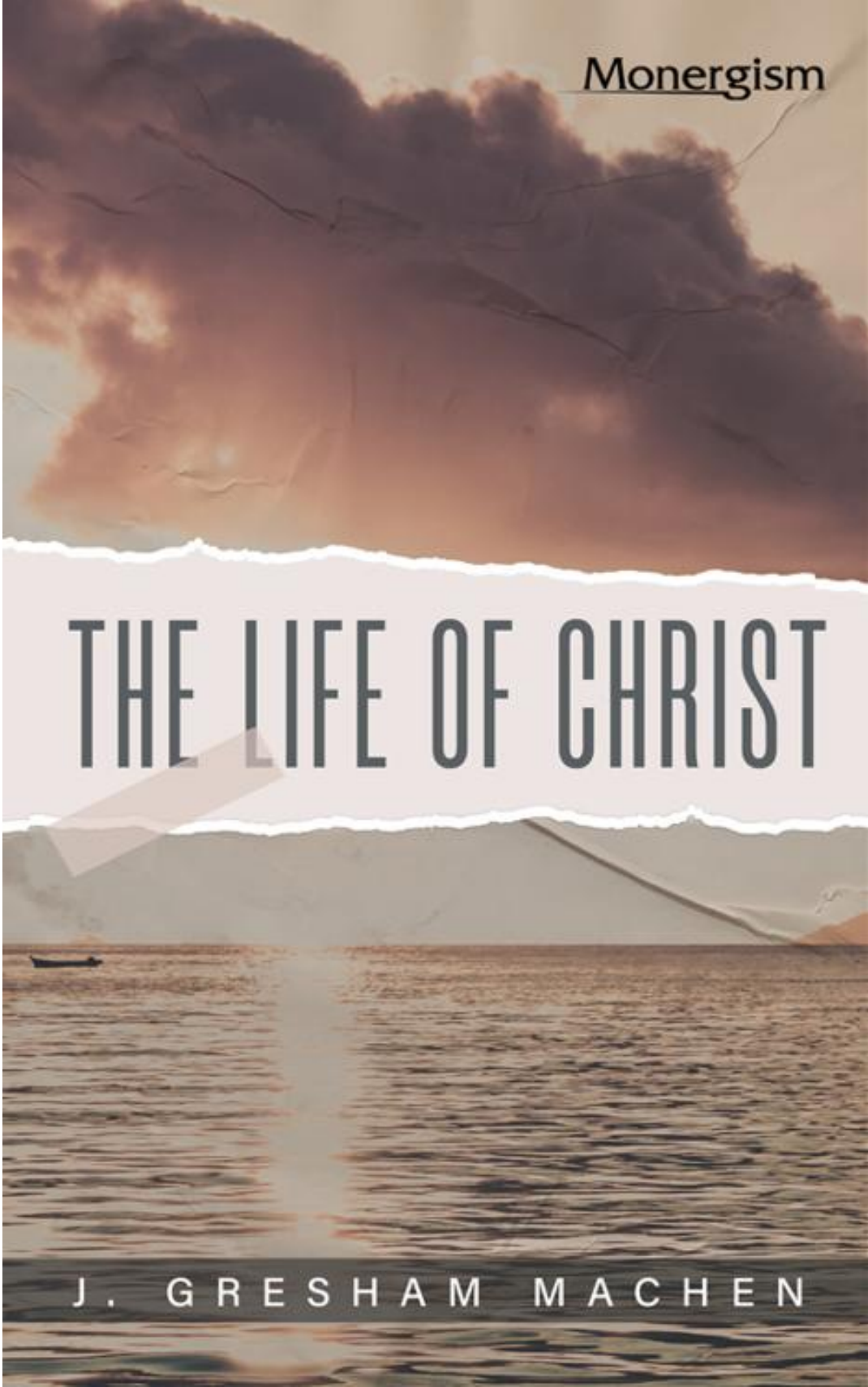


Monergism

# THE LIFE OF CHRIST

J. GRESHAM MACHEN



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# **The Life of Christ:**

## **By J. Gresham Machen**

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# **The Life of Christ**

## **Chapter 1: The Preparation**

At the time when the Old Testament narrative closes, the Jews were under the rule of Persia. The Persian control continued for about one hundred years more, and then gave way to the empire of Alexander the Great. Alexander was king of Macedonia, a country to the north of Greece; but the language and culture of his court were Greek. After Greece proper had been conquered by Alexander's father, Philip, Alexander himself proceeded to the conquest of the East. The Persian Empire fell in 331 B.C., and with the other Persian possessions Jerusalem came into the hands of the conqueror. In 323 B.C., when Alexander died, his vast empire, which extended around the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and to the borders of India, at once fell to pieces. But the kingdoms into which the empire was divided were to a large extent Greek kingdoms. Short-lived, therefore, as Alexander's empire was, it had the permanent effect of spreading the Greek language and Greek civilization over the Eastern world. It became thus as will be seen, one of the most important factors in the divine preparation for the gospel.

After the death of Alexander, the country of Judea became a bone of contention between two of the kingdoms into which Alexander's empire was divided—the Greek kingdom of Syria and the Greek kingdom of Egypt. At last, however, the Syrian kingdom, with its capital at Antioch, near the northeastern corner of the Mediterranean Sea, gained the upper hand. Judea became part of the territory of the Syrian monarchs.

In the reign of Antiochus IV of Syria, called Antiochus Epiphanes, 175-164 B.C., the Jews began a war for independence. Antiochus Epiphanes had desecrated the Temple at Jerusalem by setting up an image of a heathen god in the Holy of Holies. The result was the glorious revolt of the Jews under Mattathias and his sons-the family of the Maccabees. The Maccabean uprising, of which a stirring account has been preserved in the First Book of the Maccabees, an apocryphal book attached to the Old Testament, certainly constitutes one of the most glorious chapters in the history of liberty. The uprising was successful, and for about one hundred years the little country of the Jews, though surrounded by powerful neighbors, succeeded in maintaining its independence.

At first the Maccabees had been animated by a religious motive; the revolt had been due not to an interference with what may be called civil liberty, but to the desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes of the Temple and to the attempt at prohibiting the worship of Jehovah. As time went on, however, the Maccabean rulers became more worldly in their purposes and thus alienated the devout element among their people. Hence the little kingdom became an easy prey to the next great world empire which appeared upon the scene.

That empire was the empire of Rome. Originally a small city-state in Italy, Rome had gradually extended her conquests until she came into conflict with Greece and with the Greek kingdoms of the Eastern world. Weakened by many causes, the successors of Alexander soon succumbed, and among them the monarchs of Syria. Judea could not resist the new conqueror. In 63 B.C., the famous Roman general, Pompey, entered Jerusalem, and Jewish independence was at an end.

The Roman control was exerted in Palestine for a time through subservient high priests, until in 37 B.C. Herod the Great was made king. Herod was not a real Jew, but an Idumaeen; and at heart he had little or no attachment to the Jews' religion. But he was wise enough not to offend Jewish feeling in the outrageous way that had

proved so disastrous to Antiochus Epiphanes. Throughout his reign Herod was of course thoroughly subservient to the Romans; though a king, he was strictly a vassal king. Herod reigned from 37 B.C. to 4 B.C. His kingdom embraced not only Judea, but all Palestine. It was near the end of Herod's reign that our Saviour was born. Thus the reckoning of the Christian era, which was instituted many centuries after Christ, is at least four years too low; Jesus was born a little earlier than 4 B.C.

When Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 B.C., Rome was still a republic. But before many years had elapsed Julius Ceasar assumed the supreme power, and the ancient Roman liberties were gone. After the assassination of Caesar in 44 B.C., there was a long period of civil war. Finally Augustus was triumphant, and the Roman Empire began. In the long reign of Augustus, 27 B.C. to A.D. 14, our Saviour was born.

The political events which have just been outlined did not take place by chance. They were all parts of the plan of God which prepared for the coming of the Lord. When Jesus finally came, the world was prepared for his coming. In the first place, the Roman Empire provided that peace and unity which was needed for the spread of the gospel. War interrupts communication between nations. But when the apostles went forth from Jerusalem to spread the good news of Christ to the world, there was no war to interrupt their course. Nation was bound to nation tinder the strong hand of Rome. Travel was comparatively safe and easy, and despite occasional persecution the earliest missionaries usually enjoyed the protection of Roman law. In the second place, the Greek language provided a medium of communication. When the Romans conquered the Eastern world, they did not endeavor to substitute their own language for the language which already prevailed. Such an attempt would only have produced confusion. Indeed, the Romans themselves adopted the Greek language as a convenient medium of communication. Greek thus became a world language. The original, local languages of the various countries continued to be used (Aramaic, for example, was

used in Palestine), but Greek was a common medium. Thus when the apostles went forth to the evangelization of the world, there were no barriers of language to check their course.

In the third place, the dispersion of the Jews provided the early missionaries everywhere with a starting point for their labors. As a result not only of captivity, but also of voluntary emigration, the Jews in the first century were scattered abroad throughout the cities of the world very much as they are scattered today. But there was one important difference. Today the Jewish synagogues are attended only by Jews. In those days they were attended also by men of other races. Thus when Paul and the other Christian missionaries exercised their privilege of speaking in the, synagogues, they were speaking not only to Jews but also to a picked audience of Gentiles.

### **Questions on Chapter 1**

1. Name in order the foreign powers which possessed the country of the Jews, beginning with Old Testament times and continuing down to the present (lay).
2. What was the importance of the Maccabean uprising in the preparation for the coming of the Lord? What would have happened if Antiochus Epiphanes had been successful?
3. What was the importance of the Roman Empire for the spread of the gospel? of the Greek language? of the dispersion of the Jews?

## **Chapter 2: The Coming of the Lord**



## **John 1:1-18**

When the Son of God came to earth for our salvation, the world was ready for his coming. The whole course of history had been made to lead up to him. And he was well worthy of being thus the goal of history. For the One who came was none other than the eternal Son of God, the Word who was with God and who was God. He had existed from all eternity; he had been the instrument in creating the world. He was himself truly God, the same in substance with the Father, and equal in power and glory. Yet the One who was so great humbled himself to be born as a man and finally to suffer and die. His coming was a voluntary act, an act of the Father in giving him for the sins of the world, and his own act which he performed because he loved us. It was an act of infinite condescension. The Son of God humbled himself to lead a true human life; he took upon himself our nature. He was born, he grew in wisdom and stature, he suffered, he died." He was always God, but he became also man. Who can measure the depth of such condescending love?

What, then, was the manner of his coming? The story is told, in beautiful narrative, in the first two chapters of Matthew and Luke.

## **Luke 1:5-25, 57-80**

First, the birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner, was announced by the angel Gabriel to Zacharias, a devout priest, as he was ministering in the Temple. Luke 1:5-25. Zacharias was old; he had given up hope of children. The promise seemed to him too wonderful to be true; he doubted the angel's word. But the punishment which was inflicted upon him for his doubt was temporary merely, and the bitterness of it was swallowed up in joy for the child that was born. The tongue of Zacharias, which had been dumb on account of his sin, was loosed, and he uttered a wonderful song of praise. Vs. 57-80.

## **Luke 1:26-56**

But before John was born, in fulfillment of the angel's promise, there was a promise of a greater than John. Luke 1 : 26-56. "The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." It was a far more wonderful promise than that which had come to Zacharias, not only because of the greater glory of the promised Son, but also because of the mystery of his birth. The child was to have no human father, but was to be given by the power of the Holy Spirit. But this time, despite the strangeness of the promise, there was no unbelief, as in the case of Zacharias. "Behold, the handmaid of the Lord," said Mary; "be it unto me according to thy word." And then Mary went to Judea to visit her kinswoman Elisabeth, the wife of Zacharias; and while in Judea she gave glorious expression to her thanksgiving in the hymn which is called, from the first word of it in the Latin translation, the "Magnificat"

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Then Mary returned to her own home in Nazareth.

### **Matthew 1:18-25**

But another announcement of the Saviour's birth was made to Joseph, who was betrothed to Mary. Matt. 1:18-25. Joseph was to have the high privilege of caring for the child that was to be born. "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife," said the angel to Joseph in a dream, "for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit." And here again, there was no unbelief and no disobedience. Joseph "did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took unto him his wife."

### **Luke 2:1-7**

Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, a town of the northern part of Palestine, which was called Galilee. But the promised Child was to belong to the house of David, and it was fitting that he should be

born at Bethlehem, a little town five miles south of Jerusalem where David himself had been born. To cause him to be born at Bethlehem, God made use of an event of world politics. Luke 2:1-7. A decree had gone out from the emperor, Augustus, that the whole empire should be enrolled. This enrollment or census seems to have been carried out in the kingdom of Herod the Great by the Jewish method which took account of family relationships. So, although at the time Joseph and Mary were living at Nazareth, they went up to the home of Joseph's ancestors, to Bethlehem, to be enrolled. And at Bethlehem the Saviour was born. There was no room in the lodging place. The Child was laid, therefore, in a manger that was intended for the feeding of cattle.

### **Luke 2:8-20**

But humble as were the surroundings of the newborn King, his birth was not without manifestations of glory. Luke 2:8-20. Shepherds, keeping watch in the fields by night, heard a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased. "The shepherds went then to see the sign which had been made known to them. It was a strange sign indeed-Christ the Lord, the promised King, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

### **Luke 2:21-38; Matthew 2:1-12**

Forty days after the birth of Jesus, Joseph and Mary made the offering according to the Old Testament law, and presented the Child, as the first-born, to the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem. Luke 2:21-38. Then they must have returned to Bethlehem, for it was at Bethlehem that gifts were presented by Wise Men from the East. Matt. 2: 1-12. The Wise Men had been guided to Bethlehem partly by a wonderful star which they had first seen in their own country, and partly by questions which were answered by the scribes.

### **Matthew 2:13-23**

But the life of the infant Saviour was not all to be a hearing of angels' songs and a reception of gold and frankincense and myrrh. The Lord had come to suffer for the sins of the world, and the last great suffering on the cross was anticipated by the persecution which came in the early days. Matt. 2 :13-18. The suspicions of Herod, the jealous king, had been aroused by the questions of the Wise Men. He sent to Bethlehem to put a possible rival out of the way. But it was too late.'

'The king's rage was vented upon the innocent children of the little town, but God had cared for the infant Saviour. The Lord was finally to die for the sins of the world. But meanwhile many words of wisdom and grace were to fall from his lips; his hour was not yet come. Joseph was warned of God in a dream, and took the young Child and his mother away to Egypt, out of the way of harm, until Herod the Great was dead. Then they returned to Nazareth, where the Child was to spend long, quiet years of preparation for his work.

### **Questions on Chapter 2**

1. What life had our Saviour lived before he came to earth? Did he cease to be God while he was on earth?
2. Why did he come?
3. Who was his forerunner? What sort of persons were the parents of the forerunner?
4. How did Jesus come to be born at Bethlehem?
5. What was the character of his mother?

## **Chapter 3: The Baptism**

## **Luke 2:40-50**

The New Testament tells very little about the boyhood and early manhood of our Saviour. One incident, however, is narrated. Luke 2:41-50. Joseph and Mary, we are told, were in the habit of going up from Galilee to Jerusalem every year in the spring at the feast of the Passover. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went up with them. But when they left Jerusalem on the return, Jesus remained behind in the Temple, to study the Old Testament; and when Joseph and Mary found him, he replied to their inquiries, "Knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The incident shows the presence even in the human consciousness of the boy Jesus of a knowledge of the great mission that he was called to fulfill and of his special relation to God.

## **Luke 2:51, 52**

But the consciousness of these great things did not prevent our Saviour from performing the humble tasks of daily life and from being obedient to his human parents. Luke 2 :51, 52. Jesus became a carpenter, and since Joseph also was a carpenter, no doubt Jesus learned the trade in early youth. Mark 6:3; Matt. 13:55. For many years, till he was about thirty years old, the Saviour of the world labored at the carpenter's bench, and lived as an obedient son in a humble home at Nazareth. Luke 3:23.

At last, however, the time came for the beginning of his public ministry. Before that ministry is studied, it may be well to cast a glance at the condition of the country into which Jesus now came forward.

When Herod the Great died in 4 B.C., his dominions were divided among his three sons. Archelaus received Judea, the southern part of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its chief city; Herod Antipas, the "Herod" who is mentioned in the Gospels in connection with Jesus' public ministry, received Galilee and a district to the east of the

Jordan River called Perea; and Philip received a region lying to the east of Galilee and to the north of Perea. When Archelaus was banished in A.D. 6, his territory was placed under the control of Roman officials called procurators. The procurator who was in office during Jesus' public ministry was Pontius Pilate. Herod Antipas, with the title of "tetrarch," continued to rule until A.D. 39; Philip until about A.D. 33. The public ministry of Jesus extended from A.D. 26 or 27 to A.D. 29 or 30. During most of that time he was in the territory of Herod Antipas and of Pontius Pilate, though occasionally he entered the territory of Philip.

### **Matthew 3:1 -12, and Parallels**

The beginning of Jesus' public ministry was prepared for by the work of John the Baptist. Matt. 3:1-12, and parallels. John was the last and greatest prophet of the old dispensation, who came just before the dawn of the new age. For centuries prophecy had been silent. But at last a prophet came in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the heart of the people for the promised Messiah.

Even in dress and in manner of life, John was like a prophet of the olden time. His food was locusts and wild honey; he was clothed with a rough camel's-hair garment; and his preaching was carried on in the deserts. The substance of his message is summed up in the words, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Matt. 3:2.

The phrase, "kingdom of heaven," or "kingdom of God," was evidently familiar to the hearers of John, and the meaning of the phrase, up to a certain point, is perfectly clear. As the kingdom of Caesar is the place where Caesar bears rule, so the Kingdom of God is the place, or the condition, where God bears rule. In one sense, the whole universe is the Kingdom of God, for nothing happens apart from God's will. But evidently John was using the phrase in some narrower sense; he meant by the Kingdom of God the condition where God's will is wrought out to completion, where the sinful

disobedience which prevails in the world is banished and God is truly King.

The Jews expected an age which should be under the perfect control of God. But they were surprised by what John the Baptist said about the requirements for entrance into that age. They had supposed that all Jews would have the blessing of the Kingdom, but John told them that only the righteous would be allowed to enter in. It was a startling message, since the hearers of John knew only too well that they did not possess the righteousness which was required. Repentance, therefore, or cleansing from sin, was necessary. And the sign of cleansing was baptism.

### **Matthew 3:13 to 4:11, and Parallels**

Among those who came to be baptized was Jesus of Nazareth. Matt. 3 :13-15, and parallels. Jesus did not need to be baptized for his own sake, for he had no sin to be washed away. But his baptism was part of what he was doing for his people. Just as on the cross he received the punishment of sin, though there was no sin of his own, so in his baptism he represented the sinful people whom he came to save.

When Jesus had been baptized, there was a wonderful event which was perceived not only by him but also by John the Baptist. Matt. 3 :16-17, and parallels. The Holy Spirit descended upon him in the form of a dove, and there was a voice from heaven which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." This event marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry as Messiah. He had been the Messiah already, and he had already possessed the Holy Spirit; but now the power of the Spirit impelled him to come forward definitely as the promised One.

At the very beginning, however, there was temptation to be overcome. Matt. 4:1-11, and parallels. Jesus was led up from the deep Jordan Valley, where the baptism had taken place, into the wilderness on the heights. And there he was tempted. The

temptation was based upon the holy experience which he had just received. The voice from heaven had designated Jesus as Son of God. "If that be true," said the Tempter, "if thou art really Son of God, use thy power to obtain creature comfort, test out thy power by casting thyself down from a pinnacle of the Temple, obtain the immediate enjoyment of thy power by doing obeisance to me." The Devil quoted Scripture for his evil purpose. But Jesus did not need to repudiate the Scripture in order to refute him. The Holy Scriptures themselves contained a sufficient answer to every suggestion of the Evil One. The great victory was won. The Kingdom of the Messiah was not to be a worldly realm, and it was not to be won by worldly means. The path to the Messiah's throne led by the way of the cross. And that path our Saviour was willing to tread for our sakes.

### **Questions on Chapter 3**

1. What is known about the boyhood and youth of Jesus?
2. Describe the physical features and the political divisions of Palestine at the time of our Lord. Where was Jesus born, where did he spend his youth, and where was he baptized?
3. What was the meaning of John's baptism? Why was Jesus baptized?
4. What was the meaning of each of the three temptations, and how did Jesus overcome them?

## **Chapter 4: The Early Judean Ministry**



## **John 1:19-34**

After the temptation Jesus descended again into the Jordan Valley, where the baptism had taken place. There he received the testimony of John the Baptist. John 1:19-34. John had come not to perform a work of his own, but to be a witness to the greater One who was to follow. He put aside, therefore, all thoughts of personal ambition, declared plainly that he was not the Christ, and rejoiced when his disciples left him in order to follow the One whom he had come to announce. John had had revealed to him, moreover, not merely the fact that Jesus was the Saviour, but also something of the way in which the salvation was to be wrought. Jesus was to die, like a sacrificial lamb, for the sins of others. "Behold, the Lamb of God," said John to his disciples, "that taketh away the sin of the world!"

## **John 1:35-51**

Two pairs of brothers, in those early days, left John to follow the Saviour. John 1:35-42. One pair consisted of Andrew and Peter; the other, no doubt, consisted of the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, although John, who wrote the Gospel in which this narrative is contained, has never mentioned his own name in his book. Two other men, besides these four, came to Jesus on the following day—Philip and Nathanael. Vs.43-51.

## **John 2:1-11**

After the meeting with these six disciples, our Lord ascended again from the valley of the Jordan to the higher country of Galilee. And there, in the village of Cana, he wrought the first of his miracles. John 2:1-11. He was a guest at a wedding feast, and when the wine ran out he supplied the lack by turning water into wine. Thereby he not only manifested his power, but also indicated the manner of his ministry. He was not to be an austere person like John the Baptist, living far from the habitations of men. On the contrary, his ministry was, for those whom he came to win, a ministry of joy. He entered

not merely into the sorrows, but also into the joys of men; the One who was to die for the sins of the world was also willing to grace a marriage feast!

### **John 2:12-22**

After a brief sojourn at Capernaum, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where he was afterwards to carry on a large part of his ministry, Jesus went southward to Jerusalem at passover time. At Jerusalem his first recorded act was an act of stern rebuke. John 2:13-22. The Temple area was filled with the tables of those who sold the sheep and oxen and doves which were intended for sacrifice; the sacred precincts of God's house had been made a place of business. There was no hesitation on the part of Jesus; he made a scourge of cords and drove the traffickers out. It is a mistake to suppose that the wonderful gentleness of our Saviour or his gracious participation in innocent joys was any indication of weakness. Though always merciful to the penitent, Jesus could be indignant against blatant sinners; and the righteous anger of the Saviour was a terrible thing.

### **John 2:23-25**

At Jerusalem Jesus won adherents because of the miracles which he wrought. But he was able to distinguish true devotion from that which was false. He "knew all men, . . .and needed not that any one should bear witness concerning man; for he himself knew what was in man." John 2:24, 25.

### **John 3:1-15**

One example of this knowledge was afforded by the case of Nicodemus, John 3:1-15; Jesus knew what Nicodemus lacked. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, to discuss the substance of what Jesus had been saying. But our Lord would not waste time with things that lay on the surface. He went straight to the heart of the matter, and said to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born anew." V. 7. None of the learning, none of the worldly influence of

Nicodemus would avail; true life could come only by a new birth, which all, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, must receive, and receive, not by their own efforts, but by the mysterious power of the Spirit of God. Jesus spoke, too, on that memorable night, of the sacrificial death which he himself was to die for the sins of men. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness," he said, "even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life."

### **John 3:22-30**

Then Jesus left Jerusalem' the capital, and carried on, through his disciples, a -ministry of baptism in the country districts of Judea. John 3:22-30. He was thus engaging in a work which before had belonged peculiarly to John the Baptist. Some of John's disciples were perhaps inclined to be envious. But there was no envy in the heart of John himself. He had come not for his own sake but to be a witness to Jesus as Messiah. And now he rejoiced in the growing prominence of Jesus. "The friend of the bridegroom," he said about himself, "rejoices at the voice of the bridegroom. He must increase, but I must decrease." Vs. 29, 30, in substance.

### **John 4:1-42**

When this early Judean ministry was over, Jesus went back to Galilee. On the way he passed through Samaria. John 4:1-42. The inhabitants of Samaria were not of pure Jewish race, and although they accepted the five books of Moses and looked for the coming of a Messiah, they did not accept all of the Old Testament. They were despised by the Jews. But even for the Samaritans, and for the most degraded among them, the Saviour had a message of hope. Wearied by his journey, our Lord was sitting by Jacob's well near the city of Sychar. When his disciples had gone into the city to buy food, a woman came to draw water at the well. For that woman it was a memorable hour. Jesus was willing to labor, and that in the midst of his weariness- for one sinful soul, as well as for all the multitudes

that had crowded around him in Judea. The woman was of sinful life, and she could not hide her sin from Jesus. But Jesus searched out her sin, not in order to condemn her, but in order to bring to her the message of salvation. Attracted, then, by what the woman had said, a number of the Samaritans came to Jesus and recognized him as the Messiah and as the Saviour of the world.

### **Questions on Chapter 4**

1. Give an account of the testimony of John the Baptist to Jesus. How did John know that Jesus was the Messiah?
2. What happened at Cana? Who, besides Jesus, was a guest at the feast?
3. Give an outline of all the journeys of Jesus up to his passage through Samaria.
4. Give an account, fuller than the outline given, of the early Judean ministry. What did Jesus say when he was asked to give a sign?
5. What is the meaning of the "new birth"? Is it still necessary today if a man is to be saved? How does it come?

## **Chapter 5: The Beginning of the Galilaean Ministry**

After passing through Samaria, Jesus arrived in Galilee, and it was in Galilee that a large part of his ministry was carried on. The Galilaean ministry is narrated for the most part by the first three Gospels, which are called Synoptic Gospels, whereas the Gospel According to John deals more particularly with the work in Judea.

### **Luke 4:16-30**

After the healing of a nobleman's son, when Jesus was at Cana of Galilee, our Lord began his preaching in the Galilaean synagogues. Early in this period he went to Nazareth, the place where he had been brought up. Luke 4 :16-30. But the people of Nazareth could not believe that the carpenter's Son whom they had known was really chosen by God to fulfill the glorious prophecies of Isaiah. When rebuked by Jesus they even desired to kill him. Thus did they illustrate, to their own eternal loss, the words of Jesus that "No prophet is acceptable in his own country."

Leaving Nazareth, our Lord went down and dwelt at Capernaum, making that city apparently the center of his work. But before the details of the Galilaean ministry are studied, it will be well to cast a hurried glance at the geographical features of the country where Jesus' ministry was carried on.

The political divisions of Palestine have already been mentioned Galilee in the north, under the tetrarch, Herod Antipas; Samaria and Judea to the south, under the Roman procurator, Pontius Pilate. But

the physical features of the country do not correspond at all to the political divisions. Physically the country is divided into four narrow strips, each about one hundred and fifty miles long, running from north to south. The westernmost strip is the coastal plain, along the Mediterranean Sea, into which Jesus hardly went; then comes the low hill country, the "shephela"; then the highlands, upon which Jerusalem is situated, reaching an altitude of some 2500 feet (760 metres) above sea level. These central highlands of Palestine are broken by the plain of Esdraelon, in southern Galilee. A little to the north of this plain, in a hill country, lies the town of Nazareth. East of the central highlands is the deep valley of the Jordan River. The Jordan rises in the extreme north of Palestine, one of its sources being on the slopes of the lofty Mount Hermon; then flows southward to the lake called "the waters of Merom" then, issuing from that lake it flows, after a short course, into the Lake of Gennesaret, or Sea of Galilee, which is about twelve miles long; then, issuing from the Lake of Gennesaret, it flows southward, through a very deep valley to the Dead Sea, which has no outlet and is extremely salt. During most of its course the Jordan Valley lies far below the level of the sea, being on account of this peculiarity absolutely unique among the river valleys of the world. The Dead Sea is 1292 feet (394 metres), and the Lake of Gennesaret 682 feet (208 metres) below sea level. It was on the shores of the Lake of Gennesaret that a large part of our Lord's ministry was carried on. Centuries of misrule have now ruined the country, but in those days Galilee supported a large population. The shores of the lake, particularly, were lined with villages and towns. The work of our Lord was thus carried on amid "life's throng and press," though from time to time he sought out the desert places for rest and prayer.

### **Matthew 4:18-22, and Parallels**

At the beginning of the ministry on the shores of the Lake of Galilee Jesus called the two pairs of brothers - Simon Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Matt. 4 :18-22, and parallels. They had known Jesus before, and had devoted themselves to his service. But now

they were commanded to show their devotion by leaving their ordinary occupation and becoming Jesus' permanent followers.

### **Mark 1:21-39, and Parallels**

The Gospels give a vivid picture of a Sabbath which Jesus spent at Capernaum, near the beginning of his Galilaean ministry. Mark 1:21-34, and parallels. As usual, he went into the synagogue. Our Lord knew how to find God's handiwork in the flowers of the field; but he was not like those who think that the worship of God through nature is any substitute for the public worship of the Church. In the synagogue the people were astonished at Jesus' teaching: "He taught them as having authority, and not as the scribes." But they were also astonished at his power; he commanded even the unclean spirits and they obeyed him. He was not merely a teacher, but also a healer; he brought not merely guidance, but also active help.

After the synagogue service, Jesus went into the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. In the house he healed Simon's wife's mother who was sick of a fever. Others had heard of the wonderful power of Jesus, and desired to be healed. But in order not to break the Sabbath, they waited until sunset, when the Jewish Sabbath was over. At sunset they brought to Jesus those who were sick and those who were possessed with demons, and Jesus put forth his divine power to heal.

It had been a crowded, busy day. Our Lord must have been weary as night at last came. But even in such busy days, he took time to seek the source of all strength. A great while before the dawn he went out into a desert place and there prayed. Mark 1:35-39, and parallels.

### **Matthew 9:1-8, and Parallels**

After a tour in the Galilaean synagogues, with both preaching and healing, our Lord returned to Capernaum. There, as is told in one of the vivid narratives of the Gospels, Jesus healed a paralytic. Matt. 9:1-8, and parallels. The sick man could not be brought in by the

door of the house because of the crowds. But he and his friends were not to be denied. The four friends who bore his couch lowered him through the roof into the place where Jesus was. They had found the Healer at last. But bodily healing was not the first gift which Jesus bestowed. "Son," said Jesus, "thy sins are forgiven." It was a strange physician indeed who could forgive sins. The scribes said that the word of Jesus was blasphemy. And so it was, unless Jesus himself were God. As a proof of his divine power, the Lord said also to the paralytic, "Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk." And so the man went away from the presence of the great Healer, whole in body and in mind.

### **Questions on Chapter 5**

1. Describe the political and the physical divisions of Palestine. In what parts of the country was our Lord's ministry carried on? Where was Nazareth? Capernaum? Point out these places on a map.
2. Describe the call of the four disciples. When and where had they followed Jesus before? What was their occupation?
3. Give an account of the Sabbath in Capernaum that is described in the Gospels. What great divisions of Jesus' work were illustrated on that day?
4. Describe the healing of the paralytic. What can be learned from this incident about the nature of Jesus' person? Why were the scribes offended?

## **Chapter 6: The Period of Popularity**



During the first part of the Galilaean ministry, our Lord had the favor of the people. Great crowds followed him so that he could scarcely enter into a house. On one occasion he embarked in a little boat and put forth a short distance into the lake, so as to be able to speak to the throng on the shore.

This popularity, it is true, was not universal. The common people heard Jesus gladly, but the official teachers were hostile. These teachers, who are called scribes, belonged for the most part to the sect of the Pharisees. At the time of Christ there were two chief parties among the Jews—the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sadducees were a worldly aristocracy, in possession of the high-priestly offices at Jerusalem, favored by the Romans, and satisfied with the existing political order. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were a strict Jewish party, insisted on a strict interpretation of the Mosaic Law, and added to the Law a great mass of oral "tradition," which ostensibly consisted of interpretation of the Law, but really meant an enormous and oppressive addition to it. The Pharisees were opposed to Jesus for at least two reasons. In the first place, they were envious of his success in teaching, which endangered their own position. In the second place, they were opposed to the contents of his teaching; he rejected their interpretation of the Law, and rebuked them for paying such attention to the detailed rules which were set forth in their tradition as to forget the weightier matters of justice and mercy.

The conflict of Jesus with the Pharisees was precipitated particularly by the attitude of Jesus toward the Sabbath. The Sabbath controversy was carried on partly in Galilee and partly, John, ch. 5, during a visit of Jesus to Jerusalem. The Pharisees had developed for the preservation of the Sabbath an elaborate set of rules which went far beyond what was set forth in the Old Testament. They were offended, therefore, when Jesus refused to rebuke his disciples for plucking the ears of wheat on the Sabbath Day, and when he himself insisted on using the Sabbath to perform works of mercy like the healing of the man that had a withered hand. But for the present the

opposition of the Pharisees was held in check by the favor which our Lord had among the people.

This favor was due partly to the teaching of Jesus and partly to his miracles. He interpreted the Scriptures in a fresh, original way; "He taught as one having authority and not as their scribes." And he had power to heal every manner of disease and to cast out demons. It was no wonder that the crowds followed so wonderful a teacher.

### **Matthew 4:17**

The Galilaeen teaching of Jesus began with the proclamation of the Kingdom of God. The message sounded at first somewhat like the message of John the Baptist. Quite like John, Jesus came forward with the summons, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." But the new teacher differed from John in the more complete account which he gave of the nature of the Kingdom, and especially in the central place in the Kingdom which he assigned to himself.

### **Matthew, Chapters 5 to 7**

The nature of the Kingdom of God is set forth in the great discourse of our Lord which is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount Matt., chs. 5 to 7. Having gone up from the shores of the Sea of Galilee to the heights which surround the lake, our Lord taught his disciples what was to be the life of those who should have a part in the Kingdom of God. In one sense, the Kingdom lay altogether in the future; it would be ushered in with full power only at the end of the world. But in another sense, it was present already wherever there were those who were truly submitting their lives to Jesus.

### **The Sermon on the Mount contains certain features which are fundamental in all of Jesus' teaching.**

In the first place, God is presented, in the Sermon on the Mount, as "Father." The fatherhood of God, in the teaching of Jesus, is

sometimes misunderstood. Jesus did not mean that God is Father of all men. God stands indeed to all men in a relation which is analogous to that of a father to his children; he cares for all, he makes his sun to rise upon all. Matt. 5:45. But in the teaching of Jesus and in the whole New Testament the lofty term, "Father," is reserved for a still more intimate relationship. So in the Sermon on the Mount the great world without is sharply distinguished from the company of Jesus' disciples; it is only the latter who can say, "Our Father which art in heaven."

There was nothing narrow in such teaching; for although in Jesus' teaching the intimate relation of sonship toward God was offered only to those who should be of the household of faith, yet the door of the household of faith was open wide to all who would be willing to come in. Indeed Jesus himself died on the cross with the purpose of opening that door. Our Saviour did far more than teach men that they were already children of God; he came to make them children of God by his saving work.

In the second place, the Sermon on the Mount tells what kind of life is led by those who should have entered into the Kingdom and been made the children of God. That life is far more than obedience to a set of external rules; the purity which Jesus demanded is a purity of the heart. The life in the Kingdom is also far removed from all pretense; the children of God engage in prayer and good works not to be seen by men but to be seen by God. Finally, the life in the Kingdom is a life of perfect trust; all anxious thought for the morrow is banished, since God will care for his children.

One difficulty arises in the reading of the Sermon on the Mount. How can such an ideal be attained? It might be possible to obey a set of rules, like the rules of the Pharisees, but how is it possible for sinful men to attain purity of heart? The righteousness of the Kingdom of heaven exceeds by far the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees." How can such righteousness be attained?

The answer to this question was partly understood even by the, first hearers of the Sermon on the Mount. The disciples of Jesus knew even then that Jesus alone could give them entrance into the Kingdom; they trusted in him already not merely as teacher but also as Saviour. But the answer to the question is far plainer to us; for we know the cross. The atoning death of Christ it was that gave men the kind of righteousness required for entrance into the Kingdom of God, for it gave them the righteousness of Christ himself. The significance of the cross was spoken of by our Lord even during his earthly ministry, but the full explanation of it was left to the apostles. The saving work of Jesus could be fully explained only after it had been done.

### **Questions on Chapter 6**

1. What is the meaning of "the kingdom of God," in Jesus' teaching?
2. Who were the Sadducees?
3. Who were the Pharisees, and why were they opposed to Jesus?
4. Give an outline of the Sermon on the Mount.

## **Chapter 7: The Turning Point**

The teaching of Jesus was carried on in various ways. Sometimes there were extended discourses like the Sermon on the Mount. On the other hand, much of the most precious teaching of our Lord is contained in brief sayings which were uttered in answer to some

objection or in view of some special situation. One other form of teaching requires special attention-namely, the parables.

### **Mark 4:1-34, and Parallels**

A parable is a narrative taken from ordinary life, but intended to teach some spiritual lesson. It differs from an allegory in that the application is not to be carried out in such detail. Ordinarily a parable teaches simply one lesson; there is only one point of similarity between the literal meaning of the parable and the deeper spiritual truth. Thus when our Lord compared God's answer to prayer with the answer which an unjust judge gives to an importunate widow, the details in the two cases are not intended to be similar; God is very different from the unjust judge. But there is one point of similarity -importunity does have its effect in both cases.

The distinction between a parable and an allegory is not an absolute distinction, and sometimes the two shade into each other. Thus the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen, which Jesus uttered nearly at the close of his earthly ministry, partakes largely of the nature of allegory. The details to a considerable extent are significant-the wicked husbandmen represent the Jews and their leaders, the servants who were first sent represent the prophets, the son who was sent last represents Jesus himself. But many of Jesus'parables are parables pure and simple; they are not intended to be pressed in detail, but teach, each of them, some one lesson.

The purpose of Jesus in using parables was twofold. In the first place the parables were not clear to those who did not wish to learn. In accordance with a principle of the divine justice, willful closing of the eyes to the truth brought an increase of darkness. But in the second place, to those who were willing to receive the truth, the parables were made gloriously plain; the figurative form of the teaching only served to drive the meaning home. The ministry of Jesus did not consist merely of teaching. Along with the teaching there went wonderful manifestations of divine power. These manifestations of

divine power were of various kinds. Many of them were miracles of healing; Jesus had power to make the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, the deaf to hear. He also had power to cast out demons. At the presence of the Son of God, Satan and his ministers had put forth all their baneful power. But the demons were obliged to flee at Jesus' word.

### **Matthew 8:23-27, and Parallels**

Not all of the miracles, however, were miracles of healing. Some of the most notable of them were of a different kind. But all of them were manifestations of Jesus' divine power. When, on the lake, in the midst of the frightened disciples, our Lord said to the winds and the waves, "Peace, be still,." the Ruler of all nature was revealed. The particular form of Jesus' miracles depended upon his own inscrutable will; but all of the miracles revealed him as the Master of the world. He who had made the world in the beginning could still put forth the same creative power. A miracle, as distinguished from the ordinary course of nature, is a manifestation of the creative, as distinguished from the providential, power of God.

### **Matthew 14:13-21, and Parallels**

Among the miracles of Jesus the feeding of the five thousand seems to have been particularly important. Its importance is indicated by the fact that it is narrated in all four of the Gospels. Matt. 14:13-21, and parallels. Even the Gospel of John, which is concerned for the most part with what happened in Judea, here runs parallel with the Synoptic Gospels and narrates an event which happened in Galilee.

This event marks the climax of the popularity of our Lord and at the same time the beginning of his rejection. Even before this time he had been rejected by some; his popularity had been by no means universal. He had been opposed by the scribes and Pharisees; he had not been understood even by the members of his own household; and he had been rejected twice at the town where he had been

brought up. But for the most part he had enjoyed the favor of the people.

At the time of the feeding of the five thousand, this popular favor had reached its height. Jesus had withdrawn from the crowds into a lonely place across the lake from Capernaum. But such was his popularity that he could not escape. The people followed him even when he tried to be alone; they had had no thought of food or of lodging for the night, so eager had they been to listen to his teaching. When evening came, therefore, they were in want. But our Lord had pity on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd. By a gracious manifestation of his divine power he made the five loaves and two fishes suffice for all the multitude.

### **Matthew 14:22-34, and Parallels**

After the feeding of the five thousand Jesus found at last the solitude which he had sought; he went up into the mountain to pray. The multitudes were making their way around the lake by the shore; the disciples had taken the only boat and were rowing hard against the wind. But about three o'clock at night our Lord came to the disciples walking upon the water. It is no wonder that they bowed before him and said, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

### **John 6:22-71**

Meanwhile the multitude had gone on foot around the lake to Capernaum. When they found Jesus there before them they were astonished. But their astonishment, unfortunately, was not of the kind that leads to true and abiding faith. They had valued the earthly bread which Jesus had given them, but were not willing to receive the spiritual bread. Jesus himself, he told them, was the Bread of life who had come down from heaven; only those could truly live who would feed upon him by accepting his saving work. John 6 :22-7 1.

It seemed to the Jews to be a hard saying. How could the Jesus whose family they knew be the bread which had come down from heaven? Many even of those who had formerly followed Jesus were offended at this "hard saying." The popularity of Jesus at this time began to wane.

But there were some disciples who remained. Jesus had chosen twelve men, whom he called apostles. He had had them as his companions, and already he had sent them out on a mission to teach and to heal. Turning now to them, he asked, "Would ye also go away?" Then Peter, speaking for the others, showed the difference between true disciples and those who are offended at every hard saying. "Lord," he said, "to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."

### **Questions on Chapter 7**

1. What is a parable? How does it differ from an allegory?
2. Why did Jesus use parables? Mention some of the parables recorded in the Gospels.
3. What is a miracle? Why did Jesus work miracles?
4. What is the particular importance of the feeding of the five thousand?
5. Why were the people offended by the discourse on the Bread of life?

## **Chapter 8: Jesus as Messiah**

The waning of Jesus' popularity was by no means sudden. Even after the discourse on the Bread of life, we frequently find the multitudes around him. But in general, from that time on our Lord seems to



have withdrawn from the crowds more frequently than before, in order to devote himself to the instruction of his intimate disciples.

### **Matthew 15:21-39, and Parallels**

At this time our Lord withdrew into Phoenicia, northwest of Palestine. In Phoenicia he healed the daughter of a Syrophenician woman. It was a foretaste of the rich streams of mercy which after Pentecost were to flow out into the whole world.

After a brief stay in Phoenicia, Jesus returned to Galilee, where he engaged again in controversy with the Pharisees and again, by his divine power, fed a great multitude. This second time four thousand men were fed. There were also miracles of healing, and in general the essential characteristics of the Galilaean ministry were continued.

### **Matthew 16:13-20, and Parallels**

But before long Jesus departed again from Galilee, and finally went with his disciples to the regions of Caesarea Philippi, northeast of Galilee. Near Caesarea Philippi occurred the great confession of Peter, which is one of the most important incidents of the Gospel record. Matt. 16 :13-20, and parallels.

"Who," Jesus asked of his disciples, "do men say that I am? And they told him, saying, Elijah; but others, One of the prophets. And he asked them, But who say ye that I am? Peter answereth and saith unto him, Thou art the Christ." Mark 8:27-29.

In this confession Peter recognized that Jesus was the "Messiah," the "Anointed One," or according to the Greek translation of the same word, "the Christ." It was by no means the first recognition of the fact. The Messiahship of Jesus had been revealed to Joseph and Mary and Zacharias and Elisabeth even before Jesus was born; it had been revealed to the shepherds and the Wise Men who greeted the infant Saviour; it had been revealed to John the Baptist; it had been

revealed to the little group of disciples who left John at the Jordan in order to follow Jesus; it had been proclaimed by Jesus himself in his conversations with Nicodemus and with the Samaritan woman; it had been recognized even by the unclean spirits.

But although Jesus had been proclaimed ,is Messiah before, the confession of -Peter was by no means a matter of course. Although the disciples had already accepted Jesus as the Messiah it required considerable faith and devotion to continue to accept him, for Jesus was not the kind of Messiah whom the Jews had been expecting. They had been expecting a Messiah who, as anointed king of Israel, would deliver God's people from the Roman oppressors, and make Jerusalem the center of the whole world.

Such expectations seemed to be set at nought by the Prophet of Nazareth. No kingly pomp surrounded him; he mingled freely with the common people; he lived in the utmost humility, having not even a place to lay his head. Political Messiahship he definitely refused. When, after the feeding of the five thousand, the people were about to come and make him a king-that is, the Messianic king-he left them and withdrew into the mountain. John 6 :15. It is no wonder that they were disappointed. All their enthusiasm seemed to be ruthlessly quenched. Jesus would have absolutely nothing to do with the kind of Messiahship which they offered.

By this attitude of Jesus not only the multitudes were discouraged. Even the members of Jesus' household failed to understand, and the very forerunner of Jesus, John the Baptist himself, was assailed, momentarily at least, by doubts. Conceivably the twelve apostles also might have been discouraged. But their faith remained firm. Despite all disappointments, despite the refusal of our Lord to accept what were supposed to be prerogatives of Messiahship, Peter was able still to say, at Caesarea Philippi, "Thou art the Christ."

But in what sense was Jesus the Christ? He was not an earthly king who would lead the armies of Israel out to battle against the Romans.

He was not that sort of Messiah. What then was he? What was Jesus' own conception of Messiahship?

In order to answer that question fully, it would be necessary to return to the study of the Old Testament. Jesus accepted to the full the Old Testament promises about the Messiah; what he rejected was merely a false interpretation of them.

Even those promises of the Old Testament which make the Messiah a king of David's line were fulfilled in Jesus. He was actually of David's line, and he was born in David's city. He was also the King of Israel.

Only his kingship was exercised in ways different from those which the people generally were expecting. And there were other features of the Old Testament promises which Jesus also fulfilled. Jesus was not only Son of David; he was also Son of Man. The title "Son of Man," which was Jesus' own Messianic designation of himself, does not denote merely the humanity of Jesus in distinction from his deity. On the contrary, it is plainly taken from the stupendous scene in Dan. 7:13, where "one like unto a son of man" is represented as coming with the clouds of heaven, and as being in the presence of God. It indicates, therefore, not the human weakness of Jesus, but his exalted position as supreme Ruler and Judge.

It is not surprising that for a time at least during his earthly ministry Jesus used this title of the Messiah rather than the other titles, for the title Son of Man was without the political associations which Jesus desired to avoid. It had been employed, not so much by the masses of the people, as by the circles which read the books which are called the "Apocalypses." In these books, on the basis of Daniel and other Old Testament prophecies, the Messiah was represented not as a political king, but as a heavenly, supernatural person. The title, therefore, was admirably fitted to designate the lofty character of the Messiah's person, without the dangerous political associations which had gathered around certain other titles.

Indeed for a time, in the early Galilaean ministry, our Lord seems to have kept his Messiahship somewhat in the background. Public proclamation of his Messiahship would have aroused false, worldly hopes of political upheaval. Before proclaiming himself again as Messiah, our Lord needed to make clear by his teaching and by his

example what kind of Messiah he was; before finally setting up his Kingdom he needed to show that that Kingdom was not of this world. But he was Messiah and King from the beginning, and even at the beginning his Messiahship had been made known.

### **Questions on Chapter 8**

1. Mention some of the titles which are used to designate Jesus as Messiah, and explain their meaning. Was the title "Son of Man" ever used with reference to Jesus by anyone except Jesus himself?
2. What was the significance of Peter's confession?
3. Why did Jesus become less popular than he was at first?

1.

## **Chapter 9: The Prediction of the Cross**

Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi was a triumph of faith, for which Jesus pronounced Peter blessed. Through a revelation from God, Peter had been made able to endure the disappointment involved in Jesus' refusal of kingly honors. But another trial of faith was soon to come.

### **Matthew 16:21-28, and Parallels**

After Peter's acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah, our Lord began to teach the disciples more of what his Messiahship meant. Matt. 16:21-28, and parallels. It meant, he said, not worldly honors, and not merely a continuation of the humble life in Galilee, but actual sufferings and death. This teaching was more than Peter could endure. "Be it far from thee, Lord," he said, "this shall never be unto thee." In such rebellion against God's will Jesus recognized a repetition of the temptation which had come to him at the first, immediately after the voice from heaven had proclaimed him to be the Messiah the temptation to use his Messianic power for his own worldly glory. And now as well as then the temptation was resolutely overcome. "Get thee behind me, Satan," said Jesus: "thou art a stumbling block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.

Jesus was thus ready to tread the path of suffering which he had come into the world, for our sakes, to tread. And he called upon his true disciples to tread that path after him. Yet all the suffering was to

be followed by a greater glory than Peter had ever conceived; and almost immediately there was a wonderful foretaste of that glory.

### **Matthew 17:1-13, and Parallels**

Six days after the scene at Caesarea Philippi, our Lord took Peter and James and John, his three most intimate disciples, with him up upon a high mountain-no doubt somewhere on the slopes of the lofty Mount Hermon. There he was transfigured before them, Matt. 17:1-13, and parallels; "his face did shine as the sun, and his garments became white as the light." With him appeared Moses and Elijah, talking with him. And they were talking about what seems to be a strange subject at such a moment.

They were talking not- of the glories of Jesus' Kingdom, but of the "departure" which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Luke 9:31. The "departure" included not only the resurrection and the ascension, but also the crucifixion. Even the shining light of the transfiguration was intended to point to the cross.

### **Matthew 17:14-20, and Parallels**

After the glorious experience on the mountain, our Lord came at once into contact with the repulsiveness of human misery, Matt. 17:14-20, and parallels. But he did not shrink from the sudden transition. As he came down from the mountain, he found at the bottom a boy possessed of a demon, who "fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming." It was a depressing sight, very unlike the brightness of the transfiguration. Even more discouraging, moreover, than the condition of the boy himself was the powerlessness of the disciples. They had tried to cast the demon out but had failed miserably, not because the power might not have been theirs, but because of their unbelief. The father of the boy, too, was lacking in faith. "I believe," he said; "help thou mine unbelief." Jesus did help his unbelief, and the unbelief of the disciples. He rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy.

At this period Jesus repeated on several occasions the prophecy of his death. The tragedy on Calvary did not overtake him unawares. He went deliberately to his death for our sakes.

### **Matthew 18:1-6, and Parallels**

Even on such solemn days, when the shadow of the cross lay over the path, the disciples were unable to overcome the pettiness of their character. On the very journey when Jesus had told them about his approaching death, they had quarreled about the question as to which of them should be greatest in the Kingdom of heaven. Thereby they had shown how far they were from understanding the true nature of the Kingdom. If the Kingdom was finally to be advanced under the leadership of such men, some mighty change would have to take place in them. That change did take place afterwards, as we shall see, at Pentecost. But at present the pettiness and carnal-mindedness of the disciples added to the sorrows of our Lord. Despite the intimacy into which he entered with his earthly friends, he towered in lonely grandeur above them all.



After the transfiguration and related events near Caesarea Philippi, our Lord returned to Galilee. But apparently he did not resume permanently his Galilaean ministry. Soon we find him passing through Samaria, and laboring in Judea and in that country east of the Jordan River which is called Perea. This part of Jesus' ministry is recorded particularly in the Gospels According to Luke and According to John, although Matthew and Mark contain important information about the latter part of the period. The general character of the period is fixed by the expectation of the cross. Jesus had set his face toward Jerusalem to accomplish the atoning work which he had come into the world to perform.

### **Luke 10:1-24; John, Chapter 5**

At the beginning of the period Jesus sent out seventy disciples, to prepare for his own coming into the several cities and villages which he was intending to visit. The Seventy were in possession of something of Jesus' power; they were able to report with joy that the demons were subjected to them.

During the same period we find Jesus in Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles. Even during the period of the Galilaean ministry Jesus had gone up to Jerusalem at least once, at the time of one of the Jewish feasts; and in connection with the healing of a man at the pool of Bethesda he had then set forth the true nature of his person and his relation to God the Father. John, ch. 5. At the later period with which we are now dealing, the same teaching was continued. Chs. 7, 8.

### **Matthew 11:27, and Parallels**

It is particularly the Gospel of John which records the way in which Jesus set forth the nature of his own person, but what is fully set forth in the Gospel of John is really implied all through the Synoptic

Gospels, and in Matt. 11 :27; Luke 10 :22 it is made just as plain as it is in John. According to his own teaching, Jesus stood in a relation toward God the Father which is absolutely different from that in which other men stand toward God. In the plainest possible way, our Lord laid claim to true deity. "I and my Father," he said, "are one." All the Gospels present the true humanity of Jesus, the Gospel According to John, no less than the Synoptists. But all the Gospels also set forth his deity. He was, according to a true summary of the Gospel teaching, "God and man, in two distinct natures, and one person for ever."

### **Questions on Chapter 9**

1. What trial of Peter's faith came just after his great confession?
2. What was the meaning of the transfiguration?
3. What event took place just afterwards?
4. Give an account of Jesus' teaching at the time of the feast of tabernacles. John, chs. 7, 8. How was this teaching received?
5. Give an account of the mission of the Seventy and compare it with the previous mission of the Twelve.

## **Chapter 10 : The Last Journeys**

### **John, Chapter 9**

During the latter part of Jesus' ministry, with which Chapter 9 began to deal, Jesus spoke some of the most beautiful of his parables.

A number of them, such as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, are recorded only by Luke. From the same period the Gospel According to John records some notable teaching of Jesus, in addition to that which was mentioned in the last lesson. Part of this teaching was introduced by the healing of the man born blind. John, ch. 9. This miracle, which had been performed on the Sabbath, had aroused the special opposition of the Pharisees. In answer to them, our Lord pointed out the difference between those leaders of the people who are like robbers breaking into the sheepfold or at best like hirelings who flee at the first approach of danger, and the good shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep. Such a shepherd was Jesus himself, and his life was soon to be laid down.

### **John 11:1-53**

Finally, after various journeyings of Jesus in Judea and in Perea, there occurred in Bethany, a little village near Jerusalem, one of the most notable of our Lord's miracles. John ii 1—44. At Bethany lived a certain Lazarus with his sisters Martha and Mary, whom Jesus knew well. Lazarus fell ill during the absence of Jesus across the Jordan in Perea; and the illness resulted in his death. On the fourth day after Lazarus' death, Jesus came to Bethany. Martha came to meet him; Mary remained mourning in the house, until her sister brought word that Jesus had arrived. Then she, too, went to greet the Lord. When Jesus saw her and her friends weeping for the one who had died, he, too, wept with them. But he had power not only to sympathize, but also to help. Going with the sisters to the tomb, he caused the stone to be removed, then prayed, and then called 'with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." At the word of Jesus, the dead man came out of the tomb. Jesus was Master over death and the grave.

It was not the first time that our Lord had raised the dead. He had raised the daughter of Jairus in Galilee and the son of the widow of Nain. But the raising of Lazarus is especially important, not only because of the wonderfully vivid way in which the incident is narrated in the Gospel According to John, but also because it served

to hasten the crisis in Jerusalem. Both the Sadducees and the Pharisees were now aroused. The movement instituted by Jesus had reached alarming proportions. If allowed to continue it would be full of danger. The Romans, it was feared, would regard it as rebellion and would utterly destroy the nation of the Jews. The diverse parties among the Jewish leaders were becoming more and more united against the strange Prophet from Galilee.

### **John 11:54**

For a short time still the crisis was delayed. Our Lord retired from Judea to a city called Ephraim, near the wilderness. We also find him, in this period of his Life, again beyond the Jordan, in Perea. In this Perean residence is to be placed a portion of the teaching contained in the Synoptic Gospels, such as the teaching concerning divorce, Matt. 19 3—12, and parallels, the words to the rich young ruler, vs. 16—30, and parallels, and the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard. Matt. 20 1—16.

### **Luke 19:2-16**

Before long, however, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for the last time. On the way, when he was passing through Jericho, in the Jordan Valley, he healed two blind men, and converted the tax collector Zacchaeus. The conversion of Zacchaeus was in accord with Jesus' custom all through his ministry. The tax-gatherers were despised by the rest of the Jews at the time of Christ. They had allied themselves with the Roman oppressors, and no doubt most of them were guilty of abominable extortion on their own account. By the Pharisees, particularly, they were regarded as belonging to the very dregs of the people, with whom no true observer of the law could be intimate. But Jesus was bound by no limits in his saving work. He did not condone sin — either the sin of the tax-gatherers or the sin of the Pharisees. But he was willing to save from sin all who would believe. The whole, he said, need not a physician, but they that are sick. The Son of Man had come to “seek and to save that which was lost.”

## **John 11:55 to 12:1**

Toiling up the long ascent from Jericho, our Lord arrived at last, six days before the passover, at the village of Bethany, which is less than two miles from Jerusalem. During the remaining time before the crucifixion Jesus went every morning into the city and returned in the evening to lodge with his friends at Bethany.

## **Matthew 26:6-13, and Parallels**

Soon after his arrival at Bethany, when Jesus was reclining at table in the house of a certain Simon the leper, he was anointed by Mary the sister of Lazarus. Matt. 26 6—13; Mark 14 3—9; John 12 2—8. *This* anointing is not to be confused with a somewhat similar event which had taken place some time before, when Jesus had been anointed by a woman who had been a notorious sinner. Luke 7 36—50. The disciples murmured at the waste. The precious ointment, they said, might have been sold for a great sum, which could have been distributed to the poor. Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, had a special cause for dissatisfaction; in his case the mention of the poor was only a cloak for covetousness. Judas kept the bag, and if the proceeds of the ointment had been put into his keeping, he could have indulged his thieving propensities. But all the murmuring, whether it proceeded from more sordid motives or from a mere misunderstanding of the true spirit of the woman's act, was rebuked by our Lord. The woman, he said, had anointed his body beforehand for the burial. The days just before the crucifixion were no time for true disciples to murmur at an act which was prompted by overflowing love for the Saviour who was so soon to die.

## **Matthew 21:1-11, and Parallels**

On the day after the supper at Bethany, that is, on the day after the Jewish Sabbath, on the ninth day of the Jewish spring month Nisan, our Lord entered into Jerusalem. Matt. 21: 1—11, and parallels. It was a triumphal entry; Jesus was received publicly by the multitudes as

the Messiah, the promised King of Israel. Even the manner of his entry was in accordance with prophecy; he came riding over the Mount of Olives and into the city mounted on an ass, in accordance with Zech. 9:9. The promised King of Israel at last had come. The multitudes strewed palm branches in the way, and cried, "Hosanna to the son of David."

### **Questions on Chapter 10**

1. Where was Perea? Jericho? Bethany? Ephraim? Find on a map the places mentioned in this lesson.
2. Give an account of all the times when Jesus, during his earthly ministry, raised the dead. In what Gospels are these incidents narrated?
3. What is the special importance of the raising of Lazarus?
4. Give an account of some of those parables of Jesus which are contained only in the Gospel According to Luke.

## **Chapter 11: Teaching in the Temple**

Despite the enthusiasm which the multitudes had shown at the time when Jesus entered into Jerusalem, despite the shouts of those who cried, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord," Jesus knew that he was going to his death, and that Jerusalem would turn against her King. "When he drew nigh," we are told in the According to Luke, "he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes." Luke 19:41, 42.

On the Sunday of the triumphal entry it was already late when Jesus entered into the Temple area. He did nothing, therefore, that day, except look about him; and then he returned to Bethany with twelve apostles. Mark 11:11.

### **Matthew 21:12-19, and Parallels**

On Monday, however, the final conflict began. Entering into the city, our Lord cast out of the Temple those who bought and sold, just as he had done at the beginning of his public ministry. The rebuke which he had administered several years before had had no permanent effect. But Jesus did not hesitate to rebuke again who made God's house a place of business. The rulers, of course, were incensed. But popular favor for a time put a check upon their hate. On the way into the city, Jesus said to a fig tree, which was bearing leaves only, "No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever." The motives of our Lord's act are not fully known to us; but at least he was able afterwards to point out through the case the fig tree the limitless power of faith. The disciples were exhorted to pray in faith.

But their prayers, Jesus said, must be in love; no unforgiving spirit should be left in their souls when they prayed to heavenly Father for their own forgiveness. The next day, Tuesday, was a day of teaching. Our Lord spent the day in the Temple, meeting the attacks of his enemies. And he had an answer to every inquiry; the trick questions of his enemies always redounded to their own rebuke.

### **Matthew 21:23-32, and Parallels**

First our Lord was questioned as to the authority by which he had cleansed the Temple the day before.

Matt. 21 : 23—32, and parallels. He answered that question by another question: “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?” The chief priests and elders could not say. They were not really sincere seekers for divine authority. But Jesus was not content with having silenced them. He also pointed out, positively, their sin in not receiving the Word of God which had come through John.

### **Matthew 21:33-46, and Parallels**

Still more scathing was the rebuke which Jesus uttered through the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. Matt. 21 : 33—46, and parallels. The wicked husbandmen had been put in charge of a vineyard. But when the time came to render the fruit of the vineyard to the owner, they killed the servants who were sent to them and finally the owner’s son. The chief priests and Pharisees needed no elaborate explanation; they would probably in any case have applied the parable to themselves. But as a matter of fact Jesus made the application abundantly plain. “The kingdom of God,” he said, “shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.”

### **Matthew 22:1-14**



Just as plainly directed against the wicked leaders of the people, and against the rebellious nation itself, was the parable of the Marriage of the King's Son. Matt. 22 : 1—14. Those who were bidden to the feast refused to come in; but from the highways and hedges the king's house was filled. So the covenant people, the Jews, had rejected the divine invitation; but the despised Gentiles would be received.

### **Matthew 22:15-40, and Parallels**

The rulers would have liked to put Jesus to death at once; but they still feared the people. So they adopted the underhand method of trying to catch him in his speech. First came the Pharisees and the Herodians, the latter being the partisans of the Herodian dynasty, with their adroit question about giving tribute to Caesar, Matt. 22:15—22, and parallels; then the Sadducees, the worldly aristocracy who did not believe in the resurrection, with their attempt to is the doctrine of the resurrection ridiculous, vs. 23—33, and parallels; then an individual Pharisee with his question about the greatest commandment in the law. Vs. 24—40, and parallels. Jesus had a wonderful, profound answer for them all. But only the last inquirer to have been at all willing to learn. "Thou art not far," Jesus said him, "from the kingdom of God." Mark 12 : 34.

### **Matthew 22:41-46, and Parallels**

Then, after all the questions which had been put to him, our put one question in turn. "David himself," he said in effect, "calls the Messiah Lord; how is the Messiah, then, David's son?" In this way Jesus was presenting to the people a higher conception of Messiahship than that which they had been accustomed to bold. The Messiah was indeed David's Son, but he was not only David's Son. Matt 22 : 41—46, and parallels.

Apparently on the same day, our Lord called attention to the poor widow who was casting her mite into the collection box. A gift, he said, is measured in the estimation of God not by its amount, but by

the sacrifice which it means to the giver. Mark 12 : 41—44, and parallels

### **Matthew, Chapter 23**

Finally, on the same memorable Tuesday, our Lord denounced openly the formalism and hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees. Matt., ch. 23. It was also perhaps on the same day that certain Greeks desired to see Jesus, John 12 : 20, 21—a foretaste of that entrance of Gentiles into the Church which was to come after the resurrection. We are not told exactly how Jesus received the Greeks, but the importance of the moment was marked by a voice from heaven which came as a divine confirmation of Jesus' message.

### **Matthew, Chapters 24, 25**

When Jesus, on the same day, had gone out of the Temple and had ascended to the Mount of Olives, a hill which lay on the way to Bethany, he taught his disciples about the coming destruction of the Temple and also about the end of the world. Matt., ch. 24, and parallels. The time of the end of the world, he said, is unknown to all except God, and in expectation of it men should always be watchful. This duty of watchfulness he illustrated by the parables of the Ten Virgins, Matt. 25 : 1—13, and of the Talents. Vs. 14—30. Then our Lord drew a great picture of the last awful judgment of God, when the wicked shall be separated from the good. Vs. 31—46.

### **Questions on Chapter 11**

1. Where was the Mount of Olives? Describe the route between Bethany and the Temple in Jerusalem.
2. Compare the two occasions when Jesus cleansed the Temple.
3. On what occasions during his ministry did Jesus speak about John the Baptist?

4. Give a full account of the questions which were put to Jesus on the Tuesday of the last week, and of the answers of Jesus.
5. What were the “woes” which Jesus pronounced against the scribes and Pharisees?
6. What did Jesus say after the Gentiles came to seek him?

## **Chapter 12: The Crucifixion**

This following selection has been extracted from a joint work of J. Gresham Machen and James Oscar Boyd entitled "A Brief Bible History: A Survey of the Old and New Testaments" (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1922), now in the public domain..

### **Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16, and Parallels**

On the Wednesday of the week before the crucifixion, the chief priests and elders of the Jews took counsel how they might put Jesus to death. The difficulty was that if they arrested so popular a teacher in the midst of the crowds who had come to Jerusalem for the approaching feast of the passover, there would be a tumult. At first, therefore, the enemies of Jesus thought that they might have to wait until the passover was over. But they were helped out of their difficulty by one of Jesus' own friends. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve apostles, proved to be a traitor. He received a promise of thirty pieces of silver, and watched for a time when Jesus would be away from the crowds so that he could be delivered quietly into the hands of his enemies.

### **Matthew 26:17-19, and Parallels**

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Jesus arranged for the celebration of the passover in company with the apostles. The passover feast commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, especially the passing over of Israel's first-born when the first-born sons of the Egyptians were slain. The feast was opened on the evening of Nisan 14, Nisan being a spring month, and the first month of the Jewish year. According to Jewish reckoning, the evening of Nisan 14 constituted the beginning of Nisan 15. Starting from that time, the

feast continued for seven days, no unleavened bread being used within that period. The first and most solemn act of the whole feast was the eating of the paschal lamb on the evening of Nisan 14.

This passover supper was celebrated by Jesus and the apostles on Thursday evening, Nisan 14. And the feast was to be continued into the Christian era. The symbols were changed; bread and wine were to be used instead of the paschal lamb. But the fundamental meaning of the feast remained the same; both the passover and the Lord's Supper had reference to the atoning death of Christ. The paschal lamb prefigured the Lamb of God who was to die for the sins of the world; the bread and wine also symbolized the body of Christ broken for us and the blood of Christ poured out for the remission of our sins. Thus what the passover symbolized by way of prophecy is symbolized in the Lord's Supper by way of commemoration. And on that last evening our Lord changed the symbols in order to suit the new dispensation when, since the Lamb of God had once been offered up, other sacrifices should be no more.

### **Matthew 26:20-35, and Parallels**

Jesus gathered with his apostles for the feast in an upper room. Matt. 26:20, and parallels. Then, lamentably enough, there was a strife among the apostles as to who should be the greatest. Luke 22 :24-30. As a rebuke of all such inordinate ambitions our Lord gave an example of humility by washing the feet of his disciples. John 13:1-20. The traitor, Judas Iscariot, then left the apostolic company, John 13:21-35, and parallels, and the Lord's Supper was instituted. I Cor. 11:23-25; Matt. 26:26-29, and parallels. Then the denial of Peter was foretold; before the cock should crow twice Peter would deny his Lord three times.

### **John, Chapters 14 to 17**

Then followed some of the most precious teaching of Jesus - teaching which is preserved only in the Gospel According to John. Chs. 14 to

17. Our Lord spoke of the mission which he had come into the world to fulfill and of the mission which his apostles were to fulfill through the power of the Holy Spirit. The meaning of Jesus' redeeming work could not fully be explained until it had been accomplished. And it was to be explained by the Holy Spirit speaking through the apostles.

### **Matthew 26:36-46, and Parallels**

After they had sung a hymn, our Lord went out with the eleven to the Garden of Gethsemane, outside of Jerusalem, on the slopes of the Mount of Olives. Matt. 26: 36—46, and parallels.

There he sought strength in prayer for the approaching hour when **was** to bear the penalty of our sins. The disciples were no help to him in his agony; Peter and James and John slept while he prayed. But God the Father heard his prayer.

### **Matthew 26:47 to 27:1**

Soon the traitor came with the Temple guard, and Jesus was arrested, Matt. 26 : 47—56, and parallels. On the same evening there was an informal hearing of the Prisoner in the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest. Matt. 26:57, 58, 69—75, and parallels.

Meanwhile Peter and “another disciple,” who was no doubt John the son of Zebedee, the writer of the Fourth Gospel, had entered into the house. There Peter denied his Lord.

The next morning there was a more formal meeting of the Sanhedrin, the highest court of the Jews. Luke 22:66-71, and parallels. This meeting was intended to confirm the results of the informal hearing in the house of Annas. But both meetings were little more than a form. The court had really decided the question beforehand; it had determined to bring Jesus by any means, lawful or otherwise, to his death. When faced by his enemies, our Lord declared plainly that he

was the Messiah, the Son of God. That answer was enough to satisfy the accusers. Jesus was judged guilty of blasphemy.

### **Matthew 27:2-56, and Parallels**

But the Sanhedrin did not possess the power of life and death. Before Jesus could be executed, therefore, the findings of the Sanhedrin had to be confirmed by Pilate, the Roman procurator. And at first Pilate was recalcitrant to the Jews' demands; he was not able to find in Jesus any cause of death. John 18 : 28—38, and parallels. In his perplexity, Pilate sent the prisoner to be examined by Herod Antipas, the tetrarch of Galilee, who was at the time in Jerusalem. Luke 23 : 6—12. But this hearing also was without decisive result.

At last Pilate yielded, against his better judgment, to the importunity of the Jewish leaders and the mad shouts of the crowds, who had turned now against the One whom formerly they had honored. Matt. 27:15—30, and parallels. Pilate delivered Jesus up to the will of the Jews. Before the execution, however, the Prisoner was cruelly scourged and mocked by the Roman soldiers. Then when a last effort of Pilate had failed to placate the wrath of Jesus enemies, John 19:4-16, our Lord was finally taken out of the city to be crucified Luke 23:26-33, and parallels.

The Prisoner at first was compelled to bear the cross on which he was to be put to death, but when his strength gave way a certain Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service. A crowd of people from Jerusalem followed the Prisoner, and especially a number of women who lamented. At last the place of execution was reached. It was called "Golgotha," or according to the Latin translation of the name, "Calvary." There they crucified our Lord. Matt. 27: 33-56, and parallels.

With him were crucified two thieves, of whom one repented at the last hour, and received salvation. A number of sayings which Jesus uttered on the cross are recorded in the Gospels. At the moment of

death, he cried, “It is finished.” John 19 : 30. The meaning of that saying is plain. The work for which our Lord came into the world at last was done. The Lord of glory had died to wash away the sins of all believers. The just penalty of sin had been borne by the One who knew no sin.

### **Questions on Chapter 12**

1. Summarize the teaching of Jesus on the last evening before the crucifixion.
2. What happened in Gethsemane?
3. Describe the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin and before Pilate.
4. Why did the Jewish leaders put Jesus to death? Why did Jesus consent to die?
5. Give an account of the crucifixion of our Lord.



## **Chapter 13: The Resurrection**

The death of Christ was the greatest event that history has ever seen. By that event the grace of God triumphed over sin, and a lost world was redeemed. Apart from Christ we all deserve eternal death. But the Lord of glory, on Calvary, bore the guilt which belonged to us, and made us children of God.

So great an event was accomplished without flare of heavenly trumpets or blazing of heavenly light. To many, the death of Christ seemed to be merely the execution of a criminal. But there were not wanting some strange phenomena which marked the greatness of the event. From twelve o'clock on the day of the crucifixion there was darkness until three o'clock, when Jesus died. Then the veil of the Temple was rent, there was an earthquake, and graves were opened. Thus was nature made to recognize the suffering and the triumph of her Lord.

After Jesus had died, his side was pierced by one of the soldiers whom Pilate had sent at the instance of the Jews in order that those who had been crucified should be killed and their bodies removed before the Sabbath. From the body of Jesus there came out blood and water. The event was witnessed by John the son of Zebedee, writer of the Fourth Gospel. John 19:31-42.

### **Matthew 27:57-66**

Then, in the late afternoon of the same day Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, removed our Lord's body from the cross and placed it in a new tomb. Mark 15:42-46, and parallels. Another secret disciple, or half-disciple, Nicodemus, came also to anoint the body.

John 19:39. Certain women also came to see where Jesus was laid. Luke 23: 55,56, and parallels. The chief priests and Pharisees, on the other hand, obtained a guard from Pilate, to watch the tomb, lest the disciples of Jesus should steal the body of Jesus away and say that he had risen from the dead. Matt. 27:62-66.

### **Matthew 28:2-4, 11-15**

The next day was Saturday, the Old Testament Sabbath. The friends of Jesus rested on that day. But very early on Sunday morn the women started to the tomb bearing spices in order to anoint the body. But before they arrived, our Lord had already risen from the dead. There had been an earthquake, an angel had rolled away the stone from the sepulcher, and our Lord himself had risen. At the sight of the angel, the soldiers of the guard, in their fear, “became as dead men.” Matt. 28:2-4. All that they could do was to report the event to the chief priests who had sent them. Vs.11-15

### **Matthew 28:1, and Parallels; John 20:2; Matthew 28:5-10, and Parallels**

Then the women arrived at the tomb, and found it empty. Matt. 28:1, and parallels. One of them, Mary Magdalene, went back to tell Peter and John. John 20:2. The others remained at the tomb and there saw two angels who announced to them that Jesus was risen from the dead. On their way back to the city Jesus himself met them, and they fell down, grasped his feet, and worshiped him Matt. 28:5-10, and parallels.

### **John 20:3-18**

Meanwhile, at the message of Mary Magdalene, Peter and John ran to the tomb, found it empty, and believed that Jesus really was risen. John 20:3-10. But Mary Magdalene, after they had gone, stood weeping at the tomb; she supposed that some one had taken the body of her Lord away. Then Jesus himself came to her, her sorrow

was changed into joy, and she joined her voice to that other women who told the disciples of the glad event. Vs. 11-18

### **I Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-23**

Thus far, Jesus himself had been seen only by the women. But now he appeared to Peter, I Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:34, and to two of the disciples who were walking to the village of Emmaus. At first, the two disciples did not know him; but they recognized him at Emmaus when he broke the bread. Then, on the evening of the same Sunday he appeared to the apostles in Jerusalem. I Cor. 15:5; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23. All doubts were removed when he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side, and partook of food in their presence. Then he interpreted the Scriptures to them and showed them that it was necessary that the Messiah should suffer. Finally he breathed upon them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit."

### **John 20:24-29**

Thomas, one of the apostles, who had been absent from this meeting with the risen Lord, refused to believe at the mere word of the others. Jesus dealt very graciously with the doubting disciple. Again, one week later, he came to the apostles, the doors of the room being shut, and presented to Thomas his hands and his side. All doubts now melted away in the joy of meeting with the risen Lord. Thomas answered and said unto him, "My Lord and my God." John 20:24-29

### **John 21:1-24; I Corinthians 15:6; Matthew 28:16-20**

The apostles then went back to Galilee in accordance with Jesus' command, and in Galilee also Jesus appeared to them. First he appeared to seven of the disciples on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. Among the seven was John the son of Zebedee, who has given an account of the event in his Gospel. John 21:1-24. Then there was a great appearance of Jesus on a mountain. At that time, apparently, not only the eleven apostles were present, but also five hundred

other disciples. I Cor 15:6; Matt. 28:16-20. On the mountain Jesus instituted the sacrament of baptism, and gave his disciples the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations. The execution of that commission has sometimes been attended with discouragements. But the risen Lord promised always to be with his Church.

### **I Corinthians 15:7; Acts 1:1-11**

After the appearances in Galilee, the apostles returned to Jerusalem. It was no doubt in Jerusalem that Jesus appeared to James, his own brother, I Cor 15:7, who during the earthly ministry had not believed on him. Other appearances also occurred there. At one or more of these appearances Jesus

commanded the apostles to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit should come upon them. Then, said Jesus, they were to be witnesses of him “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Acts 1:8. Finally, forty days after the resurrection, Jesus led his disciples out to the Mount of Olives, on the way to Bethany, and there he was taken from them in a cloud into heaven. The disciples were saddened and bewildered by the departure of their Lord. But their sadness was soon turned to joy. “Two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven.” Acts 1:10,11 The disciples went then into the city, where they were constantly in the Temple, praising God.

### **Questions for Chapter 13**

1. Describe the burial of Jesus. How long did his body rest in tomb?
2. Enumerate the persons who saw the empty tomb.

3. Enumerate, so far as the facts are known, the persons who Jesus after the resurrection.
4. In what books of the New Testament are the facts about the resurrection mentioned?
5. What is the importance of the resurrection of Jesus for our Christian faith?
6. Describe the change which the resurrection produced in the early disciples of Jesus.

## **Chapter 14: The Beginnings of the Christian Church**

The Christian Church is founded on the fact of the resurrection of Jesus; if that fact had not occurred there would be no Church today. The disciples of Jesus of Nazareth were evidently far inferior to him in spiritual discernment and in courage. Evidently they could not hope to succeed if he had failed. And with his death what little strength they may have had before was utterly destroyed. In the hour of his trial they had deserted him in cowardly flight. And when he was taken from them by a shameful death, they were in despair. Never did a movement seem to be more hopelessly dead.

But then the surprising thing occurred. Those same weak, discouraged men began, in a few days, in Jerusalem, the very scene of their disgrace, a spiritual movement the like of which the world has never seen. What produced the wonderful change? What transformed those weak, discouraged men into the spiritual conquerors of the world?

The answer of those men themselves was plain. Their despair, they said, gave way to triumphant joy because the Lord Jesus had risen from the dead, and because they were convinced of his resurrection by the empty tomb and by the appearances of Jesus himself. No other real explanation has yet been discovered to account for the sudden transformation of the despair of the disciples into triumphant joy. The very existence of the Christian Church itself, therefore, is the strongest testimony to the resurrection; for without the resurrection the Church could never have come into being.

## **Acts 1:12-26**

After the ascension of Jesus, which was studied in the last lesson, the apostles returned to Jerusalem, and obeyed the command of Jesus by waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit. But the period of waiting was not a period of idleness; it was spent, on the contrary, in praising God and in prayer. One definite action was taken - the place of Judas, the traitor, who had killed himself in his remorse, was filled by the choice of Matthias. Acts 1:15-26. At that time, certain women and a number of other disciples were gathered together with the apostles, making a total of about one hundred and twenty persons. It was upon that little company of praying disciples, or rather upon the promise of Jesus which had been made to them, that the hope of the world was based.

## **Acts, Chapter 2**

At last, at the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the passover, the promise of Jesus was fulfilled; the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples to fit them for the evangelization of the world. Acts 2:1-13. They were all together in one place; there was a sound as of a rushing, mighty wind; cloven tongues, like tongues of fire, sat upon each one of them; they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance. When the crowd came together to see the wonderful thing that had happened, Peter preached the first sermon of the Christian Church. Vs. 14-36. At the preaching of Peter three thousand persons were converted; the campaign of world conquest had begun. Vs. 37-42.

The campaign from the beginning was a campaign of witnessing, in accordance with Jesus' command. Acts 1:8. The Christian Church was to conquer the world, not by exhorting men to live a certain kind of life, but by bringing them a piece of news. The Son of God, said the Christian missionaries, died on the cross and then rose again. That was the good news that conquered the world. Christianity from the beginning was a way of life, but it was a way of life founded upon a

piece of news, a way of life founded upon historical facts. The meaning of the facts was not revealed all at once, but it was revealed in part from the very beginning, and throughout the Apostolic Age the revelation came in greater and greater fullness, especially through the instrumentality of Paul.

The life of the Early Church in Jerusalem was in some respects like that of the Jews. The disciples continued to observe the Jewish fasts and feasts and were constantly in the Temple. But a new joy animated the company of believers. Their Lord was indeed taken from them for a time, and they did not know when he would return, but meanwhile he was present with them through his Spirit, and already he had saved them from their sins.

Even in external observances the believers were distinguishable from the rest of the Jews. Entrance into their company was marked by the sacrament of baptism, which signified the washing away of sin; and their continued fellowship with one another and with the risen Lord found expression in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which commemorated the atoning death of Jesus. There were also meals. And those who had property devoted it, in a purely voluntary way, to the needs of their poorer brethren. The disciples attended diligently, moreover, to the teaching of the apostles, and engaged constantly in prayer.

### **Acts, Chapter 3**

The preaching of the apostles in Jerusalem was authenticated by miracles. One notable miracle is narrated in detail in the book of The Acts. Ch. 3. As Peter and John were going up into the Temple at the hour of prayer, they healed a lame beggar, who was in the habit of sitting at the gate. The miracle was the means of bringing to the people something better than bodily healing; for when the crowd came together in wonder at the healing of the lame man, Peter proclaimed to them the good news of the salvation which Jesus had wrought.



## **Acts, Chapter 4**

The Sadducees, the ruling class, being incensed at such a proclamation, laid hands upon the two apostles, and brought them before the Sanhedrin. Acts 4:1-22. But even when Peter boldly announced to them that the name of that Jesus whom they had put to death was the only name which could bring salvation to men, they were unable to do more than warn the recalcitrant preachers. A notable miracle had been wrought, and they could not deny it. When Peter and John came again to the company of believers, all the company united in a glorious prayer of praise. The answer to the prayer was plainly given. "The place was shaken wherein they were gathered together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

## **Questions on Chapter 14**

1. Show how the Christian Church is founded upon the fact of the resurrection.
2. Describe the choice of Matthias.
3. Who were gathered together in the "upper room" in Jerusalem?
4. Describe the coming of the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.
5. Was the speaking with other tongues on the Day of Pentecost the same as the gift of tongues described in the First Epistle to the Corinthians? If not, what was the difference?
6. Why were the Sadducees opposed to the preaching of Peter and John?

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