

# **BIBLE STUDY**

## **The Life of Jesus Christ**

### **Practical Issues and the Passover**

#### **Study Section 8**



# Jesus Christ: Part 16

## Practical Issues

Having just described the characteristics of the true disciple, Jesus then proceeds to outline the practical aspects of the behaviour and the morality which spring from such a character. His teaching on this occasion is recorded in both Matthew and Luke. Continuing from his record of the Beatitudes, Luke covers it in chapter 6, verses 24-49. Once again, however, once again it is Matthew who provides the greatest amount of detail in chapters 5, 6 and 7.

We see that Jesus begins this teaching by using three striking metaphors to demonstrate that those who follow Him have a responsibility to convey His message to others in addition to living a life in Him.

### The Metaphors - Matthew 5:13-16

**“You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world;...a city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Matthew 5:13-14**

Salt gives flavour to food and, far more importantly, it preserves it from corruption. Such is the vocation of a true disciple. But this is possible only of a disciple who shows evidence of a true calling in Jesus. It would be the example of the disciple, or the follower, which will give authority to all attempts to deliver the message of Jesus. A call to repentance on behalf of Jesus is worse than valueless if there is no evidence of change within the person presenting that call. If we claim to be followers of Jesus Christ, but by our way of life and our conduct do not show that we are different by displaying the ideals of Christ in our lives our presentation of God's word will not guide others away from corruption. We will only bring shame upon the name of Jesus. Our power for harm will be greater than our power for good. Thus whilst true disciples of Jesus must mingle with the world, they must also rise above it. They are as lamps shining from a height spreading radiance far and wide. As a lamp illuminates the blackness, so they must seek out the dark environment where the Gospel of love can be preached. In the midst of evil, men must see and feel the contrast of their goodness.

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

These metaphors complement the Beatitudes, stressing that service before God rests in what we are, not in just what we do. Salt that is good inevitably produces a wholesome and saving influence. Light which is not hidden cannot do anything but dispel darkness. So disciples who show the qualities that Jesus has described become worthy of Jesus who sent them. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. It may be welcomed as a haven of rest by a weary traveller, or it may be avoided as a den of vice. But it cannot be hidden. A person who claims to be a follower of Christ cannot be ignored. He or she stands exposed to the public gaze for good or ill. In all ages, people will assess Christ, not so much by His precepts, but by the lives of men and women they see and know, who claim to be His followers.

### **Christ and the Law of Moses - Matthew 5:17-20**

Moses' law judged outward acts, but Christ's law judges the thoughts from which the acts sprang. The moral and spiritual standard of life was set out in the law. Many of those who heard Jesus thought that He spoke with an authority which set aside the law. But Jesus now reassured them in the clearest terms:

**“Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfil.” Matthew 5:17**

Moses' law called for punishment upon the sinner. It is in the mind that the seeds of sin are sown and developed. If they are rooted out, acts of sin do not find expression. It is to illustrate this principle that Jesus frequently contrasts His law with the Law of Moses. But the principles of behaviour involved in the Law of Moses remained intact. The Scribes and Pharisees observed the formality of the law. But by so doing they lacked any concept of righteousness and completely disregarded the condition of the heart. They were more concerned for their own honour and this would exclude them from the Kingdom in spite of all their formal observation and their declarations of belief in God. Jesus then went on to provide examples that would illustrate the spirit of the law in Moses which was to be applied to daily conduct.

### **Anger and Harboursing Wrath Forbidden - Matthew 5:21-26**

Moses' law judged the murderer. Jesus condemned anger which He saw as the cause of murder. If we are to be reconciled to God, we must have a desire to be reconciled with others. Jesus exhorts humility and submission where a fault is found in others. Pride and stubbornness could lead to more serious consequences and bring shame. (Compare Proverbs 6:1-5; 25:8)

---

## ***The Life of Jesus Christ***

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

### **Adultery - Matthew 5:27-32**

The very contemplation of adultery potentially leads to the act. To look is to lust, and to lust was to commit adultery in the heart. It is far better not to look. If lust persists, the only barrier to the desire to act is lack of opportunity, but in God's eyes, the desire amounts to the same thing. This principle applies to any act in which our faith and service before God are undermined. Eyes and hands combine to convert desires into deeds. Jesus' lesson is that sin can be avoided by a short sharp battle in the heart. A determined **"not wanted"** to evil thoughts wins the warfare against sin.

### **The Swearing of Oaths - Matthew 5:33-37**

If only those words spoken by oath were considered binding upon a person, what about words without an oath? Was a person in that event freed from his commitment? Of course not! To suggest that words with oaths are more binding than words without oaths is to set a double standard. It is far better for all of our words to be meaningful and binding. Oaths had come to be considered very lightly, and, therefore, God's very existence was held in question when undertakings were preceded by such oaths as, "as God liveth," were not performed. This was serious:

**"But let your statement be, yes, yes, or no, no; and anything beyond these is of evil." Matthew 5:37**

### **Non-Resistance - Matthew 5:38-42**

In Christ, the accent is upon the individual, not the nation or the state. The individual is a pilgrim and a traveller until Christ reappears to establish the Kingdom. In the meantime, He commands His followers' conduct toward others. Jesus counsels non-resistance. His follower is to be generous of heart to all who might ask, not necessarily giving exactly what is asked, but certainly giving what is needed. The object of non-resistance is to purge one's own bitterness, to take the initiative from the offender and win him to the higher principles of salvation.

### **The Law of Love - Matthew 5: 43-48**

Far from hating enemies, Jesus commands an opposite, positive action:

**"To love...bless...do good...pray..."**

---

## ***The Life of Jesus Christ***

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

This is action. This is the way in which right triumphs over evil. In so acting, Jesus' follower manifests the Father, who causes the sun to rise and sends His rain on the just and unjust. In this way God shows love for all "His" enemies, and desires their salvation. In so doing, He sets a pattern of conduct for His children. (Compare Romans 5:8-10; John 3:16)

If love is confined to the family circle, and those who love us, we are no different from unscrupulous Publicans. We then reflect no particular likeness to the Father. If we would be like Him, our love must be extended to all.

### **Hypocrisy - Matthew 6:1-18**

The word "alms" in verse 1 of the King James Version is more correctly rendered as "righteousness" in the modern translations. Our righteousness is not to be practiced as a show before others simply to gain honour and respect for ourselves. The Pharisees were very guilty of this. The examples which Jesus provides were common practices among them, as we learn from other references throughout the Gospels. He presents examples for His followers which were typical of the Pharisees' hypocrisy:

- **Public display in alms giving**
- **Praying in conspicuous places**
- **Counterfeit fasting**

In each case He denounces such religion, which is motivated by self-interest and self-acclaim, as being of no avail in attaining a reward of the Father. Such alms, prayers and fasts, were not expressions born of love for God, but for the good opinion of men.

They would receive the applause of those around them, but that is all they would get as a reward for their hypocrisy. It is impossible to serve God, if we are wholly preoccupied with gaining the esteem of others. (Compare Luke 16:15; Jude 16)

In the examples given, Jesus is obviously concerned about the place of prayer in the hearts of all who would follow Him. Already Jesus had taught His disciples this by example. It would be impossible for them to be unaware of His relationship with His Father. They saw an awareness of God and a dependence upon Him which had not been seen since the days of David. They had seen Jesus return to them from His sleepless nights on the distant hills, having spent a quiet solitude in communion with

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

His Father. He was thus prepared for the tasks of yet another day. He then gave them a pattern which true disciples to this day have treasured as the “Lord’s Prayer.”

This prayer and the application of it in our lives is a study in itself. In simple summary, it focused attention first upon God and His purpose, and then turned to the needs of the one approaching Him. Request for temporal blessings is limited to immediate necessities. It concentrates more on the needs of the heart - - - forgiveness and the strength of spirit to forgive, an appeal for deliverance from temptation, and a final declaration of eternal power and glory to God.

### **Faith and the True Riches - Matthew 6:19-31**

True worship has been contrasted with hypocrisy, and now true treasure is contrasted with greed. Hypocrisy and greed are twin perils opposing the pursuit of righteousness. The righteousness of hypocrites is hollow, and so are their riches. Such riches are symbols of this world which will perish with those who set their heart in it. The heart will turn as surely as the needle of a compass to what we truly value.

Jesus sums up His instructions against anxiety over riches by declaring that if God is master, He can be trusted to supply all needs. Live each day in Him without worry about the next. There are sufficient temptations to be overcome in any one day, that we don’t have time to worry about the next day.

### **Judgment - Matthew 7:1-5**

Jesus presents a vivid picture of a man, all but blinded by an obstruction in his eye. He is absorbed with the task of removing the smallest splinter from his brother’s eye. Such a comparison becomes the key to understanding of Jesus’ parable regarding the Pharisee and the Publican or Tax Gatherer. (Luke 18:9-14) The picture of this man with a log sticking out of his eye while complaining about a speck in another person’s eye, might provoke a smile, but it is vivid enough that the lesson it provides should not be forgotten:

**“For in the way you judge, you will be judged...” Matthew 7:2**

There can be no greater discouragement to the tendency to pass judgment upon others than this realization. Those who are too conscious of their own virtues, and too obsessed with the failings of others, tend to be fault finding and intolerant. (Compare

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

2 Peter 1:9; Romans 2:3; Romans 14:1-4; 1 Cor. 4:3-5) A true understanding of this takes us back to the 5<sup>th</sup> Beatitude:

**“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy”  
Matthew 5:7**

### **Rejection of Jesus - Matthew 7:6**

Sadly, some individuals will never appreciate the salvation and hope that is offered to them through Jesus Christ. The disciples were, therefore, given advice that prevails unto this day. They were not to try to force salvation upon the unwilling and resentful. (Compare 2 Peter 2:20-22)

### **The Heavenly Father’s Gift - A Child’s Response - Matt. 7:7-12**

The disciple, or follower of Jesus, is encouraged to persist in approaching God in prayer, to ask, to seek, and to knock. If being persistent prevails even over evil men, says Jesus, then:

**“...How much more shall your Father who is in Heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” Matthew 7:11**

Human stubbornness can be worn down. This should make us realise that our gracious and loving Heavenly Father is much more ready to respond to our pleas. (Compare James 1:5-7; Matthew 15:21-28; Luke 11:5-13) Our response to our Father’s gracious care and concern, says Jesus, should be the application of what we know as the “Golden Rule”:

**“Therefore, however you want people to treat you, so treat them...” Matthew 7:12**

This is the essential message of the law and the prophets. Jesus provides instructions for His followers to present a life style that reflects the honour of His name, and His Father’s name. In considering this, we do well to remember the direction He provides in Matthew 6:14-15; and the two great commandments that Matthew records in chapter 22, verses 37-40.

On this note Jesus completed the description of the principles of the Kingdom He had come to proclaim. He had shown the 12 (and all others who listened) the blessings

---

## ***The Life of Jesus Christ***

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

that were associated with it both in this life and in that which is to come. He had set forth the price that it demanded of them in self-control, humility and self-sacrifice. For this very reason the great mass of people would find it unattractive and would prefer selfish pleasures and temporary rewards. Only the few would walk the narrow path of life and accept the invitation to enter the Kingdom at the narrow gate.

In concluding His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds His listeners of the two alternatives that are open to all those who hear His words. A final message regarding the two alternatives is provided in the Parable of the two builders.

### **Two Ways - Matthew 7:13, 14**

Like Moses, Jesus sets before His disciples two ways and the fact that they would have to make a choice. In this He provides an echo of the vivid description Moses provided regarding these choices. (Deut. 30:15-20) **God's Word establishes that there is no middle path, and that the correct way has not been popular among mankind.**

### **Two Trees - Matthew 7:15-20**

Jesus then offered His disciples sound advice to guide them in discerning between true and false Religious Leaders. This guidance was valid in the first century. It is equally valid today. Jesus states that two classes of men would offer their services. To discern the true from the deceitful, the disciple would have to examine the fruit of both, for like a tree, the fruit is true to its kind. (Gen. 1:12) Fruit is seen in words and works. If the words were not in accordance with God's word, and their works were not modelled after the example of Christ, they could safely be rejected. (Compare Isaiah 8:20; 1 Peter 2:21)

Many would claim to follow Jesus and claim that they spoke and acted on His behalf, but in so doing they would practice lawlessness. In the coming of His Father's Kingdom, Jesus will cast such individuals away, declaring that "He never knew them."

### **Two Builders - Matthew 7:24-27**

The word divides humanity into the wise and into the foolish. Those who absorb the word and act upon it are building upon a solid foundation:

---

*The Life of Jesus Christ*

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

**“For no one can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” 1 Cor. 3:11**

Anyone who hears Jesus’ words and rejects them will fall in the time of storm and in the time of judgment. (Compare 2 Tim. 2:15)

### **LESSON FOR US**

In outlining the morality of the Kingdom, Jesus specified the qualities that will characterize those who through grace are accepted into His Father’s Kingdom. At the same time He makes it clear that He will be the judge of all who seek to enter the Kingdom.

As we become familiar with Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, and come to know and love its passages, our association with it demands an answer which will determine our position in the day when the law-giver and the mediator assumes the role of judge. Are we doers of the word?

As we look to our own lives in answer to that question, we are urged to consider Jesus’ own words regarding His judgment. He compares the two classes that will stand before Him when He comes in His glory to assume the glorious throne. Matthew records Jesus’ statement regarding that day. (Matthew 25:31-46)

If we apply the lessons of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount to our lives, and follow His instructions regarding seeking salvation in Him, we can live in hope of hearing Him declare a further and final blessing upon us:

**“...Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”  
Matthew 25:34**

### **Test Yourself**

1. What did Jesus mean when he said: **“You are the salt of the earth”**
2. What did Jesus mean when he said: **“in the way you judge, you will be judged”**
3. Why do some people find it hard to accept the principles that Jesus taught?

# Jesus Christ: Part 17

## The Second Passover

In our studies we will now go back in time a little and pick up the record from John's Gospel, which has been silent on the events in Jesus' life since the second miracle in Cana was performed. He had healed the son of the Royal Official who came from Capernaum to make his appeal to Jesus. Beginning in chapter 5, John now describes the events of a visit to Jerusalem to celebrate a feast of the Jews. This was probably the Passover, and was, therefore, the second of the four Passovers at Jerusalem that Christ attended during His ministry. (Compare John 2:13; 6:4; 13:1) It is interesting to note that following this visit to Jerusalem and the Temple, John excludes all other events in Jesus' life until the third Passover. During His first Passover visit, Jesus had cleansed the Temple of its traders. The gap between Jesus and the Jews of Jerusalem had widened as time passed and they viewed Him with growing hatred. The event that took place during this second Passover visit drove the wedge of division even more deeply between them, thus they sought His death even more. (John 5:18)

John is the only Gospel writer to record the details of this 2<sup>nd</sup> Passover visit to Jerusalem, which occurred prior to the Sermon on the Mount near Capernaum. This selective recording of events by John relates to the fact that he is providing a series of records regarding eight specific and special miracles. These miracles were far more significant than mere displays of Divine power, but were incidents that taught profound Spiritual lessons. For this reason John always used a Greek word meaning "sign" when referring to them. Thus when studying any of these signs recorded by John, we should always be looking for the very deep meaning associated with them as they relate to salvation and the Word of Light which Jesus was declaring.

So once again, Jesus approached the Temple at the time of Passover. We can picture the Temple glittering in the sunshine, the Rabbis inside teaching endless arguments or theories regarding God's Word, based on the Greek process of reasoning and philosophy. The Priests impersonally accepted the offerings and sacrifices. The Sadducees received one another with formal dignity. But God was not in their thoughts, and His Glory had departed from their midst, as was revealed in all their encounters with the Son of God.

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

### **Bethesda - John 5:2**

John immediately begins to describe the event which served as the focal point of Jesus' activity at the Temple and His subsequent confrontation with the Jewish leaders.

Now Bethesda means "house of mercy" and it was located near the Sheep Gate, through which animals for sacrifice were brought into the Temple area. It had 5 porches. In Scripture, the number 5 represents grace or mercy. (Compare Genesis 43:34; 45:22) Every point associated with Bethesda was designed to remind us of the love of God, His desire to extend mercy, and His desire to heal dying mankind.

### **The Tradition - John 5:3, 4**

Bethesda was truly a tragic scene, its five porches contained a great multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame and emaciated. It is symbolic that in the house of mercy was found a true reflection of mankind, all of whom come inevitably to the weakness of decay and death.

The newer translations of the Bible indicate that all of the words from "waiting" in verse 3 to the end of verse 4 are additions to some manuscripts. They are missing in a number of the original ancient manuscripts. Some manuscript scholars regard these words as early additions to the text, inserted to enlarge upon the statement in verse 7, and to give a supernatural explanation of what was a natural phenomena. Others consider that the words should stand. Some translations of the Bible to resolve this matter insert "it was said" in verse 4, thus designating it as a tradition that had grown up among the people. Whatever the case, the pool does appear to have been an intermittent spring containing medicinal properties which were most effective after a movement of the water.

Extensive debate over whether or not this was merely a tradition, or was, indeed, some form of miraculous activity in the part of an Angel of God, dilutes the significance of what John is endeavouring to present in recording this sign of Jesus. It is this sign to which our attention should be directed.

### **Healing the Man with an Infirmary- John 5:5-9**

In the presentation of these signs, which might almost be considered enacted parables, the various points that John mentions should be looked at for possible significance.

## Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8

---

Both the location and the man healed are significant. He is described as a man “who had an infirmity thirty–eight years.” The reference to such a specific age as 38 immediately provides us with an echo from the Old Testament. In the second year of their exodus from Egypt, the nation of Israel was condemned to wander for a total of 40 years in the wilderness. (Numbers 14:33,34) This meant that they were to wander another 38 years. (Deut. 2:14) So the crippled man was a symbol for the nation of Israel.

It was part of Israel’s history that Joshua, not Moses, led Israel into its inheritance in the land. Moses failed to honour God at one point before the people, and was condemned to die in sight of the land, but outside of it. (Deut. 32:48-52; 34:4, 5) Israel, having lost its leader, was unable to enter the land until God in His mercy, gave them another leader, Joshua, or as Anglicised from the Greek, “Jesus.” (Compare Acts 7:45; Hebrews 4:8)

Now the centuries had rolled by. A man lay helpless beside a pool which represented God’s desire to help him. Those claiming authority from Moses were more intent on honouring themselves than following the humble example of Moses. They couldn’t help the man and he could not help himself. If help was to come, it would have to come from a Joshua (Jesus). The infirm man was, in fact, seen to be the very embodiment of the nation of Israel in its present despair. He was not absolutely helpless, but was able to crawl slowly and painfully toward the pool when its waters bubbled, but he was always too late. Jesus came to him, and observing his condition, asked him:” **Do you wish to get well?” (John 5:6)**

In the Lord’s view, there must be first a desire to be made whole before we can be healed. The cripple replied, saying in effect that he was unable to help himself. He acknowledged that if he was going to be healed, it would have to be because of the strength of another. At once the command was given: “**...Arise, take up your pallet, and walk” John 5:8** and immediately the man became well, took up his pallet and began to walk. This was an act of obedience performed in faith, which is the basic requirement for salvation. Salvation for us only comes after an acknowledgment of sin and realising that we cannot save ourselves from the results of sin. We must be led out of this state through Jesus.

Israel, imprisoned for 38 years in the wilderness, had exchanged weariness for rest in the Promised Land. The infirm man, whose “bed” was toil for 38 years, now gained “rest” from his burden. So we see both Israel and the man being led to freedom by a Joshua or Jesus.

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

This act was performed in the house of mercy at the Temple. Under the Mosaic Law animals were sacrificed as part of the ritual regarding forgiveness of sin. Jesus, who became the ultimate sacrifice, performed this sign near the Sheep Gate, through which countless animals had been brought into the Temple area for sacrifice. The pool and its healing powers might well be a figure of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament. The five porches suggest immediately the five books of the Law.

The significance of this “sign” can be directly related to the only way in which God’s children were going to escape the darkness of sin which had settled over their nation. It foreshadows the only way in which the faithful can escape from the darkness of sin.

### **The Sabbath - John 5:10-16**

The city was thronged with people at the time and Jesus slipped away into the multitude. (John 5:13) The man then went on his way carrying his bed but did not get far because the Jews stopped him and charged him with violating the law of the Sabbath. He responded that he had been commanded to do so by the One who had cured him, but whose identity was unknown to him. Again this is significant in symbolising the Jewish people did not know their Messiah when He came to them.

The cured man went his way to the Temple, where Jesus once again found him, and warned him against further sin:

**“...Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse may befall you.” John 5:14**

Now Jesus knows that we will sin following our acceptance of Him, but in this instance was in effect reminding the man that disease was in the world because of sin and warning him of the need to turn away from sin. We must therefore also recognise the symbolic reference in His words.

The man then went joyfully to the Jewish rulers identifying the One who had performed this great wonder. He was probably shocked to see that they turned on Jesus, persecuting Him and seeking His death. (John 5:16-18) Their initial complaint was that He had performed this work on the Sabbath day. Israel had been told to remember to keep the Sabbath day as Holy. (Exodus 20:10) On this day, they were to desist from pursuing selfish activities. (Exodus 35:2,3; Compare Jeremiah 17:21, 22)

## **Practical Issues/ Passover      Study Section 8**

---

But their view of keeping the Sabbath had become distorted and bound by many traditions which Jesus Himself condemned as hypocritical. (Mark 7:8-13) In making this condemnation, Jesus drew upon an echo from the Prophet Isaiah. (29:13) Mark quoted this echo:

**“This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men” Mark 7:6, 7**

Jesus indictment was that they had so perverted the worship of His Father that they completely missed the idea that God wanted to teach. On that particular day at the Temple, therefore, all they could see on the Sabbath was a man carrying a bed. Their prejudice blinded them to the miracle of healing, and all that it meant in the coming of the Messiah.

If the Jewish leaders had really considered the matter, they would have understood that the spirit of the Sabbath law related to whether one's works were God-centred or self-centred. The Law was not aimed at stopping all labour, only that which was designed for self-satisfaction. This pointed forward to a time when men would find rest in God.

Paul in the letter to the Hebrews, elaborated on this meaning of the Sabbath rest and its foreshadowing that had been provided by the law. (Hebrews 4:4-11) He compared the 1,000 year reign of Christ to a Sabbath rest. He taught that the Sabbath law was not given to teach that we should be selfish 6 days, and selfless one day each week. It was given to teach us that we should continually turn away from what is selfish and seek our comfort in God. To all those labouring and heavy laden, Christ promised “rest” if they would but come to Him. To take up His yoke, as one does by baptism and by a consecrated life, is to find “rest unto our souls.” This is the significance of the Sabbath law (Compare Matthew 11:28-30).

### **A Charge of Blasphemy - John 5:18-30**

People blinded by self-interest, as these Jews were, are unable to accept instructions let alone reproof. Jesus' words stirred no spark of repentance in them, only a deep and implacable hatred. In talking with them, Jesus had said that God was His Father. In their minds, this made Him equal with God and that was blasphemy. In their blindness the significance as such Scriptures as Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 9:6 probably never occurred to them.

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

Although Jesus was the Son of God, and was endowed with all of His Father's power, and thus manifested His presence to the world, Jesus could not leave unchallenged the statement of these corrupt men that He was claiming to be equal with God. His respect for His Father's position and glory was too great to permit this. In the ensuing discourse with these men Jesus provided enough statements to make it clear that He made no claims to this position:

- **Verse 19: "...The Son can do nothing of himself, unless it is something he sees the Father doing;..."**
- **Verse 20: "...The Father...shows Him all things that He Himself is doing;"**
- **Verse 22: "...The Father...has given all judgment to the Son"**
- **Verse 23: "...The Father, who sent Him."**
- **Verses 26, 27: "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself; And He gave Him authority to execute judgment..."**
- **Verse 30: "I can do nothing on my own initiative...I do not seek my own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."**
- **Verse 36: "...The Father has sent Me"**
- **Verse 37: "...The Father who sent Me..."**

All of these expressions, either explicitly, or by clear implication, deny that the Son is co-equal with His Father. Instead they assert His constant and complete dependence upon the Father. This teaching is maintained throughout the New Testament.

Over 300 years later, in the fourth century, Religious leaders once again claimed that Christ was co-equal with God, and was in fact God. Out of their reasoning came the concept that God was a trinity, a concept that has been proclaimed by millions throughout the centuries since that time. Yet even the Church leaders who proclaim it, if tracing the history of the concept of the Trinity acknowledge that it is not a biblical doctrine.

## **Practical Issues/ Passover      Study Section 8**

---

The Encyclopaedia International states that the Trinity did not form part of the Apostles' preaching, as it was recorded in the New Testament. The word "trinity" is not found in the Bible. Mosheim, in "The History of the Church," and, Gibbon, in "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," both acknowledge this. One edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica states: "The propositions constitutive of the dogma of the trinity were not drawn directly from the New Testament, and could not be expressed in New Testament terms. They were the products of reason, speculating on a revelation to faith...they were only formed through centuries of effort, only elaborated by the aid of the conceptions and formulated in the terms of Greek and Roman Metaphysics."

The word was first used in a work by Bishop Theophilus of Syria, in the latter half of the second century. In coining the word, however, he did not relate it to a co-equality of Christ, but rather a theory regarding the attributes of God. To clarify this, he stated expressly, "the true God (that is the Father) is alone to be worshipped."

It was not until the fourth century, that the doctrine of the trinity as we know it today was actually introduced. It caused heated controversy at the time, for many still adhered to the teaching of the one God. Gradually the new doctrine prevailed, and ultimately became accepted as basic Christian teaching. Throughout that period, and in subsequent years, many theologians were frank enough to admit that the doctrine is not taught in the Bible, and that it cannot be logically explained. They acknowledge that the teaching is incomprehensible, and that inherently it provides a contradiction in terms relative to God, His Spirit and Christ.

One theologian in defending the Holy Trinity, as a doctrine, and in tracing its roots, acknowledged that the faith and belief of Christians in the first century was summed up by Paul when he wrote "there is one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in you all." (Ephesians 4:6) This Professor of Theology, (F.J. Wilkin, M.A., D.D.,) further states that "gradually some addition or modification of this Creed was found necessary."

Through philosophy and reasoning some Church leaders had slowly developed the concept that Jesus Christ was God and, later on, that the Holy Spirit was God. They were compelled to relate these convictions to their belief in the unity of God. He states that during many years, the problem was discussed and many explanations were attempted. One advanced by Sabellius, that became popular, was that Christ and the Holy Spirit were successive manifestations of the Supreme Being. Finally, however, the belief prevailed that the words Father, Son, Spirit, declared eternal distinctions of the God-Head - - - in other words, that Christ and the Holy Spirit were co-eternal and

---

***The Life of Jesus Christ***

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

co-equal with the Father. Thus was born a new doctrine based on humanist concept and popular acceptance. While not found in the Bible, it is perhaps worth considering that the concept of the Trinity is found in the Pagan Mythology of Rome, Greece, Babylon and Egypt.

Even if one does not accept the concept of the “Holy Trinity,” considering that it is unscriptural, we must never make the mistake of viewing Jesus as nothing more than a mere man. There has to be something more than “mere man” in One who could, under such provocations as He endured, exhibit the wonderful restraint, the beautiful character and the sinless life that the Lord revealed. That “something more” is revealed in the manner of His birth, and in the way in which He was anointed with the Holy Spirit “without measure.” (John 3:34) **Jesus is truly the Son of God.** Paul taught that “God was in Christ” reconciling the world unto Himself. (2 Cor. 5:19) Jesus was, indeed, the manifestation of God, His Father, as Jesus Himself testified. (John 7:16; 5:23)

In His human nature Jesus was the same as all mankind, but in the manner of His birth and character He was Divine. (Hebrews 4:14-16) Jesus Christ is, indeed, the Son of God, and anyone who denies His Divine origins and His position as the One in whom God has vested His own authority, power and judgment, does so at his own peril:

**“For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.” John 6:40**

### **Five Witnesses - John 5:30-47**

To secure conviction against a man, as the Jews desired to convict and kill Jesus, required “two or three witnesses.” (Deut. 19:15) Just as there were five porches at Bethesda (the house of mercy), so there were five witnesses testifying to the mercy that God was extending through His Son to all who would come. Jesus proceeds to outline the witnesses of His authority before His accusers in the Temple. They were:

- **John the Baptist, whom they had consulted, and who told them of Christ.**
- **The works, or the miracles, that Jesus was doing and would yet do - a man cannot do miracles except by the Father’s power.**

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

- **The Father Himself, whose voice from Heaven had testified of Him. (Compare Matthew 3:17)**
- **The Scriptures as a whole, which bore testimony concerning Him.**
- **Finally, Moses, on whom the Jews relied for authority, who had written concerning the Son. (Compare Deut. 18:18, 19)**

As Jesus explained it, He Himself, could do nothing on His own initiative. (verse 30) One must abandon the quest for one's own glory and seek for the glory of God. This requires a man to humble himself under God's mighty hand. (verse 41, 42)

There was on the part of the Jews, as Jesus explained it, a hard-hearted rejection of the humbling power of God's Word. Their sin was their love of the praise of men above the praise of God. Because of this, the Divine attitude, outgoing and selfless, was lost to them and thus as a result they rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Yet Jesus said:

**“Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; ...” John 5:45**

He did not need to accuse them. Moses and the law had already done so.

### **LESSON FOR US**

A powerful warning is found in the final words of this Passover visit recorded by John:

**“For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me...” John 5:46**

From this we learn that it is possible to study God's Word, but not be moved by it personally. In the world today, we see signs, such as Israel's revival, reminiscent in some ways of the healing of the impotent man. As we look to this and all the other signs prevalent in world conditions, there is a danger that we might harden our hearts, and be as unmoved as the Jews were at the hand of God in their midst.

Like the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda, we must readily acknowledge that we can do nothing to heal ourselves, and we must turn in loving obedience to the mighty

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

God of Israel, by whose power we will be delivered in due time through Jesus Christ our Lord:

**“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day.” John 12:48**

### **Test Yourself**

1. Which Gospel writer records the event that took place at the second Passover.
2. Describe the significance of the healing of the infirm man by Jesus
3. Briefly describe the relationship between God and Jesus Christ?

# Jesus Christ: Part 18

## Parables of the Seed

Not too long after Jesus had presented the Sermon on the Mount, He began to make much greater use of Parables as a form of teaching. This method of teaching by using parables was quite familiar to the Jews who were instructed by the Rabbis in this manner.

In this study we will digress from the record of the events during Jesus' ministry, and address in particular a group of Parables that Jesus delivered on one occasion by the Sea of Galilee. Mark states that a very great multitude had gathered to Jesus as He was preaching by the sea. This crowd was so large that He got into a boat, and preached to them who remained on the land. Mark then says:

**“...He was teaching them many things in Parables...”**

Matthew in particular, gives details of the Parables spoken by Jesus on that day. Some were given on the boat, and three were given to the Disciples when Jesus had sent the people away and returned to His house.

All of the Parables recorded in the 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew are Parables of the Kingdom. They were a vindication of words spoken to the Scribes earlier that day when Jesus had stated to them “...the Kingdom of God has come upon you.” (Matthew 12:28)

A Parable is a comparison, or a simile, specifically described as a short narrative making a moral or religious point by comparison with other things. By presenting a lesson in this manner, it is easier to comprehend because of the example provided by the comparison, and is easier to remember because of the narrative form in which it is presented.

Whenever studying the Parables of Christ, we should remember that it is the lesson we are looking for. **The story from which the lesson is drawn is not presented as a factual record and should not be regarded as such.**

## Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8

---

Quite often Parables can be identified as such by the manner in which Jesus introduces them. He began His remarks with phrases such as “there was a certain town,” or “there was a certain man.” We find an example of this in Luke, chapter 16, where Jesus presented two Parables that were designed to provide lessons regarding the love of money, a characteristic which the Pharisees manifested. (Luke 16:14) Thus, Jesus presented the Parables of the rich man and his steward and the rich man and Lazarus. He introduced both of them with the phrase “there was a certain rich man.” (Luke 16:1, 19) Another introduction common to many Parables was, “the Kingdom of God is like,” a man, a mustard seed, etc. (Examples: Mark 4:26, 30, 31)

On frequent occasions Jesus’ Disciples asked Him to explain the Parables later on. (Example: Mark 4:10) He then taught them the message that was intended to be understood from the Parable, as well as the significance of the individual components in the Parable. (Example: Mark 4: 14-20) Jesus also provided His Disciples with an explanation regarding His use of Parables:

**“...To you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God; but those who are outside get everything in Parables, in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven.” Mark 4:11, 12**

It is important to notice that this inability to see and understand is confined by the Lord to “them that are without.” Those gathering around Jesus at that time, while He was preaching, were sharply divided between those who were His Disciples, or sympathetic hearers, and those who were His implacable enemies. His Parables would have a very different effect upon these two classes. Those who desired to be instructed regarding the Kingdom would receive the Parables thoughtfully. If they found anything too difficult, they would seek Jesus out and request an explanation. Thus they would gradually learn, in a way that they could never forget, the mysteries of the Kingdom.

But in the heart of His enemies there was no such desire. Their careful attention was only with the intent of laying hold of some word by which they could condemn Him. They saw and they heard, but their failure to perceive and understand was the result of their deliberate blindness and hardness of heart.

In this study, we have chosen to specifically address the Parables of the Sower, Seeds and Leaven which Jesus presented by the Sea of Galilee on the day recorded in Matthew, chapter 13. These have been selected because they relate so directly to

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

lessons regarding the word that Jesus was preaching at that time. In this regard the Parable of the Sower is especially significant. In particular, about this Parable, Jesus said to His Disciples:

**“...Do you not understand this Parable? And how will you understand all the Parables?” Mark 4:13**

It contains an important key to unlock all the Parables. It is based on the first and greatest of all the commandments, (Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:36-38), in that it deals with what men think, feel and do about God and His Word.

### **The Sower - Matthew 13:3-23**

In Israel, the farmer sowing his seed took his bag of grain, slung by a strap from his shoulder, and walked up and down his field, scattering handfuls of seed as he went. Where the seed fell, it stayed. Its final fate depended upon the quality of the soil where it fell. The sower, of course, represents Jesus Christ, the Son of Man. (Matthew 13:37) In relating to Jesus as the sower, we realise that He is God's Great Son and Prophet. In order to draw maximum personal benefit out of this Parable, we are well advised, when prayerfully reading it, to picture the position of the One whom this sower represents. As we think of Jesus, spreading the word to His listeners and to us, think of the words with which the writer to the Hebrews describes Him in introducing his letter. (Hebrews 1:1-4)

### **Soil Conditions**

This has even greater impact when we realise that the seed sown is the Word of God. (Luke 8:11), and that the four soil conditions are four types of people who react in different ways to the Word of God.

1. **The Path:** The roadway or path was trodden hard, as some people's minds are by sinful thoughts and ways. They hear the word of the Kingdom, but it is immediately forgotten as the things of the world drive it from their minds. It is as if birds came and devoured the word before they could absorb it. No emotional spark is kindled by the seed on the path. The failure is in the intellect.
2. **The Stony Places:** An inch or two of earth on a rock base fosters quick growth while moisture exists, but nothing can endure there. Hearers of God's Word can be shallow people in the same manner. Swayed by excitement or emotion,

---

## ***The Life of Jesus Christ***

## Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8

---

they say they understand the truth of the Word, but they embrace an illusion. They do not understand what they hear, accepting it in the emotional excitement of the moment. Lacking inward resolve, they are soon offended and fall away. (Matthew 13:20, 21) Their failure is one of emotion.

- 3. The Thorns:** Weeds such as thorns grow prolifically, outpacing food crops with ease. In the same manner, life's cares, ambition and greed can swamp everything and submerge all other thoughts. Individuals like this have understood the truth of Jesus' Words, and an emotional response has been kindled in them. Their energy is channelled into worldly ways, however, and they do not produce fruit. It is important to get priorities right. Wheat matters. Weeds don't matter. In this case, the Heavenly Father, His Son and the Gospels are left to fit in any room in their lives that is left over when the things of the world have been satisfied. (Compare Matthew 6:24-34) In the example of the thorns, the failure has to do with action.
- 4. Good Ground:** This is distinguished from the other three by its complete fruitfulness. Such a person hears the Word, understands and accepts it joyfully with a full commitment and brings forth fruit in the service of the Lord. Thoughts, feelings, actions, are all given in God's service. Only one kind of soil will produce the necessary fruit. **Jesus wanted His listeners to know that the decision regarding what kind of soil they would be rests with them personally.**

Jesus then proceeded to deliver further Parables providing different lessons relating to the sower, the seed and the soil.

### **Wheat and Tares - Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43**

In this Parable, it is not the soil, but the seed sown that holds the lesson. Jesus is the sower of the good seed, "the field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom" (Matt 14:38) His ministry over, Jesus ascended to His Father, leaving the care of His fields, (the world), in the hands of His servants, the Apostles and subsequent Disciples, from that time until now.

The seed of the Word had been sown in honest hearts and brought forth growth. The wheat class 'the children of the kingdom' were to be in the world, but not of it. Their manner of life and spiritual growth, was to be based on `...whatsoever things are true...honest...just...pure...lovely...of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.'

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

(Philippians 4:8-9) These bring forth "...fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:22-23)

The tares are a very different natural species. Jesus said of the class represented by the tares, they 'are the children of the wicked (one).' That seed is sown by the devil (v 39) and refers to the many forms of wickedness described in the Scriptures. The tares are "...lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, un-thankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, (without self-control) fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God." (2 Timothy 3:2-4)

In the parable Jesus uses the phrase 'while men slept' (v25) that is during the night whilst the Lord is absent. The phrase conveys that there will be individuals who instead of being guardians of the Word, have been spiritually 'asleep' or 'unaware' of the growth of false doctrine or practice in the field of Christianity. Throughout the years, tares, or weeds, became mixed in with the good seed. Both the wheat and the tares share in the good things that God provides, but the wheat class brings forth good fruit through faith, the tare class are as weeds hindering the growth of the wheat.

Tares and wheat appear identical at first sight. However, a closer examination shows that the tares are coarse by comparison, and lack fruit. Wheat is full of grain, but tares have only a few grains in a large mature ear. They are valueless, simply cluttering the ground, and poisonous. Their seed, if mixed with wheat flour and eaten, can cause nausea, convulsions, even death.

The tares were to be allowed to grow until the harvest (v30) lest the young wheat still tender and immature also be uprooted before they are strong enough. Over the centuries since Christ left, the 'children of the kingdom' have been subjected the enmity of those who hinder spiritual growth, by undermining faith and by attacking true spiritual values. This situation is designed by God to test faith, develop resistance to evil and teach that the righteous must put their trust in Him. Only by the process will the wheat become strong and bear 'fruit unto holiness'.

Then when the time of the harvest comes at the end of the age (v39) Jesus will return in the full power of His Father. The tare class of people will be uprooted:

"The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness" (v41)

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

At His second coming, Christ, possessing infallible judgment will distinguish tares from wheat and will destroy them. In contrast, as the wheat was gathered into the barn, the righteous will be received into God's Kingdom. Thus Jesus concludes His explanation of this parable by saying:

“Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

### **The Mustard Seed - Matthew 13: 31, 32**

The astonishing thing about the mustard seed is that it produces a plant that is vastly out of proportion to its own size. It is a very tiny seed, but the plant grows to a height of 8 or 10 feet. Its branches are filled with seeds to which birds flock for food.

The mustard seed, because of its small beginning and its final glory, very appropriately illustrates the call of the Gospel.

Out of the small beginning made by the preaching of the Gospel, great things would emerge. In the Kingdom, Christ and the family of Saints will distribute to the world the seed of salvation. The Parable illustrates this by referring to the birds of the air, an emblem of nations, coming and lodging in the tree. (Echo - Daniel 4:12),

Jesus, “despised and rejected of men,” (Isaiah 53:3), “the Apostles...as men condemned to death,” (1 Cor. 4:9), the Disciples, each required to “deny himself, and take up his cross,” (Matthew 16:24), all provided a small beginning.

But, the world will be astonished when all these appear in glory as rulers and teachers (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 19:27-30; James 2:5).

### **Leaven - Matthew 13:33**

The leaven used in Christ's day was a piece of dough left over from the last baking day and allowed to go sour. Leaven has two major qualities. It corrupts and it penetrates. Its power to corrupt makes it a fit symbol for “malice and wickedness.” (1 Cor. 5:8) But in this Parable, the main emphasis is upon its power to penetrate and subdue a mass much larger than itself.

Three measures of meal was a usual quantity in baking. (Genesis 18:6; Judges 6:19; 1Sam. 1:24) Into this sizable mass, a fragment of leaven was needed. It was so

## **Practical Issues/ Passover Study Section 8**

---

insignificant that it just seemed to disappear. Yet it had soon leavened the whole batch. Small as it was, the influence spread irresistibly.

When Christ returns, the Gospel and the Kingdom will spread likewise all over the world. (Isaiah 2:2-4) The Kingdom, which is now only a promise, will then absorb all nations into itself. (Daniel 2:35, 44)

### **LESSONS FOR US**

We can all produce fruit unto God by following the lessons that Jesus provided in these Parables. The seed sown will inevitably secure the destiny marked out for it.

**“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth, and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; So shall my word be which goes forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it”  
Isaiah 55:10, 11**

**Note:** The Bible student is encouraged to find a scientific proof of the Bible in verse 10.

**Clue:** The principle of evaporation was not known in the time of Isaiah.

### **Test Yourself**

1. Why did Jesus speak to the people in parables?
2. Briefly discuss the meaning behind the ‘Parable of the Sower’.
3. What does the example of the mustard seed teach about the Kingdom of God?