

Luke

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WHY READ THIS BOOK? ▶

INTRODUCTION

Does this book offer anything that can't be found in the other Gospels? Yes, it offers plenty. Just as a witness at a trial does more than confirm the story of another witness, Luke expands the story of Jesus. You'll gain new information from Luke and see Jesus from a new perspective. Of all the Gospel writers, Luke gives us the greatest variety of teaching, parables and events from the life of Jesus.

WHO WROTE THIS BOOK? ▶

Luke, a companion of the apostle Paul, also wrote Acts. He was probably a Gentile and a medical doctor.

TO WHOM WAS IT WRITTEN AND WHY? ▶

Luke wrote to Theophilus, probably a Gentile who was either a new believer or someone seeking to learn about Jesus. *Theophilus* means “lover of God,” leading some to think the book was originally written to a general audience of people who loved God. Luke hoped Theophilus and other readers would learn that God's love reaches beyond the Jews to the entire world.

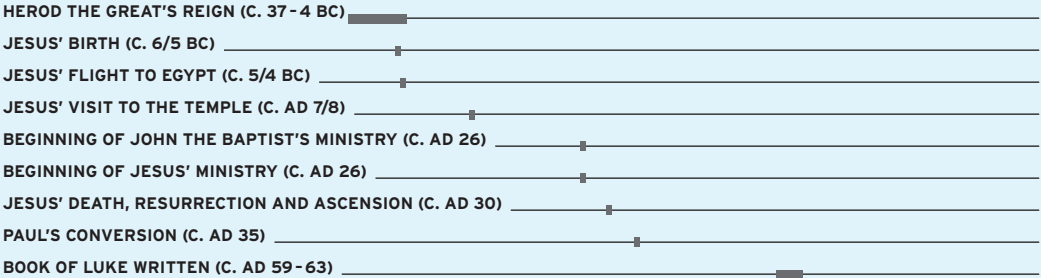
WHEN WAS IT WRITTEN? ▶

Possibly AD 59 to 63, although some think it may have been written 15 to 20 years later.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN LUKE: ▶

Watch for ways that Luke elaborates on the accounts of Matthew and Mark. You'll find new information here – more stories about Jesus' birth, for example, and the parable of the Good Samaritan. You'll also see Luke's personal perspective in the incidents he included – stories, for instance, that demonstrate Jesus' interest in the non-Jewish world and the poor.

WHEN DID THESE THINGS HAPPEN? 10 BC AD 1 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



INTRODUCTION

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled^a among us,² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word.³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST FORETOLD

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron.⁶ Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly.⁷ But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God,⁹ he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense.¹⁰ And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense.¹² When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear.¹³ But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John.¹⁴ He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth,¹⁵ for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born.¹⁶ He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God.¹⁷ And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

18 Zechariah asked the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years."

19 The angel said to him, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.²⁰ And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens, because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time."

21 Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah and wondering why he stayed so long in the temple.²² When he came out, he could not speak to them. They realized he had seen a vision in the temple, for he kept making signs to them but remained unable to speak.

23 When his time of service was completed, he returned home.²⁴ After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion.²⁵ "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

^a1 Or *been surely believed*

WHO WAS THEOPHILUS? (1:3)

See **Introduction: To whom was it written and why?** (p. 1497).

WHO WAS THIS HEROD? (1:5)

This was Herod the Great, who ruled Judea (one of the regions then in Israel) from 37 to 4 BC. See **Who was King Herod?** (Mt 2:1; p. 1412).

HOW WERE PRIESTS DIVIDED INTO GROUPS? (1:5)

There were 24 divisions of priests (1Ch 24:1-4). Each division served twice a year at the temple for a week at a time. Given the distribution of labor, a priest like Zechariah would likely have prepared the sacrifice only once in his career.

WHY CAST LOTS? (1:9)

The ancient Jewish commentary on the Law, called the Talmud, tells us about casting lots. Casting lots could be compared to throwing dice. Though we can't be sure what method was used, we know the Jews did *not* view it as a random action depending merely on chance. They believed God sovereignly directed the event, and they trusted him to reveal his purposes through the casting of the lots. See **How did God work through such an arbitrary process?** (Pr 18:18; p. 934).

WHY WAS JOHN SUPPOSED TO ABSTAIN FROM WINE? (1:15)

Abstaining from wine showed his special dedication to God. It did not make him more spiritual or holy, but it was a sign that he was totally focused on God. See **What was a Nazirite?** (Nu 6:2; p. 196).

HOW COULD A BABY BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT? (1:15)

Zechariah would have understood this promise from a Jewish point of view, not as we understand it from a New Testament point of view. We know that the Spirit is offered to those who repent and turn to the Lord (Ac 2:38), and we wonder how this could be the case for a newborn baby. But Zechariah saw this as an announcement that the Spirit would come as God's call to his son, anointing him for a prophetic assignment. As with that of Jeremiah (Jer 1:5), John's ministry was sovereignly directed by God even before his birth (Lk 1:41,44).

WHO IS GABRIEL? (1:19)

He is one of only two angels mentioned by name in the Bible (Da 8:15-27; 9:20-27). Michael (Da 10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 9; Rev 12:7) is the other. *Gabriel* means "God is my hero/warrior."

WHY DID GOD MAKE ZECHARIAH MUTE? (1:20)

This was apparently a mild rebuke for his lack of faith. Since he could not grasp what God was doing, he was given a period of silent reflection that lasted until the child was born. Zechariah, though a righteous man, still needed to learn to trust God for what he deemed the impossible. His inability to speak was a supernatural sign that undoubtedly increased his faith and helped him believe that God's promise of a child would come to pass.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS FORETOLD

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee,²⁷ to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.²⁸ The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be.³⁰ But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.³¹ You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,³³ and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

34 "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

35 The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called^a the Son of God.³⁶ Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.³⁷ For no word from God will ever fail."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

MARY VISITS ELIZABETH

39 At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea,⁴⁰ where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth.⁴¹ When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.⁴² In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear!⁴³ But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?⁴⁴ As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy.⁴⁵ Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!"

MARY'S SONG

46 And Mary said:

"My soul glorifies the Lord

47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,

48 for he has been mindful
of the humble state of his servant.

From now on all generations will call me blessed,

49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—
holy is his name.

50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,
from generation to generation.

51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

^a35 Or *So the child to be born will be called holy,*

HOW WAS MARY HIGHLY FAVORED? (1:28)

God chose Mary for a special assignment, and Mary humbly accepted the call (v. 38). She knew her assignment was based on God's grace to her, not on her merit. Later Jesus said that those who hear God's Word and obey it are even more blessed than Mary (11:27-28). In that respect, we all are *highly favored* by the Lord, because he calls each of us to a special purpose in his kingdom. We are blessed when we, like Mary, surrender to his will and obey his call.

WHY NAME THE CHILD JESUS? (1:31)

The name *Jesus* was a sign that God would save his people from their sins (Mt 1:21). Its Old Testament form was *Yeshua* or *Joshua*, meaning "Yahweh is salvation."

WAS JESUS A COMMON NAME IN THOSE DAYS? (1:31)

Yes. *Jesus* was a very common Jewish name in the first century. The Jewish historian Josephus mentioned more than a dozen people with that name, and approximately 100 tombs have been discovered in Jerusalem inscribed with the name *Jesus*.

WHY DID MARY LEAVE HOME AFTER THE ANGEL'S VISIT? (1:39-40)

She went to help Elizabeth, her elder relative, who was in her last months of pregnancy. Given her age, Elizabeth's pregnancy may have presented some complications, and Mary could have assisted her. Elizabeth was already six months pregnant when Mary heard the news (v. 36), and since Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months (v. 56), she likely stayed until Elizabeth gave birth.

HOW MUCH DID MARY KNOW ABOUT JESUS? (1:46-55)

Mary was told that Jesus would be called *the Son of the Most High*, the Messiah (vv. 31-35). But the incident recorded in 2:41-52 indicates that she didn't realize Jesus was God in human flesh.

WAS MARY BOASTING? (1:48)

No. She was filled with wonder that she—poor, young and female—could be used by God for an eternal purpose. Sinful pride would probably have caused her to refuse God's call to serve or to claim credit for what God had done. But Mary joyfully and gratefully praised God.

⁵²He has brought down rulers from their thrones
but has lifted up the humble.
⁵³He has filled the hungry with good things
but has sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴He has helped his servant Israel,
remembering to be merciful
⁵⁵to Abraham and his descendants forever,
just as he promised our ancestors.”

⁵⁶Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.

THE BIRTH OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

⁵⁷When it was time for Elizabeth to have her baby, she gave birth to a son. ⁵⁸Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown her great mercy, and they shared her joy.

⁵⁹On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, ⁶⁰but his mother spoke up and said, “No! He is to be called John.”

⁶¹They said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who has that name.”

⁶²Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. ⁶³He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, “His name is John.” ⁶⁴Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue set free, and he began to speak, praising God. ⁶⁵All the neighbors were filled with awe, and throughout the hill country of Judea people were talking about all these things. ⁶⁶Everyone who heard this wondered about it, asking, “What then is this child going to be?” For the Lord’s hand was with him.

ZECHARIAH’S SONG

⁶⁷His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied:

⁶⁸“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.
⁶⁹He has raised up a horn^a of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David
⁷⁰(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),
⁷¹salvation from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us—
⁷²to show mercy to our ancestors
and to remember his holy covenant,
⁷³the oath he swore to our father Abraham:
⁷⁴to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve him without fear
⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

⁷⁶And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him,

^a69 Horn here symbolizes a strong king.

WHY WAS CIRCUMCISION SO IMPORTANT FOR THE JEWS? (1:59)

God instituted circumcision to signify his covenant with Abraham, the father of the Jewish people. Circumcision indicated that the parents were giving their child to God, and it signified that the child would be committed to and serve God alone. Cutting off the foreskin illustrated severing the infant’s identity with the world. See the article *Why did God command circumcision?* (Ge 17:10; p. 23).

WHY DID THEY MAKE SIGNS TO ZECHARIAH? (1:62)

Zechariah may have been deaf as well as mute, a detail not included earlier in God’s judgment through Gabriel (v. 20). Had Zechariah been able to hear, the neighbors and relatives could have asked him the question, and he could have written out his answer.

IN WHAT WAYS WAS JOHN A PROPHET? (1:76)

John was a prophet in that he both proclaimed God’s message (“forth telling”) and predicted what God was going to do in the future (“fore-telling”). John called people to repentance in light of God’s coming judgment and the imminent arrival of the Messiah (3:1-18; Mt 3:1-12; Mk 1:1-8). He also fulfilled the end-time role of the prophet Elijah as the messenger who would prepare the way for the Lord (Isa 40:1-3; Mal 3:1; 4:5-6).

⁷⁷to give his people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
⁷⁸because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
⁷⁹to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”

⁸⁰And the child grew and became strong in spirit^a; and he lived in the wilderness until he appeared publicly to Israel.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. ²(This was the first census that took place while^b Quirinius was governor of Syria.) ³And everyone went to their own town to register.

⁴So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. ⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, ⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

⁸And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

¹³Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

¹⁴“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

^a80 Or in the Spirit ^b2 Or This census took place before

WHY DID JOHN LIVE IN THE WILDERNESS? (1:80)

The harsh climate may have helped to focus his attention on God. Being separated from the economic and political powers of his day allowed him to speak his words of judgment more freely. His chosen lifestyle also clearly distinguished him from other religious leaders who enjoyed living near the halls of power.

WHEN WAS JESUS BORN? (2:1-2)

Perhaps a year or so before Herod the Great’s death in 4 BC (Mt 2:19), but it’s difficult to say for certain. The actual date of Jesus’ birth was not discussed until the fourth century, and that delay has led to some uncertainty. Also, the Italian monk who devised the Christian calendar complicated matters by making a miscalculation. And confusion also exists because the only census during the time of Quirinius as yet found in other historical sources occurred too late (AD 6) to be the first census mentioned here. Some suggest that Quirinius was possibly in office for two terms—first in 6-4 BC and then again in AD 6-9—with a census associated with each term. The census mentioned here would then refer to the first census; Acts 5:37 would refer to the second.

WHAT’S THE SIGNIFICANCE OF JOSEPH’S LINEAGE? (2:4)

The Old Testament prophets foretold that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David’s royal family (Isa 11:1; Eze 37:24; Hos 3:5). See *How has David’s house and kingdom endured forever?* (2Sa 7:16; p. 432).

JESUS IS BORN (2:4-7)



IS THE CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS PAGAN? (2:8-10)

December 25 was the date on which the Romans celebrated the birth of the sun god. After the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity in AD 312, he combined the worship of the sun god with the worship of Christ Jesus. Christian leaders accepted that and saw the “Christ-mass” celebration as a vital part of the process of converting pagans.

But our celebration of Christmas goes much deeper than the date on which we observe it. The first Christmas did not celebrate a date but a supremely important event—the appearance of Israel’s promised Messiah and the Lord of the nations. Early Christians didn’t know any more than we do the specific night the angels sang and the baby cried. A few believers tried to calculate the date, but most differed with each other.

This much we know: As early as the second century, Christians used January 6 to celebrate Jesus’ appearance at the Jordan River and his baptism by John. Sometime later they expanded this festival to include Jesus’ birth. Christians called it Epiphany, or manifestation. So, although the exact date is unknown, the celebration of the “first” Christmas was not pagan; it was a celebration of the Word made flesh.

WHY WAS THE BIRTH OF JESUS ANNOUNCED TO SHEPHERDS? (2:8-12)

Perhaps the common shepherds were more receptive to the coming of the Messiah than, say, the religious leaders in Jerusalem. The more orthodox members of society despised shepherds for being unclean by strict ceremonial standards. Shepherds had a reputation for being untrustworthy; a shepherd's testimony was not valid for legal matters. Yet God chose them to be the first witnesses to the birth of Jesus (vv. 17-18)! Shepherds may have been chosen because they represented all who needed cleansing; that cleansing was now available to even the lowliest people.

WHY DID THEY PERFORM THESE CEREMONIES FOR PARENTS AND INFANTS? (2:21-24)

These ceremonies were required by the Law of the Lord (v. 39). Jewish families went through at least three ceremonies after the birth of a firstborn son. (1) Circumcision. As a sign of the covenant between God and the Jewish people, each Hebrew boy was circumcised on the eighth day after his birth (Lev 12:3). (2) Redemption of the firstborn. Each firstborn son was presented to God a month after his birth—a dedication acknowledging that he belonged to God. The parents would *redeem*, or “repurchase,” the child by giving a sacrificial offering in his place (Ex 13:2,11-16). (3) Purification of the mother. For 40 days following the birth of a son (80 days following the birth of a daughter), a mother was considered *unclean* (Lev 12:2-5). At the end of this ritual impurity, a sacrifice was offered as part of her cleansing process (Lev 12:6-8). See *Why would a good thing like giving birth require purification?* (Lev 12:4; p. 157).

WHAT WAS THE CONSOLATION OF ISRAEL? (2:25)

This phrase refers to the Old Testament hope in a Messiah who would finally and decisively deliver Israel from their political bondage to other nations. Zechariah had earlier expressed this same hope (1:68-75).

WAS IT COMMON TO THINK OF THE MESSIAH AS BEING FOR THE GENTILES AS WELL AS FOR THE JEWS? (2:32)

This was unusual but not unprecedented. Isaiah had earlier looked forward to the day when nations from around the world would come and worship God in Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-4; 42:6; 49:6). Later, the idea that Gentiles would receive God's blessings without having to become Jews was called a *mystery* (Eph 3:1-6).

¹⁶So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

²¹On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

JESUS PRESENTED IN THE TEMPLE

²²When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³(as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”^a), ²⁴and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”^b

²⁵Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. ²⁶It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. ²⁷Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

²⁹“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

³⁰For my eyes have seen your salvation,
³¹which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
³²a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

³³The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, ³⁵so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

³⁶There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷and then was a widow until she was eighty-four.^d She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.

³⁹When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. ⁴⁰And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

^a23 Exodus 13:2,12 ^b24 Lev. 12:8 ^c29 Or *promised, / now dismiss*

^d37 Or *then had been a widow for eighty-four years.*

THE BOY JESUS AT THE TEMPLE

⁴¹Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴²When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. ⁴³After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”

⁴⁹“Why were you searching for me?” he asked. “Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?”^a ⁵⁰But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵²And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

JOHN THE BAPTIST PREPARES THE WAY

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Tracónitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—²during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.

⁵Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.

The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.

⁶And all people will see God's salvation.”^b

⁷John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?

⁸Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰“What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

¹¹John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

^a49 Or *be about my Father's business* ^b6 Isaiah 40:3-5

WERE JOSEPH AND MARY CARELESS PARENTS? (2:44)

Probably not, given the expectations of their society. They apparently trusted a normally responsible Jesus to be with friends or relatives. Some scholars, observing later customs of the Middle East, suggest that the women and children traveled separately from the men. If so, each parent could have assumed that their 12-year-old son was with the other.

WHY DID MARY CALL JOSEPH JESUS' FATHER? (2:48)

Joseph functioned as a father to Jesus, so the title was appropriate on a human level. The contrast Jesus made in speaking about his involvement with the things of his heavenly Father shows how clearly Jesus saw his mission and his unique relationship to God.

WHAT YEAR WAS THIS? (3:1-2)

Opinions vary, but a good case can be made for AD 25 or 26. If Jesus was crucified in AD 30, this date would allow time for his ministry of a little over three years and time enough for John to precede Jesus with his own ministry.

LINK (3:2-9) PREPARE THE WAY FOR THE LORD

See Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8.

DID JOHN PREACH THAT SINS WERE FORGIVEN BY BAPTISM? (3:3)

John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. It did not bring about salvation any more than sacrifices did in the Old Testament. The ritual served only to illustrate the people's change of heart, which included sorrow for sin and a determination to lead a holy life. It also indicated their readiness for the Messiah, who would bring forgiveness (1:76-79). See *Does baptism save us?* (1Pe 3:21; p. 1794).

HOW DID JOHN FULFILL ISAIAH'S PROPHECY? (3:4-6)

John the Baptist “prepared the way” for the coming Messiah, much as citizens of his day prepared for the coming of a great leader—repairing the roads and cleaning up the towns in anticipation of their royal guest. John prepared the hearts of the people, removing obstacles, or barriers, to receiving the Messiah and his message of the kingdom of God. John declared that repentance is necessary to prepare the way for Jesus the Messiah. See Isaiah 57:14-15.

WHY SINGLE OUT TAX COLLECTORS AND SOLDIERS? (3:12-14)

They represented some of the most detested people of society. Soldiers and tax collectors enabled Rome to continue its domination over the land and people of Israel. Tax collectors were regarded as traitors because they were Jews who collaborated with Rome for personal gain. Jews regarded them as abhorrent sinners.

WHAT IS BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT? (3:16)

This phrase refers to the Spirit coming to dwell within believers, empowering them to be witnesses for the Lord and to live holy lives (24:48-49; Ac 1:8; 2:1-21). There are basically two views. (1) Some say we are baptized with the Holy Spirit the moment we receive Jesus as Savior by faith and become members of his body (1Co 6:19-20; 12:13). (2) Others say we can be filled with the Spirit in a deeper, more powerful sense after—even years after—we experience salvation (Ac 8:14-17). This is sometimes referred to as a “second blessing.”

WHAT IS BAPTISM WITH . . . FIRE? (3:16)

Fire, frequently a Biblical picture of judgment, here suggests a work of purification and cleansing connected with the baptism of the Spirit. The Spirit’s fire touches people in two ways, bringing either cleansing or judgment—just as a refiner’s fire both purifies gold and separates it from the dross. This is why the following verse uses the image of wheat and chaff to indicate the separation God makes between people as they respond—one way or the other—to Jesus the Messiah.

LINK (3:16-17) HE WILL BAPTIZE YOU WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

See Matthew 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8.

WHAT WAS A WINNOWING FORK? (3:17)

Ancient farmers tossed the threshed grain into the air with a large, wooden fork so the wind would blow away the lighter chaff, while the grain dropped back to the ground. John the Baptist used this image to illustrate the dual nature of Jesus’ ministry: he would separate humanity, some to judgment and some to reward.

LINK (3:21-22) JESUS WAS BAPTIZED

See Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11.

LINK (3:23-38) HE WAS THE SON . . . OF JOSEPH

Matthew records a similar genealogy in Matthew 1:1-17, though the two genealogies are in reverse order, and Matthew begins with Abraham, while Luke goes back to Adam. From Abraham to David the genealogies are almost the same, but from David on they are different (see the note below).

WHY ARE THE GENEALOGIES OF MATTHEW AND LUKE DIFFERENT? (3:23-38)

From Abraham to David, the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are almost the same, but from David on they are different. Some suggest that this is because Matthew traced the legal descent of the house of David, using only heirs to the throne, while Luke traced the direct bloodline of Joseph to David. Others say

¹²Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

¹³“Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

¹⁴Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

¹⁵The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶John answered them all, “I baptize you with^a water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with^a the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” ¹⁸And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

¹⁹But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother’s wife, and all the other evil things he had done, ²⁰Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

THE BAPTISM AND GENEALOGY OF JESUS

²¹When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²²and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

²³Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph,

the son of Heli, ²⁴the son of Matthat,

the son of Levi, the son of Melki,

the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,

²⁵the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos,

the son of Nahum, the son of Esli,

the son of Naggai, ²⁶the son of Maath,

the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein,

the son of Josek, the son of Joda,

²⁷the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesus,

the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel,

the son of Neri, ²⁸the son of Melki,

the son of Addi, the son of Cosam,

the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,

²⁹the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer,

the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat,

the son of Levi, ³⁰the son of Simeon,

the son of Judah, the son of Joseph,

the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,

³¹the son of Melea, the son of Menna,

the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan,

the son of David, ³²the son of Jesse,

the son of Obed, the son of Boaz,

the son of Salmon,^b the son of Nahshon,

^a16 Or in ^b32 Some early manuscripts Sala

³³the son of Amminadab, the son of Ram,^a

the son of Hezron, the son of Perez,

the son of Judah, ³⁴the son of Jacob,

the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham,

the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,

³⁵the son of Serug, the son of Reu,

the son of Peleg, the son of Eber,

the son of Shelah, ³⁶the son of Cainan,

the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem,

the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,

³⁷the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch,

the son of Jared, the son of Mahalalel,

the son of Kenan, ³⁸the son of Enosh,

the son of Seth, the son of Adam,

the son of God.

JESUS IS TESTED IN THE WILDERNESS

4 Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted^b by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

⁴Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’^c”

⁵The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

⁸Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’^d”

⁹The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰For it is written:

“He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully;

¹¹they will lift you up in their hands,

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”^e”

¹²Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’^f”

¹³When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

JESUS REJECTED AT NAZARETH

¹⁴Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on

^a33 Some manuscripts Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Arni; other manuscripts vary widely. ^b2 The Greek for tempted can also mean tested.

^c4 Deut. 8:3 ^d8 Deut. 6:13 ^e11 Psalm 91:11,12 ^f12 Deut. 6:16

Matthew followed the line of Joseph (Jesus’ legal father through Solomon; Mt 1:6-7), while Luke emphasized that of Mary (Jesus’ blood relative through Nathan; Lk 3:31). This view, however, is less likely since Luke so explicitly names Joseph (Lk 3:23), without any reference to Mary. The unique thing about Luke’s list is that it goes back to Adam, showing Jesus’ relationship to all humanity.

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH TURNING A STONE INTO BREAD? (4:3)

The issue was not what the temptation was but what the motive behind it was. The devil often appeals to our pride, hoping that we will take matters into our own hands rather than trust in God. If Jesus had turned the stone into bread, he would not have been depending on his Father in heaven. He resisted these temptations by quoting Scripture to reaffirm his trust in God.

WHAT DID THE DEVIL HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH BY TEMPTING JESUS? (4:3-13)

Perhaps he hoped to replay the fall of humankind, this time through the one descended from Adam (3:23,38; Ge 3:1-6; Ro 5:14-15,18-19). But Jesus did not fall prey to Satan’s schemes, as Adam had done. Satan no doubt hoped to engineer a second great deception and remove Jesus as a viable redeemer for humankind.

WAS THERE ANY RISK JESUS MIGHT HAVE YIELDED TO SATAN’S TEMPTATIONS? (4:3-13)

Some say the Spirit could never have put Jesus at risk since Jesus’ divine nature would never have succumbed to temptation. Others say that because Jesus was human, his temptations were legitimate. If this had been merely a mock spiritual battle, they say, then our salvation would not be legitimate (Heb 2:14-18; 4:15).

HOW DID THESE TEMPTATIONS RELATE TO JESUS’ CALL TO BE THE MESSIAH? (4:3-13)

The devil used these temptations to question Jesus’ identity and call. In each temptation, the devil seemed to ask, “If you can’t do this small thing, how can you claim to be the Son of God?” Satan also seemed to dangle a shortcut before Jesus: “If you are the Son of God, why not accomplish your goals in the quickest and easiest way possible?” As the Messiah, Jesus knew that one day he would rule over the kingdoms of this earth (Rev 11:15), but Satan tried to entice him to sidestep God’s intended process.

DOES SATAN TEMPT US IN SIMILAR WAYS? (4:3-13)

The letter to the Hebrews tells us that Jesus has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin (Heb 4:15). Jesus faced temptations regarding his identity and call. We may encounter similar temptations that make us doubt God’s work in our lives. The devil also urged Jesus to focus on results instead of following God’s ways. Similarly, we may be tempted to sidestep the difficulties that inevitably come with serving God.

WHY DID JESUS ALLOW THE DEVIL TO LEAD HIM? (4:5)

Jesus' temptation was also a testing (the Greek word can mean "tempting" or "testing")—one in which he demonstrated his obedience to God and his worthiness to fulfill the role of the Messiah. So Jesus willingly submitted himself to the devil's tempting as part of his preparation for service. By resisting temptation, Jesus also passed the test of obedience that Adam and Eve had failed, and so he was qualified to reverse the results of their sin.

WAS THE DEVIL RIGHT TO CLAIM THAT THE WORLD BELONGED TO HIM? (4:6)

Yes and no. This was a half-truth. The Bible does speak of Satan's power in the world (Jn 12:31; 2Co 4:4; Eph 2:1-2). But it was an exaggeration for Satan to present himself as sovereign over all of the earth's kingdoms. He still was and is under God's sovereign power and control.

HOW DID JESUS GET PERMISSION TO SPEAK IN THE SYNAGOGUE? (4:15-20)

In a synagogue service, any man who wished to speak could do so by notifying the one in charge. Usually the speaker linked the weekly reading of the Law and the Prophets with various other texts.

WHY DID JESUS STAND UP TO READ? (4:16)

Men stood to read the Scripture to show their reverence for it. But they sat to teach, distinguishing their commentary from the Scripture itself.

WHY DID JESUS ANTAGONIZE THESE PEOPLE? (4:28)

Jesus' barbed words succeeded in getting their full attention, which was apparently part of his strategy to warn them of their sins. They were offended not only that he compared them to the faithless Jews of Elijah and Elisha's time but also that he suggested that Gentiles could enjoy the blessings of God missed by the Jews—an unthinkable violation of their cultural bias. At other times, Jesus dealt gently with people who were aware of their guilt and wanted to find forgiveness.

LINK (4:31-37) THERE WAS A MAN POSSESSED BY A DEMON

See Mark 1:21-28.

HOW DO DEMONS POSSESS SOMEONE? (4:33)

A person can be "demonized" by an evil, or *impure*, spirit that manifests itself as sickness (physical or emotional) or unusual behavior beyond the control of the person involved. Such symptoms alone do not indicate demon possession. In Scripture, the appearance of evil spirits reached a climax during the earthly ministry of Jesus, perhaps as part of Satan's effort to discredit Jesus.

CAN DEMONS STILL POSSESS PEOPLE TODAY? (4:33)

Satan and demons are real, personal beings, and demons can still possess people today. Christians need not fear demons, however, since the Holy Spirit, who indwells Christians, is greater than Satan's forces (1Jn 4:4). Through his death and resurrection, Jesus defeated the

the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read,¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for
the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."^a

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

²³Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'"

²⁴"Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷And there were many in Israel with leprosy^b in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

²⁸All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

JESUS DRIVES OUT AN IMPURE SPIRIT

³¹Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. ³²They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

³³In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ³⁴"Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

³⁵"Be quiet!" Jesus said sternly. "Come out of him!" Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

³⁶All the people were amazed and said to each other, "What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!" ³⁷And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

^a19 Isaiah 61:1,2 (see Septuagint); Isaiah 58:6 ^b27 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

JESUS HEALS MANY

³⁸Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

⁴⁰At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. ⁴¹Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

⁴²At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³But he said, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent." ⁴⁴And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

JESUS CALLS HIS FIRST DISCIPLES

5 One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret,^a the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. ²He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

⁵Simon answered, "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets."

⁶When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!" ⁹For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people." ¹¹So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

JESUS HEALS A MAN WITH LEPROSY

¹²While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy.^b When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, "Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean."

¹³Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" And immediately the leprosy left him.

¹⁴Then Jesus ordered him, "Don't tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them."

^a1 That is, the Sea of Galilee ^b12 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin.

power of Satan and his demons (Col 2:15) and will ultimately destroy them when he returns (Rev 20:10,14).

WHY WOULD DEMONS PUBLICIZE JESUS' TRUE IDENTITY? (4:34)

In the ancient world, it was widely believed that if you found out the name of a demon or a spiritually powerful person, you could gain control over them. So perhaps the demons were trying to gain control over Jesus. Luke's purpose in including this account was to provide further testimony to the fact that Jesus is the Messiah.

LINK (4:38-43) SIMON'S MOTHER-IN-LAW WAS SUFFERING

See Matthew 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34.

WHY REBUKE A FEVER? (4:39)

This is a figure of speech, not a formula for healing. It is a dramatic way to show that all nature is subject to God's authority. The fever is personified to demonstrate Jesus' healing power. Although some see this as a type of exorcism, it seems unlikely because elsewhere Luke described casting out evil spirits in straightforward language.

LINK (5:1-11) FROM NOW ON YOU WILL FISH FOR PEOPLE

See Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; John 1:40-42.

WAS THIS THE FIRST TIME JESUS MET PETER? (5:3)

Probably not. John recounts an earlier episode in which Peter's brother Andrew brought Peter to meet Jesus, apparently for the first time (Jn 1:40-42). Matthew and Mark also record what appears to have been an earlier encounter when Jesus called Peter and Andrew to be his disciples while they were fishing (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20). Apparently the call of these disciples occurred gradually and in stages.

WHY DID JESUS TELL PETER WHERE TO FISH? (5:4)

This miracle, like many of Jesus' miracles, was intended to demonstrate Jesus' power and give a picture of a deeper reality. *Even though you do not believe me*, Jesus said another time, *believe the works* (Jn 10:38). Jesus' statement to these fishermen that in the future they would *fish for people* (Lk 5:10) indicates that their miraculous catch was descriptive of their future ministry of evangelism.

WHY DID PETER WANT JESUS TO GO AWAY? (5:8)

Jesus' miracle of the great catch of fish revealed his supernatural nature and made Peter aware of his own sinfulness and inadequacies. Peter was like Isaiah, who was overwhelmed by a vision of God on his throne and said, *Woe to me! . . . I am ruined! . . . My eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty* (Isa 6:5).

LINK (5:12-14) BE CLEAN

See Matthew 8:2-4; Mark 1:40-44.

LINK (5:14) OFFER THE SACRIFICES THAT MOSES COMMANDED FOR YOUR CLEANSING

The regulations and sacrifices required for cleansing infectious skin diseases can be found in Leviticus 14:1-32.

IF JESUS WAS GOD, WHY DID HE NEED TO PRAY? (5:16)

The simple answer is that he was fully human. Though he was also God and had a unique relationship with his Father, he lived on our level while on earth. When he took on the limitations of humanity, he showed us that a life of prayer is a necessity, not a luxury. Jesus lived in complete dependence on the Father.

WHY DID THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS GIVE JESUS SUCH ATTENTION? (5:17)

Word about Jesus and his ministry was spreading (4:14–15, 43–44). With his increasing popularity, the religious leaders naturally took steps to safeguard their own power. They probably viewed Jesus as an outsider—an untrained theologian threatening their spiritual monopoly.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE POWER OF THE LORD? (5:17)

These words are probably another way of saying that the Spirit of the Lord was present. This does not mean the power of the Lord was not present at other times or in other places. Rather, this phrase highlights the source of Jesus' power. For another way of looking at this, see **Does our unbelief limit what God can do?** (Mk 6:5–6; p. 1472).

LINK (5:18–26) A PARALYZED MAN

See Matthew 9:2–8; Mark 2:3–12.

DID THESE MEN DESTROY THE ROOF? (5:19)

The damage wasn't as serious as it sounds. Homes at that time were often built with outside staircases to the roof. The roof itself was flat and made of tile sandwiched around brush or branch insulation. To lift a section of the roof, then dig through the insulation and remove a tile from the ceiling was not a drastic measure. The opening could have been easily repaired.

LINK (5:27–32) LEVI . . . FOLLOWED HIM

See Matthew 9:9–13; Mark 2:14–17.

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH TAX COLLECTORS? (5:29–30)

They were a group of Jews despised by other Jews for collaborating with the Roman government that ruled over them. Tax collectors paid the authorities for the privilege of collecting taxes; then they overcharged people, skimming money off the top to line their own pockets. As a result, other Jews saw Jewish tax collectors as both traitors and thieves.

LINK (5:33–39) IN THOSE DAYS THEY WILL FAST

See Matthew 9:14–17; Mark 2:18–22.

SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST? (5:35)

Jesus compared his time with his disciples to a wedding feast. Today, since he is no longer physically among us, it is appropriate to fast—not because it is commanded, as in the Old Testament, but because it is beneficial to our spiritual development. Fasting helps us focus on prayer and keeps us from being mastered by our appetites. It heightens our spiritual awareness, lends intensity to our communion with God, and reminds us of our weakness and complete dependence on God. See **Does God want us to fast?** (Mt 6:18; p. 1420).

¹⁵Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

JESUS FORGIVES AND HEALS A PARALYZED MAN

¹⁷One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. ¹⁸Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²²Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’ ²⁴But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ²⁵Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

JESUS CALLS LEVI AND EATS WITH SINNERS

²⁷After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, ²⁸and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

²⁹Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

³¹Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³²I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

JESUS QUESTIONED ABOUT FASTING

³³They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”

³⁴Jesus answered, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? ³⁵But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

³⁶He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.

³⁷And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the

new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. ³⁹And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, ‘The old is better.’”

JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

6 One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. ²Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

³Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” ⁵Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

⁶On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. ⁷The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. ⁸But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there.

⁹Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?”

¹⁰He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored. ¹¹But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

THE TWELVE APOSTLES

¹²One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

BLESSINGS AND WOES

¹⁷He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coastal region around Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by impure spirits were cured, ¹⁹and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.

²⁰Looking at his disciples, he said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

WHAT LESSONS DO OLD WINESKINS TEACH US? (5:37)

Wineskins were flexible bags made of animal skins sewn in the shape of a bottle. At first they were soft and pliable, but with age they became brittle. Since wine gives off gases and expands as it undergoes the process of fermentation, a wineskin had to stretch to accommodate the expanding wine. Non-elastic, old skins would burst during the fermentation process. Jesus used this as a metaphor: *old wineskins* represented the religious traditions of the Pharisees, which were unable to accommodate the *new wine* of the kingdom of God.

LINK (6:1–11) THE SON OF MAN IS LORD OF THE SABBATH

See Matthew 12:1–14; Mark 2:23–3:6.

AS LORD OF THE SABBATH, DID JESUS CHANGE THE RULES? (6:2–5)

No, but he insisted that some values were being ignored. The Pharisees were so particular about nonessentials that they failed to see the deeper truths. Minimal food preparation on the Sabbath (vv. 1–2) did not offend God. Doing good on the Sabbath did not violate the spirit of the law (v. 9). Ultimately, Jesus offered himself as the central overriding principle: the *Lord of the Sabbath* was qualified to say what honored God and what did not.

WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DISCIPLES AND APOSTLES? (6:13)

A disciple was one who learned from Jesus. An apostle was commissioned as Jesus' representative. These 12 men were disciples who were also commissioned as his special representatives. Later, as Jesus' agents, they became leaders in the church (Ac 1–12).

LINK (6:13–16) HE CALLED HIS DISCIPLES TO HIM

See Matthew 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19.

WAS THIS THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT? (6:17)

Probably, Jesus most likely spoke from a plateau that was partway down the mountain—a *level place*—so both Luke's description and Matthew's (*a mountainside*; Mt 5:1) are correct. The two accounts are parallel in other respects, although Luke reduces Matthew's longer account to its basic core. It's also possible that Luke records a different sermon.

LINK (6:17–49) A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE

See Matthew 5:1–7:27.

WHY TURN A VALUE SYSTEM UPSIDE DOWN? (6:20–22)

Jesus wanted to dispute the conventional wisdom of the time that said the wealthy and influential enjoyed more of God's blessings than the poor and powerless did. Jesus wanted his followers to see that material things are only temporary and certainly not the only reality. He didn't want them to think of their current situations as signs of God's blessing or judgment. Instead, he wanted them to see that the poor can be spiritually wealthy (Jas 2:5).

LINK (6:20–23) BLESSED ARE YOU

See Matthew 5:3–12.

IS IT WRONG TO BE FINANCIALLY WELL-OFF? (6:24-26)

No, but it can be dangerous. Those who enjoy the “good life” may be more easily tempted to neglect the godly life. Also, they may never learn to depend on God. The Bible says that those entrusted with something are held responsible for it (12:48; Mt 25:19-23; 1Co 4:2). The wealthy are to be generous and not take advantage of others (2Co 9:11; 1Ti 6:17-19).

LINK (6:29-30) TURN TO THEM THE OTHER ALSO

See Matthew 5:39-42.

HOW DOES GOD SHOW KINDNESS TO THE UNGRATEFUL AND WICKED? (6:35)

The creation and the environment in which we live show the signs of God’s universal care; he sends rain, for example, both to those who deserve it and to those who don’t (Mt 5:45). The wicked also can enjoy God’s creation, good health and physical sustenance. On the spiritual level, God graciously extends the offer of salvation to all humankind, none of whom are righteous or free from sin.

IS IT EVER RIGHT TO JUDGE SOMEONE? (6:37)

When we use the word *judge* to mean “discern,” it is a good thing. Discernment protects us, whereas judgment attacks others. We should evaluate the motives, attitudes and behaviors of others (1Co 5:11-13; 6:5; Php 3:17-18), and Christians are called to *test* everything (1Th 5:21) so that we will not be deceived (1Jn 4:1). But when we delight in revealing others’ deficiencies, we fall into the trap Jesus warned about.

LINK (6:37-42) DO NOT JUDGE

See Matthew 7:1-5.

WHAT DOES JESUS MEAN BY A GOOD MEASURE, PRESSED DOWN, SHAKEN TOGETHER AND RUNNING OVER? (6:38)

In the marketplace, where a buyer would order a measure of grain, a particularly generous merchant would fill the container, shake it to settle the contents, press the grain down to make more room, and keep pouring until it overflowed into the buyer’s lap. It is a picture of receiving back far more than you give.

WHAT’S WRONG WITH STANDING UP FOR OUR RIGHTS? (6:29-30)

In this context, Jesus was talking primarily about religious intolerance. When we are persecuted because of righteousness, we should not strike back (Mt 5:10-12). The early believers went peacefully to jail when arrested for preaching the good news about Jesus. At other times they fled in order to avoid persecution. But we never see armed resistance from the New Testament church. In fact, when Jesus was arrested, Peter was told to put his sword away (Jn 18:10-11).

On the other hand, Christians with convictions about right and wrong should not idly stand by, blind to the injustices against others. Some say prayer alone is a sufficient response to injustice. Others say a voice of reason should be raised in opposition to persuade society to do what is right. Some go further and suggest that civil protests or civil disobedience are in order. Still others say that in a fallen world, force (either police or military) may be required to confront evil (Ro 13:4). Though believers may disagree about the best response, they agree that a response to injustice is necessary. See the article **Does God support bad government?** (Ro 13:1-7; p. 1661).

²²Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

²³“Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

²⁴“But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets.

LOVE FOR ENEMIES

²⁷“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

JUDGING OTHERS

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down,

shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

³⁹He also told them this parable: “Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

⁴¹“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴²How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

A TREE AND ITS FRUIT

⁴³“No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

⁴⁶“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

THE FAITH OF THE CENTURION

7 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people who were listening, he entered Capernaum. ²There a centurion’s servant, whom his master valued highly, was sick and about to die. ³The centurion heard of Jesus and sent some elders of the Jews to him, asking him to come and heal his servant. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they pleaded earnestly with him, “This man deserves to have you do this, ⁵because he loves our nation and has built our synagogue.” ⁶So Jesus went with them.

He was not far from the house when the centurion sent friends to say to him: “Lord, don’t trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and that one, ‘Come,’ and he comes. I say to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.”

⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, “I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel.” ¹⁰Then the men who had been sent returned to the house and found the servant well.

LINK (6:43-44) NO GOOD TREE BEARS BAD FRUIT

See Matthew 7:16,18,20.

DON’T WE ALL PRODUCE BAD FRUIT SOMETIMES? (6:43-45)

Yes, all Christians struggle with their sinful nature (Ro 7:15-23). But Jesus was speaking in general terms, not in specifics. He looked at life as a whole and said that a person’s basic character reveals itself in what the person produces. *Evil* people who ignore God will reveal their evil nature; *good* people who follow God will reveal their goodness as they produce the good fruit of the Spirit (Ro 8:5; Gal 5:22-23). Jesus used the analogy of a fruit tree to illustrate his point. But analogies are limited and usually do not parallel every detail.

LINK (6:47-49) THEY ARE LIKE A MAN BUILDING A HOUSE

Matthew 7:24-27 also records Jesus’ parable of the wise and foolish builders.

LINK (7:1-10) THE CENTURION

See Matthew 8:5-13.

WHY WOULD A GENTILE BUILD A SYNAGOGUE FOR THE JEWS? (7:5)

This Roman centurion was probably a “God-fearer” – a Gentile who believed in one God and respected the moral and ethical teachings of the Jews though he was not a full Jewish proselyte. If so, giving funds for a synagogue was one way he could express his devotion to God. It’s also possible he was encouraged by his superiors to do whatever might contribute to the political stability of the area. Making the Jews happy would have helped defuse civil strife.

WHY WAS JESUS AMAZED? (7:9)

Jesus was amazed that this Gentile seemed more spiritually aware than most Jews seemed to be. His amazement was two-sided: (1) He was amazed that a Gentile understood spiritual authority. (2) He was amazed that God’s chosen people did not. The only other time Jesus was said to be amazed was when he was amazed by the Jews’ lack of faith (Mk 6:6).

JESUS RAISES A WIDOW'S SON

¹¹Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. ¹²As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. ¹³When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”

¹⁴Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!” ¹⁵The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.

¹⁶They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.” ¹⁷This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.

JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

¹⁸John’s disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, ¹⁹he sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?”

²⁰When the men came to Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’”

²¹At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. ²²So he replied to the messengers, “Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy^a are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. ²³Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.”

²⁴After John’s messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ²⁵If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. ²⁶But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ²⁷This is the one about whom it is written:

“I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.”^b

²⁸I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”

²⁹(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus’ words, acknowledged that God’s way was right, because they had been baptized by John. ³⁰But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God’s purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)

³¹Jesus went on to say, “To what, then, can I compare the people of this generation? What are they like? ³²They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to each other:

^a22 The Greek word traditionally translated *leprosy* was used for various diseases affecting the skin. ^b27 Mal. 3:1

LINK (7:11–16) DON’T CRY

Similar accounts can be found in Mark 5:21–24, 35–43 and John 11:1–44. See also 1 Kings 17:17–24 and 2 Kings 4:32–37.

JESUS VISITS NAIN (7:11)



LINK (7:18–35) ARE YOU THE ONE WHO IS TO COME

See Matthew 11:2–19.

HOW COULD JOHN THE BAPTIST HAVE HAD DOUBTS ABOUT JESUS? (7:19–23)

John probably had doubts because Jesus did not exercise the kind of coercive power John had anticipated from the Messiah. Unlike skeptics, however, John was honest enough to admit his doubts and deal directly with them. While in prison, John wanted some reassurance that he had correctly understood God’s plan.

HOW CAN THOSE LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD BE GREATER THAN JOHN? (7:28)

John belonged to the age of the old covenant. Those in the kingdom of God are greater than John because they have received the salvation blessings available through Jesus’ life, death and resurrection. Great as he was, John served only as a forerunner who announced that the kingdom was near. Under the new covenant, believers enjoy the benefits of kingdom life, including the presence of the Holy Spirit (Ac 2:38; Eph 1:13–14), redemption and eternal forgiveness of sins (Col 1:13–14), and direct access to the Father through the Son (Ro 8:9–17; Heb 4:16).

HOW DID JOHN’S BAPTISM PREPARE PEOPLE FOR JESUS? (7:29–30)

Before people could appreciate God’s offer of salvation through Jesus, they needed to see their need of salvation. John’s baptism of repentance (3:3) caused people to see themselves as sinners who needed to change their ways. Humbled by their overwhelming spiritual need, they repented and became receptive to the forgiveness and new life made possible by Jesus.

“We played the pipe for you,
and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge,
and you did not cry.”

³³For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon.’ ³⁴The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ ³⁵But wisdom is proved right by all her children.”

JESUS ANOINTED BY A SINFUL WOMAN

³⁶When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table. ³⁷A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

⁴⁰Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

⁴¹“Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^a and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

⁴³Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

⁴⁴Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

⁴⁸Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

⁵⁰Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER

8 After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, ²and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; ³Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

^a41 A denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (see Matt. 20:2).

WHY WERE JESUS AND JOHN SO DIFFERENT? (7:33–34)

They were not really as different as their detractors made them appear to be. John’s simple lifestyle fit his message of repentance and self-denial, while Jesus’ attendance at public dinners expressed his gracious willingness to mingle with those who needed him. John and Jesus were neither demon-possessed nor over-indulgent, as their opponents charged; they simply refused to play along with their critics’ childish games.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT WISDOM IS PROVED RIGHT BY ALL HER CHILDREN? (7:35)

In the Old Testament, wisdom is often personified as a woman (e.g., Pr 1:20–33; 3:13–18; 8:1–36; 9:1–6); she is God’s helper who calls people to a life of wise godliness. Wisdom’s children are therefore those who follow her guidance (Pr 8:32). Here, the word *children* probably refers to the sinners and tax collectors who were responding in faith to the message of Jesus and John.

WHY DID THIS WOMAN POUR PERFUME ON JESUS? (7:37–38)

This woman was driven by a deep spiritual longing for cleansing from sin and forgiveness from Jesus. Because of her reputation as a sinful woman, she risked rejection by coming uninvited into this Pharisee’s house. But she was intent on giving Jesus the best she could offer, and she wanted to express her love and appreciation for the hope she had received. Responding to her love and repentance, Jesus forgave her sins (vv. 47–48).

LINK (7:37–39) A WOMAN . . . WHO LIVED A SINFUL LIFE

This account in Luke is an entirely different event than the event recorded in the other Gospels (Mt 26:6–13; Mk 14:3–9; Jn 12:1–8).

LINK (7:41–42) WHICH OF THEM WILL LOVE HIM MORE?

Matthew 18:23–34 records a similar parable.

DID SIMON NEGLECT COMMON COURTESIES? (7:44–46)

Many suggest that Simon, by failing to provide water for his guest’s feet, did not follow typical customs of hospitality. Others say such practices were optional. But Jesus may not have been criticizing Simon so much as commending the woman and using her actions to make a point. Her special attention to Jesus showed her devotion and dedication to him. The measure of her forgiveness was in response to her expressions of love.

WHY DID JESUS PRONOUNCE HER SINS FORGIVEN? (7:48–49)

Because of her great love (v. 47). Though she had lived a sinful life, she was willing to repent and show her gratitude to, and love for, Jesus. Jesus taught an important lesson by publicly announcing that she was forgiven; he contrasted her attitude with that of the respectable Pharisee, who was not forgiven. Simon the Pharisee revealed that he loved little because he did not think he needed much forgiveness.

HOW COULD THESE WOMEN HELP SUPPORT JESUS AND ALL HIS DISCIPLES? (8:3)

It is unknown. Perhaps these women came from wealthy families, as suggested by the fact that one of them was the wife of a government official.

WHY DID JESUS USE STORIES THAT SOME PEOPLE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND? (8:4-10)

Parables were used to reveal, as well as conceal, truth (Isa 6:9-10). Jesus concealed truth from those who would reject his message—a judgment on their hardheartedness. Jesus may have kept certain secrets of the kingdom hidden from casual observers, overzealous but poorly informed supporters, and outright opponents to prevent them from steering his ministry toward a premature conclusion. To people willing to receive his message, however, Jesus' stories communicated further truth about the nature of God's kingdom.

LINK (8:4-15) A FARMER WENT OUT TO SOW HIS SEED

See Matthew 13:2-23; Mark 4:1-20.

DOESN'T GOD WANT EVERYONE TO UNDERSTAND HIS WORD? (8:10)

Yes, God wants all people to understand his Word, but some people harden their hearts and refuse to believe. God then uses their rejection to accomplish his purpose. Just as God hardened Pharaoh's heart in order to bring about the exodus from Egypt (Ex 10:27-11:1), so here he blinded the eyes of these religious leaders—who had already rejected Jesus—so that they couldn't understand his parables. He used their rejection to accomplish salvation through Jesus' death and resurrection. See the article *Why does God harden some people's hearts?* (Ex 11:10; p. 94).

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO PRODUCE A CROP? (8:15)

Elsewhere the Bible speaks of *the fruit of the Spirit* (Gal 5:22-23)—the godly characteristics that are products of a Christian's relationship with God. In this verse, *produce a crop* may also refer to Christians who share their faith with others and urge them to accept salvation in Jesus.

⁴While a large crowd was gathering and people were coming to Jesus from town after town, he told this parable: ⁵“A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path; it was trampled on, and the birds ate it up. ⁶Some fell on rocky ground, and when it came up, the plants withered because they had no moisture. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up with it and choked the plants. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up and yielded a crop, a hundred times more than was sown.”

When he said this, he called out, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

⁹His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰He said, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that,

“though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.”^a

¹¹“This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is the word of God. ¹²Those along the path are the ones who hear, and then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. ¹³Those on the rocky ground are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. ¹⁴The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. ¹⁵But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.

A LAMP ON A STAND

¹⁶“No one lights a lamp and hides it in a clay jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, they put it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. ¹⁷For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. ¹⁸Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they think they have will be taken from them.”

^a10 Isaiah 6:9

CAN CHRISTIANS LOSE THEIR SALVATION? (8:13)

Salvation is the work of God. It came through Jesus Christ by the shedding of his blood on the cross (Jn 3:17; Ro 5:9). Those who experience salvation are given eternal life as a gift of grace that they receive by faith (Eph 2:5,8)—this gift comes because of God's mercy, not as a result of human effort (2Ti 1:9; Titus 3:5).

Since salvation is a work of God's grace from beginning to end (Ro 1:17; Gal 3:1-3), those who belong to Christ can be assured that they will never lose their salvation. They have been appointed to receive salvation, not to suffer wrath (1Th 5:9). There is also a subjective dimension to this assurance. The Holy Spirit *testifies with our spirit that we are God's children* (Ro 8:16). In other words, when we are children of God, the Holy Spirit helps us know with confidence that we are heirs of eternal life.

But assurance is no excuse for complacency. God's grace transforms those who are in Christ (2Co 5:21; Jas 2:14-26; 1Jn 3:3). Therefore, those whose lives show no evidence of this transformation should examine themselves to see if they have genuinely trusted in Christ (2Co 13:5; Heb 6:1-8). For such people the question is not whether they might lose their salvation but whether they ever possessed it in the first place.



MIRACLES OF JESUS

HEALING MIRACLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Man with leprosy	8:2-4	1:40-42	5:12-13	
Roman centurion's servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Peter's mother-in-law	8:14-15	1:30-31	4:38-39	
Two demon-possessed men	8:28-34	5:1-15	8:27-35	
Paralyzed man	9:2-7	2:3-12	5:18-25	
Woman with bleeding	9:20-22	5:25-29	8:43-48	
Two blind men	9:27-31			
Mute, demon-possessed man	9:32-33			
Man with a shriveled hand	12:10-13	3:1-5	6:6-10	
Blind, mute, demon-possessed man	12:22		11:14	
Canaanite woman's daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Demon-possessed boy	17:14-18	9:17-29	9:38-43	
Two blind men (including Bartimaeus)	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Deaf mute man		7:31-37		
Possessed man in synagogue		1:23-26	4:33-35	
Blind man at Bethsaida		8:22-26		
Crippled woman			13:11-13	
Man with abnormal swelling			14:1-4	
Ten men with leprosy			17:11-19	
The high priest's servant			22:50-51	
Official's son at Capernaum				4:46-54
Sick man at pool of Bethesda				5:1-9
Man born blind				9:1-7

MIRACLES SHOWING POWER OVER NATURE

Calming the storm	8:23-27	4:37-41	8:22-25	
Walking on water	14:25	6:48-51		6:19-21
Feeding of the 5,000	14:15-21	6:35-44	9:12-17	6:6-13
Feeding of the 4,000	15:32-38	8:1-9		
Coin in fish	17:24-27			
Fig tree withered	21:18-22	11:12-14,20-25		
Large catch of fish			5:4-11	
Water turned into wine				2:1-11
Another large catch of fish				21:1-11

MIRACLES OF RAISING THE DEAD

Jairus's daughter	9:18-19,23-25	5:22-24,38-42	8:41-42,49-56	
Widow's son at Nain			7:11-15	
Lazarus				11:1-44

IS IT FAIR THAT WHOEVER HAS WILL BE GIVEN MORE? (8:18)

Fairness is not the issue. If it were, no one would receive anything from God except judgment. The point here is that God, in his mercy, rewards those who are faithful. The one who lives a righteous life will enjoy the best life has to offer, though rewards may often seem intangible. The more closely a person lines up with God's purposes, the greater the benefits—in this life as well as in the next.

LINK (8:19-21) MY MOTHER AND BROTHERS

See Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35.

DID JESUS REJECT HIS OWN FAMILY? (8:20-21)

No. He simply used this incident to make a point: If one has to choose between one's family and the will of God, the will of God must come first. Those who obey God's Word are included in the family of God and will be rewarded (18:29-30).

LINK (8:22-25) MASTER, WE'RE GOING TO DROWN

Matthew 8:23-27 and Mark 4:36-41 also record this event. Similar stories appear in Mark 6:47-52 and John 6:16-21.

LINK (8:26-39) HE WAS MET BY A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN

See Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20.

WHY DIDN'T THE EVIL SPIRIT IMMEDIATELY OBEY JESUS' COMMAND? (8:28-29)

The forces of evil push rebellion as far as possible, even when directly confronted by the Son of God. As Jesus' followers, we have been given authority over the enemy (10:19), but we may not always see instant results. When we resist the devil, he will flee (Jas 4:7), though not willingly and not always immediately.

WHAT WAS THE ABYSS? (8:31)

The Greeks used this word to describe the underworld abode of demonic hordes, suggesting an unseen place so deep it is unfathomable. The New Testament uses this Greek word (*abyssos*) ten times—once (Ro 10:7) for the place of the dead (translated *the deep*) and nine times (here and eight times in Revelation) to describe the place of confinement for evil spirits and Satan.

WHY WERE PIGS BEING RAISED IN JEWISH AREAS? (8:32)

They weren't. The region of the Gerasenes (v. 26) was technically not Jewish territory. Mark 5:20 says it was part of the Decapolis, which was a predominately Gentile territory where some Jews lived.

WHAT WERE THE PEOPLE AFRAID OF? (8:37)

They seemed to fear the awesome power of God displayed in their midst. Such supernatural power would have been unnerving to people who had not shown any interest in honoring God. They may have seen the loss of their herd as God's judgment and perhaps feared further judgment.

JESUS' MOTHER AND BROTHERS

¹⁹Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. ²⁰Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you."

²¹He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice."

JESUS CALMS THE STORM

²²One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let us go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. ²³As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger.

²⁴The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!"

He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. ²⁵"Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples.

In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

JESUS RESTORES A DEMON-POSSESSED MAN

²⁶They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes,^a which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs.

²⁸When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" ²⁹For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

³⁰Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him.

³¹And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

³²A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. ³³When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

^a26 Some manuscripts *Gadarenes*; other manuscripts *Gergesenes*; also in verse 37

³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹"Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

JESUS RAISES A DEAD GIRL AND HEALS A SICK WOMAN

⁴⁰Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. ⁴¹Then a man named Jairus, a synagogue leader, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house ⁴²because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying.

As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. ⁴³And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years,^a but no one could heal her. ⁴⁴She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped.

⁴⁵"Who touched me?" Jesus asked.

When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you."

⁴⁶But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me."

⁴⁷Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. ⁴⁸Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace."

⁴⁹While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher anymore."

⁵⁰Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed."

⁵¹When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. ⁵²Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep."

⁵³They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. ⁵⁴But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" ⁵⁵Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened.

JESUS SENDS OUT THE TWELVE

9 When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. ³He told them: "Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. ⁴Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. ⁵If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶So they set out and went from village to village, proclaiming the good news and healing people everywhere.

^a43 Many manuscripts *years, and she had spent all she had on doctors*

LINK (8:40-56) A MAN NAMED JAIRUS . . . FELL AT JESUS' FEET
See Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43.

COULD OTHERS TAP JESUS' POWER WITHOUT HIS PERMISSION? (8:46)

Jesus was always in control; his power was never released without his consent. Why, then, did he ask who had touched him? Possibly he did so to make the woman go public. It would have been in her best interest—not to mention the crowd's—to tell others what had happened to her. Thus, a person of timid faith became a faithful witness.

WHY DOESN'T FAITH HEAL EVERYONE? (8:48)

Although God sometimes heals in response to faith, the Bible never teaches that faith automatically brings healing. God sometimes has a greater purpose than physical healing to accomplish in our lives: building character (Ro 5:3-4), teaching us to depend on him (2Co 12:7-10), allowing us to share in Jesus' suffering (1Pe 4:12-13), encouraging others toward faith through our example (Jas 5:10-11), and so forth. Faith, of course, is the ultimate healing; it brings eternal life in Jesus and the glorified bodies that believers will receive at the resurrection (1Co 15:50-57). See **Does God guarantee healing from any disease?** (Ps 103:3; p. 860) and **Is healing guaranteed?** (Jas 5:15-16; p. 1787).

WHY DID JESUS INSIST THE GIRL WAS NOT DEAD? (8:52)

Jesus used sleep as a picture of death on more than one occasion (e.g., Jn 11:11-14). Perhaps he spoke this way to show that when he is involved, death is not final. He then brought this girl back from death.

WHY DID JESUS SAY TO TAKE NOTHING? (9:3)

Jesus wanted the Twelve to be completely dependent on God for their provision. He wanted them to see that God would provide for them through the hospitality of others. In fact, the New Testament churches were repeatedly encouraged to support those who ministered to them (Php 4:14-19; 1Ti 5:17-18; 3Jn 5-8).

LINK (9:3-5) SHAKE THE DUST OFF YOUR FEET

See Matthew 10:9-15; Mark 6:8-11.

WHY WERE THEY TO SHAKE THE DUST OFF [THEIR] FEET? (9:5)

Jews returning to Israel from a foreign land shook the dust from their sandals and clothing to avoid defiling the land they considered holy. The disciples were delivering a similar warning to the people of Israel. If they rejected the message of Jesus the Messiah, they would face the same judgment as unbelieving foreigners.

WHO WAS THIS HEROD? (9:7)

This was Herod Antipas, who wanted to kill Jesus (13:31–32) and before whom Jesus eventually appeared during part of his trial (23:6–12). His father, Herod the Great, ruled during the time of Jesus' birth. Technically, the term *tetrarch* referred to someone who governed one-fourth of a country, but sometimes the title was used simply as a synonym for "prince" or "king." Herod Antipas ruled over the regions of Galilee and Perea (see **Setting of the Gospels** [Mt 1:1; p. 1411]) from approximately 4 BC to AD 39.

LINK (9:7–9) HE WAS PERPLEXED

See Matthew 14:1–2; Mark 6:14–16.

LINK (9:10–17) THEY ALL ATE AND WERE SATISFIED

See Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:32–44; John 6:5–13.

WHY DID JESUS CARE ABOUT WHAT THE CROWDS THOUGHT? (9:18)

Though Jesus' question seems to indicate that the crowd's thoughts concerned him, he probably used this to prompt his disciples to consider the matter themselves. By redirecting the question to them (v. 20), he gave them an opportunity to declare their faith in him.

LINK (9:18–20) WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

See Matthew 16:13–16; Mark 8:27–29.

LINK (9:22–27) THE SON OF MAN . . . MUST BE KILLED

See Matthew 16:21–28; Mark 8:31–9:1.

WHY IS SELF-DENIAL A PREREQUISITE TO BEING A CHRISTIAN? (9:23)

Authentic discipleship means dying to self and living wholly for Jesus. Jesus humbled himself and gave up his home in heaven to save humankind. Now he calls followers to "die" each day to self-reliance, self-sufficiency and self-justification and to depend on him. This death to self-centeredness is an essential part of salvation because we cannot save ourselves through human effort. Salvation comes by dying to the old life and rising again to new life in *Christ Jesus* (Ro 6:1–11; see Col 3:1–4).

WHAT DOES TAKE UP THEIR CROSS MEAN? (9:23)

This phrase probably startled Jesus' listeners, for in that culture "taking up a cross" meant facing the horrible pain and humiliation of Roman crucifixion—a punishment usually reserved for condemned criminals. Jesus laid down his life voluntarily, and he asks us to do the same—to commit our lives wholeheartedly to him, accepting any hardship this choice may bring.

⁷Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, ⁸others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. ⁹But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him.

JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

¹⁰When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, ¹¹but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

¹²Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

¹³He replied, "You give them something to eat."

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." ¹⁴(About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." ¹⁵The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. ¹⁶Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. ¹⁷They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

PETER DECLARES THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH

¹⁸Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

¹⁹They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life."

²⁰"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "God's Messiah."

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH

²¹Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. ²²And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

²³Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.

²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. ²⁵What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? ²⁶Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

²⁷"Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

THE TRANSFIGURATION

²⁸About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. ²⁹As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. ³⁰Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. ³¹They spoke about his departure,^a which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. ³²Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. ³³As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.)

³⁴While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. ³⁵A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." ³⁶When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves and did not tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

JESUS HEALS A DEMON-POSSESSED BOY

³⁷The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. ³⁸A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. ³⁹A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. ⁴⁰I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

⁴¹"You unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here."

⁴²Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the impure spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. ⁴³And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

^a31 Greek *exodos*

LINK (9:28–36) THE APPEARANCE OF HIS FACE CHANGED

See Matthew 17:1–8; Mark 9:2–8.

WERE MOSES AND ELIJAH PHYSICALLY PRESENT OR WAS THIS JUST AN ILLUSION? (9:30)

God briefly brought them from the spiritual realm—presumably paradise (23:43; 2Co 12:2–4)—to appear with Jesus on this special occasion. This should not be confused with spiritualist practices; this was not a séance or an example of reincarnation. This event linked Jesus to the religious heritage of the Jews. Moses (representing the law) and Elijah (representing the prophets) demonstrated their approval for Jesus and his new covenant, which was superior to the earlier covenant (Heb 8:6).

LINK (9:37–45) JESUS . . . HEALED THE BOY

See Matthew 17:14–18; Mark 9:14–27.

ARE EVIL SPIRITS THE CAUSE OF CONVULSIONS? (9:39)

They may be the cause of some convulsions. Passages like this indicate that sometimes demons manifest themselves in visible physical signs. But every convulsion is not caused by a demon; physical causes may also lie behind such symptoms.

WHY COULDN'T THE DISCIPLES DRIVE OUT THIS SPIRIT? (9:40)

The disciples, frustrated and confused by their failure, asked the same question (Mt 17:19; Mk 9:28). Jesus reminded them that faith and prayer are necessary to overcome the power of the enemy (Mt 17:20; Mk 9:29). See **Why didn't the disciples have enough faith?** (Mt 17:20; p. 1439) and **Why didn't the evil spirit immediately obey Jesus' command?** (Lk 8:28–29; p. 1516).

WHAT ARE DEMONS, AND HOW DO THEY INTERACT WITH THE WORLD TODAY? (9:37–43)

Demons are called *deceiving spirits* (1Ti 4:1). They are also called *impure spirits* (Mt 10:1; see Lk 4:33). The origin of demons is not described in the Scriptures, but Jesus' reference to *the devil and his angels* (Mt 25:41) suggests that demons are angels who fell when Satan rebelled (Rev 12:4).

Demons can speak and can possess people and animals (Mk 5:9,12; Ac 19:15). Deceitful spirits are also capable of appearing as angels of light (2Co 11:14). Yet despite their apparent beauty and power, their influence is ultimately destructive (Mk 5:2–5). Demonic manifestation during the New Testament era often resulted in symptoms similar to those of mental or physical illness (e.g., Mt 9:33; 17:15,18; Mk 5:15). Demonic influence is also a source of false religion (Dt 32:17; 1Co 10:19–21).

The fact that demons are rarely mentioned in the Old Testament has caused some Bible scholars to conclude that the high frequency of demonic activity in the New Testament era was unique and may have been a response to the presence of Jesus. Others believe that demons are just as active today. In either case, Jesus gave his disciples authority over evil spirits (Mk 6:7). This power is rooted in Jesus the Messiah's kingdom authority (Mt 10:1,7–8), which remains very much in effect today.



JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH A SECOND TIME

While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, ⁴⁴“Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.” ⁴⁵But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

⁴⁶An argument started among the disciples as to which of them would be the greatest. ⁴⁷Jesus, knowing their thoughts, took a little child and had him stand beside him. ⁴⁸Then he said to them, “Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.”

⁴⁹“Master,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.”

⁵⁰“Do not stop him,” Jesus said, “for whoever is not against you is for you.”

SAMARITAN OPPOSITION

⁵¹As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. ⁵²And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; ⁵³but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. ⁵⁴When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” ⁵⁵But Jesus turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶Then he and his disciples went to another village.

THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS

⁵⁷As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

⁵⁸Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

⁵⁹He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

⁶⁰Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

⁶¹Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”

⁶²Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

JESUS SENDS OUT THE SEVENTY-TWO

10 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two^b others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

⁵“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them;

^a54 Some manuscripts *them, just as Elijah did* ^b1 Some manuscripts *seventy*; also in verse 17

if not, it will return to you. ⁷Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.

⁸“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. ⁹Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

¹³“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades.^a

¹⁶“Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

¹⁷The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”

¹⁸He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. ¹⁹I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

²¹At that time Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

²²“All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”

²³Then he turned to his disciples and said privately, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you see. ²⁴For I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.”

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN

²⁵On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

²⁶“What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?”

²⁷He answered, “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’^b; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^c”

²⁸“You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

²⁹But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

³⁰In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to

^a15 That is, the realm of the dead ^b27 Deut. 6:5 ^c27 Lev. 19:18

LINK (9:46 - 50) THE GREATEST

See Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37.

WHAT DOES WELCOMING A CHILD HAVE TO DO WITH SPIRITUAL GREATNESS? (9:48)

People often ignore those who have no influence and treat with favor those who do. We rub shoulders with the great in order to boost our own ego and status in the eyes of others. Jesus calls us to humble ourselves. We should care nothing about the world’s status symbols because the true way to greatness is humility (1Pe 5:5-6). One sign of this humility is welcoming those whom the world considers insignificant (e.g., children).

WHY DID THE SAMARITANS CARE WHERE JESUS WAS GOING? (9:53)

The Samaritans were disturbed by anybody worshipping in Jerusalem. They believed that Mount Gerizim was the place to meet with God (see **Map 11** at the back of this Bible). Deep hostilities had existed between the Samaritans and the Jews for centuries because of ethnic and religious differences. See **Why was there tension between Jews and Samaritans?** (Jn 4:9; p. 1557).

LINK (9:57 - 60) THE SON OF MAN HAS NO PLACE TO LAY HIS HEAD

See Matthew 8:19-22.

WHY DID JESUS DISCOURAGE THOSE WHO WANTED TO FOLLOW HIM? (9:57 - 62)

He wanted them to know exactly what becoming his disciples would cost them. He pushed his point to show them that there would be ongoing hardships in following him. As the Jewish religious leaders became increasingly hostile toward Jesus, he wanted his disciples to be prepared for the worst (Jn 15:18). He was ensuring that they were following him for the right reasons and not simply because they were seeking power, status or some other selfish agenda.

WHAT DID JESUS MEAN ABOUT HAVING NO PLACE TO LAY HIS HEAD? (9:58)

It meant he had no permanent home. Jesus lived as a traveling teacher wholly committed to preaching the kingdom of God. Though God does not necessarily call everyone to live that same way, he does expect believers to commit every possession and relationship to him, serve him, and live a life of dependence on him.

WHAT DID LAMBS AMONG WOLVES MEAN? (10:3)

Jesus wanted his 72 disciples to understand what they were getting into. Their task would be dangerous. Often they would be rejected. Jesus was up front about what would happen if they ministered in his name.

LINK (10:4 - 12) DO NOT TAKE A PURSE OR BAG OR SANDALS

See Luke 9:3-5.

LINK (10:13 - 15, 21 - 22) WOE TO YOU

Matthew records Jesus’ pronouncement of woe on unrepentant cities in Matthew 11:21-23 and Jesus’ praise to the Father in Matthew 11:25-27.

WILL JUDGMENT BE EASIER FOR SOME THAN OTHERS? (10:14)

Some people may deserve more severe punishment than others because greater knowledge implies greater accountability. According to Jesus, a servant who knowingly disobeys his master deserves more punishment than one who disobeys in ignorance (12:47-48). God’s judgment is completely just. In the past God extended special mercy to those who acted in ignorance, but now he calls everyone to repent (Ac 17:30; Ro 2:4-11).

HOW DID SATAN FALL FROM HEAVEN? (10:18)

Satan fell in the sense that he was defeated when confronted with the power of Jesus. The disciples preached the message of the kingdom, healed the sick, raised the dead, cleansed lepers and drove out demons (Mt 10:7-8). The miraculous ministry of Jesus proved that God’s power was far greater than Satan’s. When Jesus ushered in the kingdom of God, Satan’s demise began. Some tie this verse to Isaiah 14 and Revelation 12, but both of those contexts are different from this one. There may be a parallel, but that similarity does not make the events identical.

IN WHAT SENSE ARE SNAKES AND SCORPIONS USED BY THE ENEMY? (10:19)

These creatures were symbols of the presence of evil (cf. Rev 20:2). This was, then, a figurative way to speak of trampling over evil. Nonetheless, some see this as a literal promise of physical protection.

LINK (10:23 - 24) BLESSED ARE THE EYES THAT SEE WHAT YOU SEE

See Matthew 13:16-17.

LINK (10:25 - 28) WHAT MUST I DO

See Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31.

WHY DID JESUS INCLUDE A PRIEST, A LEVITE AND A SAMARITAN IN THIS STORY? (10:31-33)

Jesus included three kinds of individuals in his story, raising three kinds of expectations among his listeners. A priest was God's representative, a Levite the priest's assistant—so-called examples of righteousness. Jesus' listeners would have expected them to help. Samaritans, on the other hand, were despised for their ethnic and religious impurities. Jesus' listeners would have expected them to walk on by. See *Why was there tension between Jews and Samaritans?* (Jn 4:9; p. 1557).

COULD A PRIEST AND A LEVITE REALLY HAVE IGNORED A DYING MAN? (10:31-33)

It is easy to justify wrong behavior, even for those who claim to be living for God. The priest and the Levite may have told themselves that the man was already dead (touching a dead body would have kept them from temple service) or that it was a trap, with bandits still nearby.

WHY POUR OIL AND WINE ON THE WOUNDS? (10:34)

This treatment was often used as a first response to cuts, scrapes and abrasions. Oil and wine, when mixed together, provided both soothing and antiseptic qualities.

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH MARTHA'S HOSPITALITY? (10:38-41)

Nothing was wrong with her hospitality; however, her priorities were out of order. She was so concerned with the task of serving that she missed the greater importance of taking time to sit at Jesus' feet. Life's greatest priority should be to take in and reflect on our relationship with Jesus.

IF WE ALL ADORED JESUS AS MARY DID, WHO WOULD DO THE WORK? (10:39-42)

Mary did more than just sit at the feet of Jesus. She undoubtedly took her turn serving. The tension was caused not by Mary's unwillingness to help but by Martha's excessive preparations. Jesus said such extraordinary efforts were unnecessary; in fact, *few things are needed—or indeed only one* (v. 42). Our adoration and relationship with Jesus will naturally lead to service.

HOW DO PRAYER CUSTOMS BECOME MEANINGLESS RITUAL? (11:2-4)

Spiritual disciplines yield valuable benefits for both this life and eternity. It makes sense to repeat them on a regular basis.

But sheer repetition can render a custom ineffective and insignificant. We can go through all the right motions and say all the right words without engaging either our heads or our hearts. As a result, any prayer custom can erode into meaningless ritual.

Jesus noted the temptations that can accompany public prayers (Mt 6:5), long prayers (Mt 6:7) and prayers with fasting (Mt 6:16). Though these prayer customs are essentially good, the familiarity that comes with frequency can introduce spiritual apathy toward these important disciplines.

Jesus later condemned the religious leaders by quoting Isaiah the prophet: *"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules"* (Mt 15:8-9). He warned against allowing the holy to become commonplace. Make certain you pray *from* your heart, not just *by* heart.

Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.³¹ A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.³² So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.³³ But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him.³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him.³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii^a and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

³⁶"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

³⁷The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him."

Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

AT THE HOME OF MARTHA AND MARY

³⁸As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him.

³⁹She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said.⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

⁴¹"Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things,⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one.^b Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

JESUS' TEACHING ON PRAYER

11 One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples."

²He said to them, "When you pray, say:

^a35 A denarius was the usual daily wage of a day laborer (see Matt. 20:2).

^b42 Some manuscripts *but only one thing is needed*



"Father,^a
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come.^b

³Give us each day our daily bread.

⁴Forgive us our sins,
for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.^c
And lead us not into temptation.^d"

⁵Then Jesus said to them, "Suppose you have a friend, and you go to him at midnight and say, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread; ⁶a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have no food to offer him.'⁷ And suppose the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children and I are in bed. I can't get up and give you anything.'⁸ I tell you, even though he will not get up and give you the bread because of friendship, yet because of your shameless audacity^e he will surely get up and give you as much as you need.

⁹"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for^f a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹²Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

JESUS AND BEELZEBUL

¹⁴Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed.¹⁵ But some of them said, "By Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons."¹⁶ Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.

¹⁷Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: "Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebul.¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.²⁰ But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

²¹"When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe.²² But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armor in which the man trusted and divides up his plunder.

²³"Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

²⁴"When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left.'²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept

^a2 Some manuscripts *Our Father in heaven* ^b2 Some manuscripts *come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* ^c4 Greek *everyone who is indebted to us*

^d4 Some manuscripts *temptation, but deliver us from the evil one* ^e8 Or *yet to preserve his good name* ^f11 Some manuscripts *for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for*

LINK (11:2-4) WHEN YOU PRAY

See Matthew 6:9-13.

WHY DID THIS WHOLE FAMILY SLEEP IN ONE BED? (11:7)

In that day, it was common for homes, especially those of poor families, to have only one room. The whole family typically slept in that single room, on mats spread out on the floor. Some suggest this bed may have been a divan, a large platformlike couch, set against the wall. During the day it was used for sitting; at night, for sleeping. Either way, any disturbance would have likely awakened the whole family.

LINK (11:9-13) ASK AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU

See Matthew 7:7-11.

WILL GOD GIVE US WHAT WE WANT JUST BECAUSE WE ASK? (11:9-13)

No. God promises to meet all of our needs, not necessarily give us everything we desire or that seems beneficial to us. Jesus at other times said, *You may ask me for anything in my name* (Jn 14:14) and *Whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you* (Jn 15:16). This means that we are to ask for things that will accomplish Jesus' purpose in the world. As we grow in our relationship with God, we increasingly desire the things he desires.

LINK (11:14-22) OTHERS TESTED HIM

Similar accounts are given in Matthew 12:22-45 and Mark 3:23-27.

WHERE DID THE NAME BEELZEBUL COME FROM? (11:15)

The source of this name for Satan is not clear, but it seems to have roots in idol worship. *Baal* was a Canaanite god meaning "lord" or "master." An early related form was *Baal-Zebul*. The Jews ridiculed the idol and its worshipers by changing the name to *Baal-Zebub* (e.g., 2Ki 1:2) — meaning "lord of the flies" — or *Baal-Zebul* or *Beelzebul* (e.g., here) — meaning "lord of the dung" or "lord of the dung hill."

WHO, BESIDES JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES, COULD DRIVE OUT DEMONS? (11:19)

Evidently some of the Pharisees drove out demons or at least claimed to do so. Acts 19:13 mentions a group of Jews who *went around driving out evil spirits*. Others not associated with the apostles (Lk 9:49-50) were also casting out demons in Jesus' name.

WHAT ARE THESE ARID PLACES? (11:24)

Evil spirits evidently prefer to live in bodies (Mt 8:31-32). Since few houses exist in a desert, Jesus used *arid places* to picture the restless discomfort of a disembodied evil spirit seeking a dwelling place.

WHY IS BEING CLEANSED FROM EVIL A SETUP FOR GREATER EVIL? (11:24-26)

On one level, this was a metaphor for Israel (Mt 12:45); the Messiah had come to redeem the nation, but most rejected the opportunity, which left them vulnerable to increased demonic influence. But there is another lesson: When a demon is removed, the "vacuum" left behind must be filled with the Holy Spirit. If it is not, the demon will return with additional demons. The same is true of sinful behaviors. The person's condition is then worse than it was before.