

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: Chapters 17 to 28

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transfiguration of Jesus with more parables • Jesus visits Jerusalem before his crucifixion • Teachings of the end times and tribulation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last supper, betrayal and denial of Jesus • The trials, death and resurrection of Jesus • The final instructions of Jesus before His ascension |
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THIS BOOK records Matthew's writings on the ministry, trials, death, resurrection and return to Heaven of Jesus the Christ, Israel's Messiah. It also refers readers to further teachings given in Mark's Gospel. This book includes the transfiguration of Jesus, His last supper and His betrayal by Judas and denial by Peter. It concludes with the instructions of Jesus to all His followers worldwide before His ascension to "go and make disciples of all nations".

MANNA PUBLICATIONS publish small Bible teaching commentaries written by the late Fred Morris to use on your own or to study in a group. Fred and his wife Lorna, originally from Australia, travelled round the world teaching and preaching before retiring to the USA. Their low-cost books are easy to read, understand and translate into other languages. The books explain basic New and Old Testament teaching of God's word and the new life found in Christ plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

THESE BOOKS will help you to come closer to Almighty God. He is worshipped by millions of Jews and Christians worldwide. These books will also help you to receive salvation and eternal life through God's Son, Jesus the Christ who is Israel's Messiah. They will help you to talk about your faith in God and to pray to Him. They will help to guide you from going the wrong way in life. They will help you to live a life that is pleasing to God through the love and power of His Holy Spirit. This was promised to all who believe Jesus is the Son of God, who suffered death for our sins before returning back to Heaven. These are important teachings for these last days before His return.

WE PRAY that you may have a new peace and purpose in life as you trust in God, read the Bible and use these commentaries. Think about what Jesus taught and suffered 2000 years ago for our eternal salvation and what He is calling you to say and do today to prepare the way for His return.

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"MANNA FOR ALL" BIBLE TEACHING COMMENTARIES
 "The secret of God's Kingdom has been given to you" (Mark 4:11)

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW Part 2

A Bible Teaching Commentary
 for personal or group study
 Written by Fred Morris



MANNA FOR ALL



Matthew
 Chapters 17 to 28

To the Reader or Leader

These commentaries help to explain the Bible in a way that is easy to read and understand. They are also easy to translate. You can use Fred's books to study the Bible on your own or with others in a group. Each person should have his or her own book and a Bible if possible.



Bible reading: Where you see this heading, it means you or your group leader should always read the Bible verses first before reading this book.



Talk about this: Where you see this, there are questions to prayerfully answer yourself or to discuss in a group study. They also help the reader to remember the Bible verses.

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filled life with amazing miracles and much teaching of God's truth. Matthew explains to his readers how Jesus fulfilled not only God's Old Testament laws but the prophecies about Israel's coming Messiah. Many refused to believe, then as now. However, despite the persecution of those who did believe, the Good News spread widely and was accepted by many Jews as well as Gentiles which continues to happen to this day.

Matthew enables us to understand what was special about Jesus and His ministry and also about the people who believed Him and became His followers. Through His Holy Spirit, we are able to experience and believe in this same Jesus today and receive eternal life through the forgiveness of our sins.

We rejoice that Mark, a fellow disciple of Jesus, shared the truth he knew about God and His Messiah with Matthew to record these things towards the end of the first century AD. We also give thanks to God for the careful notes Matthew made himself as well as the writings of Mark. These are the true records of events in the life on Earth of our Saviour Jesus the Christ, Israel's Messiah, who was called Yeshua at that time.

Matthew testifies that Jesus came to suffer in the form of a Son of Man to be the only perfect sacrifice to remove God's wrath against our sins. This was the only way possible to save and empower us with the authority of His Holy Spirit as the Son of God. This power is given to us to make disciples in all nations with "signs and wonders", including healing and deliverance from demons. Matthew also faithfully records the promise of Jesus, "I will be with you always." (28:20) He is not only with us but lives within us through His resurrection power in the Holy Spirit (John 14:17).

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW Part 2: Chapters 17 to 28

INTRODUCTION

This second part of the Gospel of Matthew records more of the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ, Israel's Messiah, before His final days in Jerusalem. This was where He was crucified for the sins of mankind according to the will and purpose of His Father in Heaven.

In part 1 we read about the 2000-year long family tree from Abraham to Joseph who married the virgin Mary after she gave birth to Jesus, Israel's Messiah. It tells how Joseph, Mary and Jesus escaped the persecution of King Herod after he was told by the wise men from the east that an important king had been born in Bethlehem. They fled to Egypt, then after several years returned to the lowly town of Nazareth where Jesus grew up as the son of Joseph the carpenter. It was there that he attended the local synagogue and discussed with the rabbi the Bible teachings from the Old Testament Law and the prophecies about Israel's Messiah.

After the baptism and temptation of Jesus, He moved from Nazareth and commenced His preaching, teaching and healing ministry in Capernaum with the power of the Holy Spirit. It was there that He started calling disciples to follow Him. They were present when Jesus gave His famous "Sermon on the Mount" which serves as important teaching to this day under God's new covenant.

Part 2 gives further teachings of Jesus and then describes the suffering He experienced on the Roman cross as well as the trials leading up to it. This was part of God's new covenant plan for mankind since the time of the first covenant with Noah, Abraham and Moses. It offers us all salvation through faith in the birth, death and resurrection of the Son of God as a sinless Son of Man (a descendant of Abraham and King David) who suffered and died for our eternal deliverance from sin for all who believe. Hallelujah! Amazing grace! Such love! Read on...



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 17

JESUS IS CHANGED BEFORE THEM ON A MOUNTAIN TOP

Jesus took His three disciples Peter, James and John up a high mountain. On the mountain top they saw the amazing heavenly glory of Jesus the Son of God. We call this the transfiguration of Christ. While the three disciples were looking at Jesus, His face and clothes became bright with light. The light blinded their eyes. They could not look at their Master. Heaven's glory 'clothed' Jesus (17:2). Before God created the world, Jesus was One with the Father (John 1:1-3). He would return to the Father and take His throne again. It was very important for the disciples to know that Jesus remained alive after ascending to the Father who was waiting to receive Him home again.

Just then Moses and Elijah appeared. They talked with Jesus about His death in Jerusalem as part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind (Luke 9:30-31). These men of old added their testimony to what Jesus had already told the disciples. Both agreed with the words of Jesus. The Law and the prophets of the Old Testament and Christ's Gospel under God's new covenant all agree.

Peter was amazed and uncertain what to do. He said to Jesus, "If You wish, I will put up three shelters. One for You, one for Moses and one for Elijah" (17:4). As Peter was speaking, a bright cloud came over them. A voice from the cloud said, "This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him!" (17:5; 2 Peter 1:17)

Under the Old Testament covenant of Law, the prophets had given their testimony of God's word and purposes (Hebrews 1:1). Then the last of the Old Testament prophets, John the Baptist, prepared the way for His promised Messiah, Jesus Christ who was God's final word to mankind. This is why God said to Peter, James and John, "Listen to Him!" (Matthew 17:5).

The disciples by now were terrified and fell on their faces. Jesus came and touched them, "Get up!" He said, "Do not be afraid." (17:6-7) When they looked up, Moses and Elijah were no longer there. They saw no-one except Jesus (17:8).

As Peter, James and John were coming down the mountain, Jesus warned them not to tell anyone what they had seen "until the Son of Man has risen from the dead" (17:9). It was after His resurrection they spoke about what had happened. They were eye witnesses of Christ's glory with His heavenly Father and two of the saints in Heaven (1 John 1:1-4)

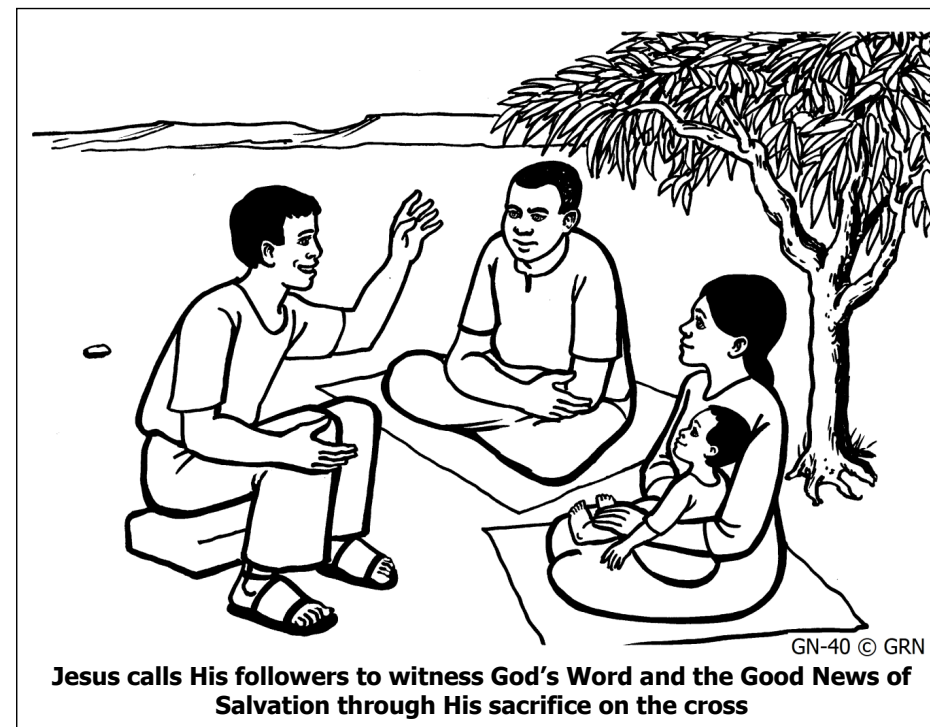
The three disciples asked Jesus: "Why do the teachers of the Law say that Elijah must come first?" (17:10) The scribes taught the people that Elijah would return to Earth. The prophet Malachi said a person would come, "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Malachi 4:5-6). Jesus said, "Elijah has already come, but no-one recognized him. They did to him everything they wished. "In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands" (17:12). Then the disciples understood that He was talking about John the Baptist (17:13). John the Baptist was the Elijah of the New Testament.

JESUS HEALS A BOY WITH AN EVIL SPIRIT

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 9

THE TEMPLE TAX

Jesus kept the Law and paid Temple tax like every Jewish citizen. Every male over 20 paid the tax. No-one was excused. A tax collector asked Peter, "Does not your teacher pay the Temple tax?" (17:24). "Yes, He does," Peter answered, but he had no money to give the man at that time.



Jesus calls His followers to witness God's Word and the Good News of Salvation through His sacrifice on the cross

This became known as the Great Commission, to make more and more disciples. Step by step, the early followers and apostles of Jesus did what Jesus told them to do. "You will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, to all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the Earth." (Acts 1:8). Our role is to confirm the faith of new believers through witnessing in baptism and help them to mature in their faith and build up the Church of Christ. But our main calling is to obey the command of Jesus to "make disciples of all nations".



Talk about this: List the known facts about the resurrection of Jesus.

CONCLUSIONS

The Gospel or Good News recorded by Matthew is not only that Christ took the punishment for our sins but that He rose from death and His Spirit is alive and at work within believers today. He fulfilled all God's Old Testament laws which His people failed to keep under the old covenant. Under His renewed covenant, we have a closer relationship with God through Christ's death, resurrection and the promised Holy Spirit power at work within us.

The life of Jesus before His crucifixion gives many examples of failings of His disciples and the religious leaders. It also gives many examples of a Spirit-

THE GUARDS' REPORT

On the first day of the week, an angel came from Heaven and the earth shook with a violent earthquake. The angel rolled back the stone and sat on it. The guards at the tomb fell to the ground "like dead men" (28:1-4).

Some of the guards got up and went into the city to tell the Jewish leaders what had happened. The chief priests and elders made a plan. They gave the soldiers a large sum of money and told them to say, "His disciples came during the night and stole Him away while we were asleep." (28:11-13) The soldiers did this and accepted the risk of being put to death. For a Roman guard to sleep while on duty was a crime punished by death. Many people believed this lie. Some still believed it at the time Matthew wrote his Gospel. Some believe it today.

God raised Jesus from death not only that He should ascend back to Heaven but that we should be saved through faith in Him and filled with His promised Holy Spirit.

JESUS MEETS HIS FOLLOWERS

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 16

THE FINAL INSTRUCTIONS OF JESUS TO HIS DISCIPLES

After His resurrection and the visits of Jesus in Jerusalem to the eleven disciples, many of His followers went to Galilee. They went to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him. But some still had their doubts. (28:16-17) They were probably followers who had not seen Him in Jerusalem after the resurrection.

Paul wrote that Jesus appeared to more than five hundred of His followers at this time (1 Corinthians 15:6). Jesus said these amazing words, "All authority in Heaven and on Earth has been given to Me." (Matthews 28:18) When Satan tempted Jesus by offering Him all the kingdoms of the world (4:8-9) Jesus refused. And now He has received God's authority, not only on Earth but in the Universe and in Heaven.

For the sake of those He came to save, Jesus temporarily gave up this authority in order to be born as a human being without sin (a 'second Adam') and then sacrificed His life in order to fulfil all the requirements of the Law and the Prophets. This enables us to be saved through faith in Him and His resurrection.

With the authority He now had before His ascension, Jesus instructed His followers, "You must go and make disciples of all nations. Baptise them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And you can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end." (28:19-20)

When Peter came into the house, Jesus spoke first. "What do you think, Simon?" Jesus asked. "From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes? From their own sons, or from others?"

Then Jesus told Peter, "Go to the lake and throw out your finishing line. Take the first fish you catch. Open its mouth. There you will find the exact coin you need. Take it and give it to them for My tax and yours." (17:27) Peter obeyed and God worked a miracle! As we obey God's words, we too will see Him do miracles.



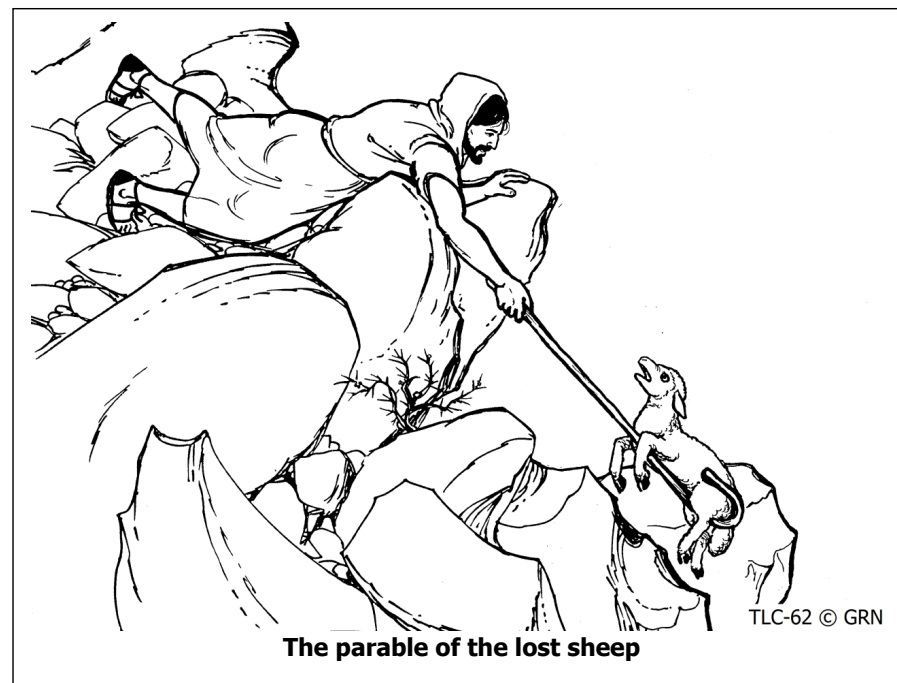
Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 18

WHO IS GREATEST IN GOD'S KINGDOM?

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 9

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP

In this parable Jesus said a sheep has value. But children have more value than a lost sheep. If a shepherd owned a hundred sheep and one of them wandered away, Jesus said the shepherd will leave the ninety-nine and go to look for the one that wandered off (18:12). In the same way, God is not willing that any should be lost (18:14; 2 Peter 3:9).



People are like sheep under the eye of the Great Shepherd. The sheep in this parable was with the flock. But just like a sheep, he wandered away. The shepherd went out to look for the lost one. In the same way God will do all He can to bring us back to Himself.

The sheep was lost without knowing it. Christ gave His life for lost people who are like the sheep. They do not know how lost they are.

WHEN SOMEONE SINS AGAINST YOU

Jesus said, "If your brother (or sister) sins against you, go to him (or her) and talk to them about their sin (Matthew 18:15). Keep it private. Be ready to forgive the hurt. Tell him (or her) you are hurt by what they have said or done. Have others pray for you and stand with you. Speak kindly with your brother (or sister). Be merciful (5:7).

If the brother or sister will not listen, take one or two others along, so that everything may be restored by the testimony of two or three witnesses (18:16). If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church. If they refuse to listen to the church elders, treat them as you would a pagan (18:17). This speaks of a big problem. A sin so big it must be brought out into the open. It is not a private matter anymore.

Jesus knew that Christians would be few in number at first. Sometimes only two or three would meet together in one place. But He would be with them by His Spirit. He promised, "Where two or three come together in My name... I am with them." (18:20)

Jesus then said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you free on earth will be freed in Heaven." (18:18) The Gospel or Good News of salvation in Christ alone is still the only key that frees men and women from their sins (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 15:2).

Christians need to pray together often in the name of Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit within. Pray also to be a witness to those who do not repent (18:15).

A MAN WHO SHOWED NO MERCY

Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21) Some people thought that to forgive three times was enough. Jesus said, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven." (18:22)

To help the disciples understand more how to forgive, Jesus told a parable of a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. A man owed the king ten thousand talents (a very large sum of money). The man could not pay, so the king ordered him and his family to be sold to pay the debt (18:25). The servant begged for mercy and the king forgave him.

Isaiah prophesied that "He was pierced for our transgressions." (Isaiah 53:5) God is Creator of our amazing Universe, but He knew that our salvation could come only by sending His own flesh and blood as a Son of God and Son of Man, to be punished on our behalf so that we may repent and be saved. This "mystery of Christ" (as Paul calls it) reveals God's eternal love for mankind.

THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 15

THE MIRACLES THAT HAPPENED AT THE DEATH OF JESUS

From noon until three o'clock, the whole land was covered with darkness. About three o'clock, Jesus cried out in a loud voice. He said, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" This means "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" (27:45-46; Psalm 22:1)

Some of those standing there heard Jesus cry out. They said, "He is calling for Elijah." Immediately, one of them ran and found a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar and put it on a stick. He offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Leave Him alone. Let us see if Elijah comes to save Him." (27:48)

After Jesus cried out again in a loud voice, He died. At that moment the Temple curtain was torn in two from top to bottom. The ground shook. The rocks split open. Tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs. After Jesus was raised from the dead, they went into the holy city. There they appeared to many people (27:50-53).

The Roman commander and those guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened. They were terrified. They exclaimed, "He was surely the Son of God!" (27:54)

Not very far away, many women were watching. They had followed Jesus from Galilee to take care of His needs. Mary Magdalene was among them. Mary, the mother of James and Joseph, was also there. So was the mother of Zebedee's sons (27:55-56).

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 15



Talk about this: Describe the preparation for the crucifixion and resurrection.



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 28

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 16

PETER SAYS HE DOES NOT KNOW JESUS

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 14



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 27

JUDAS HANGS HIMSELF

It was early in the morning. All the chief priests and the elders of the people planned how to put Jesus to death. So they tied him up and led him away. Then they handed him over to Pilate, who was the governor.

Judas, who had betrayed Him and handed him over, saw that Jesus had been sentenced to die. He felt deep shame and sadness for what he had done. So he returned the 30 silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said. "I handed over a man who is not guilty."

"What do we care?" they replied. "That's your problem."

So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

The chief priests picked up the coins. They said, "It is against the law to put this money into the Temple fund. It is blood money. It has paid for a man's death."

So they decided to use the money to buy a potter's field. People from other countries would be buried there. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then the words spoken by Jeremiah the prophet came true. He had said, "They took the 30 silver coins. That price was set for him by the people of Israel. They used the coins to buy a potter's field." (Matthew 27:1-10; Zechariah 11:12, 13)

THE SECOND TRIAL OF JESUS BY PILATE

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 15

THE SOLDIERS AGAIN MAKE FUN OF JESUS

Pilate let Barabbas go free. But he had Jesus whipped. Then he handed him over to be nailed to a cross (27:26)

The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the palace, which was called the Praetorium. All the rest of the soldiers gathered around Him. They took off His clothes and put a purple robe on Him. Then they twisted thorns together to make a crown. They placed it on His head. They put a stick in His right hand. Then they fell on their knees in front of Him and made fun of Him. "We honour you, king of the Jews!" they said. They spat on Him. They hit Him on the head with the stick again and again which made the thorns pierce His skull and beat Him with whips. After they had made fun of Him, they took off the robe. They put His own clothes back on Him. Then they led him away to nail Him to a cross (27:27-31).

In this parable the servant was freed from his debts. But he went out and found another servant who owed him a smaller sum of money. He grabbed him and began to choke him. "Pay back what you owe me," he demanded. The man fell on his knees and begged for mercy. But the man refused to forgive him. Instead, the man who had been forgiven had the other man thrown into prison (18:28-30).

When we repent and ask for mercy, God freely forgives us. He forgives us because Jesus Christ paid our debt in full when He died on the cross. Now, in Christ, we no longer have a debt of sin. This parable of Jesus tells us these things:

- We cannot earn or pay for our salvation through Christ.
- We cannot repay the big debt we owe to God our Father
- By grace alone we are saved.
- God is merciful and kind to all who call on Him.
- He will forgive all who repent and wipe out their sin.
- We must also be willing to forgive others over and over again if we want God to forgive us (18:35).



Talk about this: What do we learn from (a) the shepherd (b) the lost sheep (c) the other 99 sheep?



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 19

WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT DIVORCE AND FAMILIES?

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 10

MOTHERS COME TO JESUS WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Jesus went to the far side of the River Jordan to teach and heal the crowds. The mothers brought their children to Jesus. They wanted Him to place His hands on the children and pray for them. But the disciples sent them away. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me. Do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to people such as these." (19:14) Jesus placed his hands on them and went on His way.

We should do everything to help our children come to know Jesus. Teach them with Bible stories and times of prayer. Take them to Sunday School. Teach them around the table at home. Point them to Jesus any way you can. There is no better time than when they are young!

A RICH YOUNG MAN CAME TO JESUS

A rich young man came to Jesus. He said, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to receive eternal life?" (19:16) Jesus told him, "There is only One who is good... If you want to enter the Kingdom, obey His commandments." (19:17)

The young man had money and position. He was a leader and had "great possessions". He did good things and he believed that people who do good things go to Heaven. But he had no peace in his heart. Jesus knew this man was very religious. He knew the Ten Commandments God gave His people at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20). "I have kept all these commandments," the young man said. "What else do I need to do?" he asked (19:20). This young man was sure he was a good person but his heart was not at rest. He was right to obey God's commands for they are holy, just and good.

Jesus told him, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell your possessions and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in Heaven. Then come and follow Me." (19:21). In this way He pointed to the love of self in the young man's heart. Jesus wanted this man to see that he did not love his neighbour as much as he did himself (19:19).

The young man had a choice: wealth or Heaven? He chose wealth and went away sad. I am sure Jesus was sad, too, because He loved this young man and wanted him in His Kingdom. Jesus said to His disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven... it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle." (19:24)

Praise God that some wealthy people are truly saved. They are saved by faith in Christ's sacrificed blood like other believers. Rich people are always welcome, but do not receive special favour in the Kingdom of God.

REWARDS FOR FOLLOWING JESUS

Then Peter said to Jesus, "We disciples have left everything to follow You! What then will there be for us?" (19:27)

Jesus said this to encourage them: "At the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (19:28)

God calls all His followers to a life of service. He commanded His followers to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel" (28:18-20). To do this they have to leave home and family. Many give up good jobs. They leave fields and houses. Jesus said God will not fail to reward them. "Everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for My sake will receive a hundred times as much in this life and will inherit eternal life." (19:29)

Great rewards do come to Christ's followers in this life. Many leave homes and friends to serve the Lord far away. Others open their hearts and doors to God's servants. We must trust in God's promises. Then nothing will be too hard to do. Nothing will be too much to suffer for His sake. However, Jesus said, "Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first." (19:30) We may be weak and very poor here on Earth, but among the first in Heaven.



Talk about this: How should we minister to rich people?

The soldiers grabbed Jesus. He faced them calmly. Peter was not so calm. "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" he shouted (Luke 22:49).

Peter's heart was right, but he did something that was foolish. He drew his sword from under his coat and struck a man. His sword cut off the man's ear. The man was the servant of the High Priest (John 18:10).

Jesus told Peter, "Put your sword back... for all who fight by sword will die by the sword. Do you think I cannot call on My Father for help, and He will send twelve legions of angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" (Matthew 26:52-54).

Jesus asked the soldiers, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture Me? Every day I was with you... in the Temple courts, and you did not arrest Me" (26:55).

Then Jesus touched the man's bleeding ear and healed it. When He turned around, there was not one disciple in sight.

JESUS IS TAKEN TO THE JEWISH SANHEDRIN

Those who had arrested Jesus took him first to Caiaphas, the high priest. The teachers of the Law and the elders had come together there. Not too far away, Peter followed Jesus. He went right up to the courtyard of the high priest. He entered and sat down with the guards to see what would happen. The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were searching for something to say against Jesus. They wanted to put him to death. But they did not find enough proof, even though many false witnesses came forward (26:57-60).

Finally, two other witnesses came forward. They said, "This fellow claimed, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God. I can build it again in three days.'" (26:61)

Then the high priest stood up. He asked Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What are these charges that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent. The high priest said to him, "I am commanding you in the name of the living God. May he judge you if you do not tell the truth. Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God." (26:62-63)

"You have said so," Jesus replied. "But here is what I say to all of you. From now on, you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One. You will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes. He said, "He has spoken a very evil thing against God! Why do we need any more witnesses? You have heard Him say this evil thing. What do you think?"

"He must die!" they answered (26:64-66).

Then they spat in his face and hit him with their fists. Others slapped him. They said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah! Who hit you?" (26:67)

The blood of the sacrifice of Jesus is the new covenant poured out for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus told the disciples, "Do this to remember Me" (Luke 22:19). All over the world Christians remember the sacrifice of Jesus at "the Lord's table," during communion with the bread and the wine. There is now no reason to keep any other feast to symbolise God's new covenant (1 Corinthians 11:17-33). The service of communion should be celebrated often to remember Christ's death until He returns.

THE PRAYERS AND BETRAYAL OF JESUS

Then Jesus said to the disciples, "This very night you will turn away because of Me." After He was killed, they would be scattered and the words of the prophet would be fulfilled (Zechariah 13:7). So, He confirmed His promise to comfort them that He would rise again from death and they would see Him again in Galilee (26:32).

Peter said, "Even if all the others fall away from You, I never will." (26:33)

Jesus looked at Peter and said, "This very night, before the cock crows, you will say that you do not know Me three times." (26:34).

Peter said, "I may have to die with You. But I will never say I do not know You." And all the other disciples said the same thing (26:35).

Then Jesus went to a quiet place to pray. He took the eleven disciples with Him to a place called Gethsemane. He said to them, "Sit here while I pray." (26:36) He told Peter, James and John, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow. I feel close to death. Stay here and keep watch with Me" (26:38).

Then He went a little further and fell on His face and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will." (26:39) Here the cup means a symbol of God's wrath against sin (Jeremiah 25:15).

Luke tells us that Jesus was so overcome with sorrow that an angel came from Heaven and made him strong (Luke 22:43). Meanwhile, the disciples fell asleep. When Jesus came back to them, He asked Peter, "Could you men not keep watch with Me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation." (Matthew 26:40-41)

Jesus went away again to pray and again they fell asleep. The third time He came to them and said, "Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go!" (26:45-46)

At that very moment, Judas came with the Temple guards and chief priests. They were armed with swords and clubs (Matthew 26:47).

Judas told them, "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him."

"Greetings, Rabbi," he said, and he kissed Jesus on the face.



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 20

THE WORKERS IN GOD'S FIELD

Jesus then spoke more of the rewards to come to those who labour in God's harvest field. The field is the world of men and women. He said God's Kingdom was like a farmer who went out and hired people to work in his fields. The farmer promised to pay his workers a daily wage (20:1-2). Soon the farmer saw that he needed more workers so later in the day he went out and hired more workers. He agreed to pay them the daily wage for their work. He went out again and hired more workers. At the end of the day, all the workers received the same wages (20:3-7). Those who were hired late in the day were just as important as the other workers. It was not their fault that they had not been hired earlier.

Those who were hired first however grumbled against the farmer because those who were hired later worked fewer hours. "These people who were hired last worked only one hour," they said. "You have paid them the same as us. We have done most of the work and have been in the hot sun all day." (20:8-12)

The owner answered, "I am being fair to you. You agreed to work for the usual day's pay. Take your money and go. I want to give the one I hired last the same pay I gave you." (20:13-14) Being willing to wait and do the work of God, however small, opens up Kingdom opportunities to serve God through serving others. It also brings unexpected rewards. God does what is right. We must be ready to be used by Him. Then we must stay on the job until our part of God's work is done. He is just and full of mercy. God's servants must serve in a spirit of love. Those who leave all to serve Him must believe Paul's words, "Your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Jesus finished His parable by saying, "The last will be first, and the first will be last." (Matthew 20:16) Jesus knew that God offers eternal life in His Kingdom to the first and the last, the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor, the Jews and the Gentiles. All will receive the same reward for work done in faith. Any rewards, on Earth or in Heaven, come to us because God loves us. His rewards are just and righteous (Romans 4:4-5; Jeremiah 9:24).

JESUS SPEAKS ABOUT HIS COMING DEATH

Jesus and His disciples came closer to Jerusalem. He warned them once again that the Son of Man would be betrayed, they would condemn Him to death and on the third day He would be raised to life (20:18). This was the third time Jesus had spoken of His death. The disciples were troubled. What would happen to them after Jesus died? What would become of all those who believed in Him?

John and James told their mother Salome, what Jesus had said. She came with her sons and asked Jesus, "Promise that one of these two sons of mine may sit at Your right and the other at Your left in Your Kingdom." (20:21)

Jesus said to John and James, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" (20:22) By "cup" Jesus meant His suffering and death on the cross. They answered, "We can!"

This showed that they did not understand what Jesus meant. They did not understand that He, the Son of God, would die a cruel death as the Son of Man, but bear the sins of the whole world. They did not understand His heavenly Kingdom was spiritual, beyond time and space. They did not understand that He would come again in glory with the angels to gather together all who loved and honoured Him in His earthly Kingdom.

Jesus knew what would happen after the Holy Spirit came on James and John at Pentecost (Acts 2:4). He said, "You will indeed drink from (or taste of) My cup." He also told them that even if they suffered and died for Him, it was not His right to give them a special place in Heaven at the side of God. God Himself will give each person the place reserved for them.

The ten other disciples were not happy with James and John. Jesus was quick to remind all twelve disciples that they were not to be like men of this world. They were to be like Him. He did not come to be honoured, but to serve and give His life for all who will receive Him. This was the price for setting people free (20:28).

"SON OF DAVID, HAVE MERCY"

As Jesus and His disciples left Jericho, two blind men sat by the road. When they heard that Jesus was passing by, they shouted, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (20:29-30) Mark said that one blind man was Bartimeus, son of Timaus.

The crowd told them to stop shouting. But they shouted louder and louder. Jesus loved these blind men. He stopped and called out, "What do you want Me to do for you?" Jesus wanted them to confess their need.

They answered, "Lord, we want to see." Jesus touched their eyes. Immediately they received their sight and followed Him (20:30-34).



Talk about this: What three important things did Jesus tell his disciples before the Last Supper? (20:18)



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 21

JESUS RIDES INTO JERUSALEM ON A DONKEY

Jesus and His disciples then walked from Jericho towards Jerusalem. They came to Bethphage near Bethany. This was five days before Jesus was

Jesus and His disciples returned to Bethany. Bethany was where Mary and Martha and their brother Lazarus lived. Mary often sat at the feet of Jesus to hear His teaching.

Simon the leper also lived in Bethany (26:6). While Jesus was in his house, a woman came with a jar of very costly perfume. She broke the jar and poured the oil on the head of Jesus (26:7). She worshipped Him.

Jesus was pleased but the disciples asked "Why this waste? This perfume could have been sold at a high price and the money given to the poor." (26:9)

Jesus said to them, "Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to Me. The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have Me" (26:10-11). "She poured the perfume on my body to prepare me to be buried. What I'm about to tell you is true. What she has done will be told anywhere this Good News is preached all over the world. It will be told in memory of her." (26:12-13)

Without knowing what she had done, this woman had prepared her Master for burial.

This was the time when, Judas, one of the 12 disciples, went to the chief priests to prepare to betray Him. He asked, "What will you give me if I hand Jesus over to you?" So they counted out 30 silver coins for him. From then on, Judas watched for the right time to betray Jesus and hand Him over to them. (26:14-16)

THE LAST SUPPER

On the first day of Passover, Jesus sent His disciples to find a place where they could eat the Passover meal together (26:17). He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfilment in the Kingdom of God." (Luke 22:15-16).

Christ's last meal with them would be a special Passover feast to remember His death. Many years before, the Israelites sprinkled the blood of innocent lambs on their doorposts in Egypt. (Exodus 12:7). This guided the angel of death to pass over their homes where they lived as slaves to Pharaoh and the idols of Egypt (Exodus 12:13). Jesus Christ is the innocent Lamb of God. He would now give His own life to set the people free from slavery to all the sins of the world (John 1:29).

While they were eating bread without yeast at the table, Jesus said, "One of you will betray Me." (26:21). They were sad.

Judas Iscariot said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

Jesus then took a cup of wine, gave thanks, and offered it to His disciples. He said to them, "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the redemption (forgiveness) of sins." (26:28)

(25:41-46) Earlier, Jesus had warned about the "signs of the end of the age". (24:4-12) "But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved." (24:13)

But He will say to those on His left, "I was hungry, but you gave Me nothing to eat. I was thirsty, but you gave Me nothing to drink. I was a stranger, but you did not invite Me in. I needed clothes, but you did not give Me any. I was sick and in prison, but you did not take care of Me." (25:42-43)

The sons and daughters of the Kingdom are known by their deeds. They feed the poor, heal the sick, clothe the children, visit people in prison, and give cups of cold water in the name of Jesus. Followers of Christ do deeds of mercy because God's love is working in their hearts through the promised Holy Spirit. They do good deeds in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:10).

We must love all classes of people. Christ's love in us must flow out to all people. "For God so loved the world..." (John 3:16) God loves every person and Jesus showed God's love for all people (John 13:15; 1 John 4:7). When people expect so much of us and we are at risk of letting them down, remember just how much Jesus needs our obedience as He intercedes for them through us.

Heavenly Father, forgive us and our nation for the sin of failing to obey You and Your Bible truth. Thank You for your salvation through faith in Jesus Christ who took the punishment for our sin upon Himself. Through Your Holy Spirit's power, enable us to glorify Your name and show the compassion of Jesus for the needy and the lost so that His suffering was not in vain.

As the "signs of the end of the age" increase around us, may we share with others the joy of God's Good News, and witness together "signs and wonders" of ministry in the Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus our Saviour. Amen



Talk about this: How does the parable of the ten bridesmaids apply to today?



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 26

THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

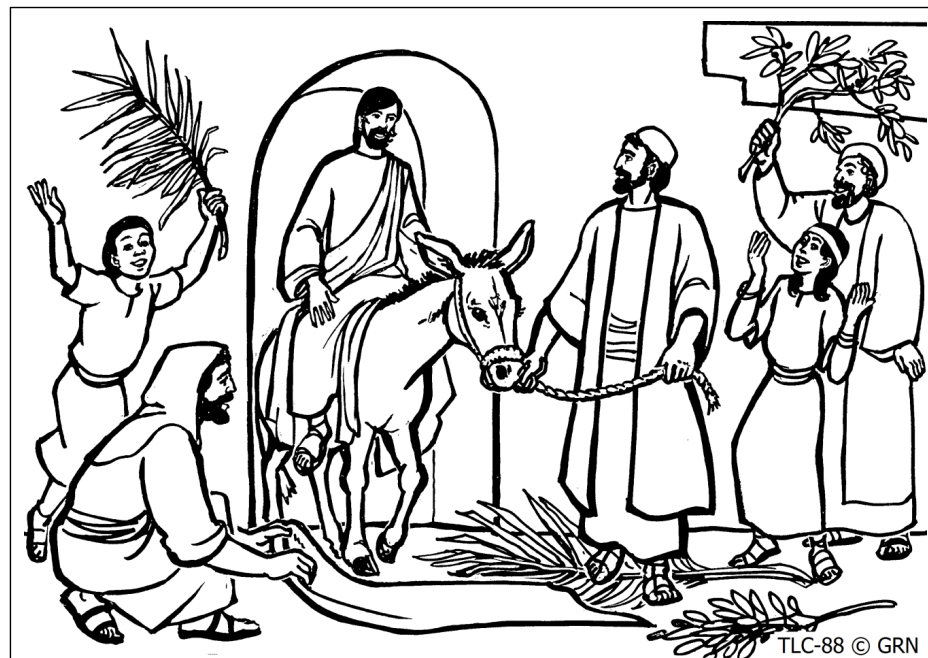
Then Jesus said to the disciples, "The Passover is two days away and the Son of Man will be handed over to be nailed to a cross." (26:2).

At Passover each family killed a lamb to remember how God brought the people of Israel out of Egypt (Exodus 12). Worshippers came from all the towns of Galilee and from far-away places and filled the city for the week of feasts.

This Passover feast was also the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Mark 14:1). The chief priests and elders plotted how they might kill Jesus. To kill Him during the Feast might have caused a riot (Matthew 26:4).

crucified. Jesus said to His disciples, "Go to the village ahead of you...you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." (21:2-3)

The disciples found the donkey and her colt and brought them to Jesus. They threw their cloaks across the donkey's back and Jesus rode on the donkey down the Mount of Olives toward the city. The Jewish leaders watched. The prophet had written, "See your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9). He had no chariot or fine horse. He had no centurions with a hundred soldiers. He wore no fine robes.



The triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem for the last time

However, a large crowd followed Jesus. Many had been healed by His touch. Many others were coming to the city to celebrate the Passover and believed He was their Messiah. They took palm branches and waved them in the air shouting, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!" (21:9)

Pilgrims came up to Jerusalem for the three yearly feasts. They always sang and waved branches as they went up to the Temple (Psalm 113-118). Now Jesus, the greatest pilgrim who ever lived, came to the Temple and the city was stirred up to ask, "Who is this?" (21:11)

All who wished could claim Him as their Saviour and all who dared shouted "He is the king!" The common people received Him but their leaders did not.

When the leaders asked, "Who is this?" The crowds shouted back, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth!" (21:11)

Jesus came offering salvation and peace to all, not judgment. He wept over the city and longed that men might receive Him and be saved from their sins (Luke 19:41-44).

The prophet Zechariah said Jesus would come into the city of Jerusalem "righteous and offering salvation" (Zechariah 9:9). The prophet gave us a picture of King Jesus coming to His own people. He had come to proclaim salvation to Israel and peace to the nations (9:10).

JESUS TEACHES AT THE TEMPLE

Next day Jesus "entered the Temple area and drove out all who were buying and selling there." (Matthew 21:12) They had their tables set up in the court of the Gentiles and Jesus was very angry when he saw them. Merchants set up the tables to exchange money. Temple taxes could only be paid in Jewish coins. Other traders sold animals or birds for sacrifices (Luke 2:24).

Jesus used the Jew's own Scriptures to point them to the truth: "It is written," He said, 'My house will be called a house of prayer, ' but you are making it a den of thieves.'" (Matthew 21:13; Isaiah 56:7). Then He drove the merchants out and overturned their tables.

Jesus found God's House empty of glory to God. God had given Israel His blessing, but they did not worship Him in Spirit and truth (John 4:24). The blind and lame came to Jesus in the Temple and He healed them (Matthew 21:14). But the Jewish leaders were angry.

"Do You hear what these children are saying?" they asked Jesus. "Yes," He said, "I hear them. Have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants You have established praise.'" (21:16; Psalm 8:2)

Then Jesus left the Temple and went out of the city (21:17). God finally left these Jewish leaders to their traditions and their polluted buildings. In AD 70 the Temple was destroyed. It had come to represent 'man without God' as a physical building rather than the spiritual House of God.

THE UNFRUITFUL FIG TREE

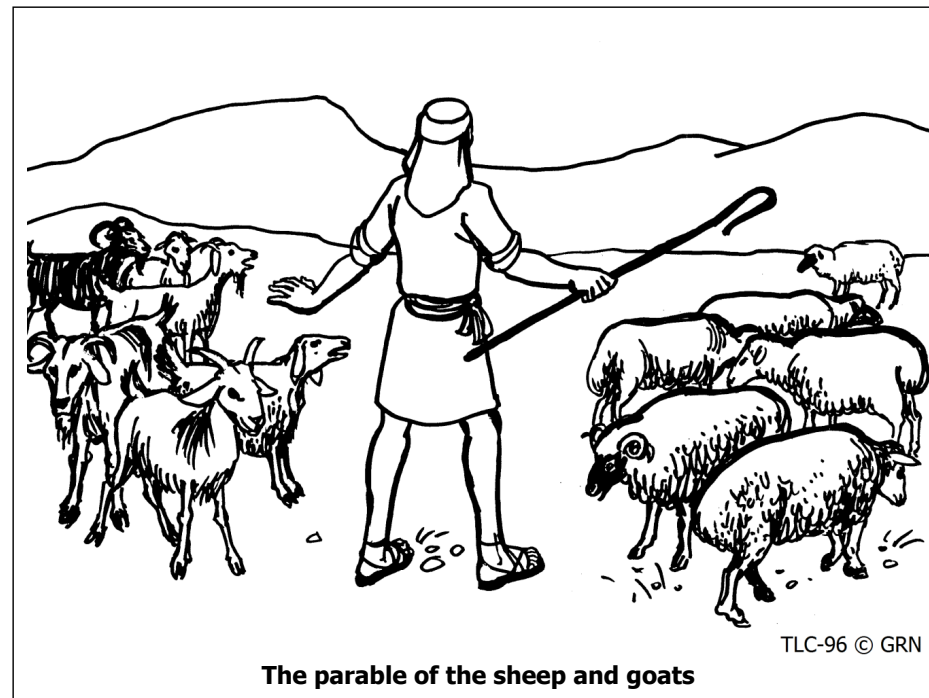
THE JEWISH LEADERS QUESTION JESUS

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 11

THE PARABLE OF THE TWO SONS

Jesus knew that the elders and chief priests were proud men. They lived by God's Law and thought they were righteous. So He told them a parable. A man

At the end of the age, all nations will stand before the Judge, Jesus Christ (John 5:22, 27). Every soul who ever lived will be there. The Judge will separate them into two groups. He will separate the sheep from the goats, those who have been born again from those who have not repented. He will put the sheep on His right-hand side, the place of God's blessing and privilege (Matthew 25:32-33).



The parable of the sheep and goats

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Then Jesus said, "The King will speak to those on His right. 'My Father has blessed you. Come and take what is yours. It is My Kingdom prepared for you since the world was created. I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat. I was thirsty, and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger, and you invited Me in.'" (25:34-36)

"Then the people who have done what is right will ask, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You? When did we see You thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You as a stranger and invite You in?'" (25:37-39)

"The King will reply, 'What I am about to tell you is true. Anything you did for one of the least important of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.' Then He will say to those on his left, 'Go away from Me into the fire that burns forever... But those who have done what is right will receive eternal life.'"

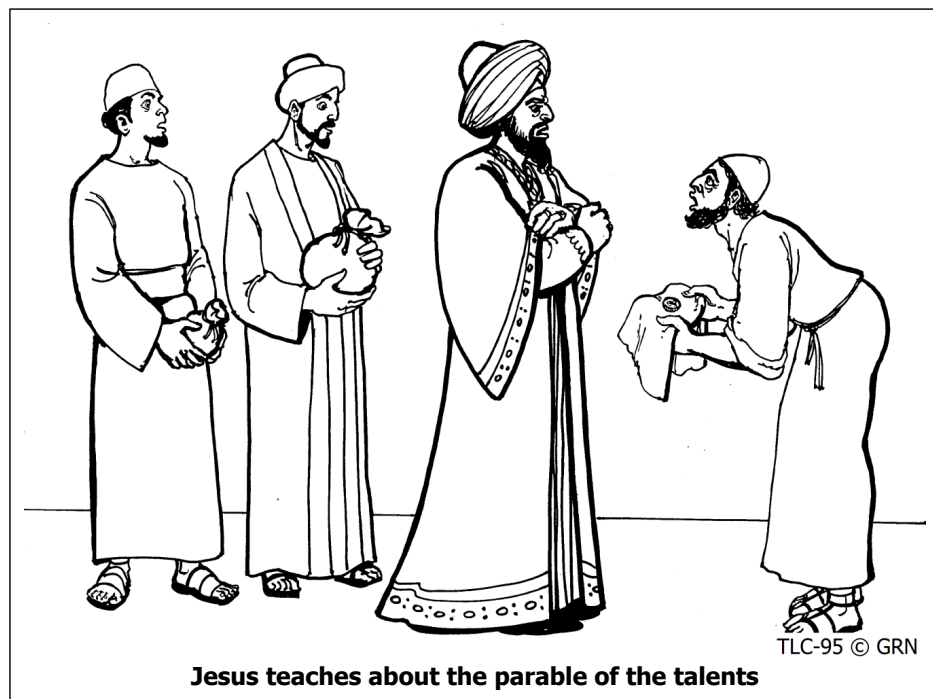
faithful in serving God and about a lost opportunity. Let us be faithful to do His work now, while we have the time. If we do not use the gifts God has given us, they will be taken away. If we grieve the Holy Spirit, He will leave us (Ephesians 4:30).

Some people are like the lazy servant in the story. The servant who uses God's gifts for himself will be punished. Jesus said that such a worthless servant would be cast out (Matthew 25:30). The lazy servant did not obey his Master. He lost everything. When his Master returned, the Master said, "Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents." (25:28)

If we reject the gifts of Christ and refuse to serve Him, we bring upon ourselves eternal condemnation. The Pharisees at the time of Jesus wasted their talents in traditions and laws made by man. They did not use what God had given them to help others (23:13).

THE PARABLE OF THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

Jesus had spoken earlier about two groups of people. Those 'born again' by the Spirit of God who serve in His Kingdom are like faithful sheep (John 3:3, 5). Those who have only a form of godliness are like disobedient goats (2 Timothy 3:5).



Jesus teaches about the parable of the talents

had two sons. Their father told his sons to go and work in his vineyard. The first said "I will not," but later went. The second said, "I will, sir," but did not go. Jesus asked, "Which one did what his father wanted?" (21:28-31)

The first son was like those who knew they were sinners, but said "No" to Jesus. Later they repented and gladly followed Him.

The Jewish leaders were like the second son in the parable. They said they would serve their father God, but they did not. Yet Jesus left the door open for even these self-righteous Pharisees. He said those who knew they were sinners, including "the tax collectors and prostitutes", were repenting and would enter the Kingdom of God ahead of them! (21:31) Jesus told them that John the Baptist, God's last Old Testament prophet, "came to show you the right way to live" (21:32).

Jesus showed them in this story that neither son fully obeyed his father. But the son who obeyed late, repented and did the father's will. Heaven will be filled with sinners who first say "No" but repent later in life. Jesus said, "John came to show you the right way to live. And you did not believe him. But the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. You saw this but even then, you did not turn away from your sins and believe him."

May our heavenly Father help us to be good examples like John and follow the teachings of Jesus our Saviour.

THE PARABLE OF THE TENANTS AND THE VINEYARD

See Manna Publications Bible commentary Mark Chapter 12

 **Talk about this:** How did Jesus (a) fulfil prophecy (b) challenge religious leaders (c) teach the crowds?

 **Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 22**

THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST

Jesus told another parable about a great king who gave a wedding feast for his son the prince. The meaning of the story is clear. God planned this wedding feast for His Son, the Prince of Peace. It was planned in Heaven from eternity past. This wedding celebrates the marriage of Christ the Bridegroom with His Church on Earth, His bride for eternity to come (Revelation 19:9).

The feast is therefore a reminder of what God does for all who come to Jesus. He saves them. He changes them. Then He takes them to Heaven. Jesus often spoke of the Kingdom of Heaven as a feast. It is rich. It is free. And it can be ours by faith.

The King invited the nation of Israel to the wedding feast first. He sent many prophets to tell His people about the feast. Many put their faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They looked forward to the coming of Christ

their Messiah. Then God sent John the Baptist, God's final prophet, who preached that all must repent. Then God sent His only Son from Heaven (John 1:14). He gave the invitation to the 'wedding feast' to all men everywhere (Matthew 22:8-10).

God's servants preached this Good News on the street corners and in the markets (22:9). Everyone heard the invitation. Jesus said many people received the King's invitation. They went to the feast. The King prepared the feast, but the guests also had to prepare and put on wedding clothes (22:11-12). The Gospel calls us to leave our old ways and live clean and holy lives.

The King of Heaven said, "Just as He who called you (invited you) is holy, so be holy in all that you do." (1 Peter 1:15) All who want fellowship with God must have "clean wedding clothes".

People who live unholy lives will be rejected and cut off from God forever (Matthew 7:23; 10:26). Jesus said many are called, but few choose to repent and make themselves ready (22:14).

THE JEWISH LEADERS ASK JESUS TRICK QUESTIONS

The Jewish leaders sent some Pharisees to Jesus to trap Him (22:15). They did not like to pay taxes to Rome and they wanted Jesus to say words against the Roman Empire. They probably wanted the Romans to arrest and kill Him. So they asked Him, "Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?" (22:17)

If He said it was right to pay taxes to the Emperor, the Jewish people would be angry with Him. If He said it was not right to pay taxes to Rome, they would accuse Him of not obeying the Roman law. Jesus knew their wicked hearts and asked them to bring Him a common Roman coin. On one side of the coin there was a portrait of Emperor Tiberius. This coin was used to pay taxes to Rome. Jesus asked, "Whose portrait is this?" (22:20)

They answered "Caesar's," which meant "the Emperor".

Then Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (22:21-22) They were amazed at the answer of Jesus, so they left Him alone at that time.

MARRIAGE WHEN THE DEAD RISE

That same day the Sadducees came to Jesus with a trick question. They did not believe that people rise from the dead. "Teacher," they said, "here is what Moses told us. If a man dies without having children, his brother must get married to the widow. He must provide children to carry on his brother's name. There were seven brothers among us. The first one got married and died. Since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brothers. It happened right on down to the seventh brother. Finally, the woman died. Now then, when the dead rise, whose wife will she be? All seven of them were married to her." (22:23-28)

come." We must be sure we remain filled with the oil of the Spirit to have the wisdom of God within us in the Last Days. The Holy Spirit comes directly from God. He cannot be borrowed from others.

The five virgins who were ready went in to the wedding with the bridegroom and the door was shut (Matthew 25:10). Those who were not ready cried, "Sir! Sir! Open the door for us!" (25:11). But it was too late. Jesus warned, "Keep watch because you do not know the day or the hour" of His return (25:13). He warned of the distress there would be for those who believed but had no witness of the Holy Spirit in their lives (Romans 8:9). When He comes again, God will shut the door to Heaven and they will be left out!

As the time of the end of the age draws near, Christians must "trim and fill their lamps" to be ready for their Bridegroom to appear. In these last days the Holy Spirit is calling believers to live holy lives, to watch and pray and be ready for Christ's coming. Those who believe will be made pure and spotless. They will enter Heaven with the Bridegroom and live with Him forever (Matthew 13:43; Ephesians 5:27).

We note the importance of receiving Holy Spirit wisdom regarding the timing of God's future events and our readiness to witness our faith to prepare others for Christ's return. Let us be sure there is oil in our lamps!

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

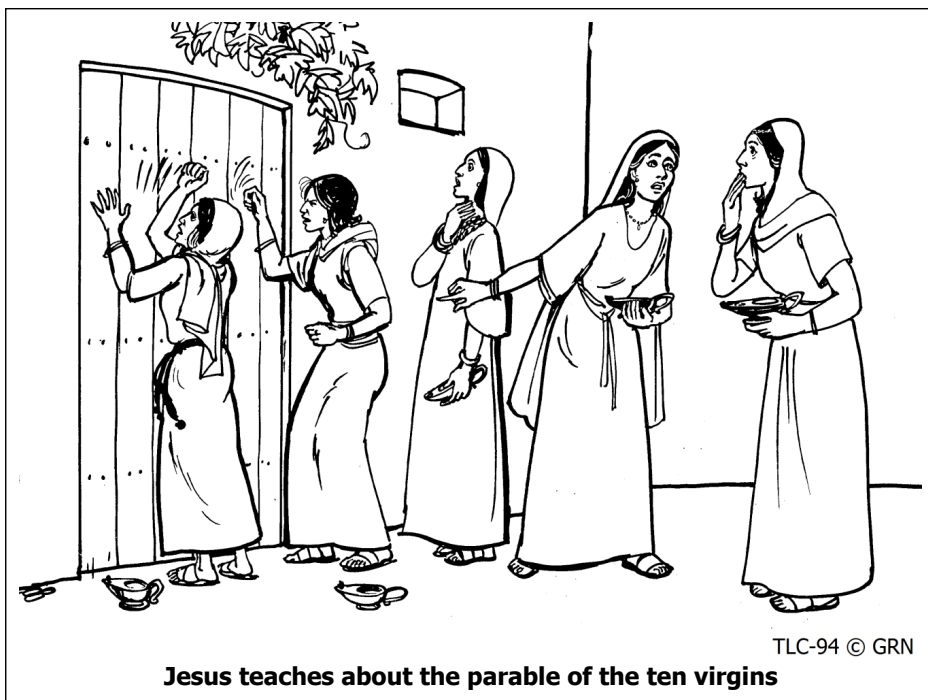
Jesus said His Second Coming will be like another parable about a man who planned to go on a long journey. Before he left, the man called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one, he gave five talents of money. To another, he gave two talents. To another, he gave one talent. This is because Christ gives different gifts to different people to match their ability (25:14-15).

God does not give us talents or money for our own profit. He does not give them to make us rich. We must use our gifts to build up the family of God and bring others into it (1 Corinthians 14:5).

The Master knows each one of us. He knows what we can do for Him. He trusts us to do His business, to manage His property. He knows just how much to give to each one because He knows us completely. He gives some great works to do for Him. He gives others less work to do (4:2). Whatever gifts He gives us, He wants us to use them well.

What is the business of the Kingdom? To preach the Gospel of salvation in Christ alone (2 Timothy 4:2). To teach Bible truth to new believers (Hebrews 5:12). And to train leaders in the ministry of the Holy Spirit with signs and wonders (1 Timothy 4:11).

Two of the three servants put the master's work first in their lives. They earned more money with the money they were given (25:16-17). The third was lazy or afraid and lost his chance to do Kingdom work. He buried the talents to keep them safe until his master returned (25:18). So this story is about being



No-one knew the hour when the bridegroom would come. So the virgins waited with their lamps beside them. The lamps were small vessels filled with oil and fixed to the top of poles. At midnight the cry went out: "Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!" (25:6)

Five of the girls were foolish. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any extra oil with them (25:3). When the bridegroom came, the foolish virgins asked the other five for oil. But the five wise virgins could not give them any oil.

In the Bible, oil is a picture of the Holy Spirit. The lamps are our witness and the light is Christ living in us by His Spirit. He said to those who followed Him, "You are the Light of the world." (5:14) By this, Jesus meant the unwise virgins had no oil of the Holy Spirit working in their lives. They were not prepared and ready to meet Christ nor to be good witnesses to others.

This parable speaks to us of being ready for Christ's Second Coming. When He comes, we will not have time to get ready (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). But all who are ready will meet and greet the Bridegroom of the Church, Jesus our Saviour and provider.

Lamps without oil are dark. Lives without God's Spirit are dead, dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1; Matthew 25:13). Jesus warned his followers, "So keep watch. You do not know the time the bridegroom will

Jesus replied, "You are mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures. And you do not know the power of God. When the dead rise, they will not get married. And their parents will not give them to be married. They will be like the angels in Heaven... Have you not read what God said to you? He said, 'I am the God of Abraham. I am the God of Isaac. And I am the God of Jacob.' (Exodus 3:6) He is not the God of the dead. He is the God of the living." (22:29-32)

When the crowds heard this, they were amazed by what he taught. (22:33)

WHICH IS THE MOST IMPORTANT COMMANDMENT?

The Pharisees heard that the Sadducees were not able to answer Jesus. So the Pharisees met together. One of them was an authority on the Law. So he tested Jesus with a question. "Teacher," he asked, "which is the most important commandment in the Law?" (22:36)

Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your mind. (Deuteronomy 6:5) This is the first and most important commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbour as you love yourself. (Leviticus 19:18) Everything that is written in the Law and the Prophets is based on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:40)

WHOSE SON IS THE CHRIST?

The next time the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them a question of His own. "What do you think about the Messiah? Who's Son is He?" (22:41)

"The son of David," they replied.

He said to them, "Then why does David call him 'Lord'? The Holy Spirit spoke through David himself. David said, 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand until I put your enemies under your control."' (Psalm 110:1) So if David calls him 'Lord,' how can He be David's son?" No-one could give any answer to Him. From that day, no-one dared to ask him any more questions (Matthew 22:41-46)



Talk about this: Describe how to apply the most important commandments mentioned by Jesus.



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 23

A WARNING AGAINST DOING THINGS FOR THE WRONG REASONS

Jesus then spoke to the crowds and to his disciples. "The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees sit in the seat of Moses," he said. "So, you must be careful to do everything they say [from the Scriptures]. But do not do what they do. They do not practice what they preach. They impose heavy loads that are hard to

carry. Then they put them on other people's shoulders. But they themselves are not willing to help them.

"Everything they do is done for others to see. On their foreheads and arms, they wear little boxes that hold Scripture verses... They love to sit down in the place of honour at dinners. They also love to have the most important seats in the synagogues. They love to be greeted with respect in the markets. But you have one Teacher, and He is the Messiah. The most important person among you will be your servant. People who lift themselves up will be made humble. And people who make themselves humble will be lifted up." (23:5-12).

"HOW TERRIBLE FOR THE TEACHERS AND THE PHARISEES!"

Jesus then accused the religious leaders of doing seven wrong things:

- "How terrible it will be for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You pretenders! You shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter. And you will not let those enter who are trying to!" (23:13-14)
- "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You travel everywhere to win one person to your faith. Then you make them twice as much a child of Hell as you are." (23:15)
- "How terrible for you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone makes a promise in the name of the Temple, it means nothing. But anyone who makes a promise in the name of the gold of the Temple must keep that promise.' You are blind and foolish! Which is more important? Is it the gold? Or is it the Temple? Anyone making a promise in the name of the Temple makes a promise in the name of it and the One who lives in it. And anyone making a promise in the name of Heaven makes a promise in the name of God's throne and the One who sits on it." (23:16-22)
- "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You give God a tenth of your spices, mint, dill and cumin. But you have not practiced the more important things of the Law, fairness, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the last things without failing to do the first." (12:23)
- "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You clean the outside of a cup and dish. But on the inside, you are full of greed. You only want to satisfy yourselves." (23:25-26)
- "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You are like tombs that are painted white. They look beautiful on the outside. But on the inside, they are full of the bones of the dead. On the outside you seem to be doing what is right. But on the inside, you are full of what is wrong. You pretend to be what you are not." (23:27-28)

- The ten virgins and their lamps (25:1-13).
- The talents (money) given to the servants (25:14-28).

The first two parables tell us that true disciples are faithful and wise. Jesus is like the master of a large house, the "household of God" (Ephesians 2:19; Galatians 6:10). He trusts His disciples to take care of His household, while He is away. "So you also must be ready. The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him." (Matthew 24:44)

These parables are a warning to church leaders to protect God's people and teach the truth of God's word and not error. The Master provides all the supplies. His disciples must give them out to others 'at the proper time' (24:45). He trusts us to do this (25:21; 1 Corinthians 4:2). Others must be able to depend on us. Many are not faithful and waste their Master's goods and gifts (23:25; 24:49).

As we wait for Christ's return, we must remain busy in what He has given us to do. If we are unfaithful, we dishonour Jesus.



Talk about this: Describe the short-term and long-term future predicted by Jesus.



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 25

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGIN BRIDESMAIDS

Because some people thought that the Kingdom of God was going to appear very soon, Jesus told this parable of the ten virgins to describe the events of the future Kingdom of Heaven on Earth. It is meant to portray the behaviour of the church members as they await the Second Coming of Christ. He told this parable to illustrate how some believers would know the truth of God but fail in times of need because they were unprepared to put their spiritual knowledge and calling into practice.

Jesus said, "Ten virgins took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom." (25:1) Jesus is the bridegroom in this story. The ten virgins represent the Christian Church as it waits for Jesus to return. At that time the custom of the Jews was for a bridegroom to come to the bride's house at night and take her to his own home. The bridesmaids would go out to welcome the groom. So if he came at night, they would need to illuminate their path.

(24:27; 1 Corinthians 15:52). People would be surprised and there would be no more time to repent.

Before that day, many will say, "I am the Christ." False Christ's meet in dark rooms or out in the desert. Do not follow them (Matthew 24:23-26)!

Jesus told them what the end of the world would be like. He used words spoken by the prophet Isaiah. "The sun will be darkened... the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." (24:29; Isaiah 13:10; Hebrews 12:25-28) "At that time the Son of Man will appear in the sky." (24:30)

Jesus said no-one knows the day nor the hour when He will come again. Not even the angels in Heaven know. Jesus Himself does not know. Only God His Father in Heaven knows the day (24:36). However, there would be clear signs for all to see before Jesus comes again (24:33, 37).

His second coming will be unexpected. Not many will think, "Jesus may come today." Most people will be busy doing their own business. Because of the wickedness in Noah's day, God sent a flood. God told Noah and Noah told the people God would send a flood. The people took no notice of Noah's warning. They went on with their own business and they were all swept away and drowned in the flood. "That is how it will be when the Son of Man comes. In the days before Noah's Flood, people were eating and drinking. They were getting married. They were giving their daughters to be married. They knew nothing about what would happen." (24:37-39) Noah was righteous and found favour with God. But other men were enjoying their sinful lives and did not fear the judgement of God. They did not believe a flood would come and end everything. Therefore, they were not ready and all perished.

Jesus warned, "Two men will be in the field. One will be taken to Heaven. The other will be left to God's terrible judgment. The same will happen to two women grinding at the mill. One will be taken and the other left behind." (24:40-41)

"So keep watch. You do not know on what day your Lord will come." (24:42) To keep watch means to look always for the Lord, to meditate on Him, to desire His company, to remain obedient to His will, and to immediately repent of any known sin. Only if we do these things will we be ready for His coming. This is why it is important to remember what Jesus asked us to do at His Last Supper (Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:19-20).

FURTHER PARABLES OF JESUS

Christians must watch and serve their Master while He is away. To show this, Jesus spoke four more parables. His words "keep watch," bring us to these parables:

- The owner of the house and the thief (24:43-44).
- The faithful and the wicked servants (24:45-51).

- "How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You build tombs for the prophets. You decorate the graves of the godly. And you say, 'If we had lived in the days of those who lived before us, we would not have done what they did.' You are witnesses against yourselves! You admit that you are the children of those who murdered the prophets." (23:29-31)

HOW WILL WE ESCAPE JUDGMENT?

Jesus continued, "You nest of poisonous snakes! How will you escape from being sentenced to Hell? I am sending you prophets, wise people, and teachers. You will kill some of them. You will nail some to a cross. Others you will whip in your synagogues." (23:3-34)

Jesus also warned them that their generation would live to see their nation punished for all the murders of God's servants from Abel to Zechariah (23:35-36).

The coming judgment of their city brought tears to the eyes of Jesus. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You kill the prophets and throw stones in order to kill those who are sent to you. How often I have longed to gather together your children. I wanted to be like a hen who gathers her chicks under her wings. And you would not let Me!" (Matthew 23:37) Jesus longed to protect His own people from the coming tribulation. Many would not accept Him as their Messiah. They made no place for Him in their hearts. And they would kill the only One who could save them!

Jesus told them, "Your house is left to you desolate." (23:38) That means their city and the Temple would be destroyed. God's judgment on that generation followed quickly. Some of the followers of Jesus lived to see the Roman armies destroy Jerusalem in AD 70. History also tells us that from the beginning of the New Testament period, thousands were killed because they preached the Good News of salvation through the blood of Christ, Israel's Messiah.



Talk about this: How should we pray for unrighteous religious leaders and devout preachers of the Good News of Christ?



Bible Reading: Matthew Chapter 24

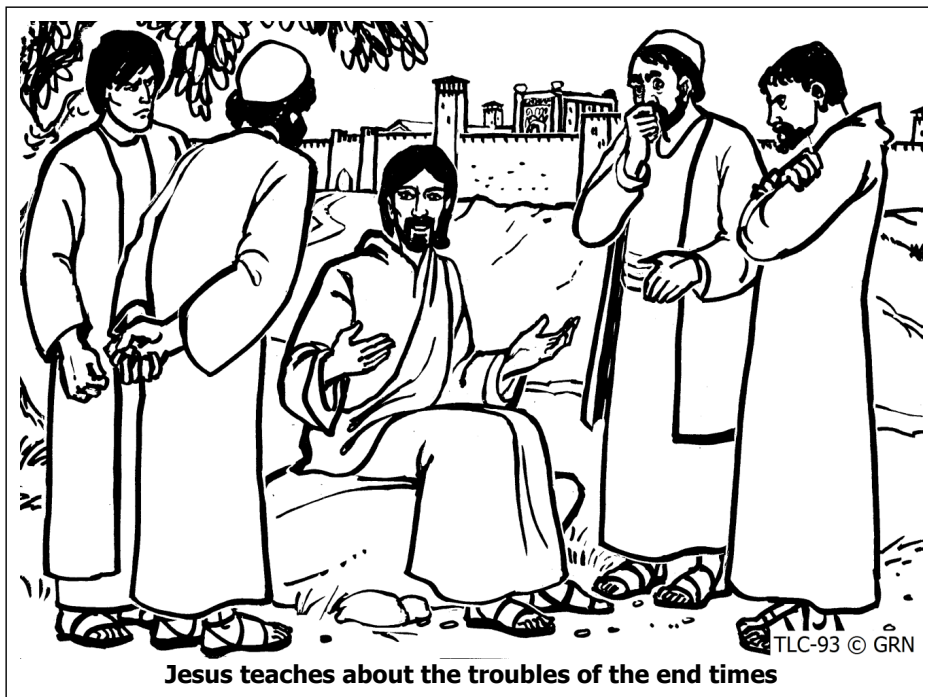
SIGNS OF THE END DAYS AND TROUBLES

Jesus and the disciples left the Temple courts (24:1). As they walked away from the Temple, the disciples said to Jesus, "Look Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" (Mark 13:1). Jesus turned to them and His words must have shocked and puzzled them. He said, "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another, and everyone will be thrown down." (Matthew 24:2)

Herod's Temple was the pride of their city. Its beauty and size could not be matched. It stood high above the city. Everyone could see it. Its walls were made of huge slabs of stone 4 metres high and 9 metres long.

In the evening Jesus went out to the hill called the Mount of Olives. It looked over the city and the Temple (Luke 21:37). As the disciples sat with Jesus, they asked, "When will this happen? What will be the sign of Your coming? What will be the sign of the end of the age?" (24:3)

Jesus answered, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, claiming, 'I am the Christ', and will deceive many." (24:4-5)



He told them what would happen to that generation (24:9-11, 34). The Romans would come and destroy the Temple and the city. Then He told them things that would happen at the end of the age, of wars, famines and earthquakes. He said, "Those who remain strong in the faith will be saved. This Good News of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come." (24:13-14)

After His resurrection, Jesus told the apostle John, "I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have. Then no one will take away your crown... I will make that person a pillar in the Temple of my God." (Revelation 3:11-12)

Christ's followers would be hated and persecuted and many would turn back from following Christ (Matthew 24:9-10). God would help them in their sufferings. He would show them "a way of escape" (1 Corinthians 10:13). And He would shorten the persecution for the sake of the elect, His own people.

The things that would happen before Jerusalem was destroyed were "the beginning of birth pains" (24:8). Jesus gave them the sign of Daniel the prophet (24:15; Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). This prophecy was partly fulfilled in 168 BC when the Syrian general Antiochus put a statue of the idol Zeus on the altar in the Temple. Some also say the Roman Emperor put a statue of himself on the altar in the Temple before the soldiers destroyed it in all AD 70. At this sign the believers were told to flee out of the city (Luke 21:20-21). They obeyed. They fled to the little town of Pella across the river Jordan. It is said that not one Christian died when Jerusalem was destroyed. Thousands of Jews were killed by the Romans at that time.

AFTER THESE GREAT TROUBLES

The disciples needed to look beyond the fall of Jerusalem to Christ's coming again in glory with a host of angels (24:30-31; Mark 13:26). In these verses Jesus stopped speaking about Jerusalem and began to speak about His second coming. He said He will come, "on the clouds of the sky" (1 Thessalonians 4:17). His coming would be sudden and bright, like lightning, and in every place at once (1 Corinthians 15:52). People would be surprised and there would be no more time to repent.

Before that day, many will say, "I am the Christ". False Christ's meet in dark rooms or out in the desert. Do not seek them out (24:23-26).

Jesus told them what the end of the world would be like. He used words spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "The sun will be darkened... the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken." (24:29; Isaiah 13:10; Hebrews 12:25-28) At that time believers will be caught up to meet Jesus in the air (1 Thess 4:17). Peter said that those who have not repented will be cut off from God forever.

Jesus said, "all nations of the earth will mourn" when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds... He will send His angels... and they will gather His elect (His chosen people) from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (24:30-31). At that time, He will send His angels to separate the true from the false, the sheep from the goats (25:31-46).

THE FUTURE RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST

In these verses, Jesus began to speak more about His Second Coming. He said He will come, "on the clouds of the sky" (24:30; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). His coming would be sudden and bright, like lightning, and in every place at once