God's Law. Since Jesus "profession", so to speak, was as a traveling teacher and healer doing these things on that particular day was for them working at His occupation. The people offended at this restricted His actions to fit their conception of honoring God's commandments. However, their ideas did not necessarily coincide with His Law because they were concerned more with works than faith. People were divided in their outlook and acceptance of Jesus. Some saw His compassion and power, while others saw Him as a threat to their way of life.

"When He had departed from there He went into their synagogue. Now it happened on another Sabbath also that He entered the synagogue, and taught, and behold there was a man was there who had a withered hand, and they asked Him, saying, 'Is it Lawful to heal on the Sabbath?'--that they might accuse Him.

So the scribes and Pharisees watched Him closely to see whether He would heal him on the Sabbath so that they might find an accusation against Him, but He knew their thoughts and He said to the man who had the withered hand, 'Arise and stand here! Step forward!' Then He said to them, 'Is it Lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to give life or to kill? What man is there among you who has one sheep and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore, it is Lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' But they kept silent and when He had looked around at them all with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand!' And he stretched it out and it was restored as whole as the other, but they were filled with rage and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Then, the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him how they might destroy Him, but when Jesus knew it He withdrew from there with His disciples to the sea. Great multitudes from Galilee followed Him, and from Judea, and Jerusalem, and Idumea, and beyond the Jordan (River, and those from Tyre and Sidon--a great multitude, when they heard how many things He was doing. (They) came to Him and He healed them (too)." (Matthew 12:9-15 & Mark 3:1-8)

Likewise, when Jesus said that God as His Father, it seemed to break the first of the commandments that were the foundation for the rest of the Law. If a person said that they were an offspring of someone, they also claimed to be equal to that person. So, Jesus referring to God as His Father was an affront to the people. They considered

God to be All-mighty, but distant. Although He had prophesied about walking among them, they never dreamt that He would look or act like a rather lowly born individual. A carpenter named Joseph was the male they knew had raised Jesus. Therefore, when Jesus stated that God was His Father not only did it appear to be blasphemy, it seemed also to be a lie.

Not only did Jesus claim to be equal to God, He also maintained that He only said and did whatever He saw God do first. He taught that He merely was imitating the behavior He had witnessed. That is to say that He never behaved contrary to God's will and conduct. This denounced many of the teachings and demeanor of the contemporary religious leaders and their followers. They regarded themselves as God's only true witnesses and keepers of the faith and Law given by Moses. However, Jesus demonstrated that the two stimuli acted contrary to each other. Therefore, both could not be completely truthful because human thinking and traditions had altered the people's conception of God enough to falsify Him in certain ways. It was vital to the established hierarchy to denounce, and if necessary condemn, the Person Whom they considered to be their opponent, not their colleague, and certainly not their Lord.

Jesus did not ever have to declare straightforwardly Who He was. The Scriptures, the prophets and their predictions, the Holy Spirit, God Himself, Jesus' words and acts did it for Him. These all demonstrated abundant cooperation that He was not a common person like any other human being who ever had existed until His advent. No matter how extraordinary people--like Moses, King David, or John the Baptist--had been they had shortcomings that did not fully illustrate the depth of God's faith and knowledge nor His eternal love for humanity, until Jesus of Nazareth

Chapter 2

Before Jesus' Public Ministry



The Circumstances Surrounding His Birth
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Wise Men Came from the East
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Temptation by Satan Immediately Afterward
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The Circumstances Surrounding His Birth

The Bible reveals little detail about Jesus' life before He began His very public ministry. However, even though we do not know much about His formative years we can still learn about His character by studying these accounts. For example, we are able to recognize that Jesus' advent and life were exceptional. God Himself directed the events from Jesus' birth, to His escape from the king's jealousy, to clues about His development into manhood.

Jesus grew and matured physically and mentally like any other normal male. He was cognizant of who He was at an early age even though only a few other people ever appreciated His uniqueness. He was as mindful of His words and actions as God's Ambassador, as well as being a dutiful Son to His earthly parents. Even when His mother asked Him to perform something He did not care to at a wedding, He obeyed her because it did not impede His relationship with His Heavenly Father. Evidently she, too, had observed and took note of the importance of everything Jesus ever said or did.

"In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary and having come in, the angel said to her, 'Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women,' but when she saw him she was troubled at his saying and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God and, behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son and shall call

Him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Highest... and of His Kingdom there will be no end.'

Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be since I do not know a man?'

And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore also, that Holy One Who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren, for with God nothing is impossible.'

Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your words,' and the angel departed from her." (Luke 1:26-39)

Before involving Mary God sent His Personal angel to disclose part of the plan in which she would play a prominent role to redeem mankind. God did not just impregnate her without first advising her of the situation and obtaining her permission to use her body. God would not have impregnated any woman without her consent because He never would have nullified her freewill to disobey Him. Although some translations of the Bible read as if she had no choice in the matter that interpretation is inconsistent with the nature of the Holy Trinity. Even though Jesus, who was the express image of God the Father in Heaven, was confident that two sisters would want Him to bring their brother back from the dead He asked both of them individually beforehand for their permission before He acted.

When Mary determined that it was indeed God's messenger who spoke to her, the choice to accept His Seed was a monumental decision, one from which she could not escape afterward if she ever changed her mind. Once she was expecting, she could not hide her condition for very long. Nor could she abort the Child that was God's Son if she ever regretted the arrangement without offending Him immensely. Mary had to be convinced that she was in the hands of a Father Who not only told her the complete truth about His will, but would take care of her life as well as the entire situation around her.

The woman who birthed, nurtured, and raised the Son of God did so knowing that her decision in all likelihood might ruin her social life, possibly even causing her to become outcast from her family and friends. She was betrothed to a man who under the Law could discard her. Being pregnant meant that not only her fiancé but also all other people would think that she no longer was a virgin. They would scorn her because she must have been with another man intimately while still unmarried. In that society Mary's acceptance of God's Seed was a very courageous thing to do.

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham: Abraham begot Isaac.... David the king begot Solomon.... And Jacob begot Joseph--the husband of Mary of whom was born Jesus Who is called Christ.... Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with Child of the Holy Spirit. Then, Joseph, being a just man and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to break off with her secretly. But, while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the

Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son and you shall call His Name Jesus (meaning Savior) for He will save His people from their sins.' (John 12:47) So, all this was done that it might be fulfilled by the prophet saying, 'Behold, the virgin shall be with Child, and they shall call His Name Immanuel, which is translated, 'God is with us'.

Then, Joseph being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took her to wife and did not (make love to) her until she had brought forth her First born Son, and he called His Name Jesus." (Matthew 1:1-25)

The Scriptures likewise inform us how God instructed Mary's promised husband Joseph to behave toward that situation, for he was to raise a Child that was not his own by blood. It is clear that when Mary told him Whose Baby it was he did not believe her at first. Joseph loved her but he initially did think that she had been unfaithful because He fully intended to break off their engagement, although secretly so as not to embarrass her. God the Father prepared not only Jesus' mother for what was to come, God also got His adoptive father ready to parent to His Child. God the Father did not neglect the emotional needs and reactions of either individual. He convinced them both that He, and not another human man, indeed was the Jesus' Father. No matter how the situation appeared, Joseph finally was assured that Mary always had been faithful to him. He not only accepted the Baby into his family, but also protected and raised Him as his own.

Jesus' Nativity

"It came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria, so all went to be registered--everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea to the city of David which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David) to be registered with Mary his betrothed wife who was with child.

So it was that while they were there the days were completed for her to be delivered. And, she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields keeping watch over their flocks by night. And, behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were afraid.

Then the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people! For, there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior Who is Christ, the Lord and this will be a sign to you: you will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger.'

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the Heavenly hosts praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!'

So it was when the angels had gone away from them into Heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass which the Lord has made known to us!' and they came with haste and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told to them concerning this Child, and all those who heard marveled in those things which were told them by the shepherds, but Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told them." (Luke 2:1-21)

Jesus was born during the first complete census that the Roman emperor Caesar Augustus ordered of his entire empire. Curiously, he did not decree that people register to be taxed where they were residing but instead go to their city of birth. This meant that quite a number of them might have to travel, spend some of Caesar's tax money for their journeys. This also might have created increased traffic and confusion on the roads, as well as crowd wherever people had to find lodging during their stay in the cities and towns. Caesar's ruling seemed peculiar because it created unnecessary complications for everyone involved, even his Roman subjects. Therefore, when Joseph housed himself and his pregnant wife in a stable it was not because he chose to but because there was nowhere else available in Bethlehem at that moment to spend those days and nights.

While Joseph and Mary were in Bethlehem, she went into labor and gave birth to her first child in that stable. Unless there really was no other location, or she was impaired mentally in some way, she never would have remained where she was to bring forth this special Baby unless she was assured that it was part of God's plan. God's Son did not enter this world like a King but as a very poor and lowborn infant. His birth was not announced to any rich or powerful people, nor was He transported to a better spot right after He was born. On the contrary, He was wrapped in swaddling clothes instead of an expensive blanket and laid in a stable manger instead of a crib. Not even Caesar himself, the most powerful man alive, knew what had taken place that eventually would affect the entire world.

Jesus of Nazareth was not born there, but in Bethlehem. As mentioned, He was not born where His earthly father and mother were from and had been residing. As predicted in the Scriptures, the Son of God was born in what was known as the city of David. Remember, centuries beforehand, God had told the prophet Samuel to go to see Jesse, King David's father, the Bethlehemite. (*1 Samuel 16:1*) God later promised David that His Savior would come from his lineage.

Evidently God did want someone other than Mary and Joseph to know about the advent of His Son. God had the entire world from which to choose witnesses, so whom did He select to announce this special birth and confirm His part in it? He told the good news to a group of unpretentious shepherds who worked at night in fields guarding sheep. Angels came to them and proclaimed Who was just born as well as exactly

where to find Him. Since these men were working outside the city limits guarding their flocks it was amazing that they immediately abandoned their work to look for a place in the city which would have been nearly impossible to find. Only something or someone very extraordinary could have induced them to leave their livelihoods.

When the shepherds saw the Baby not only did they rejoice, they left the stable and spread what they had witnessed. Those who heard it marveled, yet it was not recorded that any other people went to see the miracle for themselves. The same shepherds did return however and praised God for sending His Promise to live as one of them to deliver His people.

Dedication to God at the Temple in Jerusalem

"When eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child His name was called Jesu--the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb. Now when the thirty days of her purification, according to the Law of Moses, were completed they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.'. And, to offer sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, 'A pair of turtledoves and two pigeons.' (Leviticus 12:2-8)

And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was a just and devout man waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy spirit was upon him and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So, he came by the Spirit into the temple and when the parents brought in the Child Jesus to do for Him according to the Law.

He took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, 'Lord, now You are letting your servant depart in peace according to Your word. For, I have seen Your Salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples--a Light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the Glory of Your people Israel' And, Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him.

Them Simon blessed Him and said to Mary, His mother, 'Behold! This Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign that will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.'

Now there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity and this woman was a widow of eighty-four years who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day, and coming in that instant gave thanks to the Lord and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

So, when they had performed all things according to the Law of the Lord they returned to Galilee to their own city Nazareth and the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom and the grace of the Lord was upon Him." (Luke 2:21-39)

Jesus' parents lived under and followed God's Law given to the people by Moses. Therefore, they did what was commanded after a woman gave birth: Jesus was circumcised after eight days, Mary stayed alone with her family until her body had been purified, and then they all traveled to the temple in Jerusalem to make the required sacrifices as an offering to God. His Son did not live apart from the Law, but was raised from the beginning to respect and honor its statutes.

In the temple God directed the Holy Spirit again to confirm that Jesus was His Son. God prompted an old man to visit there at the exact moment that Mary and Joseph would be present with the Baby. Additionally, He also led an old woman who was in the temple daily witness what took place in order to corroborate further the uniqueness of the Infant. The Messiah's appearance was established by many prophets from ages past, some shepherds, these two people in the temple in Jerusalem, as well as angels from God Himself.

Even if they somehow knew all of the pertinent the prophecies in the Scriptures, the likelihood of these unrelated people who confirmed the same thing about this particular Infant being God's Son was staggering. It was virtually impossible for all of these individuals to have met each other because they were from completely different parts of the country. Without the modern system of communication that we now take for granted they could not possibly know the same information unless God Himself engineered and coordinated everything they did and witnessed.

Wise Men Came from the East

"After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem saying, 'Where is He Who was born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star and have come to worship Him.'

When Herod the king heard this he was troubled and all Jerusalem with him, and when he had gathered all the chief priests and the scribes of the people together he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. So they said to him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah are not the least of the rulers of Judah, for out of you shall come a Ruler Who will Shepherd My people Israel.'

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared and he sent them to Bethlehem and said, 'Go and search carefully for the young Child and when you have found Him bring back word to me that I may come and worship Him also.'

When they heard the king they departed> And, behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy and when they had come into the house they saw the young Child with Mary--His mother--and fell down and worshipped Him, and when they had opened their treasures they presented the gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being Divinely warned in a dream that they should not

return to Herod they departed for their own country another way.

Now when they had departed, behold an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, 'Arise! Take the young Child and His mother! Flee to Egypt and stay there until I bring you word. For, Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him!'

When he arose he took the young Child and His mother by night and departed to Egypt and was there until the death of Herod--that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I will call My Son.'

Then Herod, when he saw that he was deceived by the wise men, was exceedingly angry and he set forth and put to death all the male children who were in Bethlehem and all its districts from two years old and under according to the time which he had determined from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, 'A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping and great mourning. Rachel weeping for her children. Refusing to be comforted because they are no more.'

Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt saying, 'Arise! Take the young Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead.'

Then he arose, took the young Child and His mother and came to the land of Israel. But, when he heard that Archelaus was reigning over Judea instead of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And, being warned by God in a dream he turned aside into the region of Galilee, and he came and dwelt in a city called Nazaret--that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets. 'He shall be called a Nazarene.'" (Matthew 2:1-23)

God did not just reveal the birth of His Son through many prophecies about Him throughout the Scriptures (beginning at mankind's fall out of His Kingdom). (*Genesis 3:15*) He told at least three non-Jews about it, too. They lived far away from the site, but apparently something motivated them so strongly that they traveled a long distance to confirm it. The Bible does not reveal much detail about these men other than this, and the fact that they may have been rich because of the costly gifts they brought to present to the Child. We do not even know how, when, or where God informed and directed them. Nor does the Bible disclose whether they knew each other before they set out on their journeys or met up and shared what they were doing along the road. However, the important thing is that God Himself engineered everything.

When these wise men from the East entered Judea they went into Jerusalem to meet the king before they sought out the Child. Their inquiry suggested that they assumed that Herod would have the information they needed to pinpoint Him. After all, they were looking for the King of the Jews, so naturally they assumed that the king would know what they did, and more since he was a Jew himself and they weren't. However, although Herod pretended to welcome and support their quest, he became troubled that there might be an adversary to his throne. He asked scholars what the Scriptures revealed and told the wise men the location. Herod even instructed the wise men to come back and report what they had witnessed in Bethlehem so that he could

go and worship Jesus also. In essence, Herod used them as ignorant spies to disclose information that he would be able to use to destroy his supposed "rival".

As the wise men journeyed they saw and followed the same star that the shepherds had seen the night Jesus was born. The star even moved before them until it stopped directly above the house to where the family had since moved from the barn. It is possible that several years had passed, since the Bible is unclear about the time frame between the visits of the shepherds and the wise men to visit Him. The Bible does reveal, however, that although God's Son was born in a stable He did not remain there. When the wise men arrived in Bethlehem the family was then staying in another and better location. As the angel directed the shepherds, so did God's star lead the men who went to worship His Child. It is important to notice that God *precisely* directed people who earnestly sought Jesus right from the night of His birth, as well as kept providing not only for Him but those who wanted to revere and help take care of Him.

The wise men presented Jesus with very costly gifts, ones that seemed odd to give to any infant or toddler. Why would they do so? God knew about Herod's plans to get rid of the Child. In fact, God even warned the wise men not to return to Jerusalem and testify about what they had experienced. Nevertheless, the king, probably becoming increasingly nervous and suspicious, ordered his soldiers to slaughter every single male in the Bethlehem area under the age of three to ensure that the "Pretender" could not escape and ever try to dethrone him.

What then were those particular presents good for? More than likely they were used to fund Jesus' family's escape to Egypt. Since Joseph originally had intended to travel to Bethlehem merely to complete a census, he probably left most of his money and possessions in Nazareth and taken with him only what he and Mary would require for a short time. Unless God specifically told Joseph that he would not be returning to his home it would have been the most logical thing for him to do. Whatever really happened, however, the new family still could have used these expensive gifts to sell in order to help pay for their travel and living expenses for awhile. Although this was not mentioned specifically in the Gospels it was a perfect way for God to finance His Child's journey and safety, as well as His parents'. God apparently led other people give to His cause and be blessed by their giving, instead of Him just providing everything. Remember, this is one of the rules of the Heavenly Kingdom of God:

"Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Acts 20:35b)

"Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For, with the same measure you use it will be measured back to you." (Luke 6:38)

Just as the Bible does not disclose just how old Jesus was when the wise men visited Him in Bethlehem or His family fled to Egypt, it does not divulge how long Joseph, Mary, and Jesus stayed and lived in that country, nor what they did there. It does reveal, however, that their exile lasted until the king who had tried to kill the Child was dead. Finally God instructed Joseph that it was safe for them to return to Israel. However, he became afraid to go back once he heard that Herod's son was the new

ruler in Judea. God warned him again and he turned and went to the region of Galilee. Joseph settled them all in the city of Nazareth, the place where he came from before Caesar's first census. This is why God's Son grew up there and became identified as Jesus of Nazareth or Galilee, not Jesus of Bethlehem.

When He Was Only Twelve

"The Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon Him. His parents went to Jerusalem every year according to the custom of the Feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem and Joseph and His mother did not know it, but supposing Him to have been in the company they went a day's journey and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So, when they did not find Him they returned to Jerusalem seeking Him. Now it was after three days they found Him in the temple sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him they (also) were amazed.

So his mother said to Him, 'Son, why have you done this to us? Look, your father and I have sought You anxiously!' and He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?', but they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart and Jesus increased in wisdom, and stature, and in favor with God and men." (Luke 2:40-52)

Jesus and His family evidently did not travel by themselves to Jerusalem, so it would have been easy for His parents to think that He was with someone else when they all departed to go home. Evidently, Jesus never had gotten lost in this manner before because His parents didn't even consider that He wasn't responsible enough to be with the caravan when they left the city. Most probably there were other children in the group, too so Jesus' mother thought that if they were trustworthy enough to be in the right place at the right time to go home then certainly her Son would as well.

Even as a Child Jesus had to have been recognized as being some kind of prodigy. Even the religious teachers at the temple apparently considered Him to be so. As they were instructing Him His questions and responses must have been extremely insightful. Remember that Jesus was not born with His brain already possessing the same information that He had known in Heaven about the Scriptures. He was a human being not only in outward appearance but mentally as well. Jesus of Nazareth had to listen, study, and learn about God's Kingdom just like any other normal person. Additionally, as God's primary Ambassador on the earth Jesus had to excel in and comprehend everything about the Scriptures, something which had to require an enormous amount of personal time and effort. Along with His regular duties as the Son of a carpenter Jesus had to become proficient in God's knowledge to one day be entrusted to spread His Heavenly Father's Gospel accurately.

Jesus did not expect His parents not to have anticipated that He would be in the

temple. Nor did He count on them ever becoming anxious and afraid of the possibilities of what might have happened to Him. Jesus always was so calm and trusting in God that He probably never even gave such things a thought. Joseph and Mary however, had to have remembered how they had to flee to another country to save Jesus from king Herod. Also, think about what they must have been going through, especially His mother; she not only had lost her Son, but God's. I expect that she was acutely aware of both facts.

Seemingly, Jesus parents never asked God where to find His Own Son. Instead, they frantically scoured the city for three entire days before locating Him, and in those days there was no electronic system of communication as there is today. Nor, was there any police service especially designated to find missing children. Mary and Joseph probably had to do everything by themselves, and on foot. Imagine their conversations on those several nights when they had been out searching all day and had not found their Child. Joseph and Mary must have been increasingly apprehensive, yet Jesus questioned this. His faith and trust in God already was more developed than that of these two adults when He was only twelve years old.

Mary made a point of stating that Jesus' "father" had been looking for Him. When He asked her why she had not considered that He would be doing His "Father's" business, it must have seemed curious to anyone who was listening to their conversation. Nowadays we have the entire Scriptures in written form, so we can detect the different meaning: Jesus Heavenly Father is capitalized, while the other reference is not. However, anyone who heard this dialogue would not be able to differentiate between the two words. They would not have caught the inference as Mary did.

When Jesus returned to Nazareth with His earthly parents He lived under *their* authority like any other normal boy. He developed like an ordinary child, too, in both size and mental capacity. And, He was popular not just with God, but other people. Jesus definitely was a bright, delightful, above-average kid. Only His mother seemed to be aware that there was anything special about Him other than that. And, until He was fully ready to leave His home to go and begin His ministry Jesus remained under their control as well as God's.

Jesus' Baptism

"It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John (the Baptist) in the Jordan (River).

The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of Whom I said, 'After me comes a Man preferred before me; for, He was before me.' ...

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water, and while He prayed, behold, the heavens were opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of the Lord descending in bodily form like a dove and alighting on Him.

And, suddenly a Voice came from Heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased,'

And, John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from Heaven

like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He Who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon Whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him, This is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit,' and I have seen and testified that This is the Son of God.'" (Matthew 3:16-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22 & John 1:28-34)

When Jesus was led to begin His public ministry He was about thirty years old. Both He and His Heavenly Father not only had waited patiently for *centuries* for the time to be ripe so that Jesus could be born, They had waited another three *decades* for Him to be prepared *sufficiently* in order to leave His earthly family and embark on His mission to spread the Gospel (or "good news") about God His Father and His Kingdom. Jesus first was baptized--given the authority and power to fulfill His objective before God allowed Him to do anything publicly.

Temptation by Satan Immediately Afterward

"Then Jesus, being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And, when He had fasted forty days and forty nights and in those days He ate nothing and afterward when they had ended He was hungry.

(#1) Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, 'If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread.'

But He/Jesus answered him, saying, 'It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'

(#2 or #3) Then, the devil took Him up into the holy city--Jerusalem--set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here, for it is written, 'He shall give His angels charge over you,' and, 'In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash you foot against a stone.'

And, Jesus answered and said to him, 'It is written again, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'

*(#3 or #2) Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him **all** the kingdoms of the world and their **glory in a moment of time** and said to Him, 'All these things I will give You, for this has been delivered to me and I will give it to whomever I wish. Therefore, if You bow down and worship before me, all will be Yours.'*

Then Jesus answered and said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! Away with you, Satan, for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve,'

Now when the devil had ended his temptation (Hebrews 4:15) he departed from Him until an opportune time. Then the devil left Him and, behold, angels came and ministered to Him." (Matthew 4:1-1, (Mark 1:13), Luke 4:1-13)

God the Father allowed His worst enemy, Satan, tempt His Son instantly after He had just been baptized to begin His public ministry. The Holy Spirit even led Jesus into the wilderness purposely; knowing full well that Satan would come to try to test His faith

and endurance. *Mark 4:15* says that the devil comes immediately to try to steal God's Word out of people's hearts; so, as a human being, Jesus of Nazareth was no exception to Satan's craftiness on the earth because at that time it still was part of his kingdom.

God recognized that Satan would treat Jesus no differently than he had every person ever born from the Adams forward. Therefore, this was a good means of discovering right at the onset how Jesus would react to unGodly ideas to which the rest of us too often respond favorably. It is critical to recognize that when Jesus was being tempted to sway over to Satan's kingdom He only quoted the Old Covenant in order to free Himself from all enticement. Jesus never used any special influence or abilities that He did not tell other people to employ when they ran into similar circumstances.

"We do not have a High Priest Who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but was in all points tempted as we are." (Hebrews 4:15b)

"In that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is able to aid those who are being tempted." (Hebrews 2:18b)

"Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God,' for God cannot be tempted nor does He Himself tempt anyone, but one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and seduced. Then, when desire has conceived it gives birth to sin, and sin when it is full grown, brings forth death/Death." (James 1:13-15)

Satan's first temptation was to try to force Jesus to do anything in order to eat, even create bread out of some rocks. Interestingly, food likewise had been the same ploy he used on the first man and woman as well. God's sworn adversary initially attempted to sway Jesus away from His Father's will with the same con, but this time it did not work. So, he had to try further worldly enticements that not only would appeal to Jesus' physical senses, but mental and emotional outlook as well. However, no matter how or what the devil used Jesus never became fixated on Himself and His pleasures knowing that those things were short-lived and too often deceptive in their rewards.

As well, Jesus knew that Satan, as the father of lies (*John 8:44*), would never really give Him what he promised except temporarily. Satan's gifts would act like narcotic drugs to get Jesus addicted and want more. Their intent only was to lead Him even further away from God the Father not closer. Luke's gospel even says that Jesus resisted the temptations to rule over the things and people that He had not come into existence yet. The Bible teaches that Satan showed Him *all* the kingdoms of the entire world and their glory in only a moment of time.

When the first test did not influence Jesus, the devil tried several additional ways to entice Him away from His Father's will: safety, fame, and social prominence, along with wealth, power, greed, special powers, and ultimately world domination. There are also temptations that would accompany the other obvious ones. They would namely be sex (which He would get as the "ruler" of the world), as well as extravagance and complete hedonism (not needing to care about being wasteful or considerate of others). As well, no other physical restrictions that Jesus even could think up or desire would suppress His life on the earth. However, Jesus' influence would then have become a

totally hedonistic concern only for Himself, as well as being merely superficial. Satan tempted Jesus with far, far more enticement than any one of us ever faces; yet, He withstood them *all*.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke reverse the ordering of Satan's second and third tries to tempt to endeavor to sway Jesus away from God's Word, i.e. to get Him to "turn to the left or the right". His following the directions of either even slightly would have been rebellion causing sin against God's will as stated in His Word. Satan may have waited to confront Jesus directly only at the end of 40 days of His fasting. This would signify that Satan first spoke to Jesus after it became imperative that He eat or possibly die as a result of starvation. Matthew states that the devil was not even near Jesus until that point. Luke, however, makes it seem as if Satan was indeed hanging around from the beginning and pressuring Jesus to give up and get out of the wilderness. Regardless, both gospels imply that Satan did not approach Jesus until He was quite weak from hunger and the physical and mental repercussions of it.

Jesus never acquiesced to Satan's pressures and merely used things that He gave and taught other people to imitate to be as successful as He was in countering temptation. Namely, Jesus only quoted God's Word--the Sword of the Spirit--to guard and defend Himself. He deflected every provocation solely by using the Scriptures. God's Own Son did not use any special abilities that He had possessed when He was in a Spiritual instead of physical body and lived in Heaven. On the earth, as the Son of Man, He was completely human and thus exclusively allowed to use those defensive and offensive weapons against the devil that God gave to mankind as a whole.

Additionally, Jesus never once called upon His Father to just step in and do things for Him. He prayed and continuously asked for wisdom and guidance on how to react to situations, yet He never expected His Father to perform a deed. Jesus just spent sufficient time communing with His Father so that He always was equipped and ready to hear, accept, and use His Father's guidance through the Holy Spirit to direct Him. Jesus never petitioned God to get rid of Satan's presence for Him. Jesus employed His own personal faith and spoke what was required to get whatever He wanted to accomplish every task set before Him.

"No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man, but God is faithful, Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it." (1 Corinthians 10:13)

By bowing to the devil instead of taking control of every situation through the Holy Spirit Jesus instantly would have reversed roles with him. Satan immediately would have become the way he always wanted to be--like God Himself--while Jesus would become his enemy's Servant instead of His Father's. Likewise, because Jesus is a member of the Godhead Trinity and He and His Father are One, not merely He and His Father would lose Their Divine authority and be subject to Satan's domination but the Holy Spirit would be as well. The consequences of Jesus' not resisting Satan did not merely affect Him personally but everyone and everything we can ever imagine.

Satan quoted Scripture to Jesus but he did so deceptively. He wanted to get his personal desires satisfied, not consult, consider, or try to convey God's true thoughts or

authority about the matter. In other words, Satan did not employ the Word to demonstrate the accurate will of God. Basically, Satan merely quoted it in order to try to substantiate his own opinions and entice Jesus into acting contrary to His Father's wishes. Unfortunately, people likewise too often chose to imitate his demeanor instead of Jesus', which is hypocritical and dangerous to everyone concerned. We can see what Jesus said about this kind of behavior by observing the highest leaders of the church in that society from the temple in Jerusalem, the capital. Jesus consistently countered their ordinances by teaching that they had become more influenced by their carnal traditions than by the Scriptures themselves.

"The scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus saying, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders, for they do not wash their hands when they eat bread?'"

He answered and said to them, 'Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded saying, 'Honor your father and your mother' and 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, 'Whatever profit you have received from me is a gift to God' then need not honor his father or mother.' Thus, you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition. Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying, 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me and in vain they worship Me, teaching doctrines the commandments of men.' When He had called the multitudes to Himself He said to them, 'Hear and understand!'"

Then His disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?'"

But, He answered and said, 'Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone; they are blind leaders of the blind and if the blind leads the blind both will fall into a ditch.'

Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Explain this parable to us.'

So Jesus said, 'Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But, those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart and they defile a man, for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication's, thefts, false witness, (and) blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.'" (Matthew 15:1-20)

Because Jesus kept His faith steadfast and held onto on the authority of the Word unceasingly Satan had no other choice than finally to leave Him alone. The devil stopped trying to provoke Jesus and left His presence because he was forced to, not because he wanted to. From then until the crucifixion the devil never again faced Him directly. However, Satan never stopped hounding Jesus continually and constantly by directing his own fallen angels to harass Him, through people. Sometimes they approached Him with sickness, but instead of avoiding any encounter Jesus always stayed firm with his Godly love towards everyone. His faith in the power of His Father's

Word not only kept Himself unharmed; it helped release anyone else who was being tormented in any way whatsoever.

Jesus even resisted when even one of his own beloved disciples urged Him not to complete His ministry by letting Himself be murdered by His enemies. Even though Peter had just announced to the rest of the group that Jesus was indeed the Messiah that the Hebrews had been awaiting for centuries when he soon afterward endeavored to stop Jesus from finishing His work on the earth. Jesus realized what was going on and rebuked the spirit of Satan who was controlling Peter's emotions about the matter. Jesus recognized that human beings fluctuate in faith, but what Peter was thinking was so bad that Jesus did not pause to consider that He might offend him with His rebuke. Jesus perceived Satan's invisible influence in Peter and delivered him from it immediately.

Jesus had the ability to sin and rebel against His Father, if He had wanted to at any time during His 33 years as a Man. How can we know this? If He really lived as a bona fide human being then Jesus could have sinned. If it was impossible for Him to disobey His Father, then why was He lead by the Spirit into the wilderness expressly to see if He would succumb to any trial or temptation? If Jesus of Nazareth did not have the same freewill to disobey God that we do why was He tested? It makes that ordeal a complete waste of valuable time.

If Jesus were not able to sin He should have started His travels forty days earlier - a considerable segment of a mere three year ministry. He just had been baptized and authorized, so what would be the point of His squandering time in the wild? He came here to teach about God's Kingdom and to heal people, not to play with rocks. God did not send Jesus to this planet only to waste Their efforts. Therefore: (a) God's Son really was a true human being, (b) He really could have sinned because He possessed the freewill to be capable of doing so, and (c) He had to be fully prepared for what lay ahead. (Which, by the way, made His life even *more* difficult, as well as extraordinary.)

As much as Satan tried, he never could influence Jesus' spirit, soul, or body. Even when He was about to starve. Jesus never buckled under any of his tests, even those designed to tempt Him with power, fame, or wealth.

"The ruler of this age is coming, but he has nothing in Me." (John 14:30)

As soon as Jesus followed His Father's direction, God's angels came immediately and ministered to His needs. The Father dispatched His angels to comfort and help strengthen His Son, maybe even bringing Him food. However, God sent Jesus relief only at the perfect moment, not when it only seemed to be the best time from a purely human perspective. The Father gave His Son what He needed, not merely what He might think that He required due to basic human nature for immediate gratification.

Turning Water into Wine at a Wedding

"There was a wedding in Cana of Galilee and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples (Andrew, Simon Peter, Philip, and Nathaniel) were there and when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus

said to Him, 'They have no wine.'

Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour is not yet come.'

His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you do it.'

Now there were set six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water,' and they filled them to the brim and He said to them, 'Draw some out now and take it to the master of the feast,' and they took it.

When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine and did not know where it came from (but the servants who drew the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom and he said to him, 'Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!'

This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him." (JOHN 2:1-11)

Jesus' mother ignored His displeasure when she wanted Him to do something that He obviously was reluctant to do. Therefore, although by that time He was an adult, Jesus still respected His mother's wishes and did the favor she asked Him. He obeyed the sixth commandment that states that God's will is that we honor our parents.

Jesus spoke what He wanted to exist not what did already. However, His words came to pass only when the people He directed followed His directions precisely. Even though the servants probably did not know Jesus they indeed followed His instructions. Thus, the miracle happened and the wine that *Jesus* created was even better than what had been served before.

How did Jesus mother know to tell the servants to do whatever He said? She had lived with Him for 30+ years, so she had to have seen what He had spoken come into being before, most likely on numerous occasions. Jesus knew the value and power of words and He never used them idly. What He later taught demonstrated the effects that words have on the course of nature. In fact, James, Jesus' brother (not the apostle) later wrote about this particular phenomenon in greater detail in his letter to the churches. Therefore, Jesus' siblings likewise clearly knew His position on the power of a person's tongue to plant invisible, yet powerful, seeds--either of faith that agreed with a true understanding of the intent of the Scriptures, or the reverse.

Curiously, Jesus' new disciples believed in Him after they saw this one, rather insignificant miracle that He called into tangible reality. Yet, later in His ministry after they had traveled and lived with Him and seen countless and much more awesome things, when Jesus asked them Who they thought He was, they seemed reluctant to answer. (*Matthew 16:13-15*)

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
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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 principal 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 ones 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. Nether 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 prophecies 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 is 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." (1 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, I 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.