

April to June 2025

“The Life of Christ”

(Part I)

by Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo

About the Author



Rev Dr Jeffrey Khoo (BTh, MDiv, STM, PhD) is the Principal of the Far Eastern Bible College. A published author, he also edits The Burning Bush which is the theological journal of the Far Eastern Bible College.

An ordained Minister of the Gospel, he is Pastor of True Life Bible-Presbyterian Church.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1

JOHN 1:1-14

HEBREWS 1:1-3

“And the Word was made flesh...”

JESUS THE LIVING WORD

God has spoken to man through a person. That person is Jesus Christ. Jesus is the Logos, the Word (John 1:1). He is the Message or the Revelation of God. Hebrews 1:1 to 2 says, *“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”* There is the Written Word (Bible), and there is also the Incarnate Word (Christ). *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him”* (John 1:18). Jesus said, *“he that hath seen me hath seen the Father”* (John 14:9). Jesus as the Word fully reveals who God is. He is God’s Perfect Revelation. The Son is God’s final Word to the world.

The Apostle John described Jesus uniquely as the *“only begotten Son.”* He mentions it in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; and 1 John 4:9. Jesus is not just Son of God, He is the eternally begotten Son of God. The doctrine of the eternal generation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity is taught in the 4th century Athanasian and Nicene Creeds, which state that Jesus is both Son and God *“only-begotten, ...of the Father before all the ages.”* The Westminster Confession (1648) likewise affirms, *“In the unity of the Godhead, there be three persons, of one substance, power and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; and the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son”* (II:3).

Be warned that the New International Version (NIV) attacks the fundamental doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ by removing the God-inspired word *“begotten”* from the Bible. The NIV reads *“one and only”* instead of *“only begotten.”* The Greek *monogenes* literally means *“only begotten”* (*mono* is “only,” and *genes* is “begotten”). Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, begotten, not created. The NIV has no right to remove the divinely inspired word *“begotten”* from the Holy Scriptures. Beware of corrupt versions that attack the Written Word and the Living Word.

THOUGHT: Am I using the King James Bible?

PRAYER: Father, guide me into all truth.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

JOHN 1:1-14

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

“...the Word was God.”

CHRIST IS FULLY GOD

“In the beginning was the Word.” This reminds us of Genesis 1:1: *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* Jesus was there *“in the beginning.”* He is the Creator: *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”* (John 1:3).

“The Word was with God.” The Word is distinguished from God. The distinction has nothing to do with Jesus’ essence. Jesus is the same in essence with God. The distinction has to do with personality. The Word is a Person by Himself. He is *“with”* God in the sense that He is *“in the presence”* or *“in the company”* of God (cf. Matt 13:56, Mark 6:3, Luke 9:41, 1 Thess 3:4). Who is this God that Jesus was with? It has to be God the Father. John described Jesus as being *“the only begotten of the Father”* (John 1:14, 18, 3:16). The Father and the Son are distinguishable individuals. The Father is not the Son. (Note: Sabellianism is the heresy which says that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are all one and the same person but appearing in three different forms.)

“The Word was God.” This statement declares that Jesus is Himself God. Jesus is Deity. The New World Translation of the Jehovah’s Witnesses is absolutely wrong to translate this verse, *“The Word was a god.”* That Jesus is only a lesser god (i.e. not 100% God as Jehovah is, but only 50%) is a heresy called Arianism. The Council of Nicea (AD 325) condemned Arianism.

The deity of Christ is clearly stated in Colossians 2:9: *“For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.”* Jesus was 100% God before He became man. And when He became 100% man, He did not cease to be 100% God. He is fully God and fully Man in one perfect Person forever (cf. Heb 7:24).

THOUGHT: Does doctrine save? Read 1 Timothy 4:16.

PRAYER: Father, help me to interpret Thy Word correctly and accurately.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

LUKE 1:1-4

1 JOHN 1:1-3

“...our hands have handled...
the Word of life.”

CHRIST IS FULLY MAN

Jesus, when He was on earth, did not live in isolation. He did not station Himself in some desert place or high mountain, dispensing heavenly wisdom only to those who would take the trouble to go to Him. Jesus mingled with the people. He walked with them, ate with them, listened to them, talked to them, lived with them. His every movement was observed by a select group of 12 whom He chose to be His disciples. They were eyewitnesses to all the things that had happened. Jesus, in living so closely with the people, proved that He was totally human. They saw Him hungry, thirsty, and tired. He was no different from them, except for the fact that He was without sin.

Interestingly, in Luke 1:2, the disciples of Christ were called “*ministers of the word* (logos).” Luke, like John, referred to Jesus as the Word. Luke was thus telling his readers that he was speaking of the same Jesus, of whom John also spoke. Although both were speaking of the same Person, they presented Him from their own distinctive angles. John, for instance, emphasises the deity of Christ, while Luke stressed His humanity. Luke preferred calling Jesus “*Son of Man*” (26 times). John, on the other hand, was the only one who recorded the seven definitive “I am” statements of Jesus (Exod 3:14; John 8:58 cf. 6:35; 9:5; 10:7,9,11,14; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1,5). Seven in biblical numerology is the number of deity. Jesus is Jehovah. He is God.

Although Luke and John have their distinctive emphases on the two natures of Christ, both are nonetheless mindful that Jesus is both God and Man.

THOUGHT: Why must Jesus be both God and Man to save us from our sins?

PRAYER: “O Master let me walk with thee, in lowly paths of service free.”

FRIDAY, APRIL 4

LUKE 1:5-28

ISAIAH 9:6-7

“For unto us a child is born...”

ROYAL BIRTH ANNOUNCED

The Lord Jesus Christ did not enter into the world unannounced. Kings have heralds or forerunners to announce their coming or arrival. Jesus as King had John as His forerunner to call the people to right themselves before God in preparation for His coming (Luke 1:17, 3:4,5).

The angel Gabriel announced to Priest Zacharias that Elisabeth, his wife, would bear him a son who should be named John. Zacharias and Elisabeth had no children of their own because she was barren. Moreover, both of them were already very old. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for them to have any children. But nothing is impossible with God. He could make it happen. This was certainly good news.

God had a special purpose for their son, John. He was to be a Nazarite, consecrated to God for His service (Luke 1:15, cf. Num 6:1-21). Though born to a priestly family, he was consecrated for the prophetic ministry (cf. Matt 11:9-10). Being filled with the Spirit of God, and imbued with the spirit and power of Prophet Elijah, he would cause many Israelites to turn away from their sins in repentance to God (Luke 1:15-17).

The angel Gabriel told the virgin Mary that she would conceive in her womb the Son of God — JESUS (i.e. Saviour) by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:31,35; Matt 1:18). She would be pregnant while still a virgin. It would be a supernatural conception and birth. The birth had to be extraordinary and miraculous by virtue of the Person who was to be born. Gabriel told Mary not to be surprised by this for this Baby *“...shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end”* (Luke 1:32-33).

It is important to note that Elisabeth, who was already pregnant with John for six months, was Mary’s cousin (Luke 1:36). John would thus be half a year older than Jesus.

THOUGHT: When was the last time I shared the Gospel?

PRAYER: Father, lead me to some soul today.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5

MATTHEW 1:18-25

ISAIAH 7:1-14

*“...she was found with child of the
Holy Ghost.”*

ONLY ONE VIRGIN BIRTH

Mary did not tell Joseph about her pregnancy. She probably thought it wiser to let God tell it to Joseph since only God could make such an unbelievable story believable.

The signs of pregnancy soon became evident to Joseph. Since he knew that the pregnancy was not due to him, he must have concluded that Mary had been unfaithful, and had committed adultery. This sin was punishable by death (Deut 22:23-24). Joseph being righteous would not marry an adulteress. But he loved Mary too much to see her punished. He had in mind to annul the relationship secretly. God intervened.

The Lord revealed the truth to Joseph in a dream. He told Joseph to take Mary as his wife. The baby in her womb was no ordinary child. Mary would give birth to a son — JESUS — *“for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matt 1:21). Joseph was told that all this was done so that the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 might be fulfilled. Joseph, as a God-fearing Jew, did not question nor doubt the words of the angel. He did as the angel had told him to do. Joseph did not touch Mary until after she gave birth to Jesus (Matt 1:25). It was not only a virgin conception, but also a virgin birth.

Only the Lord Jesus Christ could be and was virgin born. Many commentaries and Study Bibles today attack Isaiah 7:14 by saying that it was not Christ alone who fulfilled this precious Messianic prophecy. They say there were two fulfilments, one in the time of Isaiah, and the other in the time of Christ. This double fulfilment view is a forked-tongue attack on Christ and His Word. The Lord Jesus alone fulfilled the prophecy of the virgin birth. Amen.

THOUGHT: Beware the forked-tongue of the snake!

PRAYER: Father, help me to discern truth from error.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 6

MATTHEW 1:1-17

LUKE 3:23-38

*"For as in Adam all die,
even so in Christ
shall all be made alive."*

JESUS THE SON OF DAVID, ABRAHAM AND ADAM

A genealogy traces the ancestry of a person. It is important for a Jew to be able to trace his lineage. This is because to a Jew, his genealogy serves as his identity card. Israelites prove their racial identity by their genealogies (cf. Phil 3:5).

Jesus claimed to be the Son of David. Where is the proof? The proof is in His genealogy. Matthew, writing mainly to the Jews, proved that Jesus came from the line of Abraham and David. This is significant because it is prophesied in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham (Gen 13:15; cf. Gal 3:16; John 8:56), and of David (2 Sam 7:13b-14a).

Matthew's genealogy mentions two women (Matt 1:5). Usually only the men are mentioned; but here we find two women: Rahab (Josh 2) and Ruth (Ruth 1-4). Both were Gentiles, not Jews. Rahab was a prostitute from Jericho, and Ruth was a Moabite. Why were they given such a place of honour? Is it not to teach the important lesson that God's grace is showered not only upon Jews but also Gentiles (Gal 3:28-29)? By grace through faith, Rahab was saved and later married Salmon, the descendant of Judah. They gave birth to Boaz who married Ruth, the Moabitess who bore Obed, the father of Jesse, and grandfather of David, king of Israel. How we thank God that He did not count us, Gentiles, out of His grace and favour!

Luke's genealogy of Jesus goes right back to the first man: Adam (Luke 3:38). Jesus is the Son of man. He is the greater Adam (Rom 5:12-21).

THOUGHT: God loves all people, but loves His children especially.

PRAYER: Father, help me to *"do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."*

MONDAY, APRIL 7

LUKE 1:39-56

PSALM 146:1-5

*“And my spirit hath rejoiced
in God my Saviour.”*

MARY THE SINNER NEEDS JESUS THE SAVIOUR

On receiving word from the angel that Elisabeth was also pregnant (cf. Luke 1:36), Mary went to see her, to tell her what God had done for her as well. Not only Elisabeth, but also baby John, though still in his mother's womb, leaped for joy upon hearing the good news. Filled with the Spirit, Elisabeth blessed Mary, addressing her as *“the mother of my Lord.”* Note that this is not the same as calling Mary the “Mother of God.” Elisabeth in no way deified Mary, only Christ!

Mary did not think of herself as God's Mother either. She made clear that she was but a *“handmaiden”* of God. She readily admitted her sinfulness when she confessed that God was her Saviour. *“Holy is his name,”* she said, not *“holy is my name.”*

Calvin, against the deification of Mary by the Roman Church, commented, “Now observe, that Mary makes her happiness to consist in nothing else, but in what she acknowledges to have been bestowed upon her by God, and mentions as the gift of his grace. ‘I shall be reckoned blessed,’ she says, ‘through all ages.’ Was it because she sought this praise by her own power or exertion? On the contrary, she makes mention of nothing but of the work of God. Hence, we see how widely the Papists differ from her, who idly adorn her with their empty devices, and reckon almost as nothing the benefits which she received from God. They heap up an abundance of magnificent and very presumptuous titles, such as, ‘Queen of Heaven, Star of Salvation, Gate of Life, Sweetness, Hope, and Salvation.’ Nay more, to such a pitch of insolence and fury have they been hurried by Satan, that they give her authority over Christ; for this is their pretty song, ‘Beseech the Father, Order the Son.’ None of these modes of expression, it is evident, proceeded from the Lord. All are disclaimed by the holy virgin in a single word, when she makes her whole glory to consist in acts of the divine kindness. If it was her duty to praise the name of God alone, who had done to her wonderful things, no room is left for the pretended titles, which come from another quarter. Besides, nothing could be more disrespectful to her, than to rob the Son of God of what is his own, to clothe her with the sacrilegious plunder.”

THOUGHT: Mariolatry is idolatry.

PRAYER: Father, keep me from idols.

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

LUKE 1:57-80

PSALM 89:1-18

“...for thou shalt go before
the face of the Lord
to prepare his ways.”

THE KING'S HERALDER IS BORN

After a full pregnancy term of 9 months, John was born to Elisabeth and Zacharias (Luke 1:57). During all those months, Zacharias' mouth was shut. He was struck dumb because he doubted Gabriel's words. Through writing, he named his son “*John*” in obedience to God (Luke 1:63-64).

After God lifted his dumbness, Zacharias announced to all what his son John would be to the glory of God. John was to become “*the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace*” (Luke 1:76-79).

All this happened because God is faithful. God remembered the covenant He made with Israel — “*the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life*” (Luke 1:73-5; cf. Gen 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:4-5, 17-18; 17:1-8; 22:15-18).

The promise of deliverance is two-fold: it is both physical and spiritual. The Messiah has come to deliver us from our enemies. These enemies refer not only to rebellious men, but also to fallen angels. He will deliver us from the curse of sin which is death, and from the bondage of Satan and of sin (1 Cor 15:26; Rom 16:20; Col 1:12-13). He will not only rule over the hearts of men, but also all the lands of the earth in holiness and righteousness (Isa 2:1-5, 9:6-7, 11:1-9; Phil 2:5-11; 1 Thess 3:13; 2 Thess 1:7-9; Rev 19:11-20:6).

THOUGHT: “*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...*” (Eccles 12:1).

PRAYER: “Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father.”

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9

LUKE 2:1-7

GALATIANS 4:4-7

“Joy to the world!

The Lord is come!”

JESUS BORN TO SAVE

Jesus saved us by His obedient life and sacrificial death. Philippians 2:8 says that the Lord Jesus took the form of a man in order to die for our sins: *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* Galatians 4:4-5 sheds additional light that Jesus became man not only to die but also to live for us: *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”* Jesus, as the greater Adam, kept the Ten Commandments perfectly, and as the sinless Lamb of God, gave His life vicariously to save us from our sins.

Christ was born in 5 BC in a little town called Bethlehem (cf. Mic 5:2). He was born not in a palace but in a stable, and His bed was not a cradle of silk but a manger of straw. It was a very lowly and humble birth for One who is Himself the Son of God and King over all. The Apostle Paul drew from the incarnation of Christ an important lesson on humility: *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil 2:3-8). His lowly birth revealed the life He was going to live — the life of a lowly servant. Jesus Himself said, *“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45). He came not to be served, but to serve. For our sake He came. He was born to die, to save us from our sins.

THOUGHT: No Virgin Birth, no Salvation.

PRAYER: “Come, Thou long expected Jesus, Born to set Thy people free.”

THURSDAY, APRIL 10

LUKE 2:8-20

ROMANS 5:1-10

“Peace on earth,

and mercy mild.

God and sinners reconciled!”

ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD ON HIGH

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). What is this “*peace*” and “*good will*”? This peace is the special, inward peace that comes when man is reconciled to God through Christ. Paul spoke of this in Romans 5:1, *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:... being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life”* (Rom 5:1, 9-10). Christ earned the righteousness of God for us when He lived a perfect life on earth in fulfilment of the Law (Matt 5:17-18). The peace of God that comes from Christ is the result of Christ clothing us with His righteousness when we accept Him as our Lord and Saviour.

The “*good will*” that the angels referred to is not man’s but God’s good will. It is because of God’s will that we can receive His peace. The KJV rightly translates it as “*good will toward men.*” It originates from God. God is the source of peace. God’s peace is a free gift. It is purely by His mercy that sinful men are bestowed His peace. Since salvation is purely by His grace, only He can boast when sinners are saved, and that is why to Him and Him alone the glory belongs. *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”* (Rom 5:6-8).

The birth of Christ was not witnessed by the high and mighty, but the lowly and humble. The angels brought the wonderful news of the birth of Jesus not to the kings, but to the shepherds. The Lord Himself was born not in a palace, but in a stable, and laid in a manger. Why such an ignominious entrance and visitation? God intended right from the start to have all know that His good will and peace are received only by those who humble themselves before Him, who has humbled Himself for them.

THOUGHT: “God’s mere goodwill reconciles him to us.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, grant me Thy peace.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11

LUKE 2:21-24

LEVITICUS 12

*“For the promise is unto you,
and to your children...”*

JESUS, KEEPER OF THE LAW

Why must Jesus be circumcised? He was circumcised not just because He was Jewish (Gen 17:10; Lev 12:3), but more importantly because He had to keep the Law in every aspect for our salvation. Calvin commented, “God appointed that his Son should be circumcised, in order to subject him to the law; for circumcision was a solemn rite, by which the Jews were initiated into the observance of the law. Paul explains the design, when he says, that Christ was ‘made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law’ (Gal 4:4-5). By undergoing circumcision, Christ acknowledged himself to be the slave of the law, that he might procure our freedom.”

The name “JESUS” means “Saviour.” True to His name, the Lord Jesus even as an infant worked for our salvation right from the start. Christ’s circumcision was not the first and only instance of His obedience to the Law. The Lord’s keeping of the Law can also be seen in His participation of the following rituals though as an infant:

1. Mary’s rite of purification (Lev 12:1-8), and
2. the dedication of the first-born (Num 3:13).

It is important to understand that these ceremonies involved not just the individual, but also the family by virtue of the Law’s covenantal nature (Deut 6:1-3).

Although Mary alone went through the purification, Jesus had to participate in that ritual because Mary’s purification was required on account of His birth. This must not be taken to mean that Jesus had to be cleansed from sin as well. Jesus had no sin. He went through the purification in identification with sinners since He was going to be their Representative as their Guilt-Bearer. Jesus is our Fountain of purity and life.

THOUGHT: It is not the circumcision of the flesh, but of the heart, that saves.

PRAYER: Search me, O Father, and know my heart today.

SATURDAY, APRIL 12

LUKE 2:25-38

PSALM 122

*“For mine eyes
have seen thy salvation.”*

CHRIST THE SAVIOUR OF ISRAEL

At least two in Israel, Simeon and Anna, were eagerly awaiting the coming of Israel's Messiah in light of Old Testament Scripture. In honour of their faith, the Lord granted them the privilege of seeing their Messiah before they died.

God had promised Simeon that before he died he would see Christ. The Greek “Christ” is equivalent to the Hebrew “Messiah,” meaning “the Anointed One.” When he laid eyes on Jesus, he rightly said that he was beholding the Lord's salvation. Jesus Christ was to be the Saviour of all people, both Jew and Gentile. He also spoke of the agony Jesus had to suffer on the cross, and how Mary herself would grieve because of it.

The KJV accurately reads “*Joseph and his mother*” (over against the NIV's erroneous “The child's father and mother” which attacks the virgin birth of Christ). It is important to note that Jesus has only one Father — the first Person of the Holy Trinity. Jesus only addressed one Person as Father in the Scriptures, and that was His Father in heaven. Joseph was not His father; God alone was His Father. And Jesus would call no one “Father” but Him. The inspired writer carefully distinguished between Joseph's actual relationship to Jesus by the words “*Joseph and his mother*,” not only in verse 33 but also 43, again purposely avoiding the title “father” for Joseph.

Anna, the prophetess, understood the Old Testament well when she said that Jesus was Jerusalem's redemption. Jerusalem, as the capital of Israel, represents the nation as a whole. Anna's “*redemption of Jerusalem*” is similar to Simeon's “*consolation of Israel*” (Luke 2:25). Israel's hope and glory rest on her Messiah — the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of David (Isa 52:9; cf. 2 Sam 7:12-13). Born in the city of David (Luke 2:11), He will one day rule over the whole earth from a restored Jerusalem (Rev 5:10, 20:6).

THOUGHT: The nation of Israel is the key to understanding prophecy.

PRAYER: “*Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.*”

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 13

MATTHEW 2:1-12

JUDE 1-13

“...we have seen
his star in the east...”

FOLLOW THE GUIDING STAR

Who were these wise men? These “*wise men*” called “*magi*” in the original, were probably Persian priests who were skilled in the study of the stars (cf. Dan 1:20). The text tells us that they came from the land east of Israel. If they were indeed from Persia, how did they come to know about the “*King of the Jews*” (Matt 2:2)? It is possible that the Jews, while in exile in Babylon, preached to the Persians the coming of their Messiah. It is difficult to see how the wise men could have come to a conclusion simply from astronomy that a great Jewish King was going to be born. This Messianic notion of theirs probably stemmed not just from their knowledge of the stars but also their knowledge of Old Testament prophecy, perhaps Daniel’s (Dan 9:24-26; cf. Num 24:17; Matt 2:6). The supernatural appearance of an extraordinary star led them to conclude that the time had arrived, the Holy Spirit guiding them in their determination of the timing of both prophecy and phenomenon.

Herod the Great demanded to know exactly where Christ would be born. The Jewish clerics on the basis of Micah 5:2 rightly answered, “*in Bethlehem of Judaea.*”

Given the location, the wise men set off to find the infant King. Note that they found Him in a house. Jesus was no longer in the stable. Evidently, the wise men did not arrive on his birthday, but shortly after that. Some time must have passed, and Joseph and Mary must have found proper accommodation by then. Jesus was also described as a “*young child*,” perhaps a year old (cf. Luke 2:22; Matt 2:16).

When the wise men found Jesus, they rejoiced greatly at the sight, and prostrated themselves on the ground in worship of Him. In acknowledgment of His Kingship, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

After being warned by God not to report to Herod, they obediently returned to their home country via another route.

THOUGHT: Follow God’s Guiding Star, and not Satan’s wandering stars.

PRAYER: “*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power...*” (Rev 4:11)

MONDAY, APRIL 14

MATTHEW 2:13-23

PSALM 91

“...Out of Egypt
have I called my son.”

THE SON CALLED OUT OF EGYPT

Herod the Great wanted to kill the infant King. Joseph was instructed by the Lord's angel to take little Jesus and Mary to Egypt for safety. It is rather paradoxical that Jesus should flee to Egypt—the place from which God through Moses led His people out. God rescued His people out of Egypt—a land of bondage and slavery, into Israel—the promised land of milk and honey. The land of Israel should be the safest place for the infant Messiah—the land He Himself had given to His people; yet it had become a land most dangerous, and now Egypt a country most safe! It is no wonder John indicted His fellow countrymen in John 1:11, *“He came unto his own, and his own received him not.”*

Did Jesus come at the right time? Indeed, He did. The Apostle Paul said that He came in *“the fulness of the time”* (Gal 4:4). He came at a time when the Israelites and the world needed Him most; a time when the unbelief of Israel and the wickedness of the world were at their height: *“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not”* (John 1:10). *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name”* (John 1:12). The advent of Christ at such an evil time underscores the grace and mercy of God. Is there a king that would seek such a humbling and humiliating entrance? We can be quite sure there is none but Jesus.

Jesus' sojourn in Egypt fulfilled Hosea's prophecy (Hosea 11:1-3). Israel, a nation beloved of God, is a type of Christ. Just as God had saved Israel by calling her out of Egypt, so God will save His Church through His beloved Son whom He calls out of Egypt.

Herod died in 4 BC. His crime against Christ no doubt called for God's swift judgment. He died of a terrible disease. Archelaus, Herod's worst son, took his father's place (cf. Matt 2:22). The new Herod was equally evil, and Judaea was still not safe for young child Jesus. The Lord's angel thus led Joseph to Galilee. Jesus grew up in Nazareth in fulfilment of prophecy (Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5, 33:15; Zech 6:12).

THOUGHT: God is our best Protector.

PRAYER: Father, send Thy angels to keep me from all harm and danger.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

LUKE 2:40-52

EPHESIANS 6:1-4

*“And the child grew,
and waxed strong in spirit...”*

JESUS GREW IN BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT

Jesus grew up like any normal child (cf. Luke 1:80), but with one exception. He was perfect, without sin (Heb 4:15). He was perfect right from the start. As such, He was man's perfect Representative in God's redemptive plan.

Jewish boys become a *bar mitzvah* (“a son of the law”) when they reach the age of twelve. As a *bar mitzvah*, they assumed personal responsibility in keeping the Law. So to inaugurate this important stage of His life, Jesus, when He was twelve years old, accompanied Joseph and Mary to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. The Passover festival commemorates the “passing over” of the children of Israel when God slew the first born of Egypt (Exod 12:11-28, 23:14-17). Jesus made sure He kept the Passover Law for our sake.

In Jerusalem, Jesus revealed His Messianic awareness. By this time, His knowledge and understanding of the Old Testament had surpassed even those of the doctors of theology in the temple. Jesus, like a model student, heard their lectures and asked questions. We can be sure there were questions He asked that stumped the learned rabbis. And when a theological problem was raised, He was able to offer an authoritative answer. This we know from Luke who reported, *“And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.”*

Jesus, as a young boy, knew the reason why He was on earth. He told Joseph and Mary, *“I must be about my Father's business.”* As God the Son, Jesus knew very well the mission God the Father wanted Him to accomplish. He stayed on in the temple because He was obedient to His Father's will.

Jesus not only perfectly obeyed His Father in heaven and His parents on earth, in terms of His reputation among the neighbours, He was undoubtedly well-liked—He increased *“in favour with... man.”* Jesus was a most lovely and lovable child. None had trouble with Him.

THOUGHT: “Read your Bible, pray every day, and you'll grow, grow, grow.”

PRAYER: Father, I do not want to remain a baby Christian; make me to grow in Christ.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

MARK 1:1-8

MALACHI 4:5-6

“...Behold, I send
my messenger before thy face...”

REPENT!

Mark begins his account of Christ's life with these words: “*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*” This is a good introduction to what the Gospel is all about. The term “Gospel” (Greek: *euangelion*) literally means “good news.” The Gospel is all about Jesus Christ, and the good news that He brings. The good news is about Jesus Christ who died, was buried, and on the third day rose from the dead according to the Scriptures (1 Cor 15:1-4). Mark (and all the other Gospel writers) elaborates on what actually happened in the life of Christ which led to His death, burial, and resurrection for the salvation of His people.

John the Baptist began his ministry as the Messiah's herald at the age of 30 (AD 26). In the wilderness of Judaea, he preached “*the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins... and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Would anyone listen to such an unpopular message in such a sparsely populated place? This surely goes against the worldly church growth techniques taught today. There is no doubt that John had a nation-wide ministry for we are told that the people went out to him from “*Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan.*” The people came to him. Surely there must have been a thirst for the Word of God for there had been no prophets in Israel since Malachi. There was no prophetic voice for 400 years. However, Malachi did prophesy that a prophet in the spirit and power of Elijah would one day appear (Mal 4:5-6).

Four hundred years had already passed. Could John be Elijah? John certainly looked like Elijah in the way he dressed. He “*was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins.*” His camel fur robe and leather belt bore similarities to Elijah's outward appearance (2 Kings 1:8). His diet consisted only of locusts and wild honey. John's appearance and conduct stood out prominently. His message was all the more striking. He denounced the sins of the people, and called on them to repent. This kind of preaching had probably not been heard since the time of Malachi. It had a familiar prophetic ring. Finally, God had sent a prophet.

THOUGHT: “Every chastisement is a call to repentance.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, I repent of my sins.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17

LUKE 3:1-18

JAMES 2:14-26

“...the crooked
shall be made straight...”

WALK YOUR TALK

Crowds of Jews came to hear John, but with a certain group he was not well-pleased. Among those who came to see and hear John were the Pharisees and Sadducees. Who were these people? The Pharisees were teachers of the Torah (Law). They were the religious “policemen” of Israel. They were keepers and enforcers of the Torah. At the time of the New Testament, there were about 6,000 of them. The Sadducees, on the other hand, were fewer, and more entrenched in the temple system. The high priests, for example, were all Sadducees. The Pharisees and Sadducees did not like each other. They were opposites in terms of doctrine. One was traditional, the other liberal. The Pharisees believed in life after death, the Sadducees did not. Both, however, had one thing in common. They hated Jesus. In their conspiracy to kill Jesus, they cooperated very well. Suddenly, enemies became buddies!

When these Pharisees and Sadducees came to John for baptism, he denounced them, calling them a “*generation of vipers*.” They were coming to him for baptism without truly repenting of their sins. It is not enough for a person to say he has faith. It is vital that he evinces true faith by producing good works. That was why John warned them, “*Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire*” (cf. James 2:21-24).

These self-righteous Pharisees and Sadducees were hypocrites. Their walk did not match their talk. “*Faith without works is dead*” (James 2:20, 26). John was the first to expose their faithless faith, and Jesus in His ministry did not fail to condemn their hypocrisy either with equal severity.

THOUGHT: Is my faith dead or alive?

PRAYER: “Father, I want to be a Christian in my heart.”

FRIDAY, APRIL 18
MATTHEW 3:13-17
ROMANS 5:12-21

*“thus it becometh us
to fulfil all righteousness...”*

FULFILLING ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS

We find the Lord Jesus Christ doing a most remarkable thing here: He went to John for baptism. We know that John's baptism was a baptism *“unto repentance.”* Jesus was sinless. There was nothing for Him to repent of. John himself was puzzled as to why the Lord would seek baptism from him.

John was simply a baptiser and not the Messiah. Jesus was infinitely greater and mightier. John said that he was not worthy even to unloose the latchet of His sandals. John baptised only with water, but Jesus would baptise them with the Holy Spirit and with fire. This fire is a chastitive fire that purifies all believers (*“whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner”*), as well as a punitive fire that destroys all unbelievers on the day of His wrath (*“but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable”*) as taught in Luke 3:17.

The Lord Jesus told John the reason He had to be baptised. Jesus said that He needed to be baptised in order *“to fulfil all righteousness.”* What does this mean? Calvin insightfully commented, “The word righteousness frequently signifies, in Scripture, the observation of the law: and in that sense we may explain this passage to mean that, since Christ had voluntarily subjected Himself to the law, it was necessary that He should keep it in every part.” Calvin also said that Jesus had to offer His Father full obedience, while the particular reason was to consecrate baptism in His own body, that it might be common between Him and us.

God the Father required God the Son to do His bidding as man's perfect Representative. The Son obeyed the Father and humbly submitted Himself to do His will. That is why after Jesus went through the waters of baptism, we hear the Father's commendation: *“Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”* Herein is another instance of the obedience of Christ. Christ obeyed this ceremonial law of water baptism in order to earn the righteousness we need for salvation. Jesus achieved this through the power of the Spirit which was given to Him without measure.

THOUGHT: *“Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice...”* (1 Sam 15:22)

PRAYER: Father, help me to obey Thy Word.

SATURDAY, APRIL 19
LUKE 3:21-23, JOHN 1:15-18
PSALM 19

*"For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth
came by Jesus Christ."*

GOD'S BELOVED SON

In the baptism of Jesus, we have a clear display of the Holy Trinity. We have God the Father in heaven, God the Son on earth, and God the Spirit coming down from heaven to earth. We find all three Persons of the Godhead in action in a single event. This surely argues against the heresy of Sabellianism or Modalism which teaches that God is not three Persons but just one, and that He sometimes appears as the Father, sometimes as the Son, and sometimes as the Spirit.

Jesus is God's beloved Son who has existed since eternity past. He came to reveal the immeasurable grace of God. *"For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."* Does this mean that with the entrance of Christ, the Ten Commandments are no longer necessary? Surely not! The Law was on no account abrogated by Grace. For if there were no Law, there would be no need of Grace. It is because we stand condemned by the Law in our sin and guilt that we need the Grace of God. The Law drives us to Christ for the Grace He bestows. It is when we receive Grace that the Law becomes our light and our delight: *"O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me"* (Ps 119:97-98).

Till today, the Law functions in three ways. As:

1. a sword to slay us in our sins (Rom 3:19),
2. a rod to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24), and
3. a torch to light up our paths (Ps 119:105).

Augustine says, "The law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled."

THOUGHT: *"The Law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul..."*
(Ps 19:7)

PRAYER: *"O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day."*

YIELD NOT TO TEMPTATION

Satan tempted Jesus for 40 days and nights. During this time, Jesus fasted. This made Him all the more physically vulnerable to the devil's temptations.

Why did Jesus have to go through this time of temptation or testing? It was because He had to earn the righteousness His people needed to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is part of His redemptive obedience. Just as Adam had to be tested in the Garden of Eden in order to secure life eternal through obedience, Christ as the greater Adam had to go through such a test to secure our salvation (Rom 5:12-21).

In the garden, Adam failed to obey God's commandment by yielding to Satan's threefold temptation (Gen 3:6; 1 John 2:16). The threefold temptation consists of (1) the lust of the flesh, (2) the lust of the eyes, and (3) the pride of life. Having been tempted by Satan, Eve partook of the fruit because it was (1) *"good for food,"* (lust of the flesh), (2) *"pleasant to the eyes"* (lust of the eyes), and (3) *"to be desired to make one wise"* (pride of life). By so disobeying God, Adam and Eve plunged themselves, and the whole human race, into the condemnation of sin.

But Jesus, in the desert, successfully resisted the same threefold temptation. He was tempted (1) to turn stones into bread (the lust of the flesh), (2) with the kingdoms of the world (lust of the eyes), and (3) to jump from the pinnacle of the temple (the pride of life). Jesus was victorious. He defeated Satan with the Word of God quoting (1) Deut 8:3, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,"* (2) Deut 6:13, *"Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve;"* and (3) Deut 6:16, *"Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."* The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit (Eph 6:17). It is a very effective weapon against Satan's fiery darts of temptation. Jesus conquered Satan. By perfectly resisting temptation and obeying the commands of God, Jesus secured *"righteousness to every one that believeth"* (Rom 10:4). Therefore, we are not only saved by Jesus' death; we are also *"saved by his life"* (Rom 5:10).

THOUGHT: *"Flee also youthful lusts..."* (2 Tim 2:22)

PRAYER: *"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."* (Matt 6:13)

MONDAY, APRIL 21

JOHN 1:19-34

1 JOHN 2:15-17

“...Behold the Lamb of God...”

JESUS THE MESSIANIC LAMB OF GOD

Jesus is *“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* The lamb sacrifices of the Old Testament were never able to take away sins. *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. ...For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Heb 10:1, 4). All the Old Testament animal sacrifices merely foreshadow the Real Sacrifice to come, namely, the Messianic Lamb of God—the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

The believers of old were saved not by the blood of the many lambs they had sacrificed, but by the blood of the Lamb of God alone which effectively takes away the sin of the world. Abel, for instance, was saved not because he trusted in the lamb he offered, but in that lamb he saw by faith, the Lamb that God Himself would provide. This Lamb is Christ—the Seed of the woman—who will crush the head of Satan—the serpent (Gen 3:15). That is why it is recorded, *“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh”* (Heb 11:4). Peter likewise wrote, *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (1 Pet 1:18-19).

Jesus saved us by His perfect obedience as the Lamb of God. His obedience is seen in His willingness to offer Himself as a Sacrifice to appease God’s wrath against sinners. His obedience is also seen in His being without spot and blemish, absolutely sinless under the Law’s holy demands.

THOUGHT: The Lamb is also our Shepherd.

PRAYER: “To Thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.”

TUESDAY, APRIL 22

JOHN 1:35-51

2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-5

“... We have found the Messiah...”

PREACH NOT SELF BUT CHRIST

Now that the Messiah has arrived, John was ready to take a back seat. He directed his personal disciples to the Lord Himself. Andrew was a disciple of John, but now followed Jesus. Andrew then brought Simon his brother to see the Lord. Even before Andrew could introduce his brother, Jesus already knew his name, and identified him as Simon, son of Jona. This is one proof of Jesus’ omniscience. The Lord took a special interest in Simon, and gave him a new name, Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek), meaning “a stone.”

Next in line was Philip. Jesus enlisted him as one of His disciples. Philip then found Nathanael and told him, *“We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write.”* Philip recognised Jesus as the Messiah foretold by Moses and the Prophets (i.e. the Old Testament). Jesus is the Moses-like Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15, and the Suffering Saviour of Isaiah 53. Jesus again displayed His omniscience in His conversation with Nathanael. He knew all about Nathanael when He saw him under the fig tree even before Philip called him. This led Nathanael to confess Jesus as the promised Messiah—*“the Son of God”* (cf. Dan 3:25), and *“King of Israel”* (Isa 44:6).

While all the disciples wondered at the greatness of their Messiah, Jesus told them that they could expect to see greater things from Him: *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”* There are several episodes in Jesus’ life where we are afforded a glimpse of His glory. On such occasions the heavens opened, and the angels descended to minister unto Him. One such event had already taken place, namely, His baptism and subsequent temptation experience (Matt 3:13-4:11). Others to come would be His transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9), His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luke 22:39-46), His resurrection (Matt 28:1-7), and His ascension (Acts 1:1-11).

THOUGHT: Not self-esteem, but Christ-esteem.

PRAYER: Father, may my only purpose in life be to glorify Thee and enjoy Thee forever.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23

JOHN 2:1-12

PROVERBS 23:29-35

“...Jesus was called
...to the marriage.”

JESUS THE WINE OF LIFE

In Cana of Galilee, a neighbouring city of Nazareth, Jesus performed His first miracle. It was at a wedding. When the host ran out of wine, Mary requested Jesus for help. But Jesus answered, “*Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.*” What did Jesus mean when He said, “*mine hour is not yet come?*” What is this “*hour*”? Out of the twenty-six times the word “*hour*” is used in the Gospel of John, nine of them refer to the hour of Jesus (2:4; 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 16:32; 17:1). The “*hour*” is described variously as “*mine*” (2:4), “*the*” (5:28; 12:23; 16:32; 17:1), “*his*” (7:30; 8:20), and “*this*” (12:27).

When Jesus said, “*mine hour is not yet come,*” He was clearly referring to the future. Jesus said His hour had arrived for the first time in John 12:23, “*The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*” From then onwards, Jesus consistently referred to the hour as having arrived. It is significant to note that these words were spoken at the beginning of the week of Suffering prior to His Crucifixion. Clearly, Jesus saw His hour to be His time of suffering leading up to His death on the cross, His burial, and subsequent resurrection. It was only at the beginning of the passion week that Jesus began to fully reveal His identity as the Messiah in very clear terms. So when Jesus told Mary that His hour had not come, He was saying that the public revelation of His Messiahship was not decided by man (cf. Mark 1:44), nor by demons (cf. Mark 1:24-25, 34; Luke 4:34-35), but by God alone (cf. Matt 16:16-17). Mary at the wedding dinner, thus overstepped her prerogative by telling Jesus to perform a sign. But Jesus, according to the will of God and in filial piety, honoured Mary’s request.

In making wine, Jesus was not advocating drinking. Rev Dr Timothy Tow rightly observed that Jesus is “the Wine of life, not the whisky of death.” The wine that Jesus made was safe. There is a vast difference in alcoholic content between biblical wine and modern liquor. The Bible clearly warns against drinking and drunkenness (Prov 23:31-33; Eph 5:18). Be teetotalers!

THOUGHT: (Read Ephesians 5:18.)

PRAYER: Father, help me to bear a good Christian testimony by not drinking.

THURSDAY, APRIL 24

JOHN 2:13-22

EZEKIEL 22:23-31

*“...make not my Father’s house an
house of merchandise.”*

HOLY ANGER

The Jerusalem Temple which was meant to be a worship centre had by this time been turned into a market place. The corrupt priests had converted the temple into a shopping centre. As Jesus said, they had turned His Father’s house into a house of merchandise. A lucrative cut-throat trade was going on. The priests and the traders were in cahoots. The former would only accept animals for sacrifice bought within the temple compound. Now the Old Testament law allowed for poor Jews to offer a couple of young pigeons (Lev 12:8; cf. Luke 2:24) in place of the usual sheep or ox which were more expensive to buy. But instead of selling these pigeons cheaply, those merchants inflated their prices. The worshippers were also exploited by the money-changers. The priests would only accept tribute money that was Jewish. Foreign currency was unacceptable. The priests granted licences to certain money-changers who exchanged temple approved coins for foreign money. A high fee was charged for every transaction. It was a money-spinner. Those merchants and money-changers in turn paid handsome commissions to the priests.

One can imagine the noisy and unruly atmosphere such activities must have created in the temple. The temple grounds must have become very dirty with all the animal excrement. The constant din of haggling and bargaining between sellers and buyers must have made the place impossible for worship. According to Alfred Edersheim, “The whole of this traffic—money-changing, selling of doves, and market for sheep and oxen—was in itself, and from its attendant circumstances, a terrible desecration.”

How could Jesus not do anything about it? Fired with holy indignation, Jesus as the only begotten Son of God had every right to purge His Father’s temple of all the filth that had invaded His house. He made a whip from the pieces of rope He found, and chased all the wicked traffickers including their animals out of the temple. The money-changers had their coins scattered, and tables overturned. What a lesson He taught by action!

THOUGHT: Beware of rice-bowl pastors.

PRAYER: Father, I am angry at my sins. I want to purge them all out.

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

JOHN 2:13-22

MALACHI 3:2-3

*“...The zeal of thine house
hath eaten me up.”*

JESUS THE REFINER'S FIRE

Jesus, in cleansing the temple with intense zeal, fulfilled Psalm 69:9, *“For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me.”* What Jesus did in the temple was already predicted in Malachi 3:2-3, *“But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap: And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness.”*

Only the Messiah had the authority to override the authority of the high priest, and set the temple in order. The Jews thus demanded a sign from Jesus to authenticate His Messiahship. They were asking for a miraculous act. No sign was given to these unbelieving men, but the sign of the resurrection, *“Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up... But he spake of the temple of his body.”* His bodily resurrection would be the surest sign that He is the Messiah.

Jesus at this time kept the Passover, an important national religious feast of the Jewish people. Jehovah commanded the Israelites to remember the great Egyptian Exodus by observing the Passover on a yearly basis (Exod 12). The Passover was kept on the 14th day of the month of Nisan. Every male Jew twelve years old and above was expected to participate in this memorial festival in Jerusalem. We have seen how Jesus had taken part in the Passover since He turned twelve. He did not fail to keep it even during His public ministry, a most hectic period of His life. This He did in order to fulfil all righteousness, to keep every aspect of the ceremonial law for our salvation.

THOUGHT: Is there such a thing as righteous anger? See Ephesians 4:26.

PRAYER: *“Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.”* (Ps 139:21-22)

SATURDAY, APRIL 26

JOHN 2:23-3:21

ROMANS 8:1-16

“...Ye must be born again.”

REGENERATION NOT REINCARNATION

Before a person can enter into the kingdom of God, he must be “*born again*” or “born from above.” Nicodemus wrongly thought that to be born again meant to go back into his mother’s womb and be born physically a second time. As a Pharisee—a doctor of theology—Nicodemus should have known what Jesus meant when He said, “*Ye must be born again.*” What Jesus propounded was not new. It is as old as the Old Testament. To become a citizen of God’s heavenly kingdom, one must be born from heaven, born spiritually (John 3:31, 8:23, 19:11). Jesus explained, “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*” The water refers to the regenerative water of the Spirit that cleanses a soul from sin. Titus 3:5 makes clear, “*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.*”

Nicodemus as a Pharisee had always thought that salvation came by way of keeping the Law and doing good works. In order to be saved, a person must be indwelt by the Holy Spirit received at the moment of faith applied by the grace of God. “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ...Ye must be born again. ...born of the Spirit.*” Since “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Rom 10:17), Jesus preached to Nicodemus the good news of salvation in Himself; “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life*” (John 3:14-15). Obviously, Jesus was alluding to His death on the cross. On that cruel tree, Jesus was made a curse for us. He, as our Substitute, bore the penalty of our sins. He took our place, and did all that had to be done to redeem us. Now it is only a matter of simply believing in Him if we want to be saved.

THOUGHT: Am I born again?

PRAYER: Father, may Jesus save me.

LORD'S DAY, APRIL 27

JOHN 3:22-36

PROVERBS 18:12

*"He must increase,
but I must decrease."*

NOT I BUT CHRIST

John 3:22 says Jesus baptised. John 4:2 however clarifies that Jesus did not personally baptise but left the work to His disciples who baptised on His behalf. The fact that Jesus did not Himself baptise but got His disciples to do it reveals that He was greater than John. In other words, John was a disciple of Jesus just like the other disciples who baptised under His supervision. By baptising those who came to Him, Jesus showed that water baptism is important. However, it must be noted that water baptism is necessary for obedience, but not necessary for salvation. Baptism does not save. The water has no power. The water symbolises the cleansing power of the Word of God (John 15:3) and of the blood of Christ (1 John 1:7). The power is in the Word and the Blood.

John was a most humble man. He rejoiced over the fact that more people were going to Jesus for baptism instead of him. He knew his position in relation to his Lord. He realised that his ministry came from God in the first place. His ministry and the success that followed came from God Himself. There was nothing for him to boast about. All credit should go to God alone. John reminded the people that he was not the Christ, just His forerunner. Christ is the Bridegroom. The Church which is His Bride belongs to Him (2 Cor 11:2). John was but a "*friend of the bridegroom*" or the bridegroom's best man. The bridegroom is the centre of attention at a wedding, not the best man. He is there only to assist the groom. That was why John said, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" This ought to be the motto of every minister of the Gospel. John exalts Jesus by telling the people who Jesus really is. Jesus is God Himself. He comes from heaven. He speaks the Word of God infallibly and authoritatively. He is filled with the Spirit without limit. The Father loves Him and has given Him all things. All of mankind is accountable to Him. He is both Saviour and Judge.

THOUGHT: "Obedience is the mistress of humility." (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, make me humble be.

MONDAY, APRIL 28

JOHN 4:1-26

PSALM 42

*“...he would have
given thee living water.”*

JESUS THE WATER OF LIFE

The Jews and the Samaritans were mutual enemies. This can be seen in the woman's response to Jesus when He asked for water, *“How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.”* This animosity between Jew and Samaritan arose after the destruction of the northern kingdom of Ephraim by Assyria in 721 BC. The Assyrians re-populated the land with captives from other countries (2 Kings 17:24). Not all the Israelites were taken captive into Assyria. Some were left behind. Inter marriages between those Israelites and foreigners resulted in a mongrel Samaritan race.

The Samaritan woman was reluctant to offer a drink to Jesus, a Jew. But Jesus told her that if she knew who He truly was, she would have asked for the living water only He could provide, and He would have given her that water willingly and freely. When she argued that the water from Jacob's well was better than any water Jesus could give, the Lord replied, *“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”* She superstitiously thought that Jesus had magical water. She asked for this water so that she could save herself the trouble of drawing water from the well again. She did not understand Jesus' words and her real need. So the Lord told her to call her husband. She lied that she had none. Jesus then revealed His omniscience by telling her that she had not one but five husbands. After Jesus exposed her sin, she realised that He was Someone extraordinary, and said, *“Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet... I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.”* Like the Jews, the Samaritans were expecting a Messiah to come based on Moses' prophecy in Deuteronomy 18:15. Jesus revealed His identity and told her, *“I that speak unto thee am he.”*

THOUGHT: Jesus is the true Jacob's well that never dries up.

PRAYER: “For Thee, my God, the living God, My thirsty soul doth pine.”

TUESDAY, APRIL 29

JOHN 4:23-42

REVELATION 4:8-11

*“...I have meat to eat
that ye know not of.”*

TRUE WORSHIP

The Samaritans were waiting for their Messiah to come, who would teach them what is true worship. Jesus did just that when He told the Samaritan woman, *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* God demands worship that is *“in spirit and in truth.”* Biblically acceptable worship requires:

1. the Spirit: True worshippers must be spiritually reborn and indwelt by the Holy Spirit—*“be born of water and of the Spirit”* (John 3:5); and
2. the Truth: True worshippers must worship God in accordance with His way as taught in His Truth—His Word is Truth (John 17:17).

Almost convinced that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Samaritan woman became evangelistic. She went straight to the city centre and told the people, *“Come, see ...is not this the Christ?”* What was the result? *“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him.”* The Samaritans pleaded with Jesus to remain with them, and He stayed there for a couple of days. During that time, many more believed *“because of his own word.”* Surely, *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom 10:17). It was not the Samaritan woman alone who believed in Christ, but the rest of the people too, for they told her, *“Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”*

Jesus knew very well that He had to obey His Father’s will if His redemptive mission was to be successful. This is revealed in His words, *“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”* Jesus went about accomplishing His Father’s commission to Him with absolute single-mindedness and great zeal. He did not allow hunger and thirst to distract Him from the urgent task of reaping precious souls for God’s kingdom in the already ripe harvest fields; another example of His perfect obedience.

THOUGHT: “Worship is the mother of all virtues.”

PRAYER: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.”

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30

JOHN 4:43-54

ROMANS 1:8-16

“...Except ye see signs
and wonders,
ye will not believe.”

BY FAITH OR BY SIGHT?

Earlier on in Samaria, Jesus said that “*salvation is of the Jews*.” Paul similarly said that the Gospel of Christ “*is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*” (Rom 1:16). As a Prophet, Jesus was generally despised by His own people. Yet He could not neglect His duty to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God to them.

Up till this point in time, Jesus performed no miracle (at least none was recorded) except in Cana of Galilee where He turned water into wine. Now we have a record of the second miracle He performed. This time it was again in Cana. A “*nobleman*” (*basilikos*, “a king’s officer” or “a small king”), probably from Herod’s court, sought help from Jesus to save his son from death. He knew Jesus could work miracles. It is possible that he was one of those at the wedding dinner who saw Jesus turning water into wine.

Jesus rebuked the nobleman, “*Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe*.” The Lord knew what was in his heart. He was not truly believing. He would believe only if Jesus could miraculously raise his son. This rebuke was not levelled at the nobleman alone, but at all the villagers (note the plural “ye”). The nobleman humbly accepted the Lord’s rebuke. He responded well by not arguing with Jesus. He knew Jesus’ appraisal of him was correct.

The nobleman was hoping that Jesus would come down to his house to heal his son. But Jesus sent him home with the words “*thy son liveth*.” He believed in Jesus’ words, and went his way. His faith had matured! He no longer needed a miracle. He took Christ at His Word. That is the kind of faith God desires from His people. “*Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*” (John 20:29). The nobleman’s son was healed that very hour.

THOUGHT: Do I need a miracle to believe in Christ?

PRAYER: Father, I want to believe by faith and not by sight.

THURSDAY, MAY 1

LUKE 4:16-30

1 TIMOTHY 5:17

*“No prophet is accepted
in his own country.”*

FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT

“A prophet has no honour in his own country” (John 4:44). As the saying goes, “Familiarity breeds contempt.” Jesus experienced such contempt in his own hometown, Nazareth, where He grew up. Nazareth should be delighted over her own son—Jesus—who was already famous throughout the region, and all were speaking very highly of Him (Luke 4:14-15). Cana, a nearby city, for instance, had received Jesus warmly, but sadly His very own from Nazareth rejected Him.

It was customary for Jesus to go to the synagogue on the sabbath day, keeping the sabbath law to fulfil all righteousness. On this occasion, the Lord graciously identified Himself as the Messiah to the Nazarenes. He read the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61:1 to 2 and with authority said, *“This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”* Surely Jesus is the promised Messiah. The Holy Spirit is upon Him (Luke 3:22). He is the Anointed Evangelist (Mark 1:14). The Messianic Age has arrived (Mark 1:15; cf. Gal 4:4).

In response, the Nazarenes dishonoured Him by asking a cynical question: *“Is not this Joseph’s son?”* In other words, “He is but a carpenter! How can He be the Messiah?” And they despised Him by this insult: *“Physician, heal thyself.”* In other words, “We want to see in order to believe!” They viewed Christ with great scepticism and unbelief (cf. Matt 13:58).

A prophet is usually received with respect and honour in foreign places, but in his own hometown, he is despised and treated with contempt. For this reason, God withheld His blessings from them. Instead, He showered His blessings upon the Gentiles. The widow of Sarepta showed kind hospitality to Elijah, and was wonderfully supplied throughout the famine (1 Kings 17:1-24). Naaman the Syrian showed great respect for Elisha, and was miraculously healed of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-14). In contrast, the Nazarenes, instead of humbling themselves before God, became very angry, and wanted to kill Jesus. But it was not yet time for Jesus to die. They thus could not lay a finger on Him. God froze them on the spot. Jesus calmly walked right past them, and went on His way.

THOUGHT: Do I treat my own pastor with contempt?

PRAYER: Father, help me appreciate my own local pastor(s).

FRIDAY, MAY 2

MATTHEW 4:13-22, LUKE 5:1-11

ISAIAH 9:1-2

*“The people which sat
in darkness saw great light...”*

JESUS THE TRUE LIGHT

“The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up” (Matt 4:16). Jesus is that Great Light. *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ... (He) was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”* (John 1:4-5, 9). Jesus was going to shine forth His Light and His Truth in this small fishing village of Capernaum. We are going to see Him calling fishermen to become His personal disciples.

The first two disciples to receive an official call from the Lord were Peter and his brother, Andrew. Both Peter and Andrew were fishermen. They were done fishing for the day, and were already cleaning their nets. Jesus told them to go back into the water, and to release their nets for a catch. Now Jesus was a carpenter and not a fisherman. Peter, on the other hand, was an expert fisherman. He had already spent all night fishing and caught nothing. Moreover, Peter and Andrew by then must have already been very tired. They had just finished washing their nets. The temptation to dismiss Jesus' words must have been very real. But Peter humbled himself before the Lord: *“...Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net”* (Luke 5:5).

Peter took Jesus at His Word. And because he trusted in the Lord and obeyed Him, He received God's blessing. They netted the greatest catch of their lives. The catch was so great that their nets were tearing. They had to get help from their friends in the other boat. When both boats were filled, they began to sink. It was a terrific haul. This caused Peter to fall on his knees to worship Jesus saying, *“...Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord”* (Luke 5:8). It is when we demote ourselves before God that we get promoted. Jesus promoted Peter and Andrew. No longer would they fish for fish but for men. Jesus commanded them, *“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* In obedience, they forsook all and followed Him.

THOUGHT: Is Jesus calling me to full-time service?

PRAYER: *“Here am I; send me.”*

SATURDAY, MAY 3

MARK 1:21-22

1 TIMOTHY 4

*“And they were astonished
at his doctrine...”*

JESUS THE MASTER TEACHER

Jesus on the sabbath day was again found in the synagogue, and there He taught. He was no ordinary teacher. The people could see that He was different from the scribes. The scribes were part of the synagogue institution. They were a professional class of men who became copyists, guardians, and interpreters of the Law. They were the religious lawyers who invented many extra-biblical laws that weighed heavily on the people. These scribes often taught in the temple and synagogues, and the people heard them much. Although they were generally well respected by the Jewish populace, they were unimpressive as teachers. They delivered dry as dust lectures. The modernistic theologians of today are very much like those scribes. They major on the minor. In their study of the Gospels, they take great delight in musing over the so-called “synoptic problem,” and go to great lengths to prove to themselves and to their students that the imaginary “Q” source really does exist. What a colossal waste of time and energy!

The teaching of Jesus was vastly different. The people were amazed at His doctrine. His Word had great power and authority. He did not have to quote from fallible human sources like the scribes. He Himself is the Author of the Law. He Himself is the Authority on every subject pertaining to the Law. He Himself is the Source of all Wisdom. There was no mistaking that His doctrine bore the divine stamp of *“Thus saith the Lord.”*

THOUGHT: A good teacher is also a good student.

PRAYER: Father, I not only want to teach, but be teachable as well.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 4

MARK 1:23-34

MATTHEW 8:14-17

*"And he healed many
that were sick of divers diseases..."*

JESUS THE GREAT PHYSICIAN

In the synagogue was a man possessed by an unclean spirit or a demon. The demon declared that Jesus is *"the Holy One of God."* That statement is true. Jesus is the thrice holy *"Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come"* (Rev 4:8). The fallen angels, though they oppose Jesus, do not deny His true identity.

Yet, the demon had no right to speak or to teach. Jesus shut him up immediately, and commanded him to come out of the man. After having *"torn him and cried with a loud voice,"* the demon came out, leaving his victim unhurt. This display of Jesus' power and authority over powerful demonic spirits authenticated His Person and His Word. There can be no doubt that Jesus is the Messianic Word of God.

Peter's mother-in-law was very ill. Dr Luke recorded that her fever was dangerously high. Jesus healed her instantaneously by the power of His Word. This is evinced by her ability to serve them after she was raised up. She was in the pink of health. This is so unlike the many charismatic healings that occur today where people claim to be "half-healed." When the Lord heals, He heals totally and fully. All those charismatic semi-healings and delayed healings are no healings at all!

Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the Suffering Servant (Isa 53:4-5). Why did Jesus take our infirmities and bear our sicknesses? He did so because of His "vicarious suffering for sin, which—and this, too, he felt very deeply—was the root of every ill, and dishonored his Father. Thus whenever he saw sickness or distress he experienced Calvary, his own Calvary, his own bitter, vicarious suffering throughout His life on earth but especially on the cross" (Hendriksen). The pain Jesus suffered in His death was also felt in His life as He ministered to the sick.

THOUGHT: "Our diseases are effectually counteracted by heavenly medicine." (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, I pray for good health and strength to serve Thee.

MONDAY, MAY 5

MARK 1:35-39

LUKE 18:1-8

*“...he went out, and departed
into a solitary place,
and there prayed.”*

JESUS THE PRAYER WARRIOR

If Jesus is God, why must He pray? As God, He receives prayers. But we ought not to forget that having put on flesh, He is also Man. He prayed because of His humanity. He needed the strength for a tiring ministry He was about to embark throughout all Galilee. By praying, He showed that He was fully dependent on His Father in Heaven. Jesus was totally submissive to His Father's will. It is doubtless that during such prayer sessions, the Father also spoke to His Son and told Him what He had to do. By praying, Jesus also set for His people an example: *“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint”* (Luke 18:1).

Jesus' primary ministry on earth was not to heal but to preach the Gospel of salvation. That was why when more people from Capernaum came to Him for healing, He told His disciples, *“Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.”* But today, the charismatics do the opposite. They heal more than they preach. Many of these healers carry no Bible, and have no message. Jesus, on the other hand, was more eager to preach than to heal. This was also the case with Dr John Sung—Billy Sunday of China—during the Singapore Pentecost. In a two-week campaign, John Sung would have 40 sessions of preaching, but only one session for healing, the 41st and final afternoon slot. Revival broke out in those days not because of the healing, but the preaching. Signs and wonders do not save. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ saves.

Against the many who perform miracles and think they belong to Him, Jesus warned, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity”* (Matt 7:21-23).

THOUGHT: Can Satan perform miracles? See: Rev 13:11-14, 19:20.

PRAYER: Father, keep me from counterfeit healers and miracles.

TUESDAY, MAY 6

MARK 1:40-45

LUKE 5:12-16

“...be thou clean.”

JESUS MAKES THE UNCLEAN CLEAN

Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by bacteria. It attacks the nerves and causes the loss of sensation and paralysis. Disfiguration results when the skin develops white patches, and becomes thicker. Lepers usually hide their faces because the disease often attacks the eyes, ears and nose. Since it is highly infectious, the victims isolate themselves. When they did go out into the streets, they would have to cry out, “Unclean! Unclean!” to warn others of their condition (cf. the law of leprosy in Lev 13-14).

Jesus healed a leprous man. Dr Luke tells us that his leprosy was at its advanced stage for he described him as being *“full of leprosy.”* This leper confessed his uncleanness, and begged the Lord to cleanse Him: *“Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.”* It is significant that the leper used the word *“clean,”* and not *“heal.”* Perhaps he recognised Jesus as the great High Priest who alone had the power to cleanse Him from sin and heal him of the disease. Surely Jesus is our great High Priest. He knows our weaknesses for He *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Heb 4:15). Jesus feels for us. This is seen in how He treated the leper. As the great High Priest, He was *“moved with compassion... and touched him.”* He was truly *“a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”* (Isa 53:3). He did not shun this leper like the other religious leaders who minded the letter but not the spirit of the law. Jesus, as the perfectly obedient Son of God, kept the weightier matters, i.e. the spirit of the law, namely, justice, mercy, and fidelity (Matt 23:23).

Jesus made sure He kept the Law. He instructed the leper (now healed) to show himself to the priest, and present for his cleansing an offering as required in the Mosaic Law (Lev 14:3, 4, 10). Jesus not only kept the Law Himself, He was also careful to instruct others to keep the Law as well. He did not sin the sin of omission. He kept the Law to its jot and tittle indeed.

THOUGHT: The higher law of necessity overrides the lower law of ceremony.

PRAYER: Father, cleanse me from spiritual leprosy.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

MARK 2:1-12

ACTS 2:22-24

“...Son, thy sins
be forgiven thee.”

JESUS' POWER TO FORGIVE SINS

A certain paralysed man wanted to see Jesus but could not get into the house because of the crowd. He had four friends who helped him. In an attempt to get him in, they climbed up the roof, and lowered him down from there. Jesus commended them for their faith. Their persistence revealed their true belief in Him and His power to save. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him”* (Heb 11:6). Jesus forgave the paralytic man of his sins. This was a most gracious act. Although He had yet to make the all-necessary final atonement for sins, the pardon was still applicable and efficacious. Although His once-for-all sacrifice was yet future, it was considered a surety. God controls history, and all that He has foreordained will surely come to pass.

It was clear that Jesus is the Son of God. His miracles throughout all Galilee testified to that. He truly has the power to forgive sins. The Pharisees and scribes knew this. They thus questioned the authority of Jesus among themselves not because of ignorance, but unbelief. They were absolutely without faith. They refused to believe that Jesus is God Himself. “How can Jesus forgive sins if He is not God? This is blasphemy!” they reasoned among themselves. Jesus knew their evil thoughts, and began to prove His authority and power. How did He do it? By means of a miracle! Jesus told the paralytic, *“Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.”* He did as he was told. This man who could not walk at all, who had to be stretchered in, could now walk out of the house carrying the very stretcher on which he had lain. He was not only spiritually healed, but also physically. All were awestruck by the wonderful things seen and glorified God.

Jesus proved to the people in no uncertain terms by His miracles that He was sent by God, and that His Words were true. But it is tragic that Israel was so blind to the Truth.

THOUGHT: Which is easier to say? *“Thy sins be forgiven thee,”* or *“Arise... and walk”*?

PRAYER: Father, I confess my sins. Forgive me.

THURSDAY, MAY 8

MARK 2:13-20

MATTHEW 9:9-15

“...Follow me.

And He arose
and followed him.”

JESUS CALLS ME — I MUST FOLLOW

Matthew was a tax-collector. He collected taxes on behalf of the Roman government. It was not uncommon for tax-collectors to exact more than the required amount from the people (cf. Luke 19:2, 8). Jews who collected taxes were called traitors and extortionists. There is no hint in Scripture that Matthew was dishonest in his work, but he would certainly be regarded as a traitor. Tax collectors were considered “running dogs” of the Romans. The profession became so despised that the term “tax-collector” became a derogatory label. That is why we find tax-collectors being lumped together with sinners in the Gospels (Matt 9:10-11, 11:19; Mark 2:15-16; Luke 5:30, 19:2-10).

Matthew, when called by Jesus, did not hesitate but readily forsook all and followed Him. As a tax-collector, he was probably very rich. But he was willing to surrender all to Jesus. He proved his sincerity by honouring Jesus with a banquet probably equivalent to a grand 10-course Chinese dinner.

The scribes and the Pharisees criticised Jesus for dining with publicans and sinners. The Jewish religious leaders in self-righteous pride called all who were not of their class the *‘am ha’aretz* (“the people of the soil”). Those who were unschooled in the Law earned this label (cf. John 7:49). The disciples of the scribes and Pharisees were not allowed to eat together with the *‘am ha’aretz*.

Jesus answered their criticism with these words, “*They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick:... But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.*” Those who are sick with sin can come to Jesus for healing. Those who think they are well but are actually sick can find no healing from Him. The self-righteous scribes and Pharisees being sick with pride had cut themselves off from the Saviour’s help. The sinful who humble themselves will find Jesus a most willing Saviour.

THOUGHT: Following demands forsaking.

PRAYER: “Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.”

FRIDAY, MAY 9

MARK 2:23-38

MICAH 6:6-8

*“For the Son of man is Lord
even of the sabbath day.”*

JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH (I)

The Pharisees charged Jesus and His disciples for breaking the sabbath. According to the Pharisees, the sabbath law was broken when the disciples plucked and rubbed the wheat grains in their hands. The Pharisees had a list of 39 activities that were prohibited on the Sabbath; among them were reaping and threshing. The disciples plucked the heads of grain; that was considered reaping. Then they rubbed them in their hands; that was threshing. Jesus was culpable because He did not stop His disciples from “breaking the sabbath.” His disciples were hungry, and plucked some wheat grains to eat; was the Master wrong to allow them to do it?

Jesus and His disciples clearly did not violate the sabbath law. What they went against were those extra-biblical, man-made, and foolish laws of the Pharisees (cf. Luke 11:46). Jesus rebutted the accusations of the Pharisees by citing the example of David who ate of the shewbread that only the priests were allowed to eat. David was hungry, and Ahimelech the priest, knowing the law for sure, did not forbid David and his men to fill their stomachs with forbidden bread (1 Sam 21:1-6; cf. Lev 24:9). Ahimelech “broke” the ceremonial law of Leviticus 24:9, but was blameless. David likewise “broke” that law by eating of the ceremonial bread, and was guiltless as well. If Ahimelech and David were innocent, how could Jesus—the great High Priest, the greater David—be guilty?

Moreover, Jesus Himself is the Lord of the sabbath! Jesus had every right to override a divinely ordained ceremonial provision when necessity demanded it. The higher law of necessity overrides the lower law of ceremony. Jesus did not break the law but kept it perfectly.

Jesus laid down a wonderful principle for sabbath-keeping when He said, *“The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.”* In other words, the sabbath was made for man’s advantage and not disadvantage. The sabbath was not meant to be a burden but a benefit to man. Thus any legalistic application of the sabbath law contradicts its God-given role for man.

THOUGHT: Can a Christian eat in a restaurant on the Lord’s Day?

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for instituting the sabbath for the good of man.

SATURDAY, MAY 10

LUKE 6:6-11

MATTHEW 12:9-14

*“...Is it lawful on the sabbath days
to do good, or to do evil?...”*

JESUS IS LORD OF THE SABBATH (II)

Here is another instance where the scribes and Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the sabbath. Instead of paying attention to His teachings, they were busy trying to catch Him at fault. They attempted this in vain. Jesus is impeccable. He can never sin or do wrong.

As usual, Jesus would teach in the synagogue on the sabbath. On that day, there was a man who had a withered right hand. The scribes and the Pharisees questioned Jesus over the lawfulness of healing on the sabbath. Jesus answered with a question, *“Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it?”* That rhetorical question shut their mouths. For if they were to answer that it was lawful to do good on the sabbath, then they would be wrong to fault Jesus for healing the sick. If they were to say that it was evil to do good on the sabbath day, then their wickedness would be exposed. They could not answer.

Jesus Himself gave them the answer to His very own question: *“What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.”* A perfect answer that is both logical and biblical (cf. Exod 23:4-5; Deut 22:4)!

Noting still their unbelief and hardness of heart, Jesus in a final act of grace, healed the handicapped man. In so doing, He demonstrated His power, proving that He truly is the Lord of the sabbath, or Jehovah Himself, the Author of the sabbath law. The scribes and Pharisees ought to have humbled themselves before Jesus after this wonderful demonstration of God's grace. Instead of being repentant, they became angrier. In wicked rebellion, they hated Him all the more, and wanted to kill Him.

THOUGHT: Think of doing something good for Jesus this Lord's Day.

PRAYER: Father, help me to keep the Lord's Day holy.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 11

MATTHEW 12:15-21

ISAIAH 42:1-4

*"Behold my servant,
whom I have chosen..."*

JESUS THE SUFFERING SERVANT

By this time, Jesus was well known not only in Galilee, but also Jerusalem/Judaea and Idumea in the South, in Transjordan which is East, and in the Northern cities of Tyre and Sidon. People came to Him from all over Palestine for spiritual and physical help. He served the people wholeheartedly.

Isaiah had already prophesied that the Messiah would come as a Servant (Isa 42:1-4, see also 49:1-9a, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12). Jesus was Jehovah's suffering Servant. He suffered in His life and in His death. In His life, we see how He suffered bitter opposition from the Jewish religious and political leaders even after He performed good deeds and preached the good news. As God Himself, He could have destroyed all His enemies in righteous indignation if He had wanted to. But Jesus the Son of God was ever submissive to His Father to do His will on earth, to go through suffering and opposition, and to be obedient even unto death to save His people from their sins (cf. Gal 4:7-8).

Having suffered on earth, Jesus knows all our pains and struggles. Hebrews 5:8 to 9 says, *"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."* *"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"* (Heb 4:14-16).

THOUGHT: Jesus cares!

PRAYER: Father, have compassion on me in my troubles and struggles.

MONDAY, MAY 12

JOHN 5:1-31

HEBREWS 1:1-6

“...My Father worketh hitherto,
and I work.”

JESUS THE MESSIAH HEALS

On the sabbath, Jesus healed a man who suffered for 38 years a terrible disease that caused him to be bedridden. This man hoped to be cured at the pool of Bethesda where an angel occasionally stirred the water for healing. Only the first one to step into the pool would be healed. This man no longer needed to wait. Jesus, the Messiah, had arrived “*with healing in his wings*” (Mal 4:2). Jesus healed him by the power of His Word, “*Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.*”

The Jews became very angry with Jesus because He healed on the sabbath, and even sought to kill Him. “*But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*” Both the Father and the Son were united in accomplishing the work of man’s redemption. Jesus did not work independently. He worked in conjunction with His Father. Jesus’ argument showed how absurd their accusation was, for in faulting Him the Son, they also faulted Jehovah the Father.

God the Father and God the Son are one not only in essence, but also in their work of accomplishing the eternal plan of redemption. God the Son works in tandem with God the Father. What the Father thinks, the Son thinks. What the Father does, the Son does. Whom the Father condemns, the Son condemns also. There is perfect harmony and agreement between the two. They are never in conflict. So when the Son is honoured, the Father is honoured, and when the Son is despised, the Father is likewise despised. The Father and the Son are inseparable. They have the same judgment, the same authority, and the same power.

Both the Father and the Son bestow life upon those who believe. That is why Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*”

THOUGHT: Jesus is of the very same nature as the Father.

PRAYER: I thank Thee, Father, for the Lord Jesus, Thy obedient Son.

TUESDAY, MAY 13

JOHN 5:32-47

DEUTERONOMY 18:15-19

*“...I have greater witness
than that of John...”*

JESUS' GREATER WITNESS

Jesus' testimony concerning Himself is true. John the baptiser had already testified that Jesus is the Christ. John was a *“burning and a shining light”* because what he declared was the truth. Jesus was telling those fault-finding Jews that if they did hold John in high regard, then they surely had to accept what he had said concerning Him. Nevertheless there is an even greater witness, and that was from the Father in heaven who had sent His Son. His witness is found in His Word, namely the Old Testament. Jesus told them, *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”* Jesus was thus telling these unbelieving Jews that if they considered their Old Testament to be the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God, then they should believe in Him for their Scriptures unmistakably testify of Him.

Why did they not believe despite all these undeniable testimonies? Jesus revealed the problem. It was because *“ye have not his word abiding in you.”* They went against Jesus because they had already made up their minds to reject the divine Word — both the Written and the Living. Jesus went on to describe the unregenerate condition of their heart, *“for whom he (i.e. God) hath sent, him (i.e. Jesus) ye believe not. ...And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. ...ye have not the love of God in you.”*

Their stubborn rejection of Christ warranted this severe indictment by Him, *“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.”* By rejecting Christ, the Jews had rejected Moses. They were inexcusable. They had not sinned out of ignorance, but knowledge. They could see that Jesus is the Christ, and yet refused to believe.

THOUGHT: We can know the Living Word only through the Written Word.

PRAYER: Father, sanctify me through Thy Truth, Thy Word is Truth.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 14

LUKE 6:12-20

MATTHEW 7:21-29

“...he chose twelve...”

ELEVEN APOSTLES, ONE TRAITOR

Jesus had twelve disciples. They belonged to a special office of commissioned servants called Apostles. There were to be only twelve of them, no more and no less. The twelve Apostles originally chosen by Jesus were:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Simon (aka, Peter) | 8. Thomas |
| 2. Andrew (Peter's brother) | 9. James (son of Alphaeus,
aka, James the Less) |
| 3. James (son of Zebedee) | 10. Simon Zealotes
(or the Canaanite) |
| 4. John (James' brother,
son of Zebedee) | 11. Lebbaeus (aka, Thaddaeus,
Judas “not Iscariot” of
John 14:22, brother of James) |
| 5. Philip | 12. Judas Iscariot (the traitor) |
| 6. Bartholomew (aka, Nathanael,
John 1:45-49, 21:2) | |
| 7. Matthew (the tax collector) | |

When they were reduced to eleven after Judas Iscariot fell out, they had to appoint someone else to make up that number (cf. Acts 1:21-26, 6:2; 1 Cor 15:5). The number is fixed.

The Apostles had a special ministry of the Word. They were prepared by Jesus for an infallible ministry of preaching the Word (1 Thess 2:13; 2 Pet 1:21), writing the Word (2 Tim 3:16; Eph 2:20), and administering the Word (1 Cor 11:1; Phil 4:9). Their Word ministry was authenticated by powerful works of miracles (Mark 16:20; 2 Cor 12:12). They had an authoritative “*Thus saith the Lord*” ministry.

We no longer have nor do we need Apostles today because we already have in our hands the complete, sufficient and authoritative Word of God (cf. 1 Cor 13:8-10; Rev 22:18-19). God speaks to us today through the Holy Scriptures. What we do have today are pastors and teachers who expound God's Word to us. These spiritually gifted men minister within the Revelation of Holy Scriptures that God had inspired the Apostles to write (2 Pet 1:21; 2 Tim 3:16).

Beware of false prophets and apostles who come with their visions and dreams.

THOUGHT: “The Bible has in it all that the Christian needs.” (McIntire)

PRAYER: Father, give me a thirst and hunger for Thy Word.

THURSDAY, MAY 15

MATTHEW 5:1-18

PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21

“...that they may see
your good works...”

LIVING AS KINGDOM CITIZENS

The Sermon on the Mount is applicable to God's people today! How to become a Christian, and then to stay Christian? Jesus gives the answer here.

In His beatitudes, Jesus explained how people can be and should live as a citizen of God's kingdom. A person is truly blessed if he is a citizen of God's kingdom. In order to become a citizen, he must be *“poor in spirit,”* he must be thoroughly humbled before God. He must *“mourn,”* and *“weep”* for his sins, confessing all of them, and pleading for God's mercy and forgiveness. *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* (Ps 51:17). God will look kindly on the man who *“is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word”* (Isa 66:2). The Lord is *“nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit”* (Ps 34:18). Those who are thus converted, will *“hunger and thirst after righteousness,”* will be *“peacemakers”* by loving God and loving man, and will not waver in their faith when *“persecuted for righteousness’ sake.”*

Jesus then set up the ethical standards of His kingdom. The kingdom and its citizens are characterised by righteousness. The King must earn the righteousness required of His people. The Lord thus talked about His active obedience in Matthew 5:17 to 18 where He said, *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* That was His purpose or mission statement.

THOUGHT: We are in but not of the world.

PRAYER: Father, help me to live by the rules of Thy Kingdom.

FRIDAY, MAY 16

MATTHEW 5:17-20

ROMANS 3:19-25

*“...I am not come
to destroy, but to fulfil.”*

CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Jesus came not to cancel the law and the prophets, but to fulfil and accomplish them. The word “*fulfil*” is used in a two-fold way: to indicate the fulfilment of prophecies and the accomplishment of the law.

Jesus fulfilled all the predictions of the Prophets concerning His incarnation, and kept perfectly all the requirements of the Law in His mission on earth. Dr Homer Kent was precisely right to say, “Christ fulfilled the Old Testament by obeying the Law perfectly, by fulfilling its types and prophecies, and by paying the full penalty of the Law as the Substitute for sinners.”

Righteousness is earned by obeying the Law perfectly in all its aspects: ceremonial, judicial, and moral (Deut 6:25). In order to impute us with righteousness, Jesus had to keep the Law perfectly in all points. He fulfilled all righteousness by fulfilling the:

1. ceremonial laws of circumcision (Luke 2:21), baptism (Matt 3:15), Passover (Luke 2:42), and other Jewish feasts (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:1; John 7:10);
2. judicial laws as seen in His cleansing of the temple (John 2:13-22), His correction of Pharisaical additions to and misapplications of the law (Matt 23:23), and His judicious handling of sinners (eg. the woman taken in adultery in John 8:11); and the
3. Moral Law as seen in His infallible exposition (Matt 5:2-48; Mark 12:28-34) and perfect obedience of it (eg. His temptation in Matt 4:1-11, and sabbath observance in Mark 2:23-28).

Jesus underscored the importance of teaching the Law accurately and obeying it correctly. A true observance of the Law involves not just teaching it but also keeping it. Hypocritical righteousness as displayed by the scribes and Pharisees disqualifies one from heaven. To enter heaven, one's righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. One must put on the righteousness of Christ which He has earned for His people by His perfect obedience.

THOUGHT: Christ has earned for me the righteousness that I need.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the righteousness of Thy Son.

MURDERERS AND ADULTERERS

As part of His fulfilment of the Law, Jesus exposed the misinterpretations and misapplications of the Law by the scribes and Pharisees. Those rabbis taught superficially that the sixth commandment—*“Thou shalt not kill”*—applies only to murder. But Jesus explains its true meaning. The sixth commandment does not only mean the physical taking away of another person’s life. God’s prohibition is much deeper than that. Murder is committed not only physically, but also verbally, by means of abusive words that stem from a hateful heart. Hurling invectives like “idiot” or “moron” against someone is the same as plunging a knife into his heart. “A tongue six inches long can kill a man six feet tall.”

The rabbis also diluted the force of the seventh commandment—*“Thou shalt not commit adultery”*—by applying it only to the external act. Any lustful thought, desire, or glance of the eye is adultery. In the area of marriage and divorce, the rabbis made it easy for the men to cast off their wives. For example, Rabbi Hillel taught that a man had the right to divorce his wife if she was a poor cook. Rabbi Akiba even allowed a man to divorce his wife if he found someone prettier. As long as divorce papers were served, a man could marry another according to his wish.

But Jesus made the marriage law absolutely binding: *“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.”* In other words, the marriage bond is for life, and if broken because of fornication, no remarriage is allowed. Marriage is a “life sentence”!

Are we guilty of murder and adultery?

THOUGHT: “The sins of the spirit are ten times worse than the sins of the flesh.”

PRAYER: Father, I confess my sins. Forgive me.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 18

MATTHEW 5:33-37

JOHN 8:43-47

"But let your communication be,

Yea, yea; Nay, nay..."

IS YOUR WORD ANY GOOD?

The Jews were fond of making frivolous promises and taking unnecessary oaths invoking God's Name. By so doing, they took God's name in vain—a violation of the third commandment.

An oath could be taken on important occasions to confirm a truth or to ascertain truthfulness. But the rabbinic laws made it possible for the Jews to take an oath in order to lie or cheat. These were deemed "vain oaths." So a man could be freed from an oath he had taken if his oath could be deemed as "vain." For example, if a man swore by the gold of the temple, he would be accountable. If he swore by the sacrifice on the altar, he would be accountable. But if he swore by the temple, he would not be accountable since the temple was not for sale! It was a "vain oath."

Such were the atrocities of oath-taking in those days. An unscrupulous lawyer could thus easily defraud a poor widow of her property if he swore to her a vain oath, or if she did not know the right things by which to swear. Jesus told the people, *"Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay."* In other words, "If a man cannot be trusted by a simple Yes or No, but only by an oath, don't trust him at all." A person is only as good as his word. Anything beyond that is from the evil one.

THOUGHT: "Honesty is the best policy."

PRAYER: Father, help me not to break any of my promises.

MONDAY, MAY 19
MATTHEW 5:38-48
ROMANS 12:17-21

*“...An eye for an eye,
and a tooth for a tooth.”*

THE LAW OF NON-RETALIATION

The biblical law of retaliation (*lex talionis*)—“*an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*” (Exod 21:24-25; Deut 19:21)—was given to the judges of Israel for the equitable execution of justice. It was meant for the civil courts to apply. But the Pharisees took it as a licence for personal vendettas (cf. Lev 19:18; Prov 20:22, 24:29).

Jesus here taught the law of non-retaliation for injuries inflicted on, and wrongs done against us by our enemies. In other words, we are to love our enemies. The Pharisees taught the people to love their friends, and hate their enemies. Jesus reminded them that Moses had taught them to love and not hate their enemies (see Exod 23:4-5; Lev 19:33-34). Jesus affirmed the Law of Moses, “*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven... Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*” “*Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*” Paul restated Jesus’ law of love like this: “*Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law*” (Rom 13:10).

Love will not lead one to judge others with a holier-than-thou attitude. Jesus said, “*Judge not, that ye be not judged.*” For sure Jesus was not against judging per se for He Himself judged the Pharisees and called them “*hypocrites.*” He is against the type of judging that is self-righteous and merciless. He is against the judgmental “holier-than-thou” attitude. To judge righteously, one must first examine oneself, repent of one’s own sins before attempting to judge others and correct their sins. We are to judge others righteously and not hypocritically. By so teaching, Jesus shows Himself to be the perfect Judge who fulfils the judicial laws.

THOUGHT: Return good for evil.

PRAYER: Father, help me to do good not only to my friends but also to my enemies.

THE LORD’S PRAYER

As the perfect and great High Priest (cf. Heb 5:5-10, 6:20-7:28), Jesus taught the people how to worship God. He taught them how to pray. Jesus said, *“when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking.”* It is not verbosity but sincerity that impresses God. Jesus offers a model prayer in what we know today as “The Lord’s Prayer.” It is a short prayer, but if uttered in sincerity and truth, goes a long way.

Jesus encouraged His people to pray, for God answers prayers: *“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”*

As High Priest, Jesus taught the people that godliness is not measured by outward religiosity, but inward spirituality. Jesus was against showy giving, praying, and fasting. When we serve in church, let us not do so because we want to please men, or to obtain their praise. Let us serve because we love Jesus, and desire His praise.

THOUGHT: “Prayer is nothing else than the opening up of our heart before God.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, teach me to pray.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

MATTHEW 7:1-29

JAMES 2:8-17

*“Not every one that saith unto me,
Lord, Lord, shall enter
into the kingdom of heaven...”*

LAW AND LOVE

“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.” This summary statement of Jesus is another proof of His active obedience as the perfect Teacher of the Law and the Prophets. Jesus’ positive application of the Law—*“Thou shalt”*—enhances and reinforces the Law’s negative prohibition—*“Thou shalt not.”* The negative rule—*“Thou shalt not”* (eg. kill)—has a positive counterpart—*“Thou shalt”* (eg. save). One fulfils the Law when one loves and does good to his fellow man, even his enemy. Jesus is our perfect Example for while we were yet sinners, yet His enemies, He loved us and died for us (Rom 5:8).

If a person says he loves God, he must show it by loving his fellow man. We fulfil the Law by loving others. *“If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.”* Jesus warned, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.”* In other words, *“faith without works is dead”* (James 2:20). Jesus must be Lord not only by our lips, but also in our lives.

The people could see that Jesus as a teacher was vastly different from and far superior to the Jewish lawyers and theologians, *“For he taught them as one having authority.”* The Jewish rabbis relied on human authority in their exposition of the Law; they depended on one another’s interpretation of it, but Jesus as the Author of the Law was His own divine authority, and none was able to question or fault Him.

THOUGHT: “Where there is no love the Spirit of God does not rule there.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, teach me to love.

THURSDAY, MAY 22

LUKE 7:1-10

MATTHEW 18:1-4

“...Lord, trouble not thyself:
for I am not worthy...”

HUMILITY THE MARK OF GREATNESS

A centurion was a commander of a hundred men in the Roman army. As a high-ranking soldier, he possessed power and authority. Such a man came to Jesus for help. He had a beloved servant who was very sick and about to die. He had heard about Jesus, and requested the Jewish elders to beseech Jesus on his behalf. This reveals that he felt himself unworthy to speak to Jesus directly, and that he, though a Gentile, had a good relationship with the Jews. He loved the Jewish people, and had built a synagogue for them.

When Jesus was near his house, the centurion sent his friends to tell Jesus not to trouble Himself to come any nearer. He did not want to trouble the Lord any further, and did not consider himself worthy enough to have Jesus step into his home. He was probably aware of the fact that Jews do not enter Gentile homes for fear of being defiled. He showed himself to be very considerate. He also showed himself to be very humble. He felt totally unworthy to see Jesus face to face. He was happy if Jesus would just say a word from a distance. He truly believed that only the word of Jesus was needed to heal his servant; there was no need for Jesus to see or to touch his servant. There was also no need for him to see Jesus perform a miracle before his very eyes. That was why Jesus was so pleased with this centurion, and commended him so highly, *“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”* Israel was proud, but this Gentile was humble. Israel sought His miracles, but this Gentile sought His Word. Jesus remarked that this centurion was more worthy to sit with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, than any of the Jews. Like the patriarchs, he had true faith.

THOUGHT: “Humility is the annihilation of self.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, take away my pride and teach me humility.

FRIDAY, MAY 23
MATTHEW 11:2-19
LUKE 7:18-35

*“...he that is least
in the kingdom of heaven
is greater than he.”*

JESUS THE LEAST

Jesus appreciated very much John's ministry as His forerunner. John fulfilled the prophecy concerning the Lord's herald in Malachi 3:1. He performed his duty most faithfully. He was a most humble servant. His motto—*“He must increase, but I must decrease”* (John 3:30)—should be adopted by every Christian.

Those who humble themselves, God will lift up. Jesus promoted John by calling him the greatest of the prophets (Matt 11:11). As such John fulfilled the prophecy that he *“shall be great,”* and *“shalt be called the prophet of the Highest”* (Luke 1:15, 76).

What did Jesus mean when He said, *“he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he?”* Who is the *“he that is least”*? The one who is called “The Least” is none other than Jesus Himself. Although John was greater than all the other Old Testament prophets, yet there is One who is greater than him. The Lord Jesus Christ is infinitely greater than John. John's greatness was measured by his humility. But who could be more humble than Jesus? *“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Phil 2:6-8). It was because of His humility and humiliation that God exalted Jesus over all: *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil 2:9-11).

Jesus' title as “The Least” speaks of His life sufferings. Jesus was made *“the least in the kingdom”* in His humiliation on the cross, having been utterly shamed and despised by the people He came to save. His humiliation led to His exaltation (Heb 2:9-10).

THOUGHT: Self-demotion precedes divine promotion.

PRAYER: Father, give me a servant's heart.

SATURDAY, MAY 24

MATTHEW 11:20-30

1 CORINTHIANS 1:19-30

*“For my yoke is easy,
and my burden is light.”*

JESUS OFFERS THE BEST YOKE

By this time, Jesus had performed countless miracles. All those “mighty deeds” specifically pointed to Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus was fully justified in upbraiding the Jewish cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida. They should have recognised their Messiah readily but did not. The wicked Gentile cities would have repented long ago if such wonderful things had been done in their midst. How awful the sin of Israel! They had all the God-given clues in the Old Testament, yet they were blind to their Lord. They certainly deserved the “Woe” of double judgment levelled against them by Jesus.

Those who think that by the power of their human intellect they can know God, deceive themselves. Unless God reveals Himself to sinful man, he cannot know Him. It is to the humble and teachable that God graciously grants the wisdom to know Him (1 Cor 1:19-30).

One can know God the Father only through God the Son. The Lord Jesus extends this gracious invitation: *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”* Jesus was telling the people, “Stop working and start trusting in Me for your salvation.” The Pharisees had been oppressing the people with their load of rules and regulations. “Obey those laws and you shall be saved,” was the bad news the Pharisees preached. But the good news of Jesus is this: “I will obey the Law for you so that you might be saved.” Jesus not only kept the Law but also bore the curse of the Law upon Himself on the cross. By so doing, He was truly *“meek and lowly in heart.”* He who is Author of the Law became a Servant to the Law; He was *“made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law”* (Gal 4:4-5).

All who need salvation rest can find it in Jesus. But we must take His yoke, and learn from Him. We take His yoke by believing in Him, and doing what He says. He assures us that His yoke is far better than any other, for His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

THOUGHT: Is my burden heavy as I bear it all alone?

PRAYER: Father, I willingly bear Thy yoke.

LORD'S DAY, MAY 25

LUKE 7:36-50

LUKE 18:9-14

*“...Her sins, which are many,
are forgiven; for she loved much...”*

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS VERSUS SELF-ABASEMENT

In this account, we again see the humility of Jesus. Jesus could see into the heart of man. When Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus for dinner in his house, it was not because he loved Jesus. Simon had Jesus over to his house to trap Him if he could, to find some incriminating evidence against Him. This we can see from his snide remark inwardly against Jesus when a woman came to anoint Jesus with perfume. He was quick to criticise Jesus. He questioned whether Jesus was truly the great Prophet (cf. Luke 7:16). In self-righteousness, he judged that if Jesus were truly a prophet, he would have known that the woman who was anointing His feet with perfume was a sinner, and would have rejected her.

What is remarkable about the whole episode is that Jesus though knowing the heart of Simon—that Simon despised Him—accepted his invitation. Simon dispensed with all the customary courtesies accorded to invited guests. He treated the Lord shabbily. He did not provide water to wash Jesus' feet, welcome Him with a kiss, or anoint His head with oil. The reception was a cold and patronising one. It was an insult.

This woman who had been forgiven of her sins is a good example of what it means to take on the yoke of Jesus, and to learn from Him. She emulated the conduct of Jesus by putting on His yoke of humility. She humbled herself before Jesus by cleaning His feet with her hair and her tears. She honoured Jesus by anointing Him with expensive perfume in deep gratitude.

Who displayed true faith and, as a result, received God's blessing? Not the self-righteous Simon, but the self-abasing woman. If we want to receive God's forgiveness, we must be like her.

THOUGHT: “The chief praise of Christians is self-renunciation.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, I am eternally grateful to Thee for saving me from my sins.

MONDAY, MAY 26

LUKE 8:1-3

TITUS 2:1-5

*“And certain women,
...which ministered unto him
of their substance.”*

WOMEN AS CHRIST’S ASSISTANTS

Jesus was very thorough in His evangelism of Galilee. He preached the Gospel to “*every city and village*.” By so doing, Jesus serves as a pattern for the church in her work of evangelism. In the Singapore context, the church ought to preach the Gospel systematically by covering the ground district by district, block by block, flat by flat.

By this time, Jesus had His team of 12 disciples plus certain woman assistants, namely, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna among others. Jesus uses both men and women in the ministry of the Gospel. The men are to lead, but the women are by no means discounted from ministry. On the role of women in the church, Calvin commented, “...[the women] acted as enthusiastic public-criers to get together an audience for their master. Hence, although their position was inferior, they were called Christ’s assistants.”

It is the office of the men to lead and to teach, however we find some exceptions in Scripture. In the Old Testament, as a form of judgment (because there was no man to take the lead) we find a leader in Judge Deborah (Judg 4-5). In the New Testament, we have a teacher in Priscilla who, with her husband Aquila, privately expounded to Apollos the Christian faith more perfectly (Acts 18:24-26). When there are no men available or capable to lead and teach, the Lord at times uses women to be His assistants.

THOUGHT: “When the men to lead refuse, then the women God would use.”

PRAYER: Father, help me to fulfil my God-given role at home and in church.

TUESDAY, MAY 27
MATTHEW 12:22-37
HEBREWS 6:4-6

*“...but the blasphemy
against the Holy Ghost
shall not be forgiven unto men.”*

BEWARE THE UNPARDONABLE SIN

The sin of blasphemy against the Spirit is unpardonable. How is this sin against the Spirit committed, and who are the people who commit this sin? Jesus, from the beginning of His public ministry, had preached the good news of salvation, done good, and performed many miracles which in no uncertain terms proved His deity and Messiahship (John 10:37-38). Yet the Jewish religious leaders wilfully chose not to believe in Him. When they could find no fault in His message, or His works, they attacked His person, accusing Him of doing all His miracles by the power of the devil when it was clearly the work of the Spirit. This sin is unforgivable because the only avenue of forgiveness through the convicting work of the Spirit has been rejected. The greatest sin that anyone can commit that leads to eternal damnation is the sin of rejecting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord (John 3:18). The constant, persistent, voluntary, wilful, decisive rejection of the Gospel is tantamount to the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Spirit.

What happens when a person commits the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Spirit? The consequences are as follows:

1. God abandons the man totally to his own destruction (Jer 7:13-16; Heb 10:26-27).
2. God judicially hardens or blinds the person to the truth (Matt 13:15; John 12:37-40; eg. Pharaoh, Exod 9:12, 10:1, 20, 27, 14:8; cf. Rom 1:24).
3. The sinner finds it impossible to repent (Heb 6:6; eg. Judas Iscariot, Matt 27:3-5; cf. 2 Cor 7:10).

Can a Christian commit the unpardonable sin? Calvin answered, “he who has been truly regenerated by the Spirit cannot possibly fall into so horrid a crime.”

THOUGHT: “When men add sin to sin, God loosens his reins, and allows them to destroy themselves.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, may I never harden my heart against Thee.

THE SIGN OF SIGNS

The charismatics, like the Pharisees, crave for signs and wonders. Jesus’ indictment of the Pharisees applies equally well to the charismatics, “*An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.*” Is this not so? The money and sex scandals within charismatic circles are well publicised. In these last days, Christians ought to be especially watchful of greedy, seductive and poisonous preachers, “*For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers... Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake... They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate*” (Titus 1:10, 11, 16).

Nevertheless, Jesus gave the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees a sign—not of their choosing but His. It was the sign of the prophet Jonah: “*For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*” (cf. John 1:17-2:2). Jesus was pointing to the miracle of His coming death and resurrection. When Jesus said that He would be “*three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,*” He simply meant that He would be in the state of death for a period of three days. He would rise up from the grave on the third day (cf. Matt 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22).

The sign of Jonah is the sign of the resurrection. The resurrection of Christ is the sign of signs! We live because He lives (1 Cor 15:1-22).

THOUGHT: Will signs and wonders win people to Christ? See Luke 16:31.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the resurrection power that I experience in my life.

THURSDAY, MAY 29
MATTHEW 12:46-50
LUKE 8:19-21

“...My mother and my brethren
are these which hear
the word of God, and do it.”

MARY DEFINITELY NOT SUPERIOR TO JESUS

Mary and her sons wanted to see Jesus while He was teaching the people. Since they could not get in because of the crowd, they requested someone to convey the message to Him, making themselves known as His mother and brothers. What they did was quite rude. Instead of interrupting Him, they could have waited till He was done. Perhaps, they thought that they would get special attention because of their physical relationship to Him.

Jesus used this interruption to teach a spiritual truth. Special attention from Him comes from a spiritual and not physical relationship. Pointing to His disciples, He said, *“Behold my mother and my brethren! ...My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it. ... For whosoever shall do the will of my Father (God) which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.”*

Jesus clearly did not run immediately to Mary when she called Him. He put Mary and her sons in their proper places. The Roman Church teaches that Jesus must listen and do the bidding of Mary all the time since she is His mother. But here we find Jesus doing just the very opposite. Jesus put Mary on hold. She had to wait until He had accomplished doing His Father’s will in teaching the people. Jesus would allow no one to distract Him from His all-important mission—to do His Father’s will. Jesus had already told Mary at the temple that He had to be about His Father’s business (Luke 2:49). Apparently, Mary did not take heed of His words. So in telling the people that they ought to hear God’s Word and do His will, Jesus showed it by example. By continuing in His teaching, and refusing to see Mary right away, He practised what He preached. Even in such tiny matters, Jesus was faultless in His behaviour. He was perfectly obedient to His heavenly Father.

THOUGHT: Did Jesus teach His disciples to pray to the Father or to Mary?

PRAYER: *“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”*

FRIDAY, MAY 30

MATTHEW 13:1-23

LUKE 8:4-18

*“...he spake many things
unto them in parables...”*

JESUS AND HIS PARABLES (I)

A parable is “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” Jesus used common things or situations in human life to teach important spiritual truths about God and His kingdom. Jesus is the Teacher of teachers. He made use of simple illustrations to teach difficult concepts. By so teaching, difficult concepts are made simple and easy for people to understand.

The parable of the sower/seed/soil is one of the most preached parables of Jesus. It is also one of the few parables where Jesus explained its meaning. This parable seeks to teach what true faith is. The wayside refers to those who are totally void of faith. Stony and thorny places describe those who have false faith (cf. the “*seemeth to have*” of Luke 8:18). The good soil describes those who possess true faith. True faith is manifested by perseverance and fruitfulness: “*he that received seed into the good ground is he that ...in an honest and good heart ...heareth the word, and understandeth* (i.e. receives, keeps) *it; which also beareth fruit ... with patience*” (Matt 13:23; Luke 8:15; Matt 13:23; Luke 8:15). The Apostle James, who heard Jesus, rightly taught in his epistle that “*faith without works is dead*” (James 2:20). True faith is a persevering faith that overcomes trials and temptations (Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26, 3:5, 12, 21), and will produce the fruit of the Spirit—“*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*” etc (Gal 5:22-23).

THOUGHT: The Church on earth is a mixed multitude of true and false believers.

PRAYER: Father, I want to be a believer who has Thy Word sown on fertile soil.

SATURDAY, MAY 31

MARK 4:1-25

1 CORINTHIANS 2:9-14

“...He that hath ears to hear,
let him hear.”

JESUS AND HIS PARABLES (II)

Jesus spoke to the people in parables not only to reveal but also to conceal truths. To true believers of Christ, the parables were given for their edification. The Holy Spirit will help them to understand. These “mysteries” are truths hidden in the past but now revealed in Christ (Matt 13:35). Such spiritual truths are spiritually discerned by Spirit-indwelt men; the Spirit teaching them by “*comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” (1 Cor 2:13-14). It is said that Jesus conducted private tutorials for His disciples and “*expounded all things*” to them (Mark 4:34). Those in the Old Testament did not enjoy this privilege of personally sitting at the Master’s feet and having the mysteries of God explained. The Old Testament prophets and saints had desired to see how all the promises of the Old Testament concerning Christ and His kingdom were going to be fulfilled, but were not able to. The New Testament apostles and saints, on the other hand, had been given that privilege because Christ had indeed come, and was systematically revealing in His life and teachings what the Old Testament had promised and predicted.

To unbelievers and false believers, the parables were given for their destruction. The reprobate who stubbornly reject Christ and His Word are punitively dealt with by God. In the Old Testament, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart when Pharaoh kept on hardening his heart against Jehovah and His Word. The Pharisees, scribes, and their followers likewise had been rejecting wilfully and repeatedly the Lord Jesus and His Word, and even attributed to Satan all the good that Jesus had done. So God in judgment blinded them to the truth (Matt 13:14-15; cf. Isa 6:9-10).

Why were they thus dealt with by God? The Apostle Paul gave the reason in Romans 1:21 to 22. Such judicial blinding and hardening occur when the unpardonable sin of blasphemy against the Spirit is committed (cf. Rom 1:18-32; Heb 6:4-8).

THOUGHT: Sinful men cannot know God unless He reveals Himself to them.

PRAYER: Father, help me to understand Thy Word.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 1

MATTHEW 13:24-43

MARK 4:26-34

*“...I will open
my mouth in parables...”*

JESUS AND HIS PARABLES (III)

The parable of the tares tells us that the church visible or church on earth is characterised by a mixed multitude of true and false believers. Tares are weeds that look like wheat. These imitation wheat refer to professors but not possessors of Christ. They look like Christians but are not. God will separate them at the end, and cast them into the lake of fire (see Matt 13:36-43).

The parable of the harvest tells us that the growth of the kingdom is due to God. Christians are responsible for sowing the Gospel seed, but it is God who causes the seed to take root and bear fruit. It is God who gives the increase (1 Cor 3:6-7). God alone deserves all the glory for the growth of His kingdom.

The parable of the mustard seed tells us that the kingdom of God has a very humble beginning. Like a mustard seed, it starts off very small. Jesus, for instance, had only a small band of disciples. At the end of His ministry, His following was just above 500 (1 Cor 15:6). The kingdom will take time to grow. The Church, as Rev Timothy Tow says, is not a mushroom that sprouts overnight and soon after dies off. The Church is a mustard tree that takes years to grow and will last for a long time. A mustard tree fully grown stands 10 to 15 feet high. Its sturdy branches provide shelter for many species of birds. Likewise, Christ welcomes Jew and Gentile, men and women, young and old, rich and poor, to seek His salvation from this sin-plagued world through His Church.

The parable of the leaven tells us that the kingdom of God has a pervasive influence in the world. Leaven is yeast used in bread-making. A little yeast added to the dough will cause the bread to rise. The leaven is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Church has good news for a world gone bad. Jesus saves! And this good news, which began in Jerusalem and Judaea, has spread to Samaria, and is now gone out to all parts of the world (Acts 1:8).

THOUGHT: Bad news in the papers, but Good News in the Bible.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the Good News in a bad news world.

MONDAY, JUNE 2

MATTHEW 13:44-53

PHILIPPIANS 3:7-8

“...the kingdom of heaven is like
unto treasure hid in a field...”

JESUS AND HIS PARABLES (IV)

The parable of the hidden treasure tells us that the kingdom of God as found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a thing most precious. A person who finds it would be willing to sell all that he has in order to obtain it. This was Paul's experience (Phil 3:7-8).

The parable of the pearl of great price tells us that the Gospel of the kingdom is of infinite value. It is like a pearl merchant who, in search of good pearls, finds one that is unique, and sells all his other pearls to buy it. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is thus incomparable.

The parable of the good and bad fishes is similar to the parable of the wheat and tares. It tells us that the church visible comprises both true and false believers. The Gospel net ought to be cast far and wide, and will inevitably bring in all kinds of people, some sincere, others not. There are those who are found in church, but they are there not because of Christ, but for wicked reasons. At the end of the world, God will send His angels to separate the wicked from the righteous, and He will cast the wicked into the lake of fire.

The disciples understood Jesus' parables after He had explained to them their meaning. Having learnt those wonderful truths about the kingdom of God, they were duty-bound to teach them to others also (cf. 2 Tim 2:2). But they were not to teach as the scribes who had nothing new and fresh to say. Christian teachers ought to dig into the treasury of God's Word to bring up *“things new and old.”*

On *“things new and old,”* Calvin commented, “teachers are like heads of families who take care not only to have enough for themselves but to have a store laid up to feed others. They do not live from hand to mouth, but have an eye to the future. The meaning is then: The doctors of the Church should be taught by long meditation, so that as need arises they may minister doctrine to the Church from God's Word as from a storehouse. ...by which they wisely and aptly accommodate the teaching to the grasp of each individual.”

THOUGHT: The parables of Jesus are incomparable.

PRAYER: “Thy Word is like a Garden, Lord.”

TUESDAY, JUNE 3

MARK 4:35-5:21

EZEKIEL 28:12-16

*“...even the wind and
the sea obey him...”*

JESUS AND HIS MIRACLES (I)

The miracles of Jesus authenticate His person, that He is the promised Messiah of the Jews, and that He is the Saviour of the world. His signs and wonders prove and teach that Jesus who is fully God also became fully man so that sinful man can be reconciled to a holy God.

In the miraculous calming of the storm, Jesus showed His power over nature. Human beings are at the mercy of the forces of nature. No man is able to stop the tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc. Only God can. Jesus needed no high-tech machine to calm the storm. His word was enough. The same powerful word that created the whole universe was surely powerful enough to calm a storm. Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves, and they obeyed Him at once. There was “*a great calm*,” not a breeze, nor a ripple.

In delivering the Gadarene demoniacs, Jesus showed His power over evil spirits. Evil spirits are fallen angels. Those angels fell because they followed the archangel Lucifer in rebellion against God (Isa 14:12-14; Ezek 28:12-16; Rev 12:9). After the fall, Lucifer became the devil or Satan, and his angels, demons.

In this incident, a certain man from Gadara was possessed by many demons. It appears that those demons had organised themselves into a gang, and called themselves “*Legion*.” In any case, whether it be one or many, Jesus can never be outnumbered. He had absolute power over them. The demons had to obey Him. Here we see that they not only obeyed but also worshipped Him. This is remarkable. Those demons hated God, and yet when they met Him, they had to worshipfully “kowtow” before Him.

The demons willingly offered to leave the man they had possessed. Just by Jesus’ simple two-letter word—“Go”—the demons were cast out, and the man became whole immediately.

THOUGHT: A Christian can never be demon-possessed.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for the Holy Spirit that dwells within me.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4

MATTHEW 9:18-34

MARK 5:22-43

“...Believe ye
that I am able to do this?...”

JESUS AND HIS MIRACLES (II)

Jesus performed four miracles in this account. First, He healed a woman with an incurable disease; second, He raised a young girl from the dead; third, He healed two blind men; and fourth, He cast out a demon from a dumb man.

A certain woman had a bleeding disease. She had spent all her money and yet remained unhealed. Jesus was her last hope. She did the right thing by going to the Lord. She had great faith. She believed that a simple touch of His clothes would be enough to heal her completely. Indeed power went out from Jesus when the woman touched His garment. Her bleeding stopped immediately.

Then there was Jairus whose daughter had died. Jesus raised her from the dead with a softly spoken word in Aramaic, *Talitha cumi*, which means “Little girl, I say to you, ‘Get up.’” Again, here we see the power of God’s Word, and the omnipotence of Jesus. He is also able to raise us up when our time on earth is up.

We also find Jesus healing not just one but two blind men. By a simple touch of His hands, their eyes opened.

The blind men were healed both physically and spiritually because of their faith. Although they were physically blind, they were not spiritually blind. They were able to see that Jesus is the Messianic Son of David (cf. 2 Sam 7:12-14). They saw not through their eyes, but through their ears. They heard His teaching. They heard of His wonderful works, and believed. The world says, “I must see in order to believe.” But the Bible says that you must believe in order to see (Rom 10:17, John 20:29).

In the deliverance of the dumb demoniac, we find an instance where a physical handicap was caused by demonic possession. When Jesus cast out the demon, his speech was restored. The people were astonished by what happened. They had never seen anything like it before. The medical doctors were powerless. The Jewish exorcists had failed. But Jesus delivered him. It was truly a miracle, and not trickery.

THOUGHT: We do not see in order to believe. We believe in order to see.

PRAYER: Father, help me to live by faith and not by sight.

THURSDAY, JUNE 5

MATTHEW 9:32-38

MARK 6:1-6

*“...he was moved with
compassion on them...”*

JESUS AND HIS MIRACLES (III)

Jesus had a comprehensive ministry. He was tireless in trying to reach out to everyone in Galilee. He did not just preach in a city or village once. Matthew tells us that He revisited those cities and villages. He went back to them again and again to preach the Gospel and heal the sick. He did not engage in touristic evangelism which is so common nowadays. These evangelists spend more time sight-seeing than Gospel-preaching. Instead of being a blessing, they become a burden to the church.

In His evangelistic work, Jesus showed great compassion for the people. He likened the people to wandering sheep having no shepherd. They were hungering for the Word of God, but there were hardly any good and caring pastors to do the feeding. Being weak, they were vulnerable to the attacks of the evil one, and in danger of being misled by false teachers. The crying need for true pastors and teachers was indeed great. That is also the case today. Surely, *“The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.”*

Jesus felt for the people to whom He ministered. He did not embark on a cold and clinical ministry. He really went down to the level of the people, heard their problems, wept with them, lovingly counselled them, and touched their lives. Jesus understands our struggles. He has also gone through the same sufferings, only without sin: *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Heb 4:1-16).

THOUGHT: “I am so glad that Jesus loves me.”

PRAYER: “O how I love Jesus because He first loved me!”

FRIDAY, JUNE 6

MATTHEW 10:1-11:1

ECCLESIASTES 4:9-10

*“And he called unto him the twelve,
and began to send them
forth by two and two...”*

THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE (I)

Jesus was now about halfway through His four-year public ministry. He sent His disciples out two by two, no doubt applying the biblical principle of *“Two are better than one”* (Eccles 4:9-10). A partner in ministry is a boon. The twelve-member team now became six. More ground could thus be covered. The field was indeed ripe for harvest. It was time for a more intensive and extensive outreach through His disciples.

Jesus wanted His disciples to depend on God as they served Him. That was why He sent them out with only the barest of necessities (Mark 6:8-9). They were told to travel light, real light! In their want, they would have to be very prayerful. They would have to ask the Lord for their daily food. They would then experience the joy of knowing that God was with them to provide for their every need each step of the way. God provides through those who are happy to hear the Gospel. The disciples were told to accept the hospitality extended to them by those who welcomed them into their homes. Serving the Lord can be very exciting when we learn to depend on Him for all our needs. God can work unpleasant situations for the benefit of His servants when they do His will, and walk His way.

Another reason why Jesus commanded His disciples to travel light is offered by Calvin, “He tells them to take no luggage which would delay the speed of their progress.” Without any luggage burden, they could move faster, and execute their mission with haste. The principle taught here is this: We must waste no time in preaching the Gospel. We must spare no effort to accelerate missions. There is no speed limit in the Gospel Highway. The faster the better.

THOUGHT: The pastoral ministry is not an occupation but a vocation.

PRAYER: “Make me a blessing to someone today.”

SATURDAY, JUNE 7

MARK 6:7-13

HEBREWS 10:26-31

*“It is a fearful thing
to fall into the hands
of the living God.”*

THE TRAINING OF THE TWELVE (II)

One important instruction Jesus gave His disciples was this: *“And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear you, when ye depart thence, shake off the dust under your feet for a testimony against them.”* This is also applicable to us today. In witnessing for Christ, we must not be “gung ho.” Be enthusiastic, yes; but do not be foolishly enthusiastic. *“Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves”* (Matt 10:16).

In those days, the Jews after travelling through heathen territory had a custom of shaking the dust off their sandals before re-entering the Holy Land. They would literally take off their sandals, shake them vigorously or slap them together to get rid of all the dust that came from unclean soil. Jesus gave the reason for such an action: *“for a testimony against them.”* By so shaking the dust from off their feet, they were acting out a message of judgment. Such an acted prophetic ministry is common in the Old Testament. In Jeremiah 13 for example, God told Jeremiah to preach to the Jews wearing only his underwear. It was a dramatised message of condemnation to the people of Judah. It sought to jolt them into realising the seriousness of their sins. The Lord will hold unbelievers accountable for their actions. God will judge them on that day of reckoning.

We also need to understand that the Gospel is something very precious and valuable. In our efforts to preach the Gospel, do not cheapen it by presenting it in such a way that makes man the good guy and God the bad guy. Do not present the Gospel in such a way whereby man is promoted and God demoted. The sinner must not be made to feel or think that he is doing God a favour by believing in the Gospel. When preaching the Gospel, we are trying to reconcile sinful man to a holy God. Man needs to be reconciled to God, and not the other way round. Man is in the wrong, not God. Man has to say sorry, not God. The Gospel is the pearl of great price, and is offered free of charge. If sinful man shows contempt for it, that is the end of him. Do not cast pearls before swine, the Bible says. *“Be not deceived; God is not mocked”* (Gal 6:7).

THOUGHT: Man has to say sorry, not God.

PRAYER: Father, may I never compromise Thee in my preaching of the Gospel.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 8

MARK 6:14-29

MATTHEW 5:10-12

*"...It is John, whom I beheaded:
he is risen from the dead."*

DYING FOR DOING RIGHT

John the herald was murdered for doing the right thing. He rebuked Herod Antipas for committing adultery by marrying Herodias, who was already married to his half-brother Herod Philip and had borne him a daughter, Salome. It was also an incestuous marriage (Lev 18:16, 20:21). John had good reason to rebuke Herod. Herodias was vengeful and desired to kill John. But Herod had no wish to do that. He respected John greatly, knowing that he was a just and holy man. Moreover, John was a prophet, a messenger from God. Herodias, however, was a persistent nag. Herod finally gave in to Herodias. But he would not have John executed, only imprisoned.

Herodias did not give up on her evil desire to have John killed. She waited patiently for the kill. Her chance finally arrived during Herod's birthday party. Herodias' daughter, Salome, pleased Herod greatly with her seductive dance. For this, Herod granted Salome a wish fit for a king. Herod was a fool. Herodias told her daughter to ask for the head of John. This shows she desired to kill John more than anything else in the world. That was uppermost in her mind. Herod could not break his promise. Reluctantly, he had John beheaded, and his head presented on a platter to Salome who brought it to her mother. One can be sure that both mother and daughter viewed the gory platter with great pride and delight. What evil! Herodias' wickedness is surpassed only by Jezebel!

The headless body of John was buried by his disciples who also reported to Jesus all that had happened. What could be said to John's disciples? Perhaps these words, *"Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation... be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life"* (Rev 2:10). John was *"faithful unto death"* indeed. If there comes a time when our lives are threatened because of our faith in Christ, may we be ready to face death courageously like John.

THOUGHT: Am I willing and ready to die for Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, help me to be faithful unto death.

MONDAY, JUNE 9

MARK 6:30-34

PSALM 127:1-2

*“...Come ye yourselves
apart into a desert place,
and rest a while...”*

BIBLICAL LEISURE

The Apostles returned from their missions trip and reported to Jesus *“all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught.”* In Acts 14:27, we find Paul and Barnabas reporting to the Antioch church what God had accomplished through them in their first missionary journey: *“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.”* This serves as an example for all missionaries who are required to report to their sending agencies or churches. What makes a good report? A good report should consist of these two items:

1. things done, and
2. things taught.

Missionaries ought not to work in secret, accountable to no one. They are accountable to the church which has commissioned them under God.

The disciples had worked hard in their evangelistic trip, and deserved some rest. Jesus Himself needed rest. The people were coming and going, and He and His disciples had no time even to eat. So Jesus and His disciples retreated to a secluded spot in Bethsaida. We should follow the example of Jesus, and take such timely rest. And there is no better way to rest than to go for a church camp. Many churches hold annual Bible camps. Both clergy and laity need to take time off from the hustle and bustle of daily work for a period of physical rest and spiritual meditation. We need to be physically refreshed and spiritually recharged. Every Christian should make a special effort to attend such camps. Such biblical leisure will bring much blessing from God.

THOUGHT: A missionary should not be a freelancer.

PRAYER: Father, I want to attend the next Bible camp.

TUESDAY, JUNE 10

JOHN 6:3-14

PSALM 23

*“And they did all eat,
and were filled.”*

JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE

The feeding of the 5,000 is perhaps the best known miracle of Jesus. It is found in all the four Gospels.

The miracle of feeding the 5,000 with just five loaves of bread and two fishes reveals Jesus as the Moses-like Prophet of Deuteronomy 18:15. After Jesus performed that miracle, His disciples declared, *“This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”* How did they come to this conclusion? The similarity obviously lies in the bread. Israel ate manna under Moses. Jesus then fed the people with miracle bread. It was thus not difficult to link Jesus to Moses. Jesus is really the greater Moses. He is the true Manna from heaven (cf. John 6:22-59).

This miracle of mass feeding cannot be explained away naturally or rationally. It was supernatural. Modernists say that the miracle was not in the feeding of so many with so few, but in selfish hearts turned generous because of the sacrificial giving of the little boy. Such an explanation seems clever but comes from a faithless heart. The text clearly tells us that all the people ate as much as they wanted from the same five loaves and two fishes which Jesus kept breaking and distributing. From just five loaves and two fishes, more than 5,000 were satiated. Besides, there were 12 baskets full of leftovers from the original loaves and fishes.

This account also teaches us at least two important practical lessons. First, it teaches us to pray before we eat. Jesus clearly taught this by example. He looked up to heaven and gave thanks for the food. We pray for God to give us each day our daily bread, and when He graciously provides we must not forget to thank Him. One secret to good health is to eat worshipfully with a grateful and thankful heart. God blesses the food when we thank Him for it, and sustains our physical health for His service.

Second, it teaches us not to waste food. Gather whatever food is left over so that nothing be lost. Frugality is a virtue God Himself practises. “It is a sin to waste. Every grain of rice on your plate should be eaten! God is an Economist. And economy is the mother of prosperity.”

THOUGHT: God is an Economist. Am I?

PRAYER: Father, help me to be thrifty, not stingy.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11

MATTHEW 14:22-33

PSALM 93

*“...Jesus went unto them,
walking on the sea.”*

JESUS RIDES THE STORM

The Sea of Galilee was boisterous, but Jesus literally walked on the waves proving His deity and displaying His all-powerfulness.

The disciples were having a hard time rowing to shore because of the storm. About three in the morning, they saw a haunting figure approaching them. They thought it was a ghost, and became very frightened. Jesus reassured them that it was He. When Peter saw that it was the Lord, he asked Him for permission to walk on the water towards Him. Jesus told Peter to come. Peter stepped out, and lo and behold, he found himself walking on the water as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. But soon, he allowed the winds and waves to distract him. When he started to doubt, he also started to sink. The Lord had to rescue him from drowning.

Why did Jesus grant Peter his wish? Calvin answered, “God often looks after us better by denying what we ask. But sometimes He gives way to us so as to convince us of our foolishness by experience. Thus by yielding to them more than is expedient He daily trains His believers in sobriety and moderation for the future. Add that this was profitable for Peter and the rest and is profitable for us today. Christ’s power shines forth more brightly in Peter when He makes him His comrade than if He had walked on the water alone. Yet Peter knew, and the others saw plainly, that because he did not abide in a firm faith and rest on the Lord’s Word the secret power of God which had made the water solid failed. But Christ deals kindly with him, for He did not want him to sink completely. Both these things concern us also. Just as Peter began to sink as soon as he was overtaken by fear, so our frail and transient fleshly ideas sometimes cause us to sink in the course of our activities. Yet the Lord pardons our weakness and stretches out His hand lest the waters should swallow us up. We must also observe that when Peter saw that his temerity had turned out badly, he committed himself to Christ’s mercy. Wherefore we also, even when we are suffering a punishment we deserve, must flee to Him to have mercy on us and give us the help we do not deserve.” (Source: https://www.oakleys.org.uk/blog/2020/08/calvin_on_peter_walking_on_the_water)

THOUGHT: “With Christ in the vessel, we can smile at the storm.”

PRAYER: Father, please calm the storms in my life.

THURSDAY, JUNE 12

JOHN 6:22-59

PSALM 78:1-38

*"I am the living bread,
which came down from heaven..."*

JESUS THE LIVING MANNA (I)

There is a spiritual lesson in every miracle. What is the spiritual lesson in the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:1-14)? Jesus gave the answer in verses 27, 32, 33, and 35, *"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you; for him hath God the Father sealed. ... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. ... I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."*

Jesus enjoined the people to see the spiritual truth that spiritual life comes not by eating physical bread but spiritual bread. Jesus said He is the Manna of life. God gave Israel manna to eat in the wilderness (Exod 16:15; Num 11:7). Manna was a most wonderful food. During the Exodus, the Israelites would wake up every morning (except on the sabbath) with manna on the ground provided freely and supernaturally by God. It is described as *"a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground"* (Exod 16:14). It was like coriander seed, whitish in colour, and tasted like honey (Num 11:7). It must have been delicious. It was made in heaven. It was called *"bread from heaven"* (Exod 16:4), *"corn of heaven"* and *"angels' food"* (Ps 78:24-25).

The manna of Moses pointed man to the greater Moses who is the true Manna. Jesus identified Himself as the Bread or Manna of Life. Like manna, Christ was provided by God, sent from heaven, pure and white, sweet as honey, and needed for life. Jesus declared, *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life."*

THOUGHT: The bread that Jesus gives is rich and free.

PRAYER: "Break thou the bread of life dear Lord to me."

FRIDAY, JUNE 13

JOHN 6:60-71

DEUTERONOMY 8:1-3

“...Lord, to whom shall we go?
thou hast the words of eternal life.”

JESUS THE LIVING MANNA (II)

Jesus fed and healed the people. He now had a great following. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them. He knew their hearts. They followed Him not because they believed in Him as their Messianic Lord and Saviour, but because they desired free food and healthcare. Jesus rightly said of them, *“Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled”* (John 6:26, cf. 6:29, 30, 36, 41, 42, 52, 66).

The natural unregenerate mind cannot grasp spiritual truths but by the grace of God and guidance of the Spirit (1 Cor 2:14; John 16:13). Jesus Himself said, *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day”* (John 6:44). Sinful man is blind to the truth unless and until the Holy Spirit opens his eyes. It is thus no surprise to Jesus that *“many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him”* (John 6:66). Those disciples followed Jesus with ulterior motives. Like Judas Iscariot, they followed Jesus for selfish and carnal reasons.

Jesus then asked the twelve, *“Will ye also go away?”* Peter answered well, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* In this test, Peter scored an A+. But Judas got an F. He was still lost. Knowing that his selfish ambition would not be fulfilled, he plotted from thence to betray his Master.

THOUGHT: Keep feeding on the bread of His Word day by day. Use the RPG!

PRAYER: Father, may I enjoy my Quiet Time with Thee each morning.

SATURDAY, JUNE 14

MARK 7:1-13

EZEKIEL 33:31-32

*“...This people honoureth me
with their lips, but
their heart is far from me.”*

THE CRUELTY OF HYPOCRISY

Pharisaism is the outward display of religiosity without the accompanying inward evidence of spirituality. In a word, it is hypocrisy. It is unholy judgmentalism that arises out of a conceited holier-than-thou spirit. Isaiah described these conceited Pharisees and scribes well, *“This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”* They might profess faith, but they certainly did not possess faith. They were careful to cleanse their hands and feet, but not their hearts and minds.

As a matter of fact, these Pharisees and scribes invented their own laws in order to nullify God's. Jesus levelled this indictment against them, *“Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ...Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition... For God commanded, saying... Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me... And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free... And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye”* (Mark 7:9-13; Matt 15:3-6).

The fifth commandment of the Moral Law demands of the people to honour their parents. But these rabbis, by means of their humanly invented laws, circumvented the obligation to support their parents by pronouncing the money or property due to them, *“Corban”* (Heb: “given to God”). Once a thing is dedicated to God, it cannot be changed. So when the time came for them to make an offering to God, instead of giving to God what they owned, they gave to Him that which they owed their parents. Instead of offering two portions, one to God, and the other to Mom and Dad, they needed only to offer one by applying the Corban rule; taking their parent's portion and making it God's. This is thievish. What wicked hypocrisy!

THOUGHT: “Hypocrisy is always proud and cruel.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, rid me of hypocrisy.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 15

MARK 7:14-23

PSALM 53

*"All these evil things
come from within,
and defile the man."*

SIN COMES FROM INSIDE OUT

What is it that makes a person unclean? Jesus told the people, *"Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man... there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. ...whatsoever thing from without entereth into the mouth, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man ...those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts... false witness... covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: These are the things which defile a man. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man... but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man"* (Mark 7:14-23; Matt 15:18-20). The people thought that the Pharisees and scribes were very holy men. Jesus told them that they were mistaken. Those Pharisees and scribes might be outwardly clean, but inwardly they were full of filth.

The disciples told Jesus that the Pharisees and scribes were very offended by His words. Should that worry Jesus? The disciples ought to know that Jesus did not come to please man but God. He came to do the will of His Father, and to expose the errors of false teachers was certainly pleasing to God. Jesus said, *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."* He commanded His disciples to keep themselves away from them. *"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch."*

THOUGHT: "Hypocrites are so stupid that they do not feel their sores."
(Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, cleanse me inside out.

HUMILITY AND PERSISTENCE

When the Syrophenician woman begged Jesus for help, He did not answer her pleas initially. He kept quiet and walked on. His disciples, irritated by her persistent cries, told Jesus to send her away. Jesus finally answered, “*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” God dealt with Israel first. Since “*salvation is of the Jews*” as Jesus said, it is only right that it is offered to them first. Notwithstanding, it must be said that Jesus was not shutting out the Gentiles. If that were so, He would not have gone to their cities. He was there precisely to show God’s grace to the Gentiles. Why then did He not answer this Syrophenician woman? He did so for the sake of His disciples who had to learn what true faith was all about. The Jews thus far had been faithless, but this Gentile woman was faithful. Jesus was going to use her as an example of what great faith is.

The Syrophenician woman showed great, persistent faith. Jesus said, “*the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it*” (Luke 16:16). True faith is a faith that will keep pressing on. This woman evinced that kind of persistent faith. Even though Jesus did not answer her, she kept on pleading with Him to save her daughter.

Not only was she persistent, she was also humble. Look at how she replied Jesus when He told her that she was but a dog. How would an ordinary person react to such a statement? Most people, if not all, would resent this, and defend their dignity. Not this woman. She humbled herself to the dust, and agreed with Jesus that she was but a dog. In those days, the people dined with their hands, and after they had eaten, they would use the leftover bread to wipe their fingers, and this dirty bread was cast to the ground for their pet dogs to eat. This woman considered herself worthy only of the dirtied pieces of bread that fell from the Lord’s table.

What faith! Jesus highly commended her for her great faith. And her daughter was healed that very moment. It is only when we strip ourselves of all our pride, and exalt Jesus in every way, that we receive His blessings.

THOUGHT: He must be everything, and I absolutely nothing.

PRAYER: Father, may I be willing to be humble for Jesus.

TUESDAY, JUNE 17

MARK 7:31-37

PSALM 145

“...he spit, and
touched his tongue...”

JESUS' HEALING SPITTLE

Jesus healed the deaf and dumb man in a most remarkable way. He could heal simply by the power of His Word. But here, He not only used His words but also His fingers and His spittle. Why? It was to impress upon this man that He Himself was his Healer. The Lord used sensory means freely to help people understand who He was, and what He could do. A picture is worth a thousand words. His act revealed His identity as the God-Man. His fingers and spittle proved His perfect humanity. The power that came through them showed His true deity. Moreover, the spittle of sinful man is full of germs. But one can be sure that the spittle of the God-Man was absolutely pure and clean.

It is recorded that Jesus sighed as He healed the man. Why? Calvin insightfully commented that His “sighing was a sign of His powerful emotion—and it shows us His singular love towards men when He so much sympathised with their miseries.” Here is another display of Jesus’ emotional sufferings for us—“*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*” (Heb 4:15).

THOUGHT: Jesus’ spittle was absolutely hygienic.

PRAYER: Father, I thank Thee for Jesus’ perfect humanity.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18

MATTHEW 15:30-16:4

PSALM 50

*“And he took
the seven loaves and the fishes...”*

JESUS THE HEAVENLY SIGN (I)

Here is another instance where Jesus showed great sympathy for the people. The great crowd which came to Him for healing had been there for three days already. They had nothing to eat, and He was not willing to send them away hungry for some of them had come from faraway places. Jesus was concerned that they might faint on their way back. He truly bore our weaknesses, and sincerely cared for our needs.

Jesus, like the way He miraculously fed the 5,000, blessed and broke the loaves and the fishes that were brought to Him. This time seven loaves and a few little fish fed 4,000 not counting women and children, and there were seven baskets full of leftovers after all had eaten and were filled.

The Jewish leaders again demanded a sign-miracle from Jesus. Where had these Pharisees and Sadducees been? He had just fed the 4,000 miraculously, healed the deaf and dumb man, cast out the demon from the Canaanite woman, etc. The wonderful works of Jesus had been broadcast everywhere. By this time, Jesus had already performed countless sign miracles. We can be sure that the Pharisees and Sadducees were witnesses to them, but they chose to wilfully go against the plain facts and deny that they were true. This is the unpardonable sin Jesus spoke of earlier. They asked for a sign *“from heaven.”* But the sign *“from heaven”* was standing right before them. Jesus had already told them, *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven”* (John 6:51). Their demand for a sign when the Sign was staring right at them revealed their utter spiritual blindness.

What is truly pathetic about the Pharisees and Sadducees was that they were more interested in being meteorologists than evangelists. They could accurately forecast the next day's weather by looking at the sky, but could not tell that the Messiah had arrived by observing the signs of the times.

THOUGHT: What are the signs today that tell me that Jesus is returning soon?

PRAYER: Father, may I be observant of the signs of Christ's return.

THURSDAY, JUNE 19

MATTHEW 16:1-4

JONAH 1:17-2:10

*“...there shall no sign be given unto it,
but the sign of the prophet Jonas...”*

JESUS THE HEAVENLY SIGN (II)

Why were the Pharisees and Sadducees blind towards spiritual things? Jesus revealed that it was due to their wickedness: *“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.”* It is evil and adulterous because it is pride and idolatry. The proud sinner worships his mind and intellect. He wants to see in order to believe. But God requires that he believes in order to see.

It is mentioned that Jesus *“sighed deeply in his spirit.”* He was very grieved over their stubborn rejection of Him. This shows that God does not delight in the loss of the reprobate. God says, *“I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live”* (Ezek 33:11).

Jesus nevertheless had a sign for them, namely, the sign of Jonah (cf. Matt 12:38-42). It was the sign of His death and resurrection. It was a sign to the Pharisees who were planning to kill Him that they would be defeated because He would conquer death, and live again. It was a sign to the Sadducees who did not believe in life after death, that there was indeed a life hereafter. If they did not wish to be judged, they had better repent like the Ninevites of old. If Jonah had to be taken seriously, what more the greater Jonah who was then there.

THOUGHT: “Pride is the mother of all contempt of God.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, take away all pride and arrogance in me.

FRIDAY, JUNE 20

MATTHEW 16:5-12

JEREMIAH 23:1-8

*“...beware of the leaven
of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”*

BEWARE OF FALSE PASTORS

Jesus warned the disciples against the leaven (or yeast) of the Pharisees and Sadducees. *“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”* (1 Cor 5:6). What was this leaven of which Jesus spoke? Was Jesus speaking literally or figuratively? The disciples apparently thought Jesus was referring to literal physical bread. They thought Jesus was angry with them for not buying enough bread for the journey. The Lord had to chide His disciples for thinking so carnally. They were truly babes in their understanding of the spiritual words that came from their Master’s mouth.

Jesus had to rebuke them for being preoccupied with physical bread. They were very anxious about their next meal. Jesus had to remind them about the two feeding miracles they had just witnessed. Did He not feed the 5,000 and the 4,000 with just a few loaves and fishes? “Am I not able to satisfy all twelve of you with a good meal with just one loaf seeing that I have miraculously fed the thousands with just a few loaves and fishes of which you were witnesses? Why are you so lacking in faith?” The disciples at this point were spiritually dense indeed.

Jesus when He spoke of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, was referring to their “doctrine.” It was the false teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees that they should be careful of. The leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees was poisonous because their doctrine was characterised by unbelief. They could clearly see that Jesus is the Messiah promised in their sacred Scripture. Both the words and the works of Jesus unmistakably pointed to that fact, and yet they blatantly denied the truth.

Who are the modern-day Pharisees and Sadducees? They are all so-called biblical scholars who deny the full inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, and the full deity of Jesus Christ. Beware of the leaven of such false teachers who blatantly attack the Living and the Written Word.

THOUGHT: “Pride is always the companion of unbelief.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, I believe that every jot and tittle in the Bible is Thy Word inerrant, infallible.

SATURDAY, JUNE 21

MARK 8:22-26

ACTS 8:5-24

*“...and he was restored,
and saw every man clearly.”*

BEWARE OF FALSE HEALERS

Jesus' miraculous healing of the blind man here is similar to His healing of the deaf and dumb man earlier on where He also used His spittle in His healing ministry. This time, Jesus applied His spittle to the eyes of the blind man. Once the spittle was applied, the man began to see. The darkness had been lifted and he was able to see the shadowy figures (*“as trees”*) of men walking. When Jesus put His hand upon his eyes a second time, his sight was completely restored, and he *“saw every man clearly”* — 20/20 vision.

Why did Jesus heal in two steps when He could have healed this blind man instantly? Why did He use His spittle and His hands when He could have simply said the word? No reasons are given. Nonetheless, it is clear that Jesus' actions here revealed not just His deity, but also His humanity. Jesus was not aloof, but had made Himself very close to the people. He was not distant and clinical in His treatment of man, but had that personal touch which displayed His genuine sympathy and compassion for those who had gone to Him for help.

Charismatic healers today often cite this text to prove that healing miracles are not always instantaneous. But such a citation is a misappropriation of the text. This text does not at all support the kind of so-called healing miracles performed by so-called faith healers of today. The healing Jesus accomplished here was truly immediate. Although He healed in two steps, there was no long interval between them. The man was healed completely within minutes. Do we find this to be the case in modern-day charismatic healings? Often we see the same sickly ones visiting the so-called healer again and again, and even after several prolonged sessions, they are still not healed. Beware of charlatan healers!

THOUGHT: “The gift of healing was temporary.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, prevent me from being deceived by charlatan healers.

LORD'S DAY, JUNE 22

MATTHEW 16:13-20

1 PETER 2:4-8

*“...Thou art the Christ,
the Son of the living God.”*

JESUS THE SAVING ROCK (I)

After Jesus had ministered extensively in the regions of Judaea, Samaria, and Galilee, the Jewish populace still could not see that He was their promised Messiah. They merely classed Him together with the great prophets of old like John, Elijah, and Jeremiah. When Jesus asked the twelve, *“But whom say ye that I am?”* Peter gave an A+ answer, *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Jesus commended Peter for identifying Him as the Messiah who is the living and true God Himself. The Old Testament describes the Messiah in clear terms of deity (eg. Isa 7:14, 9:6). Peter understood Scripture, and identified Jesus accurately. How was it that Peter was able to see this while others could not? Jesus said that this could happen only by divine illumination. Human intelligence by itself is blind towards spiritual matters. Unless God opens our eyes, we cannot see Him (Matt 11:25-27; 1 Cor 2:7-14). Just as the naked eye is blind towards micro-organisms without the help of a microscope, so is the sinful eye blind towards spiritual matters without the help of God's Spirit.

Then Jesus said these powerful words to Peter, *“Thou art Peter (petros), and upon this rock (petra) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”* There is a play on words here. *Petros* means “stone,” and *petra* means “rock,” or “bedrock.” Peter's name means “a stone.” But Jesus will build His church upon *“this rock.”* Who is *“this rock”* to which Jesus referred? Was Jesus referring to Peter or to Himself?

THOUGHT: Who is the Rock?

PRAYER: “Rock of ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in Thee.”

MONDAY, JUNE 23

MATTHEW 16:13-20

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-4

“...upon this rock
I will build my church...”

JESUS THE SAVING ROCK (II)

Jesus, not Peter, is the Rock. The Scriptures never called Peter *Petra*—a rock. As Jesus said, Peter was but a *petros*—a stone or pebble. Christ, according to the apostle Paul, is the *Petra*—the “*Rock (Petra) was Christ*” (1 Cor 10:4). Peter never referred to himself as *petra*, always *petros*. What is more is that Peter himself identified Jesus as the *Petra*—the Rock (*Petra*) of offence (1 Pet 2:8). This shows that Peter heard Jesus well and understood what He meant by the words, “*upon this rock (Petra) I will build my Church.*”

What is also significant is the fact that Jesus said those words in Caesarea Philippi which has the majestic snow-covered Mount Hermon looming nearby. It is quite possible that Jesus could be pointing to that mountain when He said “*upon this rock.*” In other words, just as Mount Hermon is unmoveable, so is the mountain Rock on which Jesus will build His Church. Peter had to be reminded that he was just a pebble lest he became conceited. But he would find his strength from what he knew about his Lord who is the Christ, the Son of the living God. He is that Bedrock on which the Church will stand. Peter as a pebble could be kicked around, but not Christ the Rock who is indestructible (Dan 2:44-45; Luke 20:17-18). Christ is the Church’s firm foundation. “*For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Cor 3:11). The Church is “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone*” (Eph 2:20). The foundation Rock of the Church is surely not Simon Peter, but Jesus Christ—the Messianic Prophet, Priest and King.

THOUGHT: “The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord.”

PRAYER: Father, Thou art the Rock on which I stand.

TUESDAY, JUNE 24

MARK 8:31-9:1

ISAIAH 53:1-7

“...*the Son of man*
must suffer many things...”

CROSS FIRST THAN CROWN (I)

Jesus, in response to Peter's confession of His Messiahship, told His disciples in no uncertain terms that He would have to be killed, and then resurrected on the third day. This was the first time Jesus spoke in clear terms about His impending death and resurrection. Before this time, He only referred to them vaguely (Mark 2:20, cf. Matt 12:39, 40, 16:4). The Lord's clear revelation of what He was about to do marked the turning point in His public ministry. His face was now set towards Jerusalem where He would ultimately fulfil the passive aspect of His two-fold obedience, namely, His sacrificial death on the cross for the redemption of His people.

Peter rebuked Jesus for speaking about death. In Peter's mind, the Messiah was a Warrior King who would deliver the Jewish nation from out of Roman bondage. To Peter, death meant defeat. His hopes for a restored kingdom of Israel would be dashed if Jesus were to be killed.

Peter's rebuke of Jesus was satanic. That was why Jesus rebuked Peter harshly with a stinging, “*Get thee behind me, Satan,*” i.e. “Get out of my sight, Satan.” Like Satan, Peter was going against God's plan when he prohibited Jesus from dying. Peter should have known better. Isaiah 53 clearly speaks of the Messiah's death. As a former disciple of John the baptiser, he had to have heard John's loud declaration that Jesus is “*the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). Perhaps Peter did know what Jesus would do, but refused to accept it. This could be the reason for Jesus' sharp rebuke of him. Peter did not see Jesus with eyes of faith. He ought to have understood that humiliation must come before exaltation. Jesus had to fulfil His mission as a Lamb, before He could fulfil His role as a King. Cross first, then Crown!

THOUGHT: “The Son of God became the Son of man so that the sons of men might become the sons of God.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: Father, I thank the Lord Jesus for suffering for me.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25
MATTHEW 16:21-28
REVELATION 2:8-11

*“For what is a man profited,
if he shall gain the whole world,
and lose his own soul?...”*

CROSS FIRST THAN CROWN (II)

This divine principle of cross before crown applies not only to Jesus, but also to all His disciples. Jesus said, *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake... and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.”* Peter was probably thinking of grand things for himself. He wanted to rule with Christ. Yes, indeed, Peter and all Christians will rule with Christ one day, but before that happens, they must likewise take up their crosses daily, and walk as Jesus had walked. Death by crucifixion is a most painful and shameful death. If we are not ashamed of being humiliated together with Jesus by taking up the cross and following Him, then Jesus will not be ashamed of us when He returns gloriously as King of kings and Lord of lords. For bearing our crosses in this world, the Lord promises to reward us with His crowns in the world to come.

Not only did Christ predict His death and resurrection for the first time here, He also predicted His return. His second coming would be a glorious and powerful one. He would come into His kingdom (cf. Acts 1:3, 6, 7, 11; 2 Tim 4:1) with His holy angels (2 Thess 1:7-9), and with rewards (cf. 2 Tim 4:1). Peter was not wrong to think of Jesus as the Messianic Warrior King, only that he got the timing mixed up. His first coming was to suffer as the Lamb of God, but His second would be to reign as the Lion from the tribe of Judah. Jesus then promised that some of them would be given a glimpse of the kind of glory He would possess at His second coming: *“Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death... till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom... the kingdom of God come with power.”* Jesus was invariably speaking of His transfiguration of which Peter, James and John would be the privileged eyewitnesses.

THOUGHT: “God does not call His people to triumph before He has exercised them in the warfare of suffering.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: “Lord, here I take my cross, now to follow thee. Worldly gain, empty fame, are but dross to me.”

THURSDAY, JUNE 26

MATTHEW 17:1-13

REVELATION 1:10-18

*“And was transfigured before them:
and his face did shine as the sun...”*

THE GLORY OF CHRIST (I)

The transfiguration of Christ is one of the highlights of His life on earth. It is found in all the three synoptic Gospels immediately following the Lord's prediction that some of His disciples *“shall not taste death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.”* By *“some of them”* Jesus must have been thinking of His inner circle of disciples—Peter, James and John—for they were the only ones who had the privilege of previewing Jesus in His glory during the transfiguration. For a brief moment, on a high mountain (possibly Hermon), Jesus was reclathed with the shekinah glory which He as God Himself possessed, but had removed when He became man (Phil 2:6-7). The glory that emanated from Him is described as intense brightness, shining like the sun, extremely white as white can ever be, with sparkling brilliance.

Moses and Elijah visited Jesus at this time to prepare Him to face His coming death on the cross with courage. Why Moses and Elijah? The reason is that Moses represents the law, and Elijah the prophets. The Old Testament, comprising the law and the prophets, was what Jesus had come to fulfil (Matt 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44). That Jesus had by this time perfectly kept the Old Testament law and fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies is indicated by the Father's commendation of the Son—*“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”* This same commendation was also given at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry—at His baptism. Now that His ministry was about to end, the Father again commended Him for a work well done. Jesus had obeyed the instructions of His Father in every detail without fail and without error. Just as the Son has obeyed the Father, so also should all Christians obey the Son—*“hear ye him.”* *“Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it”* (John 2:5).

THOUGHT: “The Church is the principal theatre of His glory.” (Calvin)

PRAYER: “Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days. Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise.”

FRIDAY, JUNE 27

MARK 9:2-13

REVELATION 5:6-14

*“And his raiment became shining,
exceeding white as snow...”*

THE GLORY OF CHRIST (II)

For sure, this mountain-top experience of seeing Jesus transfigured was deeply etched on the minds of Peter, James and John. But they were commanded by Jesus to keep it a secret until after His resurrection. All three did not fail to mention in their writings that wondrous “glory” they were privileged to behold (see 2 Pet 1:16-18; James 2:1; John 1:14).

By means of this incident, Peter argued that Jesus would surely come again with great power and majesty in keeping to the prophecies of Scripture: *“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Pet 1:16-21). The Lord Jesus Christ will return one day to set up His theocratic kingdom. He will sit on the throne of David to reign over the whole earth for a millennium with a restored Jerusalem as His capital city, and the glorified saints as His assistant rulers.

THOUGHT: Is my Jesus a glorious Jesus?

PRAYER: Father, help me to see Jesus as the soon-coming King.

SATURDAY, JUNE 28

MARK 9:14-33

MATTHEW 17:14-23

“...If ye have faith as

a grain of mustard seed

...nothing shall be impossible unto you.”

MUSTARD SEED FAITH

When Jesus came down from the mount of transfiguration, He was confronted by a crowd who had gathered to see whether His disciples could heal an epileptic boy who was obviously demon possessed. But the nine were powerless. The scribes were no doubt scoffing at them. The boy's father himself confessed his unbelief. Jesus was angered and grieved by such spiritual degeneracy among the people. He had been ministering to them for about three years, and yet they were still unbelieving. Jesus' indictment of them as a *“faithless and perverse generation”* was fully justified.

Jesus showed mercy on the boy and his father who tearfully pleaded, *“Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.”* He cast out the demon and prohibited it from entering the boy ever again. When the disciples asked the Lord why they were powerless to cast out the demon, Jesus replied that spiritual power lies in faith. If only they had a mustard seed kind of faith (cf. Matt 13:31-32), they could have moved even *“this mountain”* (Hermon?). Faith, like the mustard seed, needs to be cultivated through much prayer and fasting, and nourished by the Word of God.

As Jesus approached the last stretch of His redemptive ministry on earth, Jesus wanted His disciples to know for certain that He would be betrayed and killed by men, and on the third day be raised from the dead by God. They were very sad to hear this. Up till this point, they still thought of Jesus as the One who would put to death His enemies, and raise up Israel to its former glory. But Jesus, on the contrary, predicted His own death, and spoke of His own resurrection. They just could not figure out what it all meant. God had also concealed it from them until the appointed time (cf. John 14:16, 17, 26).

THOUGHT: Faith is the victory.

PRAYER: *“Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”* (Mark 9:24)

LORD'S DAY MORNING, JUNE 29

MATTHEW 17:24-27

EXODUS 30:11-16

“...Doth not your
master pay tribute?”

JESUS AND TAXES

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, His Galilean headquarters, He was asked to pay the annual temple tax as required by the law of Moses in Exodus 30:11 to 16. Jesus had no need to pay this fee because He Himself is the Lord of the temple. But in order not to stumble those weak in faith and knowledge, Jesus instructed Peter to pay the double-drachma (*didrachma*) which was about two days' worth of wages.

The money came miraculously from the mouth of a fish. Jesus knew which fish had the coin, and directed it to Peter's hook. In the fish's mouth was a four-drachma coin (*statera*) which was the exact amount for two persons: Jesus and Peter.

Jesus, in this instance, not only displayed that He is God Himself and Lord of His temple, He also revealed His active obedience as man's Representative. This He did by paying the temple tax required by the Mosaic law. He also kept the law by loving His fellowmen. He paid the money because He did not want to stumble others. By His loving action, Jesus fulfilled the law (Rom 13:10).

THOUGHT: Jesus fulfilled all righteousness.

PRAYER: Father, help me to be faithful in giving my tithe to Thee.

LORD'S DAY EVENING, JUNE 29

MARK 9:33-50

JOHN 13:12-17

*"...If any man desire to be first,
the same shall be last of all..."*

LET THE FIRST BE LAST

Jesus had been paying quite a bit of attention to Peter. Peter had shown himself to be the outspoken and leading disciple. He was the one who identified Jesus as the Christ. It was to him that the Lord entrusted the keys of the kingdom. He was one of the three privileged to see the transfiguration. He was the one whom Jesus sent to fish for a coin. Jesus had called on Peter again and again. The other disciples had been noticing this. It is thus no wonder that they began to ask whether the Lord had Peter earmarked for leadership. They even had a debate over who would be the best candidate for the job of top apostle.

Jesus took this opportunity to teach His disciples what true greatness is. He who wants to be first must be last. A leader must be a servant. Having not been able to come to a consensus on who amongst them was number one, they wanted Jesus' view, and so they asked, *"Who is the greatest?"* Thinking that He would pick one from among them, Jesus took a little child instead, and set him in their midst, and said, *"Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ...for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great"* (Matt 18:3-4, Luke 9:48). Unless they had childlike faith, humbly trusting in Christ without scepticism, were totally dependent on Him as a little child is on his parents, have a child's innocence which is void of selfish ambition, they could be great.

Jesus is indeed the supreme example of humility in His life on earth. He did not see it beneath Him to associate with little children. He did not look down on them. He considered them to be very important people. This attitude of Jesus is certainly a demonstration of His active obedience. He fulfilled the law by loving His neighbour, and His neighbour includes not just adults, but also children. "Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world. Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight. Jesus loves the little children of the world."

THOUGHT: A leader must first be a servant.

PRAYER: Father, help me to be like Jesus: not to be served but to serve.

FORGIVE AND FORGET

Love involves not only having a humble spirit, but also a forgiving one. Here Jesus taught His disciples how to deal kindly with someone who had wronged them. There are four steps to take:

1. Go to him privately and tell him his fault. This is a loving act. It seeks to protect his reputation. But if he refuses to listen, then you
2. take one or two witnesses the next time to prove to him that he is indeed at fault. Again, this is a loving act of patience, to give the erring brother another chance to think about his sin and repent. If he rejects even this overture, then
3. bring the matter to the public attention of the church—the clergy first then the laity. This too is an act of love. Perhaps when confronted by a loving community of believers, this sinning brother would be turned around. If he refuses to listen even to the church, then
4. disciplinary measures ought to be taken. He should be excommunicated. Let the church have nothing to do with him. Even this final step is an act of love (Heb 12:6). If he is truly a believer, he would desire to get right with God and with his fellow brother. Restoration comes after repentance (1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 2:6-8).

The Lord sometimes uses the church as an instrument of His chastening work. He gives His church the authority to mete out judgment and exercise discipline according to His Word (2 Thess 3:14-15). A judgment meted out on the bases of scriptural principles, sincere prayer, and genuine love receives God's approval.

Peter asked if seven times was enough to forgive someone who has sinned against us. Jesus said no. Not seven times but seventy times seven. Clearly, Jesus did not mean to say that after the 490th time, there should be no more forgiveness. By using two perfect numbers—ten and seven—Jesus was telling Peter that he had to always and completely forgive anyone who had sinned against him. For this is how God has forgiven us. He has forgiven us of our sins past, present, and future. We should also possess God's forgiving spirit if we truly belong to Him.

THOUGHT: God forgives and forgets. So must I.

PRAYER: Father, forgive me as I forgive others.

Notes

To: *The RPG Ministry*

Calvary Pandan B-P Church

201 Pandan Gardens, Singapore 609 337

Tel: (65)-6560 1111 Fax: (65)-6561 1861 Email: rpg@calvarypandan.sg

Read Pray Grow (RPG) is a Daily Devotional Guide published and distributed quarterly free-of-charge by The RPG Ministry. If you have been blessed by this Devotional Guide, you may wish to request it for yourself or for your loved ones and friends by filling in the form below.

1. Please send me: (*Maximum 2 years*)

____ years of ____ copies per issue of RPG

____ years of ____ copies per issue of Teenz RPG

____ years of ____ copies per issue of Junior RPG

____ years of ____ copies per issue of Chinese RPG

Starting from month: JAN / APR / JUL / OCT _____ (year)

2. Name: (Dr/Rev/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Mdm/Ms) _____

Address: _____

Country: _____ Postal Code: _____

Tel no.: _____ (H/O) _____ (Mobile)

Email (*Important for receipt & renewal*): _____

Postage & handling cost for 4 issues per year

No. of copies per issue	Singapore	Malaysia/Brunei	Asia	Other Countries	
	Local Mail	Airmail	Airmail	Surface Mail	Airmail
1 copy	S\$6.00	S\$8.00	S\$15.00	S\$8.00	S\$20.00
2 copies	S\$7.00	S\$12.00	S\$23.00	S\$12.00	S\$31.00
5 copies	S\$10.00	S\$23.00	S\$50.00	S\$24.00	S\$67.00

Love Gift: The RPG Ministry welcomes love gifts from readers to help meet the cost of publishing and distribution. Hence, your generous support is much needed and greatly appreciated. "Freely ye have received, freely give." (Matthew 10:8)

Enclosed is my love gift of

Please make all love gifts payable to: **CALVARY PANDAN B-P CHURCH**

*International donors please send love gifts by Bank Draft in Singapore Dollars.
Please do not send cash by post.*

I give clear and unambiguous consent
for Tabernacle Books to receive, store
and use my personal information given
above. (In compliance with Personal
Data Protection Act 2012, Singapore)

Name / Signature



To: *The RPG Ministry*
Calvary Pandan B-P Church
201 Pandan Gardens, Singapore 609 337
电话: (65)-6560 1111 传真: (65)-6561 1861 电邮: rpg@calvarypandan.sg

《读经、祷告、长进》(读祷长)乃读祷长事工定期出版并免费赠阅的每日灵修辅助本。你若因这灵修辅助读本蒙福，且愿意为自己或朋友订阅此刊物，请填写以下表格:

1. 请寄: (最多两年数量)
____ 份 ____ 年数量之英文版读祷长
____ 份 ____ 年数量之英文少年版读祷长
____ 份 ____ 年数量之英文小学生版读祷长
____ 份 ____ 年数量之中文版读祷长

从 _____ 年 一月/四月/七月/十月 起分发

2. 姓名: (Dr/Rev/Mr/Mrs/Miss/Mdm/Ms) _____
地址: _____

国家: _____ 邮区: _____
电话: _____ (H/O) _____ (手提电话)
电邮(为发收据与更新使用): _____

一年四期的邮费及运送费					
每期数量	新加坡	马来西亚/文莱	亚洲	其他国家	
	本地邮费	空运	空运	平邮	空运
1 copy	S\$6.00	S\$8.00	S\$15.00	S\$8.00	S\$20.00
2 copies	S\$7.00	S\$12.00	S\$23.00	S\$12.00	S\$31.00
5 copies	S\$10.00	S\$23.00	S\$50.00	S\$24.00	S\$67.00

爱心奉献: 读祷长事工欢迎读者的爱心奉献以资助印刷与运输费。因此，我们需要您的慷慨奉献与帮助。谨此献上感谢。“你们白白地得来，也要白白地舍去。”(马太福音10:8)

谨此附上爱心奉献

支票请注明收款人: CALVARY PANDAN B-P CHURCH

海外捐款者，请使用(以新币兑现之)银行汇票。请勿汇现金。

我谨明确允准帐幕书局收收据集，
储存并使用我所提供的上述个人资料。
(遵照新加坡个人资料保护法令
2012的要求)

姓名 / 签名

