

LESSON TEXT: Luke 1:1-80

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

(Lady): I went to the doctor, and he told me to drink carrot juice after a hot bath.

(Gent): Did the carrot juice help?

(Lady): I don't know. I'm still drinking the hot bath!

Now that's what you call *trusting* your doctor! People trust their doctors with their lives, their families and their most intimate secrets. Physicians are respected as trustworthy, compassionate and unbiased humanitarians. People (usually) *do what their doctors tell them to do!*

Luke, the author of the 3rd gospel account was a physician. Doctors in Luke's day were esteemed for their *analytical* expertise as they are today. Their technology was more limited than today, but their character, purpose and training was as intense as that of the 20th century. Some say, "Science and religion don't mix." So, what is a physician doing writing about Jesus Christ? Wouldn't it have been better to have only Jewish fishermen writing accounts of Christ's life? Consider!

1. If Jesus came to save the whole world, it is crucially important to have a Gentile (Luke), unencumbered by any prejudices or biases from a Jewish point of view to investigate, confirm and record the facts he learned about Jesus.
2. Luke, the doctor, was trained to be obsessed for detailed accuracy in diagnosing and reporting facts. Christianity is a belief based on the science of history, i.e., testimony about facts. It is not based on subjectivism (i.e., "feelings").
3. The search of medicine is the search for life. Luke found what all science, if it is honest, seeks----the **Truth!**
4. Doctors heal souls as much as they heal bodies. That is why Luke wrote his gospel account. It will be medicine for your soul to study it and believe it!

QUESTIONS:

1. Does the academic/social position of Luke tell you anything about the cutting-edge of the gospel in 1st century-society? Will the gospel "cut" just as well today in Luke's kind of "circles?" 1:1-4
2. Is it important to you that Luke has emphasized his goal as one of minute and orderly accuracy? Why? 1:1-4
3. Why did God choose this aged priest, Zechariah, with a sterile wife, to give birth to the Way-Preparer for the Messiah? 1:5-7
4. How was John the Immerser (Baptizer) "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children?" 1:17
5. Can we really believe Luke that a virgin could conceive a child without the implantation of male sperm in her womb? 1:26-31
6. What purpose is served by the preservation of Elizabeth's and Mary's songs of praise? What good do they do for one's life? 1:32-56
7. Why was God so emphatic that Zechariah name his son John? 1:59
8. Does the figurative language of Zechariah's and Mary's prayers help you understand the intent of OT figurative language in the Prophets? 1:67-79

"A group of biblical researchers has decided that Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin...It came in the wake of a presentation by a feminist theologian who said the notion of a virgin birth represented another example of subjugation of women, and that Christ was, in fact, an illegitimate child....Her research leads her to believe that Mary was impregnated during her betrothal by someone other than Joseph, perhaps by a Roman soldier....it was probably consensual sex rather than rape "

—from the *Fresno Bee*, (daily news paper of Fresno, CA), October 16, 1994

Comment by P.T. Butler----Did you notice she said Christ was "**in fact**" an illegitimate child, and then she says she **believes**, by **someone....perhaps** by a Roman soldier...**probably** consensual sex." WHAT KIND OF FACTUAL, DOCUMENTED, RESEARCH IS THAT?!!! She can't have it both ways. Is her assessment of Christ "fact" or "probability"?

Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance deride it; malice may distort it; *but there it is!* ---Winston Churchill

LESSON TEXT: Luke 2:1-52

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Christmas is “the season to be jolly.” The only music you’ll hear from Thanksgiving to New Year’s is—“I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas...” or, “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire...” Christmas always exudes nostalgia. Everyone gets sentimental and exuberant listening to carols, decorating the tree, buying presents. Other feelings crop up at Christmas-time which often tend obfuscate a clear spiritual appreciation of the birth of Christ. There is repugnance at the exploitation and secularization of it all. There is the stress and aggravation associated with shopping and preparations---the drunkenness and carousing, and the carnage on our nation’s highways. Even religion itself, with all its non-Biblical traditions, tends to turn us away from the real impact of Jesus’s birth. But every December 25th we go, robot-like, through the motions. It’s expected; but it’s mostly external. The nostalgia and frivolity confuse us about the *real essence* of Christmas.

Come to Bible School and study the birth of Jesus of Nazareth without all the trappings of a media-hyped “Christmas.” He was born in a disreputable village of a despised province of the ancient Roman empire. It was deliberately rumored among Jews that he was the illegitimate son of a Roman soldier who had raped a poor Jewish virgin. His trustworthy biographers, however, claimed he was conceived by the Holy Spirit of God in the womb of a poor Jewess virgin betrothed to a Galilean carpenter. He was born in an insect-infested cattle-shed in Bethlehem, and his first bed was a feed-trough. He was 30 yrs. of age before he left home. He wrote no books, commanded no armies, amassed no fortunes, built no monuments and traveled hardly more than 100 miles from his own home town. Yet all the world’s history is dated from his birth; the world’s best art, music and literature are dedicated to him. At the age of 12 he confounded the greatest Jewish theologians with his knowledge and wisdom. His eye-witness biographer’s report that he claimed to be God in the in flesh. There’s much more! Come and see!

QUESTIONS:

1. When was Jesus born? Is that important? Why? Why isn’t his birth mentioned in secular literature of the first century?
2. Why were shepherds, of all people, chosen to receive the first announcement of Jesus’ birth? Whom would you have chosen?
3. If this had been your baby could you have kept it secret like Mary did? Why did she? Why isn’t his birth mentioned in Jewish literature of the 1st century?
4. Why did Mary have to be “purified” after giving birth to Jesus---is giving birth sinful? Why did they give an offering for Jesus?
5. What is said to be Simeon’s whole mission in life? Could that be your mission in life?
6. How was Jesus to be “a sign that is spoken against”? How would that reveal thoughts? (cf. 1 Cor. 1:18ff)
7. Why would God want Jesus to live in disreputable Nazareth until adulthood?
8. Did Jesus disobey his parents when he stayed in Jerusalem at age 12?
9. How did Jesus, if he was God, increase in wisdom?

“I have always been subconsciously embarrassed by the ‘function’ of Christmas....The spirit of ‘loving kindness,’ that is presumed to come to a head like a boil once year, when it has been magnificently concealed up to that moment!”
---John Barrymore, writing in his diary, December 31, 1925, quoted in Gene Fowler, *Good Night Sweet Prince*, 1943

Anyone who thinks the birth of Jesus of Nazareth is not worth investigating needs investigating!

LESSON TEXT: Luke 3:1-38

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Years ago, in 1947, I saw my first “hippie.” Actually, he was a “flower-child” before “hippie-nish” was fashionable. I was on my way through Laguna Beach, CA, for a weekend of “liberty” from the U.S. Navy. He was a reclusive, social-drop-out, with long hair, a long beard, dressed in a weird robe, carrying a long walking-staff. All the sailors called him “Nature-Boy” from the popular recording of Nat King Cole at that time. He was protesting something but no one could ever figure out what it was. He always mumbled incoherently unless he was “putting the touch on” someone for money. When he begged for money he was very articulate.

Another “Nature-Boy,” some 2000 years ago, an eccentric dresser and eater, met travelers as they journeyed through the uninhabited places of the hills of Judea. His name was John bar-Zechariah, otherwise known as *John The Baptizer*. He was a recluse until he was about 30 years of age. He then flashed across the scene of history like a brilliant comet in the sky. And in less than a year, he was gone---dead, beheaded by Herod Antipas. Yet, in that one year thousands of people went out into the hills to hear him preach and responded to his command to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins. Millions have been blessed through the results of his ministry in century after century unto this very day. He was no beggar---he was a giver. He gave the world its Savior by “preparing the way before him.”

We hear so much about the necessity for “image” in leadership. Men have built businesses and made fortunes in “image-making.” “Hype” and “image” has even crept into the thinking of some preachers and their congregations. The “Baptizer’s” impression on mankind was not in his “stage presence” or eccentricity, but in his message and mission. John the Baptizer would not even call himself by his own name (Jn. 1:23) but referred to himself as simply the “voice” of God to announce the coming of God’s King and his kingdom. Learning about John the Baptizer will deepen your faith in God and his word. BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL.

QUESTIONS:

1. What about the historical context of the Baptizer's mission? Could you preach like he did to people like that?
2. How could there be a baptism for the forgiveness of sins before's Christ's atoning death on the cross?
3. Did John sprinkle, pour or immerse people in water as "baptism?"
4. Should John have called religious leaders "a brood of vipers?" Isn't that offensive and uncalled for? Is that kind of bluntness called for in our day?
5. From all John says about repentance, how would you define the word?
6. Can a person be a government worker or soldier and please God? How?
7. Are all believers to be immersed in the Holy Spirit?
8. If Jesus was perfect, why was he baptized by John the Immerser?
9. Why is it important that the genealogical record of Jesus' ancestry be a part of the gospel account? Why does Luke trace it back to Adam?

You should study in connection with this lesson, Isa. 49:1-11; Malachi 3:1-4; 4:5-6; Matt. 3:117; 11:1-19; 14:1-12; Mark 1:1-15; and John 1:1-42, to get the full picture of the Baptizer's mission and message.

“Candor is a proof of both a just frame of mind, and of a good tone of breeding. It is a quality that belongs equally to the honest man and to the gentleman.”
---James Fenimore Cooper

“If you think practicing what you preach is rough,
just try preaching what you practice.”
---Bowen Baxter

LESSON TEXT: Luke 4:1-44

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Life is a snap, once a person commits himself to doing the will of God. If you believe that, I would like to sell you the Brooklyn Bridge. Just as soon as Jesus had been baptized and had reaffirmed his commitment to doing his Father's will, he was led by the Spirit of God to be tested and tempted. The life of the God-server is one of constant tension in the arena of choice and action. There is no relaxation for the Christian in the struggle for sanctification.

Jesus Christ, Man, Perfect-Man, lived all his life in this tension. Although he was God Incarnate, he willingly allowed himself to face the struggles that every human being experiences. *Not once did Jesus work a miracle to extricate himself from temptation!* In the 4th chapter of Luke's gospel we have a record of Jesus being tested in the most fundamental ways all humans are tested:

- a. Tempted to prostitute the spiritual for the physical, Lk. 4:1-13
- b. Tempted to desert the kingdom of God because of discouragement with people, Lk. 4:14-30, and,
- c. Tempted to conceit and pride because of a pseudo-popularity, Lk. 4:31-44.

Mark Twain once said, with tongue-in-cheek, "There are several good protections against temptation, but the surest is cowardice." Jesus did NOT take the coward's way. He took the hero's way. Jesus fought; he battled; he struggled (see Lk. 12:49-50; Jn. 12:27-32; Matt. 26:38; Heb. 5:7-9) and he was victorious by remembering, trusting, and obeying the word of God! The same weapon he used to win is available to you and me. Don't take the coward's way; be in Bible School and learn how to be a victor.

"Better shun the bait than struggle in the snare."
---John Dryden

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Jesus go 40 days and nights without food? Why would Jesus have a body vulnerable to temptation? Lk. 4:1-2
2. Since Jesus was divine, was temptation really a problem for him? What if it had not been? see Phil. 2:5-8; Heb. 2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:2; 5:7-9
3. Isn't merely recollecting God's words a simplistic, child-like way to deal with temptation? Isn't there a better way for adults to deal with temptation? Lk. 4:3-15
4. When Jesus preached in his home-town of Nazareth about a couple of old prophets, why did they get angry enough to kill him? Lk. 4:16-29
5. Why didn't Jesus stay in Nazareth and preach until they made the right response? Didn't he take the coward's way out by leaving? Lk. 4:30
6. How does Jesus' healing compare with that of modern pseudo-healers? Lk. 4:31-41
7. Was Jesus primary purpose in ministry healing sick bodies? Why *did* he heal people? Lk. 42-44
8. Do you think popularity was a temptation to Jesus? Lk. 4:32,37,42 How did he handle applause? Can you handle flattery? How about when you are ignored or forgotten?

"It is better to fall among crows than flatterers; for those devour only the dead----
these the living."*Antisthenes*

LESSON TEXT: Luke 5:1--6:49

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

I knew of a man once who would go to the lake down at Grove, Oklahoma, and set up nicely printed signs all up and down the shore which said, "Welcome, all big fish---I have a lovely line with the nicest worm on the hook; please jump out of the water, wiggle up onto the shore and get it." Naw, that never happened---I'm really telling you a big fish yarn! Fish can't be caught that way. Neither can Christians "catch men" (Lk. 5:10) that way.

H. J. Heinz is known worldwide for his "57 Varieties" of pickles. But few know of his zeal as a "fisher of men." After being challenged by his preacher he prayed that the Lord would help him be a soul-winner. The next meeting of bankers and executives he attended, he turned to the man next to him and spoke to him of Jesus Christ. His friend looked at him in amazement and said, "I've wondered many times why you never spoke to me about him if you really believed in him." That man was the first of 267 souls which Mr. Heinz won to Christ afterward.

The tried and true methods of evangelism used by Jesus and his apostles taught and demonstrated in Luke chapters 5 and 6 worked then, and they will work now, if we will "work" them. Going out to find people where they work and inviting them to follow Christ; inviting people into our homes and introducing them to Christ; helping people when they're hurting and introducing them to Christ; or just being the kind of person Jesus describes in his sermon (Lk. 6) will make us "lights of the world and salt of the earth."

There *is* something *all of us* can do to "catch men" for Christ. It does not necessarily have to be a structured program; nor be in some formal situation. Jesus caught men out of a culture and time just as wicked, materialistic and irresponsible as ours. If an important and busy man like H. J. Heinz could do it, we can do it. **BE IN BIBLE SCHOOL. IT'S A SHAME TO WASTE AN HOUR YOU COULD BE STUDYING THE LIVING WORD OF THE ALMIGHTY GOD!!**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would Jesus choose fishermen to be "catchers of men?" What expertise did they have in that? What expertise is needed to be a soul winner? Lk. 5:1-11
2. How could these fishermen make a total commitment at one meeting with Jesus? (see John ch. 1,2,3,4). Is "catching men" a slow process? Why? Lk. 5:12-26
3. How did Levi introduce Jesus to his friends? Why would Jesus fellowship with publicans and sinners? Shouldn't we be careful about this? Lk. 5:17-32 (see also 1 Cor. 15:33; 2 Jn. 10-11; 2 Thess. 3:14)
4. Just what did Jesus mean by answering the Pharisees question about fasting by talking about old and new wineskins? Lk. 5:33-39
5. When Jesus defended his disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath was he actually saying it is sometimes lawful to break the law? Lk. 6:1-5
6. Does Jesus intend to prohibit us from having any fun at all when he says, "woe to you that laugh...for you shall mourn and weep?" Lk. 6:25
7. Should Christians charge other Christians interest on money loaned? Lk. 6:35 What would God do about demanding a return on his investment?
8. Before we attempt to lead others out of spiritual blindness, what are we to do about ourselves? Lk. 6:37-42
9. Will *doing* the words of Jesus bring *stability* to life in the here and now? Will believing in Christ get a person through the terrible *storms* of life? Lk. 6:46-49

"Christians do not become 'sons of God' by their works, but it is by their works alone that they prove themselves to *be* 'sons of God.'" ---John Mackey

"The world has more winnable people than ever before---
but it is possible to come out of a ripe field empty-handed"
---Donald McGavran

LESSON TEXT: Luke 7:1--8:56

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Jesus Christ was a "friend of sinners." He was compassionate and caring. For that we will eternally praise his name for we are all sinners, saved by his compassion and love. Someone defined compassion as "an understanding of the troubles of others, coupled with a compelling desire to help." We will learn about the tenderness of our Lord for the hurting of human beings in this lesson.

While Jesus was *compassionate* toward the physical ailments of human beings, he was most *impassioned* about people hearing and obeying the revealed word of God. In this lesson we will study the "Parable of Hearing!" The parable Jesus told, so often called The Parable of the Sower, is really not about sowing but about **hearing**. Jesus entitled the message of this parable, "*Take heed then how you hear...*"

The hero of the parable is the "**good soil**...who hears the word and understands it; and accepts it; and holds it fast in an honest and good heart, and brings forth fruit with patience." (a composite of Mt. Mk. & Lk.). To *look* is one thing. To *see* what you look at is another. To *understand* what you see is a third step. To *learn* from what you understand is still something else. But to **act** upon what you learn is "the bottom line," isn't it? People learn best by experiencing, doing, participating. Passive learning is not effective learning. That is why Jesus, after teaching the 12 disciples the *Parable on Hearing* went immediately into a ministry of proclaiming and proving himself to be the Son of God. Coincidentally, Jesus's ministry was also one of helpfulness to suffering men and women.

Throughout the *Parable of Hearing* Jesus emphasizes that we must *use* our knowledge and faith in his word, *or* we will *lose* it! Even the miracle with Jairus's daughter was knowledge the apostles who saw would put to use later testifying and preaching and writing about Jesus (Acts 1:1; 2:22; etc.)

QUESTIONS:

1. What would a Roman army Captain be doing fraternizing with Jewish elders? Why would he send to Jesus to heal his slave? L. 7:1-5
2. What does respect for authority have to do with believing? If people have discipline in their lives does it help them believe in Christ? Lk. 7:6-10
3. Why would Jesus go to dinner in a Pharisee's home? How did the "woman of the city" get in? What did Simon think of her? Lk. 7:36-50
4. Were the woman's sins really *more* than the Pharisees? Are those who love Jesus the most, always the most prolific sinners? Lk. 7:47
5. How may one get "an honest and good heart" **before** the word of God (the seed) is sown in his heart? Lk. 8:1-15
6. Was it mean-spirited of Jesus to question the faith of the disciples during the storm? Lk. 8:22-25 Do you think he might question your faith? When?
7. Did the woman who "touched" Jesus receive something more important than healing? What? How? Lk. 8:40-48
8. Why did Jesus order the mourners to leave Jairus's house? Lk. 8:51. Was the daughter asleep or was she dead? Who laughed at Jesus?
9. Why tell the parents to tell no one what had happened? Lk. 8:56 Could you have kept quiet about that if it had been your daughter? Would Jesus excuse disobedience?

"Never mind your happiness; do your duty."
---Will Durant

"The secret of getting action: What the mind attends to, it considers. What it does not attend to, it dismisses. What the mind attends to *continually*, it believes. And what the mind believes, it eventually does."
---Earl Nightingale

LESSON TEXT: Luke 9:1-62

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

William Menninger, one of the famous Menninger brothers gave this definition of "Emotional Maturity: (1) The ability to deal constructively with reality; (2) The capacity to adapt to change; (3) A relative freedom from symptoms that are produced by tensions and anxieties; (4) The capacity to find more satisfaction from giving than receiving; (5) The capacity to relate to other people in a consistent manner with mutual satisfaction and helpfulness; (6) The capacity to sublimate, to direct one's instinctive hostile energy into creative and constructive outlets; and (7) The capacity to love."

In chapter 9 of Luke's gospel account we will see exposed the emotional ups and downs and ins and outs of the men Jesus called to be apostles. These men were human beings with all the frailties human beings have. First, they were excited about their preaching tour; then, they were apprehensive about the great crowd which had nothing to eat; they then became depressed when Jesus ordered them to feed the crowd; Peter expressed their air of self-assuredness when asked to identify Jesus; but then when Jesus predicted his death, Peter (acc. to Matt. 16:21-23) flew off the handle; they became enthralled at the transfiguration and tried to prolong the experience; they allowed themselves to be intimidated by the Pharisees; they argued with one another about positions; they were haughty toward "lesser" brethren; and they became hateful and angry toward those who opposed them.

So how did Jesus go about *converting* these men? Very simply, by crystallizing their faith in him! Faith, unreserved trust, in Jesus Christ is what controls, disciplines and changes our harmful thoughts and feelings into the blessed mind and feelings of God. Beholding the glory of Christ we are changed into his image *from one degree* of glory to *another* (2 Cor. 3:18; 5:14-21:10:3-5).

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Jesus instruct the apostles not to take provisions on their evangelistic tour? Was he testing them, or those to whom they went? 9:1-5
2. Do you think the 12 reported back with the same enthusiasm as the 70 did later (see Lk. 10:17)? Was that wrong? 9:10
3. Did Jesus deliberately challenge their enthusiasm with the "impossible" project of feeding 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish? 9:10-17 Why?
4. Why did Jesus ask the 12 if they knew who he was? Did Jesus have an "identity problem?" 9:18-23 Why, at this moment, predict his death?
5. How was Jesus's countenance altered? 9:28-36 Why were Moses and Elijah talking of his "departure"? (in Greek, literally, *exodus*). What is wrong with wanting to build booths?
6. How could Jesus be so insensitive as to rebuke the people as "faithless and perverse" for wanting a demon-possessed lad healed? 9:37-45
7. Is this the only time the 12 argued about position in the kingdom? 9:46-48 (see also Matt 20:20-28; Lk. 22:24-30)
8. How would they justify their haughtiness and anger? 9:49-56 Do we?
9. Just how much does one have to put aside to give first priority to what Jesus asks us to do? 9:57-62 Can't we even bury our loved ones?

"He submits to be seen through a microscope,
who suffers himself to be caught in a fit of passion."
----Johann Kaspar Lavater

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

A minister, speaking to college students in their "frat" house, asked the fraternity president, "What are you living for?" The student answered, "I am going to be a pharmacist." The minister continued, "I know that this is how you are going to earn your livelihood, but what are you living for?" After thinking for a moment, the young man replied with both honesty and bewilderment; "Sir, I am sorry, but I haven't thought that through." The minister then asked the rest of the group the same question. Only 2 out of the 30 young men had seriously faced the central issue of existence: *the purpose for living*.

Every life should have a purpose to which it can give the energy of its mind and the enthusiasm of its heart. Give a man a dollar and you cheer his heart. Give him a dream and you challenge his heart. Give him Christ and you **change** his heart. Then the dollar and the dream become meaningful to him, and to others.

Life's purpose is not in performing spectacular miracles; it is not in philosophizing about religious questions; it is not in hard work and hospitality. Life finds purpose in **knowing Jesus Christ**. Jesus is known by *learning* what his word teaches, and by *doing* what his word teaches. If ever there was a person who demonstrated the true purpose of human life it was Jesus Christ. In our lesson for this Lord's Day, Jesus reveals to searching people what life's true purpose is. Bring a neighbor or a friend to Bible School that they may find **The Way, the Truth, and the Life**.

"Life is filled with questions. Life is filled with problems. Sometimes people say 'Christ is the answer.' But Christ is not the answer to *all* our questions. Sometimes he is the strength that helps us to live with unanswered questions. He is not the solution to *all* our problems. Sometimes he is the strength that enables us to live with insoluble problems."
---Robert C. Shannon in, *1000 Windows*

QUESTIONS:

1. Would the instructions to the "70" be proper instructions for Christians to do evangelism today? Aren't methods used 2000 years ago outdated? 10:1-9
2. What should be done about rejection of the gospel message? 10:10-16 What will be done at the judgment day about rejection of the gospel?
3. Why did Jesus thank God that things were hidden from some but revealed to others? 10:21-24 Is that fair?
4. Does Jesus' teaching in the parable of the Good Samaritan apply to us? 10:29-37. Should we help just any stranger? Even when danger is imminent?
5. Had you been Martha, would you have been offended at Jesus' rebuke? 10:38-42 Is it possible to be too hospitable?
6. Will God change his mind and give us what we want if we pray persistently? 11:5-13 What is taught about God in these verses?
7. Is mankind really divided into only two segments---those for Christ and those against him? 11:14-23
8. Is it evil to seek a sign from the Lord? 11:29-32 When? Why?
9. How could Jesus hold *that generation* responsible for all the blood shed from the foundation of the world? 11:45-53

"Life is a book in volumes three:
The past, the present, the yet-to-be.
The past is written and laid away;
The present we're writing day by day;
The last and best of volumes three
Is locked from sight---God keeps the key."
---Anonymous

LESSON TEXT: Luke 12:1---13:35

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Chapters 12 and 13 of Luke's gospel focus on the judgment to come and the need to get right with God by repentance. Those themes are not much heard in theology and preaching today!

From a letter written by an adolescent, now in the White House Collection: "September, 1895: To His Majesty President Cleveland: Dear President: I am in a dreadful state of mind, and I thought I would write and tell you all. About two years ago---as near as I can remember---I used two postage stamps that had been used before on letters; perhaps more than two stamps, but I can only remember of doing it twice. I did not realize what I had done until lately. My mind is constantly turned on that subject, and I think of it night and day. Now, dear President, will you please forgive me, and I will promise you I will never do it again. Enclosed find cost of three stamps, and please forgive me, for I was then but thirteen years old, for I am heartily sorry for what I have done. From one of your subjects."

Thousands of such letters from adults pour into Washington, D.C., every year. People want to repent and make restitution to the IRS, the Defense Department, Social Security, Postal Service, etc. Many people joke about this and believe such trivial improprieties need no repentance. Most of the world thinks a person should be sorry only when one commits a murder, pollutes a stream, is racially bigoted, or lies about Watergate. If a person can attain fame by ungodliness, he is excused from repentance by the majority opinion.

The Lord who possesses the keys of Death and Hades (Rev. 1:18) teaches that **all** must repent---not just horrendous criminals and lascivious reprobates. **Every** "tree" (person) planted in this world by the Creator must produce the fruit of holiness or it will be cut down! *Repent or perish* demands Jesus Christ. What is repentance? How does one repent? How often should one repent? If you think this is serious enough to learn about for your life, be in Bible School this Lord's Day.

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you think that all we have tried to cover up or hide will be made public at the judgment day? 12:1-7 (see also Matt. 12:36; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom. 2:16; 14:10; 2 Cor. 5:10). Does God *really* know *every* hair on the heads of 7,000,000,000 people?
2. May we acknowledge Christ with our mouths and deny him with our finances? 12:8-21 Why was the rich farmer a "fool" for saving?
3. Why is it wrong to have anxiety? 12:22-34 How does one repent of anxiety?
4. How does one repent of poor stewardship? 12:35-48 What is stewardship, anyway?
5. Will repentance on the judgment day be too late? 12:49-59
6. What is repentance? 13:1-9 Why does God allow towers to fall on people?
7. Is Satan the author of disease? All disease? 13:10-17
8. Will only a "few" be saved? 13:18-30 Who are the "few"? Do we have to "strive" to be saved?
9. Was Jesus wrong in his prediction that Jerusalem would be "forsaken"? 13:31-35---Jerusalem is an inhabited city today, isn't it?

"The Church must redefine its task. We have had too much preaching that dealt out mild homeopathic doses of ethical exhortation or sought to establish a social utopia by ignoring the fundamental need for a complete change in the mind and heart of mankind."

---William D. Chamberlain, op.cit.

"The thoughts of man are not the thoughts of God, but before men can enter God's Kingdom, they must be."

---William Chamberlain in, *The Meaning of Repentance*

LESSON TEXT: Luke 14:1-35

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Francisco Pizarro, explorer and conqueror of Peru once challenged his tired and discouraged followers. Drawing a line in the sand and pointing south where lay unexplored regions, Pizarro said: "On that side are toil, hunger, nakedness, drenching storm, and death; on this side are ease and pleasure. Choose, each man, what becomes a brave Castilian. For my part, I go to the south!"

Christ is not yours for nothing! The kingdom of God is not cheap. We may speak of free salvation and grace that is given us, but it is not thrown at us, even as pearls are not thrown before swine. Jesus told a story of a pearl merchant. He finds for sale the most beautiful, perfect pearl ever known. He wants it. And when he hears the price, he makes careful calculation---it will cost him everything he has. *Everything!* This is what Christ and discipleship with him is like---a fabulous pearl, only *more*. It will cost you *everything!*

In the *Christian Standard*, 1-11-69, James Crain wrote; "...a real disciple is one for whom the will of the Master is his unquestioned command. He claims no rights for himself, no authority over his own life. He seeks nothing for his own benefit. Everything he is or has belongs to the Master. He would gladly give his life for his Master and even so considers that he is doing no more than his duty. This is how Jesus regarded discipleship, and this is the kind of discipleship that does not exist today *because it is too extreme to be comfortable.*" Have we counted the cost? Are we paying the price?

QUESTIONS:

1. Which takes precedence---going to church on Sunday or helping someone in need on Sunday? 14:1-6 see also Hosea 6:6; Matt. 9:13; 5:23-24; 12:12
2. Should we be humble so others will exalt us? 14:7-11 What is humility? Why do men seek honor from one another? When does the honor of God come?
3. When was the last time you gave a dinner and invited the *poor, lame, blind and maimed*? Why don't we? 14:12-14 see Matt. 5:46-48
4. Have you heard excuses like those in 14:15-20? How did you answer? Why have so many refused the invitation? see Matt. 22:1-14
5. If the Christian life is *already* a feast, why do we think we have to *add* merriment or festivity to it? 14:21-25 Why must we *compel* people to come?
6. Do we have to hate *everyone*, even our own *families* to love Jesus? 14:25-27
7. Which is the better army for Christ---*more* soldiers who haven't counted the cost, or *less* soldiers who have? 14:28-30
8. Is the Lord's church warning would-be disciples to "*count the cost*?" 14:31-32
9. Is 14:33---"renounce all that he has"---an ideal only a few will ever reach or is it attainable by all Christians?

*Being a Christian is not a matter
of emotional delirium
but of earnest deliberation
-----Paul T. Butler*

LESSON TEXT: Luke 15:1-32

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

For many nights during 1995, between the hours of 10 and 12 midnight, a poor woman could be seen making her way through the streets of London, England. A year had passed since her only daughter had left home for the great city. There she became acquainted with evil companions, and she was living a life of open sin. The mother learned that her daughter might be seen every night in a certain part of the city. After many nights of watching, she was about to despair, when she saw a figure closely resembling that of her daughter. She eagerly approached, stretching out her arms in an embrace, when the light of a lamp showed that it was not her child. In an agony of grief, she exclaimed: "Ah! it is not she! I was looking for my daughter; but, no, you are not my child!" The poor girl burst into tears, saying: "I have no mother---I wish I had; I wish I had someone who would look for me---Oh, how I wish someone would look for me!"

Friend, there are lots of people right here in our community wishing someone would look for them! They may not be walking the streets at midnight--then again, they might be! Without God, without Christ, and without hope, wherever they are, they live in the darkness. And in the anguish of their crushed spirits their muted cry is, "No man careth for my soul!" Jesus cares! Jesus looks for them. *But Jesus cares and looks through you and me.* Christians, we are Christ's body in the world now. We are his feet, his mouth, his eyes looking for lost coins, and his shepherds looking for lost sheep. We are the Father's servants welcoming prodigals back home with open arms and celebration. Either that or we are murmuring, hateful Pharisees and elder brothers.

Bible School is the place to get the knowledge of God's word about saving the lost and get the burden on your heart to go do it. Do you dare to be here this coming Lord's Day?

*The way from God and his word to a human heart is
through another human heart. ---PTB*

QUESTIONS:

1. Who were "sinners" according to the Pharisees? 15:1-2 Whom do you classify as "sinners?" Whom do you think is "lost?"
2. How did Jesus "receive" sinner? 15:2 Do you ever eat and visit with sinners? Do you ever mention to them the will of God for their lives?
3. How do sheep get lost? 15:3-7 Why are people like sheep?
4. How much time this month have we spent looking for lost coins or lost keys? 15:8-10 Have we looked for a human being lost from God this month?
5. Were we really "prodigals" before "coming home?" 15:11-16 Were we starving? Do we know any other "prodigals?" What can we tell them about the Father?
6. What must all prodigals do before they will turn toward home? 15:17-21
7. Is God going to be like the father of this parable to every prodigal? 15:22-24
8. Have you ever known any "elder" brothers? 15:27-32 Could there be any "elder brother-ish-ness" in any of us?
9. What do you think was the status of the "elder" brother in relationship to the father? What did the "elder brother" think his status was?
10. Could this parable be teaching that our salvation depends as much upon **brotherhood** as it does **sonship**? Could it be saying that you can't be a **son** unless you are a **brother**?

*"Home, in one form or another,
is the great object of life."
---Josiah G. Holland, 1859*

LESSON TEXT: Luke 16:1-31

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Billy Sunday jokingly said in one of his sermons, "If there is no hell, a good many preachers are obtaining money under false pretenses." **Indeed, there is a hell.** We know that on the authority of Jesus Christ.

More people will go to hell for mercilessness and misuse of their money than for doctrinal mistakes! Of course, since faith comes by hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17), we must strive to have a correct knowledge of his word and the only place to find the truth of God is in the Bible. However, cold-hearted *indifference*, even with an informed mind, will send a person to hell. This is the clear teaching of Jesus time after time in the Gospels. When Jesus described the great judgment day scene (Mt. 25:31-46) we see the ones going away into eternal punishment were those who did **not** feed the hungry, welcome strangers, clothe the naked, and visit the sick and imprisoned..

Jesus drew a parabolic picture of a scallywag of an employee who was embezzling his employer's funds. This guy was also cunning enough to know how to use what belonged to someone else to make for himself friends who would "take him in" when his boss fired him! Then the Lord said satirically , "the sons of this world are wiser in their own generation than the sons of light." In other words, compared to the way worldly-minded people use their money, Jesus is calling Christians, dumb!

If you really want to know how to be smart and *send your money on ahead of you to the eternal bank of Heaven* be in Bible School this Lord's Day. You can't take it with you, but you *can* send it on ahead.

But, if you think you would be more apt to be generous if someone who has gone to hell would come back and warn you, forget it! There won't be any "ghosts of Christmas-past." That happens only in fiction. The reality is: if we do not hear Christ and the apostles, neither will we be convinced if someone should rise from the dead (Lk. 16:31).

QUESTIONS:

1. What is a "steward?" Why is God concerned about how we use things down here? Are we ready to give account of our stewardship? 16:1-2
2. Why was the wasteful, dishonest, lazy steward *commended*? 16:8
3. How could Jesus say worldly people are *wiser* than "sons of light?" 16:8
4. Why can't a person serve **two** masters; why can't a person have God and money both? 16:10-13
5. What connection is there between "entering the kingdom by **violence**" and the proper use of money? 16:14-17
6. How is the subject of **divorce** connected to misuse of money? 16:18
7. Is the story of Lazarus and the rich man a parable? 16:19ff What if it isn't?
8. Are the unsaved really going to burn **forever** in flames? 16:24 Will there be any opportunity to escape hell after this life is over?
9. Did the rich man go to hell because he was rich? Why did he go? 16:25-26
10. Why wouldn't sending a person back from the dead have convinced the brothers of the rich man? 16:27-31

"HELL IS TRUTH SEEN TOO LATE
---DUTY NEGLECTED IN ITS SEASON"

"The opposite of love is not hate; it is something much worse than that...something much colder, more pallid, and really much more cruel; the opposite of love is *indifference*."

LESSON TEXT: Luke 17:1---18:43

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Two of the Lord's most pungent parables are in these two chapters (Luke 17:7-10 and 18:9-14). In them Jesus confronts the mind-set of arrogance and worldliness so pandemic in the human race from the Garden of Eden until today. He emphasizes that humility, faithfulness and benevolence are the attributes of character that shall inhabit the kingdom of heaven (Lk. 18:15-17). When a servant of God has done all that is commanded he should understand that he is still an unworthy servant for he has done only his duty. When a servant of God prays he should say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And when a man is affluent he should give to help others (Lk. 18:18-30).

We had a man in this congregation with those attributes. A few hours after Walter Goodman went to be with the Lord, Gale and I visited in the home. Walter's son, John, related a poignant statement his Dad made in the last days of his life on earth. Walter told John he didn't want to die yet because he had not done enough for the Lord. I have known Walter for 40 years, and that little statement characterizes exactly the man I know. When he had done all that was commanded, he still felt like an unworthy servant of the Lord. And, only the Lord knows the tremendous amount of his money and time Walter gave to the work of the kingdom all over the world.

The opposite of worldly-mindedness is heavenly-mindedness (Col. 3:1-2; Rom. 8:1-11). It has to do with the focus, the commitment, the goal of one's whole being. Once that is confirmed and reaffirmed, the deeds fall into place as they should. Spirituality is not genetic---it is **learned**. And it is learned only from God's Word, the Bible. Walter Goodman learned spirituality from his home and his church. That is why he was emphatic about promoting the church's Bible School. Why don't you become a role-mode of spiritual-mindedness for someone in your neighborhood. Bring them to Bible School.

QUESTIONS:

1. If temptations are sure to come why would a person be blamed that one came through him? 17:1-4 (see Rom. 14:1---15:13; 1 Cor. 8:1---10:33)
2. If servants have done what was commanded, why should they say they were still "unworthy servants? 17:7-10
3. Did Jesus say the kingdom of God is "within you" (NIV & KJV) or "in the midst of you" (RSV). 17:20-21 (Remember to whom he was speaking!)
4. What catastrophic signs did the people of Noah's day have about the end of their world? 17:22-27 What anticipatory signs shall we have of Judgment Day?
5. Is God a grouchy, reluctant, unrighteous judge who will eventually "cave in" if we pray long enough? 18:1-8
6. How could Jesus turn over the kingdom of God to children---they haven't enough experience or wisdom to manage the kingdom, do they? 18:15-17
7. How should the body of Christ (the church) respond to greed like that of the rich young ruler? 18:18-25 (see 1 Cor. 5:10; 6:10; Eph. 4:19; 1 Tim. 3:8; Titus 1:7). Receive them into membership?
8. Will Christians have more material blessings than non-Christians? 18:29-30
9. Why would people be so cruel as to rebuke a blind beggar for wanting help? 18:35-43

Humility modeled:

On his way to a reception in his honor, Ulysses S. Grant got caught in a rainstorm. He shared his umbrella with a stranger, going to the same reception who did not recognize Grant.

"I have never seen Grant," he said, "but I have always thought that he was a very much overrated man."

"That's my view, also," said Grant.

"Promises must be kept, deadlines met, commitments honored; not just for the sake of old-fashioned morality, but because we become what we do (or fail to do), and character is simply the sum of our performances."

LESSON TEXT: Luke 19:1---20:47

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

If a poll were taken of the whole human race, asking, "What is the fundamental issue of life?" what do **you** think the answer would be? What would you vote for---love? peace? liberty? happiness? faith? knowledge? food? what's on TV tonight? Surely, you have considered the question. Needless to say, philosophers and wannabe-philosophers have pondered that question since the beginning of the human race. Search for the *fundamental issue of life* is what created "schools" of philosophy. One school said, "Know thyself..." another said, "Know nature...." another school said, "Try to know nothing!" Basically, these are the three schools in vogue yet today, thousands of years after their beginning. Now which school is right? That **is** the fundamental issue of life! Not **which** school, but the **very question** itself. In other words, **AUTHORITY** is the fundamental issue of life. For man, **authority** (God's, Satan's or man's) was the fundamental issue at creation in the Garden of Eden. Satan challenged, "Did God say....?" Eve took the bait!

Make any propositional statement, champion any issue, ask any question, make any demand and the first reaction is usually, "*Who sez so?*" If "Who sez" isn't the first reaction, it will be the ultimate one. **All** issues ultimately reduce themselves to the issue of **authority**.

In our lesson in Luke, chapters 19 & 20, it is significant that Jesus, preparing to finish on the cross the *purpose of history and humanity*, establishes the fundamental issue of life---**authority**. Fallible and finite human beings must have an **Absolute Authority** as a point of reference for all the incidental and peripheral issues of life. The crucial issue is not simply authority or authorities, but **Absolute Authority**. In our lesson this week, Jesus shows that when God and his Word is our Absolute Point of Reference, harmony, purpose and peace resolves every other critical problem of life.

QUESTIONS:

1. Why would a "chief tax collector" climb a tree just to see an itinerant rabbi from Galilee? 19:1-6
2. How could Jesus pronounce Zacchaeus "saved" before "Zac" had been immersed? 19:7-10
3. Was it fair for the "nobleman" to condemn the servant who kept the pound given to him safe and secure? 19:11-27
4. Why didn't the owner of the colt object when the two disciples commandeered it for Jesus? 19:28-35
5. Were the Jewish officials right in challenging Jesus' authority for cleansing the temple? 19:45--20:2
6. Was Jesus dodging the issue by asking them a question? 20:3-8
7. How did the "tenants" propose to take over the "vineyard?" 20:9-18
8. What authority does the Lord give to civil governments? What is man's obligation to civil government? 20:19-26 (see also Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:14-17)
9. In heaven, who will be the spouse of those remarrying after the first spouse is gone? 20:27-40 Maybe there is no heaven after all?
10. How could the Messiah be both David's son and David's Lord? 20:41-44

"I am the Lord your God....You shall have no other gods besides me."
---Exodus 20:2-3

Settle this: Jesus Christ is Absolute Lord!
Then, everything else in this life and the next life
is settled!--P.T. Butler

LESSON TEXT: Luke 21:1-38

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

In Luke, chapter 21, we will be studying the dreadful prediction of Christ about the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation which took place in A.D. 70. Many people have been led astray by sensationalist "prophecy-preachers" about this text, and its parallels (Matt. 24:1-42; Mk. 13:1-33).

Constant warfare, natural disasters, grave moral dereliction and the deluge of new technology has provoked an abundance of eschatological intemperance and grievous error in connection to this text. Frenzied and irresponsible predictions about the **alleged** "rapture, tribulation, and millennium" certainly didn't decrease as New Year's Eve, 1999 A.D. approached.

But this chapter in Luke is not about the Second Coming of Christ except for Jesus' last statement (Lk. 21:33-36). The "Olivet Discourse" as this chapter and parallels are called is almost totally about the **demise** of an incorrigible, incipient Jewish system which had "filled up the measure of its fathers," as Jesus put it (Mt. 23:29-39) and had "finished the transgression..." And Judaism was about to "cut off an *anointed one*" (*Messiah* in Hebrew text)..." as Daniel put it in Dan. 9:24-27.

Israel had rejected Jehovah for idols in the days of the prophets so God sent judgments upon them, expecting to correct them (Amos 4:1-13), but they would not take correction (Jer. 5:3). Then God chastened them by exile and dispersion. By the time the Messiah arrived the pendulum of Judaism had swung to the other extreme. They deified their traditions and legalisms into a god and were set to kill anyone (including God himself) who said their system must be fulfilled and set aside.

What is God to do with a nation that would rather kill him and his Son than carry out the purpose for which he commissioned them? That's what Luke 21 is all about. Don't be led astray by grossly erroneous interpretations of this chapter. Be sure to be in Bible School to study this lesson!

QUESTIONS:

1. Do you know what statements of Jesus preceded this prophecy? (They are in Mt. 23:15,31,35,36,37,38,39; and Jn. 12:20-50--you **must** read these and understand the connections).
2. Why did some ask for a "sign" that what Jesus said would come to pass? 21:7
3. Who would lead those disciples astray? 21:8
4. What earthquakes and famines would precede the destruction of Jerusalem? 21:11
5. How would armies surrounding Jerusalem "fulfill all that is written?" 21:20-22 (see Dan. 9:24-27)
6. When would the "times of the Gentiles" be fulfilled? 21:24 (compare Rom. 11:25-26 with Rom. 9:8; Gal. 3:29; 6:15-16; Rom. 2:28-29; 4:9; 9:22-26; Gal. 3:6-9; Heb. 10:10; 10:12-14).
7. Are verses, Lk. 21:25-28 referring to the destruction of Jerusalem? (compare this apocalyptic language with Isa. 13:10; 14:12ff; 24:23; Jer. 4:23-28; 15:9; Joel 2:10; 2:30--3:21; Amos 4:9; Micah 3:6; Hab. 3:11, et al.)
8. What generation would "not pass away?" 21:32
9. Is there a lesson in Judaism's destruction for all men? 21:34-36 (see Rom. 11:17-36).

10.

"The Second Coming of Jesus for Christians and the First Coming of the Messiah to the Jews will be within the next 32 years (i.e., before 2000 A.D.)..."
Jean Dixon, October 7, 1968, Dallas, TX
Oooooops! (PTB)

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father..."

"Watch therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming."

"Therefore you also must be ready;

for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

---Jesus Christ, ca. 30 A.D.

LESSON TEXT: Luke 22:1-71

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Remember the "pep-talk" scene in the movie, *Patton*? Just before a general or a king launches his army into battle, he usually gives them a "rally-round-the-flag-boys" speech. It is saturated with patriotism, hate-the-enemy, invincibility-of-our-troops, blood and guts kind of language. Everyone is charged up. Fighting-and-conquering-emotions are brought to a boil.

In Luke 22 (and Mt. & Mk. parallels and supplementary in Jn. 13-17) we see Jesus, the King, preparing his troops. They are going, soon, into battle. He is going "away" soon (absent in the flesh). What kind of talk comes from Jesus? He says things like, "One of you will betray me---I am going to die---remember me by perpetuating this supper---one of you will deny me---do not take up the sword---you will be tempted." What did Jesus' "army" see him do? He did nothing to stop the betrayer; he washed their feet; he spoke of love and persecution; he prayed that if possible his own "cup" be taken away; he surrendered to his enemies; he healed an enemy; he was silent before his accusers.

That wouldn't exactly get the old fighting adrenaline going would it? Especially, if you were a Jew and you had preconceived notions about the kind of Messiah your people expected. You'd have problems with such a "pep-talk" wouldn't you? Yet everything Jesus said and did was as it had to be. This was the way his "army" would eventually conquer the minds and hearts of millions. But it was going to take something much more convincing than this "pep-talk." *It would take a resurrection from the dead to prove Jesus knew what he was talking about.*

What a failure Christianity would have been if Jesus had tried to launch it only by his "pep-talk," or even by his acquiescent but courageous death. Thank God, the Gospel does not stop at his death!

QUESTIONS:

1. Can Satan take over a person without that person agreeing to it? 22:3
2. Why did Jesus choose Passover time to institute the "Lord's Supper?" 22:14
3. How could the 12 be so insensitive as to argue with one another about being the greatest? 22:24-27
4. Did this "supper" prepare them for his absence? 22:28-30 Is that what it's for today? How is it a "participation" for us?
5. Are you ready to die fighting like Peter? 22:31-34 Are you ready to live for him? Which is more difficult?
6. What does Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane say about "feelings" vs. God's will? 22:39-46 Does his experience apply to us? Have you ever agonized over the conflict between your will and God's will? (see Rom. 7:13-25; Gal. 5:16-26)
7. Why did Peter deny knowing Jesus when he was so willing to fight for him? 22:54-62 Have you ever denied knowing Jesus?
8. Why didn't someone protest the illegal and unjust way the innocent Jesus was treated by the authorities? 22:63-71 Had you been there, would you have protested? What about all those protesting everything else under the sun today---would they?

"Take from a man his wealth, and you hinder him;
take from him his purpose, and you slow
him down. But take from a man his hope, and
you stop him. *He will not go on without hope.*"
---Anonymous

"In August of 1989 millionaire publisher Malcolm Forbes spent \$2,000,000 to fly 600 guests to Tangiers to celebrate his 70th birthday. Surely it was one of the costliest feasts ever held-----unless you count the Lord's Supper!"
---Robert C. Shannon, in, *1000 Windows*

LESSON TEXT: Luke 23:1-56

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

One of the happiest days in the history of little Denmark and Norway and the other countries which had been invaded and occupied by Hitler's armies was that day in the spring of 1945 when the electrifying message came over the air: "Allied Armies Victorious." The decisive battle had not been fought in their own countries. Nor had it been fought by their own armies. It had been fought in a different land, and won by the blood, sweat and deaths of men they had never seen. But they knew that victory meant their release.

The Gospel, in its simplest terms, is the **message** of man's deliverance from the horrible occupation of the powers of darkness---by the death and resurrection of God's Son. It is the record of a triumph won by a Champion who did battle for the entire human race, on a battlefield two thousand years away.

That many people have not caught the full force and implication of this **message** is evidenced by the listless manner in which they hear it. Can you imagine a faithful member of the Norwegian underground greeting the news of the Allied victory with an indifferent: "How interesting---so what?" For the Norwegian that message of triumph meant the end of an old way of life, a life of fear and dread. It meant a complete change in all his relationships---to his wife, his children, to society, to the entire human family. It meant a new day, a new era, a new life, a new world. He had heard a thrilling **message** based upon a thrilling **fact**, and he could be nothing else but **thrilled!**

The Gospel does not thrill some people today as it should because they no longer regard it as a **message based on facts**. They regard it merely as "a religion," whatever that may mean. But the Gospel is a **message** about **objective facts**, about something that **happened**---the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death. *If* that victory did not take place, the Gospel *is* a myth. But it did, the Gospel is a **message**, the message, the only message that is really **good news!**

QUESTIONS:

1. Why did the Jews take Jesus to Pilate--why didn't they kill him? 23:1
2. Why did Herod want to see "some sign" by Jesus? 23:8
3. Were the charges the Jews made against Jesus true? 23:14
4. Pilate declared Jesus innocent---why did he propose to "chastise" Jesus? 23:16
5. Why did Pilate finally give in to Jewish demands? 23:24
6. What did Jesus mean about the "green wood" and the "dry"? 23:31
7. What is the significance that Jesus was executed by crucifixion? 23:33
8. How could Jesus promise the thief Paradise if he had not been baptized? 23:43
9. What god was the Roman centurion praising at the crucifixion? 23:47
10. What is the day of Preparation? What is the point in documenting the day of Jesus' crucifixion? 23:54
- 11.

*"Upon that cross of Jesus Mine eye at times can see
The very dying form of One Who suffered there for me; And from my smitten heart
with tears Two wonders I confess, The wonders of His glorious love And my
unworthiness."
--Elizabeth C. Clephane (1830-1869)*

"But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.
the apostle Paul---Galatians 6:14

LESSON TEXT: Luke 24:1-53

Prepared by Paul T. Butler, Th.D.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS:

Elizabeth Kuebler-Ross, authoress of a number of books about life after death once said, "Before I started working with dying patients, I did not believe in a life after death. I now believe in a life after death, beyond a shadow of a doubt."

I don't know about you, but I would need a basis more certain than the experiences of "dying" patients upon which to rest any belief in immortality. Every experience of this life as far as immortality goes ends in hopelessness (see Ecclesiastes, Rom. 8:20; 1 Cor. 15:12-19,32; Eph. 2:12, et al.).

The **good news** to mankind is there **is** an absolutely certain and secure **proof** (as absolutely certain as anything can be) that life does exist after death. That proof is **the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth**.

- a. The documents (Gospels & Epistles) attesting to the fact are beyond any reasonable doubt as to their genuineness, authenticity, historicity, and credibility. If anything can be believed---they can!
- b. The data recorded in these documents establishing the resurrection of Jesus is *experiential* (i.e., scientific) if any data is. It is data seen, heard and touched (1 John 1:1-4).
- c. Those who saw were in the hundreds. These were not isolated incidents. Those who saw were not expecting to see. They were not coached or bribed. They gained nothing but animosity for telling what they saw.
- d. The fact of Jesus' resurrection was proclaimed in the presence of those who killed him and who tried to make sure he remained dead and in the tomb--- if there was evidence that he was still dead they could have easily presented it. But there is not one shred of ancient, documented, historical data to the contrary---only conjecture, rhetoric, and deliberate falsehoods.

It is not a question of whether a resurrection could or could not occur. The question is, DID IT OR DIDN'T IT! The question is to be resolved on the basis of evidence and testimony.

QUESTIONS:

1. Is there an alternative explanation for the empty tomb of Jesus besides the actual, bodily resurrection? 24:1-3 What testimony is there for alternatives?
2. Why did Jesus' disciples forget his predictions about resurrection? 24:4-8
3. Why did the apostles look upon the women's report as "an idle tale?" 24:11
4. Why didn't the two on the road to Emmaus recognize Jesus? 24:13-16 Why were they so despondent?
5. Where does the OT predict Messiah's death and resurrection? 24:25-35 Why didn't the Jews understand and believe their own Scriptures?
6. What if someone said to you "Christianity is all myth!" How would you answer? 24:36-43
7. Has anyone ever told you "Religion is all how you feel, so facts do not really matter!?" How did you answer? 24:44-49
8. What if someone challenged your statement that the tomb was never empty--saying, the women went to the wrong tomb; the disciples stole his body?
9. If you did not believe Christ actually arose from the dead, would you be a Christian? 24:50-51 What would be your moral base if you didn't believe? Why?

The most famous clock in the world is London's "Big Ben."
It stands by the House of Parliament and towers above Westminster Abbey. It is a familiar landmark.

The chimes play the tune of a hymn.
The hymn is: "I Know My Redeemer Liveth."

Death is not a period, but a comma in the story of life. The resurrection is the rest of the never-ending statement.