



THRU the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

LUKE

BIBLE COMPANION



GOSPEL

READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the Gospel of Luke heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



Begin with prayer. Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



As you study, read the Bible passage first. Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to TTB.org/Luke (or any book of the Bible). The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion. Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING...

COLOSSIANS 3:16^A

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LESSON 1

ANGELS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 1**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 1:1-4**, **Luke 1:5-35**, and **Luke 1:36-80**

Heaven has been silent for over four hundred years.

Then one day, in the holiest place on earth, an angel broke through the distance and surprised a man praying in the temple in Jerusalem. He came to announce that God had heard his prayer.

Thus begins Luke's Gospel, a narrative of eyewitnesses—people who saw for themselves Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Luke, a physician, said he examined all the reports in close detail and wrote to give us confidence in what we believe about the Lord Jesus Christ.

AN ANGEL ANNOUNCES THE NEWS

Chronologically, Dr. Luke begins with the birth of John the Baptist. That was the angel Gabriel who appeared to John's father as he served in the temple. John's parents were Zacharias, meaning "God remembers," and Elizabeth, meaning "His oath." Together their names mean "God remembers His oath." God promised an oath to David that one of his descendants would have an eternal throne. Jesus Christ is that descendant.

Both Zacharias and Elizabeth were righteous—that is, they were right with God. However, for a lifetime they had longed for a child. To be childless was a disgrace for a Hebrew woman.

As Zacharias served in the temple, one night he stood alone at the golden altar, offering evening prayers. Suddenly, Gabriel the angel stood there with him.

If you saw an angel, your reaction might be the same as Zacharias'—he was terrified. Gabriel told him, *“Don't be afraid. God has heard your prayer. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a son and you will call his name John.”*

Then Gabriel filled in more details. This son was to be a Nazarite. He would not drink wine but find his joy in the Holy Spirit and in God. God's Spirit will give him, as He gives us, the strength to face life. Gabriel also described John as having great stature with God and in his spirit and power he would be like Elijah. John will turn father's hearts to their children and bridge the gap between people and God.

Zacharias had trouble believing this glad news, so Gabriel answered his doubt with a consequence: *“Because you won't believe me, you'll be unable to say a word until the day of your son's birth.”*

Zacharias, who has been so vocal, will immediately be mute for months. Unbelief is always mute—it never has a message. Give the man who believes in God the chance to say something.

Isn't it curious? God, after 400 years of silence, breaks through to the human race, but the man He communicates with does not believe Him. Now he is speechless. Just imagine him trying to explain to the people waiting for him outside the Holy Place that he had just seen an angel and now he can't talk.

So Zacharias went home and his wife Elizabeth, now an older woman, soon is wearing maternity clothes.

GABRIEL ANNOUNCES ANOTHER BIRTH

Six months later, in a town 100 miles north of Jerusalem, the same angel Gabriel makes a surprise visit on Mary, a young virgin in Nazareth.

When Gabriel appeared to Mary, she was afraid—and she had a right to be! It's an awesome thing for the supernatural to touch the natural. Gabriel put her mind at ease with an amazing, very clearly explained announcement.

God highly favored Mary. She was blessed *among* women. Mary is not lifted above women; she lifted up womanhood. Eve, a woman, brought sin into the world, but now Mary, a woman, will bring the Savior into the world.

“You will become pregnant,” Gabriel said, *“and give birth to a son and call His name Jesus. He will sit on David’s throne.”*

This announcement is quite literal. The virgin’s womb is literal, and so is the throne of David. Jesus will literally reign over the house of Jacob, and of His literal Kingdom, there will be no end.

Mary was the first one to question the virgin birth. She said, “How can this be?” (v. 34). This is still a good question. She is a virgin, a woman who has never had a relationship with a man that would make the birth of a child possible.

How could I be pregnant? The angel Gabriel answers her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you” (v. 35). No man had anything to do with Jesus’ birth. The union of a man and woman can only produce a child with a sin nature. A virgin birth is the only way to introduce a sinless child into the human family. Mary will *not* be bringing a sinner into the world but Jesus, the holy Son of God.

Mary’s response was complete submission to whatever God wanted to do. She told the angel, “Let it be to me according to your word” (v. 38).

At that very moment a cloud came over her life, and that cloud was there until the Lord Jesus Christ came back from the dead. Jesus’ resurrection proves His virgin birth. It was questioned until then. But you cannot deny the virgin birth and believe the Resurrection, or vice versa. The virgin birth and the Resurrection go together; they stand or fall together.

TWO PREGNANT WOMEN

Gabriel also told Mary her cousin Elizabeth was six months pregnant—a miracle, considering Elizabeth’s age. Though he wasn’t virgin-born, John the Baptist’s birth story is miraculous. Gabriel said, “For with God nothing will be impossible” (v. 37). This is a good truth to hold on to: Anything God determines to do, He can accomplish. That doesn’t mean He will do everything believers want Him to do, because some things are not included in His plan.

After a time Mary visits Elizabeth down in the hill country of Judea—about 100 miles south. When she walked into her relatives' house and called out a "hello," the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped for joy and she was filled with God's Spirit.

Elizabeth greeted Mary with a song—the first of three songs in this Gospel, the first Christmas songs.

We don't know much about Elizabeth but when you have a soloist like this, you should not ignore her. She's a remarkable person. She had faith when her husband Zacharias did not. He was struck speechless because of his unbelief, but Elizabeth believed God from the start. Now she encourages Mary. Elizabeth had walked with God for many years, and she assures young Mary that what Gabriel had told her would happen. Mary needed Elizabeth's encouragement.

Next, Mary sings a song we call the Magnificat. (See Luke 1:46-55.) Mary tells us in her song that she needed a Savior and that she rejoices in Him. Along with Gabriel, she calls herself blessed and we should agree. God gave her the privilege of being the mother of the Son of God, to bring Him into the world. She was a wonderful person, and it was God's definite decision to choose her for this role.

Listen as Mary sings her song:

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; for behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. For He who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation."

WELCOME TO THE WORLD, LITTLE JOHN

Soon after Mary returned to Nazareth, Elizabeth and Zacharias welcomed their miracle baby to the world. The family assumed the baby would be named after his father, according to tradition. But Elizabeth set the record straight and said that he was to be called John. The family appealed to Zacharias, who agreed with his wife. He wrote on his tablet, *"His name is John."* He had already been named by God. Those present marveled at the name.

Upon his obedience, Zacharias could not only speak again, but he immediately began to sing. Although Zacharias didn't have much faith, when the baby was born he could rejoice in God.

Elizabeth sang the first song, Mary sang the second, and now Zacharias sings the third. His song is about prophecy. Although Zacharias is not in the line of David, he recognizes that his son is going to be the forerunner of Jesus Christ, as foretold by Malachi and Isaiah. John will announce the Messiah's arrival. Praise God—the Messiah is on His way!

Zacharias somehow knew John would be “the prophet of the Highest” (v. 76). He would prepare the way for the Messiah. He would “give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (v. 79).

Zacharias also confirmed the promises God made through His prophets, and His promise of mercy and commitment to His covenants. Zacharias recalled the promises God made to Abraham, that he and Elizabeth and Mary now believed God will complete. And just as we believe the promises God makes to us, we should believe He will accomplish all that He has promised.

John the Baptist would grow up to be a very unusual person, uniquely gifted and called by God to do a special task.

NEXT: More about the world John and Jesus were born into and why John ended up in prison.

LESSON 2

AT THE PERFECT TIME



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 2:1–3:8**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 2:1-30** and **Luke 2:31–3:8**

Every book in the Bible was written in a specific time, place, and culture; each has a specific purpose. As we learned, Luke wrote this Gospel from eyewitness accounts—it reflects actual history. His audience was the Greek thinking person, and his purpose is to show us that Jesus is the Son of God.

The Greek culture prepared the world for Jesus' arrival. Their goal was to present the “perfect mankind,” physically as well as in human reason. Reality forced the thinking person to confess this had not happened yet. They waited and longed for one who could accomplish this work.

Historically, God used Alexander to prepare the world for spreading the news of the gospel, building the roads that would carry the Good News in Greek, the language most of the world understood. At the exact time it was right for Jesus to be born, the Roman Empire announced the civilized world would be taxed.

The tax announcement came from Caesar Augustus, the adopted son of Julius Caesar. He chose *Augustus* as his title over options like king, emperor, and dictator, because *Augustus* sounded religious and he wanted to make himself a god. He wanted to be worshiped.

In God's perfect time, Caesar Augustus signed a tax bill that prompted a peasant couple to travel from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register in the town of their heritage. The baby that woman was carrying in her womb actually was the Son of God. Nobody reveres or pays taxes to Caesar Augustus today, but millions still worship Jesus as Savior of the world. Caesar Augustus was only a tool in God's hand to fulfill the Old Testament prophecy (see Micah 5:2). God arranged everything.

ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS

So when was Jesus Christ born—in December? No, likely Jesus was born in the Spring when the shepherds watched their sheep in the fields at night. Scripture does not say *when* He was born; the important thing is that He was born. Scripture does not say *when* He was crucified; the important thing is that He died for our sins.

It was in those fields one glorious night that the angels shouted to the shepherds that their Messiah had been born. They even shared little details, like how Mary put diapers on the Son of God. How perfectly human Jesus was—God with skin on. That's how God entered the world. He could have come in power and great glory like He will when He comes to earth the second time. This time He came in the weakest way possible, as a baby.

When Jesus became a human, He did not lay aside His deity; He laid aside His glory. He was still God, still the second Person of the Trinity. All of creation should have welcomed His birth. Instead of collecting taxes, that “augusta” Caesar should have been on his knees before the Lord in Bethlehem. Jesus Christ could have forced him to do that, but He did not. Jesus laid aside, not His deity, but His rights and privileges of deity.

Because He came into this world as a human being, He understands our emotions; He is compassionate about our weaknesses. And because He took upon Himself our humanity, we can know something about God.

This peace that the angels announced, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men” (2:14), actually means “peace among men with whom He is pleased.” The angels didn't say, “Let's have peace, peace, peace.” We live in a wicked, Satan-dominated world, and there will be no peace in this world. There is, however, peace to people who have come to Jesus Christ and believed on His name as their Savior. These people can know this peace of God (see Romans 5:1). Do you know Him?

When Jesus Christ comes to earth again, He will come as the Prince of Peace; at that time He will put down unrighteousness and rebellion and establish peace on the earth.

After the angels announced Jesus' arrival, they disappeared back into the night sky and the shepherds hurried to Bethlehem where they found Mary, Joseph, and the baby. Jesus' first visitors were poor, wide-eyed shepherds.

SIMEON IN THE TEMPLE

As good Jews, Mary and Joseph followed the Mosaic Law that instructed them to take eight-day-old Jesus to the temple to be circumcised. Also according to Moses' Law, Mary needed to bring a sacrifice to the Lord because, after giving birth, she is considered unclean. The young couple brought turtledoves to sacrifice, allowed under the Law for those with little money. This sacrifice was for Mary and not for Jesus, because Jesus was not a sinner and didn't need to sacrifice.

In the temple there waited a man named Simeon to whom the Holy Spirit had made a special promise. God told Simeon that he would actually see God's salvation. What did he see? A little baby. Salvation is a Person, and not something you *do*. Salvation is a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ. You either believe in Him, or you don't. You either trust Him, or you don't. Do *you* believe in the name of Jesus today?

When Simeon sees the Lord wiggling in His mother's arms, he sings—another beautiful solo in God's Word. Although Simeon was limited geographically in his outlook on life, he saw the One who was to be the Savior of the *world*. The gospel, and the whole Word of God, is given to a certain people, yet it is offered to the world. No other religion opens to the world, usually they are localized for a specific people group. Right from the start, Christianity has been for all people everywhere.

Mary and Joseph marveled at Simeon's response. Notice Luke calls them "Joseph and His mother," not Jesus' father and mother (2:33). Simeon had a special word for Mary, too: "A sword will pierce through your own soul also" (2:35). Mary paid a tremendous price to bring the Savior into the world. Jesus was her Savior, but He was also her child. She raised Him; He was her son. No one else had this human relationship with Jesus.

When Mary stood beneath that cross and watched Jesus die, it was with a mother's broken heart. Her suffering had nothing to do with *your* salvation or *her* salvation. Simeon's prophecy was fulfilled—the sword pierced through her soul—when Jesus' mother watched Him die.

Mary pondered many things in her heart, as a mother does. Because of danger to Jesus' life, Mary and Joseph took Him into Egypt for a time and when they returned, they settled in Nazareth.

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Born six months before Jesus, John the Baptist's life and ministry was specially ordered by God, tied to a specific time in history. Luke gives us the exact historical context. Tiberius Caesar, a brilliant but brutal man, was emperor. He was clever but cunning, inhuman and profane, and he tried to rule the world.

In Jerusalem, Annas and Caiaphas were the high priests. Two high priests reveals Rome's power over Jerusalem in that day. Annas was the power behind the throne, but Caiaphas was the front man.

If John the Baptist had been born to a normal experience, he would have been a leader in the temple and served as a priest like his father. Instead John renounced his priesthood. He couldn't imagine serving the corrupt system, so John, a priest, became a prophet and a preacher in the wilderness. We knew from his miraculous conception that God had special plans for him. We don't know anything about his boyhood but meet him now at the beginning of his ministry.

No one who met John would ever forget him. To some, he was like Elijah, an unusual man with zeal to match. He is picturesque, unshaven, and shaggy, wearing camel's hair clothes. He is the last of the prophets, walking out of the Old Testament. He will receive the same reception many prophets received—he will be put to death.

The most unwelcome message, even today, is the voice of the prophet. The world will not receive a person who contradicts its philosophy of life. The world wants someone who will sing in unison with the crowd, not the voice of God, especially when it speaks of judgment. John's message was very strong: Prepare the way of the Lord.

John preached repentance. Repentance means to turn to God and away from your sin. You can't turn *to* God without turning *from* something. When you accept Jesus Christ as your Savior, you turn from the things of the world. Perhaps you have heard about God's love, but you have not been moved by it, and you have wondered why. You need to hear that voice crying in the wilderness, "Repent."

Repentance is not the message for today—we proclaim the grace of God. But if you have received God's grace and have turned *to* Him, you are going to have to turn *from* your sins. If you do not turn from your sins, you have not really turned to God. Repentance is involved in salvation, but today God's message is, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved ..." (Acts 16:31).

John's purpose was to warn people of coming judgment. He never talked about God's redeeming love; he wasn't called to give that message. John warned Israel that all trees that didn't produce fruit were useless and used for firewood. As a nation, they had not been productive, and they were going to be judged. John told people plainly that they needed to stop living only for themselves. "So *what should we do?*" they asked. "*Be fruitful,*" John said.

If you are a printer, show the world you are a Christian by the way you print. If you are a soldier, reveal your Christianity by the way you soldier. If you are a housewife, show your faith in God by the way you order your household. Reveal who you are by what you do. Produce fruit. (See how Jesus describes this in John 15:1-11.)

John makes it clear his message is not the final one but that he is preparing the way for the One to come. Everyone who humbled Himself and repented, John baptized with water.

John certainly got people's attention. Some turned to God in faith and others scoffed at him and walked away. John didn't hold back speaking truth. In fact, he called out Herod the tetrarch for all his evils. Herod's wife was so enraged, that she demanded John be put in prison.

**NEXT: The Lord will be tested in His humanity
beyond every breaking point.**

4. Discuss how this can be true in your life: “If you are a printer, show the world you are a Christian by the way you print. If you are a soldier, reveal your Christianity by the way you soldier. If you are a housewife, show your faith in God by the way you order your household. Reveal who you are by what you do. Produce fruit.”

LESSON 3

JESUS— HUMAN IN EVERY WAY



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 3:9–4:43**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 3:9–4:13** and **Luke 4:14-43**

Your family tree may explain a lot about you—where you came from, who your grandfather was, and his father before him.

In Matthew's Gospel, we traced Jesus' family from Abraham through David, through Solomon. The *legal* title to the throne came through Joseph. Luke makes it clear, however, that Joseph was not the father of the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke's Gospel traces Jesus' family through Mary's story. Most importantly, it traces the royal blood of David through Nathan, which also flowed in her veins.

Luke reveals Jesus Christ as the Son of Man and the Savior of the *world*. His line does not begin with Abraham, but goes all the way back to Adam who was the first created son of God. But Adam fell from that lofty position when he sinned. Jesus Christ, the last Adam and the Son of God, came to bring mankind back into that relationship with God which Adam formerly had but lost. Now Jesus Christ invites us into that relationship with God by believing on Him—the only way possible to be in fellowship with God.

TO PROVE HE COULDN'T SIN

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke show us Jesus was fully human. He faced all the temptations and testing we do, but He never sinned.

After Jesus was baptized, Luke says the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tested by Satan. There is a frightful and fearful darkness about this temptation. We can only stand on the fringe and learn from Jesus, but we can't fully understand the unseen, hidden forces of evil that spun all around Him. Surrounded by powers of darkness and destruction, He grappled with all the problems that mankind faces and He won a spiritual victory for us.

As man, the Son of God needed to be filled with the Spirit in order to meet the temptation. How much more do we need the Spirit's power to face every kind of temptation? We can't do it in our own strength (see Galatians 5:16). We *need* the Holy Spirit.

This test was God's idea; Jesus didn't seek it, but the evil one gladly engaged. For 40 days, Satan didn't stop tempting the Lord. Even after this wilderness assault, he continued tempting Jesus, culminating in the Garden of Gethsemane ambush.

The Lord met Satan face to face. Satan's strategies are subtle—one time he appears as a roaring lion looking for prey, the next time he's an angel of light deceiving everyone he possibly can. (See 1 Peter 5:8; 2 Corinthians 11:14.)

Why would God the Father put Jesus through temptation? To tempt means two things. The first is "to seduce to do evil." When Satan tempts us, he finds some area of our lives he can take hold of, something in us we might possibly yield to him. Yet Jesus is holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners (see Hebrews 7:26). Jesus wasn't tempted to do evil—that would be a losing proposition. Nothing in Him would yield to do evil.

But the word tempt also means "to prove or test." God tested Abraham and tested Israel for 40 years in the wilderness. God tested Jesus to prove we have a Savior who is holy, without sin, undefiled, unbroken, and completely unlike us as sinners. Because He passed the test, He is qualified to save anyone who comes to God through Him (see Hebrews 7:25-26).

The Lord was tested as a man in His humanity, beyond any breaking point. The pressure was never removed all the way to His cross. He endured the entire spectrum of human temptations and passed every physical, psychological, and spiritual test.

PHYSICAL TEST: Satan asks Jesus to make stones into bread. A man must live, and in order to live, he must eat. When Satan tempted Him, Jesus was starving. One day soon Jesus would make a lunch for thousands from a few crackers and sardines. *So what was the problem? To use His great powers to minister to Himself ... would that be so selfish?* Jesus answered him, “It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone”” (4:4).

PSYCHOLOGICAL TEST: Satan took Jesus to a high mountain and showed Him the kingdoms of the world and offered them to Him. The “kingdoms of the world” encompassed the great Roman Empire. But Jesus Christ was on His way to the throne by way of the cross. Satan was saying, “Let’s skip the cross.” *Why should Jesus suffer if he could offer an easy way to the power?* Satan reasoned. He only asked that Jesus worship him. At that, Jesus wielded the sword of truth, “It is written, “You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve”” (4:8).

SPIRITUAL TEST: Satan tempts Jesus to throw Himself down from the temple and let the angels catch Him. He wanted Jesus to demonstrate He was the Son of God—“*Show them, prove it, then they will accept you.*” But this isn’t faith; it’s presumption. Satan tempted Jesus to dare His Father. Faith quietly waits on God, doing His will. Satan misquotes Scripture when he challenges Jesus to test God, but Jesus would have none of it. “It has been said, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God”” (4:12).

Why was Jesus Christ tempted? To prove He is a sinless Savior. He is able to save. He proved all power had been given to Him. There is a Man in glory today who sits at God’s right hand, who understands you and is able to sympathize with everything you face. The Lord Jesus can be depended upon in every circumstance of life. Isn’t it wonderful to have a Savior like that!

JESUS RETURNS HOME

After the Lord Jesus Christ was tested by Satan in the wilderness, He was strengthened to go forward in the Holy Spirit’s power. He now identified Himself with mankind, entering into every detail of our lives. According to Hebrews 2:17, this qualifies Him to be our merciful and faithful priest because He experienced it all Himself, though without sin. He is now able to help us where we need it.

So leaving the wilderness, Jesus turns toward His hometown, Nazareth. Generally a hometown is proud of their local boy when he gets famous. As was His custom on the Sabbath, Jesus went to the synagogue and was invited to open the scrolls.

The synagogue was one of the most important religious institutions in Jesus' time. When the Jews were far from their land and temple during the Babylonian captivity, they gathered to listen to the Word of God and worship together. After the exile, the synagogue tradition continued in all of Israel's larger towns.

We don't know much about Jesus' daily routines, but we do know He spent one day a week in His local synagogue. So on this day, Jesus is handed the Word, and He begins to read it according to the synagogue reading schedule (the same for all synagogues). That day's passage was Isaiah 61:1-2.

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD”

He looked at that crowd and said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (4:21).

The people looked at Him confused, *“Isn't this Joseph's son, a carpenter? How could He be the Messiah?”*

Jesus then tried to show them they, His own people, were apt to miss a great blessing if they reject Him as Messiah. But they wouldn't accept anything He said. He said, *“I am your Messiah,”* but His claim enraged them. Their rejection then turned violent and they drove Jesus to the edge of town, planning to push Him off a cliff to His death. Jesus miraculously disappeared into the crowd and went on His way.

JESUS MOVES TO CAPERNAUM

Because Nazareth rejected Jesus as Messiah, Jesus moves His home base to Capernaum, a town on the north end of the Sea of Galilee. The people were amazed at His powerful teaching—they never heard the Pharisees and scribes speak with such confidence and authority. They were drawn to Jesus' light—but with this attraction comes a responsibility to respond in faith.

On one day, we follow Jesus from morning to night. He started His day teaching in the synagogue. A man controlled by a demon cried out, “I know who You are—the Holy One of God!” (4:34). Spiritual warfare had increased in Galilee during the years of Jesus’ ministry. From across the room, Jesus demanded the demons leave the man and they did so without another word.

After synagogue, Jesus went to Peter’s house, probably to eat lunch. While there, Jesus learned that Peter’s mother-in-law had a bad fever and a serious illness. The Lord rebuked the fever, using Luke’s medical terms, “be muzzled.” The fever, like a wild dog, had broken the leash. (Jesus dealt with sin like that, too.) Immediately she got up, healed, and helped with lunch. When the Lord Jesus Christ healed someone, it took place immediately. Amazing!

When the sun was setting, the Lord goes outside to the crowds that had gathered, and moves from one to another, talking and healing people, both from demonic control to debilitating diseases. The Lord healed in a wonderful way, with great compassion, touching people in their need. He didn’t heal them according to their faith, but from a great heart of sympathy. We’re told to follow His example in Galatians 6:2, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

NEXT: Jesus goes fishing for men.

Christianity

has always been
for all people
everywhere.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 4

MINISTRY, MIRACLES, AND AN INVITATION



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 5–6**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 5** and **Luke 6**

“Present the glorious gospel in as many ways as possible”—that’s the theme of Luke chapters 5 and 6. Why? So that people might hear about Jesus Christ and have an opportunity to choose whether they will accept Him or reject Him.

All of us must make this decision to accept or reject Jesus Christ for ourselves.

First, Jesus called the disciples. Actually, this is the second time He called them. The first time, they heard and followed, but Jesus found them again, back at fishing. They sat on the shore, washing their nets.

It was on Lake Gennesaret, also called the Sea of Galilee. The crowds had followed Jesus, listening to Him teach. The Lord climbed into Simon Peter’s boat and asked him to push the boat out a little from the land.

Peter’s boat became a pulpit. But you know, every pulpit is a “fishing boat,” a place to give out the Word of God and attempt to catch fish. You don’t catch fish every time you give out the Word, but as Jesus had told these men, He makes us fishers of men. The supreme business of life is to fish for the souls of men.

After the Lord had finished teaching the people, He turned His attention to the disciples. *“Let’s go fish,”* He said to Simon Peter, who had been sitting in the boat listening. *“Now, launch out into the deep, and let your net down. You quit fishing with Me; now I am going to give you a fishing lesson.”*

Peter objected at first. He had been out on the water all night and had caught nothing. He knew all about fishing on the Sea of Galilee. But he conceded to Jesus, *“OK—whatever you say”*

You need not argue with Him: *“We’ve tried it before, and it can’t be done.”* Jesus doesn’t give impossible commands. Sure enough, Peter let out the nets and caught so many fish that the nets began to break.

Fishing is an art. You must go where the fish are, use the right bait, and be patient. But the most important lesson is that fishing must be done according to God’s directions. If we are ever going to win people for Him, we must go about it God’s way.

Peter realized that when his boat was so full of fish that it began to sink. He immediately fell at Jesus’ knees and confessed, *“Lord, you called me to be a fisher of men and I failed. I went back to fishing for fish—I thought I knew that kind of fishing better, but I guess I don’t! Depart from me. Go find someone you can depend on.”* The Lord must have smiled. He didn’t want to get rid of Simon Peter, He wanted to use him.

Same as with us. All we need to do is recognize our failures and faithlessness. When we are willing to depend on Him, He won’t throw us overboard; He will use us. Do you need that encouragement today?

“From now on, Peter, you’ll catch men,” the Lord said. And he did! In less than three years from now, Peter will preach his first sermon and 3,000 souls will come to Jesus Christ. Peter was fishing according to God’s instructions.

There is another fisherman fishing for souls. Satan has his hook out in the water, too, baited with the things of the world. (Read 2 Timothy 2:26.) God’s hook is the cross on which Jesus died for you.

Whose hook are you on today? Either the devil has you or God has you. There is no third fisherman.

JESUS TOUCHES BROKEN PEOPLE

Jesus continued on in His ministry, giving as many people who would listen the opportunity to follow Him.

Most people would have walked by the lepers in Jesus' day. But Dr. Luke makes a point of recording a conversation between Jesus and a man with leprosy. As a good doctor, Luke seemed to recognize the psychological implications of Jesus' healing of this man.

As a leper, this man had been cut off from society, including his own wife and family. Never again could he take them in his arms. He could only watch them from a distance.

Then one day the Lord Jesus Christ came by. The leper said, *"If You want to, Jesus, You can heal me."* The King of kings replied, "I am willing; be cleansed" (5:13). Notice how the Lord healed him—He touched his infectious body. This poor man had not felt anyone's touch for years. Can you imagine what it must have meant to him to feel Christ's hand on him?

Has the Lord Jesus touched your life? We all need to be touched. If you are His, and you are fishing at His command, you can also reach out your hand and touch some soul for Him today.

On another day in Capernaum, Jesus was teaching in a house packed with people. Some men were carrying their paralyzed friend to Jesus, but couldn't get in the door. Determined to give their friend a chance, they tore through the straw roof and lowered their friend's stretcher down in front of Jesus. Jesus loved their faith!

God wants us to get the message. Many people need you to lift a corner of their stretcher and carry them to where they can hear the Word of the Lord. They are paralyzed—powerless by sin and the things the world binds them to. They are never going to hear Jesus say to them, "Your sins are forgiven you" (5:20), unless you take the corner of their stretcher and bring them to Him.

These incidents show us how the Lord Jesus Christ wants us to share the message of salvation with others. One man can't carry a stretcher alone. More people are needed today to help get the Word of God out to those who desperately need Him.

JESUS CALLS MATTHEW

Matthew did what he could to introduce his friends to Jesus. Matthew was a tax collector and a rascal working for Rome. He was a rich publican—so he gave a dinner and invited all his rascal friends to it so that they could meet Jesus Christ.

The scribes and Pharisees criticized Jesus for going to the party. But the Lord had a good answer for them. He was the Great Physician. He came to minister to those who were sick with sin.

The gospel is really for those who recognize their spiritual need. If you know you need a Savior, then the gospel is for you. But some people think they're too good to be saved. They're unaware of their need. In their self-sufficiency, they go their chosen path. But it's a road that leads to destruction. The Great Physician can do nothing for those who think they are not sick.

Jesus went on to tell His first recorded parable in Luke. *“You don't patch an old coat with a silk scarf—you want fabrics that match. And you don't pour new wine into old bottles or else the bottles will burst.”*

Jesus was illustrating that natural man likes his old ways. But He did not come to patch up the old ways (the Law). He came to pay the penalty of sin by dying on the cross. But He did more than that—He rose from the dead so He could place on us His robe of righteousness. He gives us the new wine of the gospel in the new wineskin of grace, not in the old one of Law. He came to give us something new. He came to save us by faith in Him.

Now the Pharisees had Jesus in their crosshairs, and they were going to find fault in whatever He did. One Sabbath, they saw Jesus and His disciples walking through a field. As they went, they plucked grain off the wheat, rubbed it in their hands and ate it. They were hungry. The Pharisees accused them of breaking Moses' Law by threshing the grain on the Sabbath. If they had been cutting it with a sickle, they would have been harvesting, but the Pharisees had their own interpretation, and therefore they saw the action as they wanted: Jesus was breaking the Law.

Instead of arguing with them, Jesus reminded them about how David was justified by eating when he was hungry.

On another Sabbath day in the synagogue, a man with a deformed hand stood directly in Jesus' path. The Pharisees planted him there to set Jesus up. In so doing, they paid the Lord a wonderful compliment. They believed He could—and would—heal the man's hand since He was both powerful and compassionate.

And they were right, the Lord healed him. Jesus' enemies then accused Him of breaking the Sabbath. Filled with rage, they plotted Jesus' death from that moment on.

JESUS CHOOSES HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES

Many people followed Jesus at this time, but out of all these disciples, Jesus chose twelve men to be His apostles. He spent the entire night in prayer before making His choice. This is a good pattern for us to follow. Too often we follow our feelings and selfish desires and use our own measuring rods rather than God's measuring stick. We should spend time with God before making our decisions.

Then Jesus' ministry kicked into high gear. As Jesus traveled around Galilee, He healed thousands of people. The people came—but did nothing else. Jesus did it all. He even healed people at a distance.

Jesus also taught the crowds that came to Him for healing, often bringing the same sermon again and again. On one such day, He taught the "Sermon on the Mount" (same as in Matthew 5) only this time it was taught on a plain.

On this occasion, Jesus introduces a new thought about those who preach God's Word (6:23). He says the true prophet speaks for God and is persecuted. Yet he maintains a quiet confidence in God and looks beyond the things which are seen to the things which are eternal. This confidence keeps them true to God.

The world likes the false prophet. If he says the right thing, they pay him well. He may become popular with the world, but he will be notorious with God. Heaven weeps while he has fun on earth. He may be well fed, but he has a starved soul.

Jesus describes what it means to follow Him and compares a true and false servant of God with a fruit tree. "*The health of the apple tells the health of the tree,*" He said. A diseased tree produced rotten fruit; a healthy tree

produces good fruit. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (6:45).

It's unpopular today to mention sin. Some call it a relic. Many say sin is not a crime against God. They are afraid to say God hates sin and Jehovah is a Man of War.

But to be right in God's sight, you must call it what it is. You can't compliment the ego, pat the pride, smile upon sin, and put a band-aid on the cancer of sin. You cannot write a prescription on philosophy and have it filled in the pleasures of the world. The only place you can go is to the foot of the Cross. There God performs major surgery, and makes you a new creature in Christ Jesus. That's the message Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Plain.

The Lord concludes with a parable comparing those who heard and believed what He taught to a man who built his house on a rock. No matter how the storm raged and the flood waters rose, the house stood firm. Unlike the other man, Jesus said, who built his house on the sand. When the storm came, the house was destroyed.

The house built on the rock stood. The house built on the sand was absolutely washed away. You can build your life on a foundation that will stand. That Rock is Christ Jesus (read 1 Corinthians 3:22).

Do you recognize yourself in Jesus' sermon and parable? Where is your house? Are you a lost, hell-doomed sinner? Come to Jesus. Get on the Solid Rock which is Christ. He will save without money and without price. Come to Him in simple faith, and put your complete confidence in Him.

NEXT: John asks Jesus, “So are You the One, or should we look for another?”

LESSON 4



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. When we read the narrative describing the miraculous catch of fish, we can appreciate how the Lord uses us in spite of our failures and faithlessness. Dr. McGee encourages, “When we are willing to depend on Him, He won’t throw us overboard, He will use us. Do you need that encouragement today?”

2. How does Jesus’ interactions with the leper and other people needing healing touch you?

3. Agree or disagree? “The gospel is really for those who recognize their spiritual need. If you know you need a Savior, then the gospel is for you. Some people think they’re too good to be saved; they’re unaware of their need. In their self-sufficiency, they go their chosen path but it leads to destruction. The Great Physician can do nothing for those who think they are not sick.”

LESSON 5

MORE MIRACLES, PARABLES, AND DISCIPLES



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 7–8**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 7:1-35** and **Luke 7:36–8:56**

As Jesus continued His ministry, many people turned to Him, even some officials in high places. They too had heard of Jesus' healing power. In one case, a centurion asked Jesus to heal his servant.

Apparently, this officer was a man of faith. He showed his love for the Jewish nation by building them a synagogue in Capernaum. As one in authority, he said he knew Jesus only had to speak and it would be so. Jesus marveled at his faith. (Only two times do we read that Jesus marveled—here and at Israel's unbelief.) When the centurion returned home, his servant's health was completely restored. Jesus healed him from a distance.

Only from Dr. Luke do we hear of a time Jesus watched a funeral procession pass by them. A young man had died and his mother, also a widow, was torn with grief. When He saw her, Jesus felt compassion. The end of the man's life also signaled the end of hers. So, Jesus touched the dead man and said, "*Get up,*" and he did!

A holy awe came over the crowds. Only God could restore life like this.

Jesus always used the same method in raising people from the dead. Jesus always spoke directly to the dead when restoring their lives. Someday at the Rapture, He will come for us with a shout. (Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17.) His solo voice will call His own back from the dead.

Word of what Jesus was doing spread throughout Israel—even to the prison where John the Baptist sat. But John was puzzled. Remember John from the other gospels? He called people to repent.

John the Baptist doesn't belong in the New Testament. He is the bridge over the yawning chasm between the Old and New Testaments. He was a highway builder for the King and Messiah. He ranks with such prophets as Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah. Like many of the prophets, John the Baptist's voice was soon to be silenced in death.

While John was in prison, doubt troubled him. Was Jesus the Messiah? Some have tried to explain this doubt by saying John was depressed and discouraged. But consider this: John had announced the Kingdom and declared the coming of the King. He expected Christ to establish the Kingdom in all of its glory and power. Since this had not happened, John sent some of his disciples to ask if Jesus was the One they were looking for, or should they look for another?

The Lord Jesus heard John's messengers out, but He kept them waiting. He allowed them to watch Him work. Jesus kept John's disciples waiting while He performed many miracles so that they could go back to tell John that they had seen the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the Messiah. (See Isaiah 35:5-6.) In other words, *"Tell John you've seen the credentials of the Messiah."* Jesus realized He was not moving as fast as John wanted Him to, but He asked John to trust Him. Jesus asks the same of us today—*"Trust Me when you don't understand."*

DINNER AT THE PHARISEE'S HOUSE

When Jesus went out to dinner, it was never a dull affair. Jesus had criticized the Pharisees, calling them spoiled brats, yet a Pharisee named Simon asked Him over for dinner. Perhaps this invitation was a strategy to spy on Jesus and find something to use against Him.

While Jesus was eating dinner, a woman came in. When you had guests in that day, your neighbors could enter, stand along the wall, and watch. So this woman came in and stood behind Jesus, while He reclined on a couch with His feet sticking out in back. As was the custom, Jesus leaned on His

arm, and talked across the table to His host. As she stood by His feet and wept, her tears fell on His feet and she wiped them with her hair. Then she kissed His feet and anointed them with an expensive oil. No respectable woman would do this. No honorable man would let her.

Simon wouldn't have had anything to do with a woman, much less one with a reputation. When he saw her wiping and kissing the Lord's feet, he thought, *He couldn't be a prophet or he'd know the kind of woman she is.*

But Jesus knew what Simon was thinking so He told Simon a beautiful parable about forgiveness. One debtor owed a lot; another not as much. They were both forgiven. Who was the most grateful?

Simon nodded at the story but then Jesus said, *"See the woman? When I came to your home, you didn't provide water for my feet, but she washed them with her tears. You didn't greet Me, but she hasn't quit kissing me. She was forgiven many sins, and so she's very grateful. If the forgiveness is minimal, the gratitude is minimal."*

Simon had not been a proper host. This poor woman from the streets, without hope, wanted forgiveness. She had no good works to her credit, but she trusted the Lord and asked Him for forgiveness, which He gladly gave.

"Simon, you have judged correctly. The one who owed the most would naturally be the one who would love the most. Well, she was a great sinner, forgiven of a lot. But because you don't think you're a sinner, you don't know forgiveness." And that hypocritical old Pharisee sat there—an unforgiven sinner.

The others in the room whispered, *"Who does He think He is—God? Only God can forgive sin."*

After this, Jesus and His twelve disciples traveled to every village and city, preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God. They were financially supported by those Jesus touched, including women like Mary Magdalene and Joanna, Herod's steward's wife, and Susanna.

Jesus told stories illustrating profound messages. Here are a few:

THE FARMER AND HIS SEED. A farmer planted his field with seed. Some fell by the wayside; it was beat down, and the birds ate it up. Some fell on rocks; as soon as it sprung up, it withered away without water. Some fell among thorns, but the thorns choked them. But some seed fell on good ground and grew into a bumper crop.

Jesus explained that He was the farmer and the seed is His Word. The birds are a picture of the devil stealing opportunities. The rocky places are like those who receive the Word of God with enthusiasm but, soon, trouble and persecution dampens their interest. They didn't really believe at all. Only some of the seed falls on good ground and brings a full harvest. Those describe people who are genuinely saved by the Word of God.

THE LIGHTED CANDLE. The next parable points out that you don't hide a lit candle under your bed. You must take action. Light creates responsibility. Truth must be acted on. We are held responsible to the degree that light has been given us. There was a time when we only knew darkness, but then the light of the gospel got through to us.

Often people recognize Jesus as God but refuse to glorify Him. They willfully turn their back to Him. They stubbornly reject His authority over their lives. But the light we have received makes us responsible to respond to His invitation. If we don't, we remain lost.

MOTHERS AND BROTHERS. While Jesus was teaching, His mother and brothers couldn't get through the crowd to see Him. But Jesus said, *"My family are the ones who hear and do God's Word."* Jesus Christ declares a new relationship here. The people who obey God's Word are infinitely deeper, higher, and more permanent, transcending any blood relationship. Wow! Look how close He draws us near to Him.

JESUS STILLS THE STORM. After teaching, Jesus was tired and wanted to get away from the crowds. His disciples sailed the boat while Jesus fell asleep. While they sailed, a violent storm blew in (its intensity suggests the savagery of Satan). But Jesus slept right through it. The frightened disciples thought they would all die.

The storm didn't disturb the Lord, but the disciples' lack of faith did. He woke up, and spoke to the wind and the sea like you would speak to dogs on a leash. Literally, *"Be muzzled."* Immediately, the wind stopped, and the water flattened like glass. How often He puts us in the storms of life in order that we might come closer to Him and learn what kind of Savior He really is.

As they got out of the boat on the other side of the sea, a naked man possessed by demons ran towards them. Demon possession (then and now) is just as real as cancer or leprosy. Demons disturb people physically, mentally, and spiritually. They cause a person to do their will—usually terrifying, soul-destroying acts. They want nothing more than to devastate our souls and lead us to eternal doom.

This case of the demon-possessed man here at Gadara is one of the worst on record. The man's personality was degraded, debased, and destroyed. Demons completely controlled him. They recognized Jesus right away and were terrified of Him. (See James 2:19.) They knew Jesus would judge them someday.

Jesus spoke directly to the demons in the man—not just one possessed him but a legion, literally a mob of demons. They pleaded with Jesus not to send them “out into the abyss” (8:31). Demons want to inhabit a body. When a demon is cast out of a person, he will wander around and come back to try to enter that person again; or, if he cannot gain entrance, he will go to another person. When the Lord cast the demons out of this man, they asked to be sent into the bodies of the swine rather than go to the abyss. (And the pigs would rather drown than have the demons in them!)

Once the demons were gone, the man was transformed. Only Jesus can deliver from the power of Satan. We can call on Him for help. Surprisingly, when the town came out to see the restored man, they asked the Lord to leave. His power scared them.

Back on the other side of the lake, crowds once again gathered around Jesus. Two people in the crowd were desperate.

The ruler of the synagogue, Jairus, had a dying 12-year-old daughter. He thought, “*All Jesus needs to do is touch her.*” Jesus agreed to go with him. Just as they were leaving, a woman who had been sick for 12 years touched His robe.

Jesus suddenly asked, “Who touched me?” (8:45). He had felt power released. Then a woman, thinking she could hide, admitted it was her. Jesus had not touched the woman; she touched Him and was healed instantly.

Just then, Jairus got word: “*Your daughter is dead.*” But Jesus just said, “*Trust Me.*”

When they got to Jairus' home, the paid mourners had already gone to work. They stopped weeping long enough to laugh at Jesus in disbelief. They knew she was dead.

Then the Lord took Peter, James, John, and Jairus and his wife inside with Him to where the little girl lay. Dr. Luke tells us that He spoke to her, “*Little lamb, wake up,*” and she heard His voice and got up! Once again our Lord demonstrated He is indeed God.

NEXT: The disciples learn what to do when Jesus asks the impossible.

LESSON 5



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. We meet and visit with several people in this passage.
Which of the following stand out to you?
How are their lives or situations impacting you?

The Roman Centurion with a sick servant

A widow whose son just died

John the Baptist in prison

Simon the Pharisee at his own dinner party

The woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears

The disciples in the boat during a storm

Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue, who had a dying daughter

2. Which of Jesus' stories or interactions cause you to think?

LESSON 6

ON THE WAY TO JERUSALEM



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 9–10**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 9:1–10:24** and **Luke 10:25-42**

At this place in our grand gospel story, Jesus lays the foundation for a future without Him physically present on earth. He gave His twelve disciples power over demons and disease as a “sign gift.” When the church got under way before the New Testament was written, sign gifts proved the apostles were who they claimed to be. Both Peter and Paul could heal the sick and raise the dead, proving they were true apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ.

These sign gifts disappeared from the church as Scripture became a part of the church. Authority moved from a specific *person* to the *page* of Scripture, the Word of God. Correct doctrine was a person’s credential and absolute authority is in God’s Word.

Jesus’ ministry impact was well known in Galilee. Even Herod heard about Jesus and thought He was John, risen from the dead. (Herod had beheaded John and his guilt plagued his mind.)

Even when Jesus withdrew to rest, the crowds still followed Him. Graciously, Jesus received them, taught them, and healed the sick. The disciples wanted Jesus to send the crowds away, but Jesus told them to give them all something to eat. *“That’s impossible,”* the disciples said, doing the math. *“How can we feed over 5,000 men and their families?”*

The disciples had to learn, as we must learn, that God always commands the impossible. The reason is obvious—He intends to do the work.

Jesus told the disciples to organize the crowd into groups of 50 people each and ask them to sit down. He took the five loaves and two fish from a little boy's lunch, prayed, and passed the bread and fish to the disciples to distribute. The Creator, who made the fish in the beginning and causes the grain to multiply in the fields, now by His word creates food for the crowd. After the people had all eaten their fill—perhaps the first time for many to ever feel full, the disciples gathered up twelve baskets of leftovers. God always provides a surplus.

Soon after, when it was just Jesus and His disciples, Jesus asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (9:18).

More than wanting to know men's estimate of Him, Jesus wanted the disciples to be clear about who He actually was. *“Some say You are John the Baptist,”* they said. *“Some say Elijah or another old prophet.”* They, too, were confused.

But Jesus pressed, “Who do you say that I am?” (9:20).

“You are the Christ, the Messiah,” Peter said—it was the finest thing he ever said.

Then Jesus shocked them with the news that He was going away. He would suffer and be killed and raised again on the third day. He wanted to prepare them for His death but also give them hope of His resurrection. *“Keep following Me—regardless of the cost. It's worth every sacrifice,”* He told them. The same is true today. Keep proclaiming Jesus is Lord and Savior. Keep serving Him and giving Him glory. He's worth everything.

A week later, the Lord took Peter, James, and John to a mountain to pray. While He prayed, the Lord's countenance was “transfigured”—literally, it is *metamorphosis*.

That which took place in Jesus' body is like what happens to a caterpillar. First the caterpillar encases itself in a cocoon, and then it comes out a beautiful butterfly. Quite differently than it is sometimes taught, Jesus' transfiguration shows us, not His deity, but His perfect humanity.

When we see the Lord Jesus Christ transfigured there on the mount, we see exactly what will take place in that future day when we are transfigured. *“The dead shall be raised, and those who are alive shall be changed,”* the Bible says (see 1 Corinthians 15:52). We will undergo metamorphosis. Then we will all be translated and brought into God’s presence.

As Jesus prayed, a light came from within His body and shone outwardly, making His clothes glistening white. Some have asked if we will wear clothes in heaven—perhaps it will be like this when we will be clothed in this glory.

And as Jesus prayed, two men stood with Him there on the mountainside. Moses, who represented the Law, and Elijah, who represented the prophets, stood witness there to Him. They talked with Jesus about His coming death. This is a prime illustration that the Law and the prophets (the Old Testament) was fulfilled in Jesus. The *only* way God could save us is through the righteousness we obtain by faith alone. In the Old Testament this was done by bringing a sacrifice. The little lamb offered on the altar was a picture of Jesus dying for our sins. When John the Baptist first saw Jesus, he called Him, “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Now Elijah and Moses talked with Jesus about His sacrifice.

Back on the mountain, Peter and James and John were just waking up from their nap and they were amazed by Jesus’ glory. Not completely understanding what he saw, Peter suggested they build three tabernacles to honor this event, putting Moses and Elijah on a par with Jesus Christ. Others do the same when they list Buddha, Mohammed, Moses, and Christ as founders of religion. But Jesus Christ is not the founder of any religion; He is the *Savior*. We are not saved by religion; we are saved by Jesus Christ. Lose your religion and find Jesus.

As the men stood there, a cloud overshadowed them and a voice thundered, “This is my beloved Son. Hear Him” (9:35). When the cloud lifted, only Jesus stood there alone.

Years later when Peter wrote his letters, he tells us that some “were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). *“We were there on the holy mountain with him,”* Peter said. *“We heard the voice out of heaven with our own ears.”*

When they came down from the mountain the next day, a big crowd met them. A man ran to Jesus and asked Him to heal his only son from a demon. The other disciples had tried but couldn’t. Even as the boy came to Jesus, the demon terrorized him and threw him to the ground with convulsions.

Jesus healed the boy by simply ordering the demon to be gone—and it obeyed. Everyone shook their heads with wonder. When Jesus spoke to the crowd, He rebuked them for their lack of faith concerning this boy. Jesus just turned to the father and asked him to believe.

This entire scene is a picture of us today. On the mountain, Jesus passed on into glory. His disciples are with Him. But down where we are at the foot of the mountain, we experience great confusion, compromise, and powerlessness. The world today acts like a demon-possessed man, and the church is helpless in the presence of the world's need.

Now the time comes for Jesus to head for Jerusalem. On the road, the Lord again talks to His disciples about His coming death, but they didn't understand what He meant by "rising from the dead." Even when Jesus talked about His own death on their behalf, they bickered about who would be the greatest in God's kingdom. After the Transfiguration, you'd think they would be humbled and obedient, but instead they became ambitious. They thought only of the crown and ignored the Cross.

Jesus knew their hearts, so He illustrated with a child what it means to be the greatest. "For he who is least among you all will be great" (9:48). Isn't it true? The greatest saints are the unknown people in our churches who quietly and faithfully serve the Lord.

As they continued to walk toward Jerusalem, they were rejected by a Samaritan town. John suggested they call down fire and destroy the town. But Jesus said, "The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them" (9:56). Another time He said, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). John entirely misunderstood why Jesus had come.

So what does it mean to follow Jesus? Three different people walk alongside Jesus on the way to Jerusalem and illustrate what it means to be His disciple.

The first is an impulsive young man who boasted, "*Anywhere you go, I'll go.*" Jesus told him the way wasn't easy. Extreme poverty was part of the curse He bore on the earth. Did the young man follow Him? Let's hope so.

Jesus invited another, "*Follow me,*" but the young man said he wouldn't be free to follow Jesus until after his father died. When it comes to discipleship, Jesus claims the first place.

Another disciple said he was ready to follow Jesus, but needed to get things straightened out at home. This one was a halfhearted follower and didn't share the urgency or the importance of Jesus' mission. The cost of discipleship is high, demanding all we have to give.

But some did follow Jesus. The Lord sent out 70 disciples to prepare for His ministry on the way to Jerusalem. These disciples' job was to sow the seed and the Lord would someday harvest the crop of souls. Our job even today—the job of every Christian—is to sow the seed, which is the Word of God.

To these 70, Jesus taught how to approach ministry. He warns them of hardship and danger—they will be “lambs among wolves” (10:3). They should travel light and waste no time in idle conversations. They are to be disciples compelled by one supreme motive—to prepare hearts for Jesus' coming.

Not every city was ready to receive the disciples, or even Jesus. These—like Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum—would be destroyed. It's a serious thing to reject Jesus' messengers—to reject them was to reject Him.

When the 70 disciples came back to Jesus, they were thrilled and excited with what just happened. Isn't this our same experience when we give out the Word of God, and someone comes to Christ? It's wonderful! Jesus reminds them, though, that the important thing is not how God used them, but that their names are written in heaven. Whatever success comes from our ministry, it is His work, not ours.

PARABLES—STORIES WITH PROFOUND TRUTHS

Just as the Gospel of Mark majors in miracles, Luke focuses on parables. Often, Jesus told a parable to answer a question. The best-known story, the parable of the Good Samaritan, is an answer to the question, “*Teacher, what do I need to do to get eternal life?*” It was a good question, though not an honest one; it was meant to trick Jesus. But our Lord had a wonderful way of answering a question by asking a question. The lawyer tried to put Jesus on the witness stand, but Jesus turns it around and put *him* on the witness stand.

“*What does the Law say?*” Jesus knew the lawyer knew the Law.

“‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself’” (10:27).

“*Great answer,*” Jesus said. “*Now go do it.*”

If the lawyer had been honest (he wasn't) he would have said, *"Master, I've sincerely tried to love God with all my heart, soul, strength, and mind, and my neighbor as myself. But I can't do it. I've miserably failed. So how can I inherit eternal life?"* Instead, he looked for a loophole, *"Really, who is my neighbor?"*

Jesus answered this question with a simple, marvelous story. He brought this parable right to our own neighborhoods.

A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and was ambushed by thieves. That is a picture of humanity: Mankind came from Jerusalem, the place where they approached God, to Jericho, the doomed city. Humanity fell—we are helpless, hopeless, and unable to save ourselves. We are dead in our sin—just like this man left for dead on the side of the road. The thieves remind us of the devil who John 8:44 tells us was a murderer from the beginning. The devil is a thief; our Lord was crucified between two thieves.

Then a priest passed the broken man on the *other* side of the road. He, like religious rituals and ceremonies, can't save a person. Next a Levite, thick in legalism, walked by on the other side.

Then a "certain" Samaritan passed by. When religion could do nothing to help us, Jesus Christ came. He binds up the broken-hearted and kneels down to help the lost sinner.

The world today is like the man who fell among thieves and needs our Jesus. He can not only rescue us from drowning, but He can teach us to swim. Ritualism and formalism see mankind drowning and say, "Swim, brother, swim," but we can't swim. Legalism and liberalism push across toward man and say, "Hang on, brother, hang on," but we cannot hang on. Jesus hears our cry as we sink to rise no more and lifts us from the water. He saves us when no one else can. That is the message of the Good Samaritan.

As Jesus and His disciples got close to Jerusalem, they were welcomed into the home of Mary and Martha and their brother, Lazarus, for a meal. They were Jesus' friends but this time, Martha got anxious preparing the meal. Her sister, Mary, was sitting at Jesus' feet. *"Tell her to help me, Jesus,"* Martha asked. But Jesus spoke gently with Martha and said, *"Mary has chosen the best part."*

If you're feeling frustrated and confused like Martha, take Jesus' word to heart. For goodness' sake, sit down at Jesus' feet. Look in His Word and see what He has to say. That's what Mary did, and Jesus noticed.

NEXT: What's the only thing the disciples ever asked Jesus to teach them?



HAS THE
LORD JESUS
TOUCHED
YOUR LIFE?

IF YOU ARE HIS,
YOU CAN ALSO
REACH OUT YOUR
HAND AND TOUCH
SOME SOUL FOR
HIM TODAY.

LESSON 7

JESUS TELLS IT LIKE IT IS



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 11–12**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 11** and **Luke 12**

“Lord, teach us to pray” (11:1). The only record we have of something the disciples asked Jesus for was this.

They watched Jesus pray all the time; how He got away alone. Likely they overheard what He prayed, too.

Did you know that at this moment, the Lord Jesus Christ is at God’s right hand praying for you? He is our great Intercessor. It’s still a good idea to ask Him to teach us to pray.

The disciples weren’t asking for a technique, or art form, or ritual to follow. They weren’t asking *how*, they wanted to pray *like* Jesus.

This disciple asked the Lord, “Teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” We get an unexpected glimpse of John the Baptist here—the last one we get. We’re told John was a man of prayer. Is anyone going to say that about us? All great servants of God have been people of prayer.

In answer to their request, the Lord gives them a model of prayer. It was intended to be a spontaneous, personal prayer, like a son talks to his father. God the Father *knows you*. He doesn’t want you to put on airs, assume an

unnatural voice, and use flowery language. He wants you to talk like yourself in simple language. Don't you get weary of "wordy" prayers? God probably does, too.

"The Lord's Prayer," as it is sometimes called, begins with worship—"Hallowed be Your name." "Your kingdom come" is praying for God's will to be done on earth. It includes putting down evil and the putting up of good. It also means you want God's will in your life. Don't pray this prayer without meaning it.

Only those who know Jesus as Savior can pray this as the Lord intended; it's not for the unsaved. The only prayer God hears from the unsaved is, "God, be merciful to me a sinner" (18:13). You do not have to beg Him to save you; He will save you if you will come to Him. God *is* merciful and wants to extend mercy to you.

This prayer also asks for physical provision, "Give us day by day our daily bread." Then Jesus tells us to pray, "And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us." No one can measure up to this standard. Do you forgive everyone? Well, my friend, God wants us to forgive others. Our standard is set for us by Jesus Himself, "be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

God, help us to be men and women who pray. We do not need more preachers, churches, or missionaries, but we do need more people who know how to pray.

To further teach us, Jesus tells another parable about prayer that only Luke records. Prayer is like knocking on your friend's front door at midnight, asking for help. When your neighbor says, "*I'll get back to you in the morning,*" you keep knocking. You need help now!

Jesus contrasts that scenario with the assurance that when you ask God for help, He'll give it to you right then and there.

My friend, do you think God is asleep when you pray, and you can't wake Him up? Do you believe He doesn't want to answer your prayers?

God wants to answer your prayers and He will. You don't have to knock down heaven's door to get His attention. He's not reluctant to answer you (read Isaiah 65:24) but sometimes His answer is no. God *always* hears His child's prayer, and answers them, but when He says no it is because we're not praying for what is best for us.

Before you go to God in prayer, make sure He is really your Father. (Read John 1:12.) Believing the Lord Jesus Christ died for you and rose again for your salvation makes you a child of God. When you trust Christ as your Savior, you are baptized by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ, and you are a son who can go to God and say, "Father." If you ask your earthly father for bread, will he give you a stone? If you ask him for a fish, will he give you a serpent? Can you imagine a father doing that?

As Jesus continued to teach, He also continued healing people, sometimes by showing His authority over demons and demanding they leave people. The religious leaders couldn't deny Jesus worked miracles, but they tried to explain them away by saying He did them with power the devil gave Him. But Jesus Christ showed them the absurdity of their reasoning.

A house divided against itself falls. Would Satan be against himself?

Jesus is stronger than Satan and with a finger could throw a demon out of a man. He said He had the credentials to do it. Wicked people are everywhere and want to disarm us. Satan is also at work. As long as there is a strong enemy, we need to be armed in the power of God's Spirit.

Jesus didn't hold back when He described this generation in Israel as evil. They looked for a sign, but Jesus said the only one they would get was to be reminded of Jonah, the Old Testament prophet. Apparently, God raised Jonah from the dead after he was swallowed by the big fish. Jesus compared Jonah's experience with His own coming death and resurrection. But the Ninevites received Jonah and his preaching after his miraculous deliverance, and they repented of their sin. As a nation, Israel fared worse because they rejected Jesus as their Messiah and refused to repent.

Once again, in order to find something to entrap Jesus, a Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner. He surprised them by not going through ceremonial cleansing, a religious practice. But Jesus knew true religion is not about externalities, but a matter of the heart. Jesus then called the Pharisees frauds.

"You're frauds when you reflect false values. You keep meticulous accounting books, but look for loopholes to get around showing God's love.

"You're frauds when you look shiny, clean on the outside, but inside you're filled with maggots. You're worried about externals. You make the Law more difficult to follow but don't even try to follow it yourself.

“You can’t hide behind your religious masks forever. Your phoniness will be found out.”

Rather than object to what Jesus was saying, the Pharisees urged Him on, hoping He’d say something they could use against Him.

Meanwhile, the crowds following Jesus grew beyond number and He continued to teach and heal people. He invited thousands of handicapped people to walk and speak and see. He continued to publicly warn people of the Pharisee’s evil. *“But only fear God,”* He said. God is fully aware of your needs and He loves you. He sees your heart.

Jesus also assured people of the coming Holy Spirit. *“Don’t resist His convicting work in your heart and life. He’ll teach you how to respond to those who challenge your faith.”* And to His disciples, He promised the Holy Spirit would give them courage and wisdom to faithfully witness for Him.

Some people asked Jesus to play judge for them on family issues, but the Lord refused. When He came to earth the first time, Jesus came as Savior. The next time He comes it will be as Judge. But, out of this incident our Lord warned us against covetousness—when “things” become too important to us and occupy so much of our time. Covetousness is a tricky sin, defining life by what you have. You may not even be aware you are coveting. That’s why Jesus next tells the parable of the rich fool.

Once there was a man who had a lot of stuff, Jesus said. He thought he was set for life. He didn’t know God would call him to account that very night. This man had gathered all of his treasure on earth but had stored none in heaven. He wasn’t evil, but he thought this life is all there was, and lived only for himself as if there is nothing beyond death. Jesus called him a fool.

Instead, Jesus told His disciples, *“Don’t think about what you’ll eat or the clothes you wear. Your Father knows what you need. Go look at the birds. Learn something from them.”*

Search your heart and ask yourself, “Am I living for this life only?”

Use whatever ability He has given you, but not as if this was all there is to life. Don’t forget there is a God in heaven and that we all have an eternal soul. We will each stand before God, stripped of the things that filled up our life on earth. The only treasure you’ll have up there is what you sent ahead. If you lived without God, you will die without God.

“The day is coming,” the Lord Jesus said, *“when I will return to the earth.”* To help His people be ready, He tells two parables, primarily about Israel but in principle we can apply them to His coming at the Rapture.

He set the first parable in a wedding story. In Jesus’ day, a bride waited for her groom to come get her and bring her back to his house where he had prepared a feast. His groomsmen were expected to prepare the house for the return parade. They were supposed to light the lamps and wait for the couple’s return. *Be ready!* was the theme of this parable. Live like the bridegroom could return any moment.

The second parable, like the first, emphasizes our expectation of Jesus’ return—not only in waiting, but also working. We should live like He is coming any minute but work as though we had another thousand years. Work hard so we have more to lay at His feet in worship.

Jesus may not return today or tomorrow, but He is going to come back. Just because He hasn’t appeared yet, don’t let things slip. Keep God’s work your priority. When He does come, we will stand before Him as our judge and He will review what we’ve done for Him. This is not to determine if we are saved, but to judge if we will receive rewards. There will be degrees of rewards for those who believe in God just as there will be degrees of punishment for those who refuse to believe. One question separates people—do you believe in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ?

NEXT: You are invited to a feast. RSVP required.

LESSON 8

YOU ARE INVITED



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 13–15**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 13:1–14:7**, **Luke 14:7–15:3**, and **Luke 15:3-32**

Why do bad things happen? Essentially, that's what people asked Jesus. When people are killed, does that mean they are being judged? Jesus used these questions to stress that *today* is the day to repent of your sin. Sin didn't cause trouble to happen, but it does highlight the urgency of turning to God for forgiveness. Are you far from God? Turn around today!

Nobody is ever free of trouble. Even Christians should expect a little tribulation down here. It's often what keeps us close to God.

As Jesus made His way to Jerusalem, He taught and healed people, just as He had been doing in Galilee. To teach godly principles, He used object lessons from the landscape around them—fig trees, mustard seeds, and leaven.

The fig tree without fruit represents the nation Israel. The owner could cut down the tree for its lack of fruit, but he doesn't. God promised Israel blessings if they walked in the light He had given them and curses if they reject the light. God had given Israel special attention—He cultivated and fertilized them and they should have produced fruit. But they didn't and because of that, they experience God's judgment. They were scattered around the world. But they are still God's chosen people and someday He will bring them back to their land in faith and belief. Until then, they won't have peace.

Jesus also used the mustard seed and leaven to symbolize an outward expression of faith that has lost its true character. In both examples, evil actively grew. But in His own good time, Jesus Christ Himself assures us He will establish His Kingdom in this world.

As Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the Sabbath, He noticed a handicapped woman, who had been doubled over for 18 years. With compassion, He touched this desperate woman and she immediately stood up straight. She glorified God, but the religious rulers were outraged. It was the Sabbath and they were more interested in keeping the rules than freeing the poor woman. But Jesus saw the woman behind the argument. He sees you, too. Are you filled with doubts and fears? Are you confused or anxious? Bent double with the burdens of life? Then come to the Lord Jesus Christ with your burdens and sins. Come to Him anytime—He is ready to meet your need.

Jesus continued to move toward Jerusalem, on His way to die, and the crowds still followed Him, asking questions. The more He talked, the more they realized that it's costly to follow Him. (It still is.)

Still Jesus longs that the crowds would recognize Him as Messiah and grieves when they don't. He loves Jerusalem, the city where He was about to die, but sobs as He pronounces judgment upon the "city of the great King." He also announces that He is coming again—and the next time will be the real Triumphal Entry.

DINNER WITH THE PHARISEES

Thanks to the Gospel of Luke who alone records this, we get to accompany Jesus to dinner at the home of the chief Pharisee. But there's a story to tell as Jesus schools His host and guests in etiquette.

The Pharisee had asked Jesus over for dinner on the Sabbath in order to spy on Him. They needed something to discredit Him. The first test: a disabled man was deliberately put in Jesus' path to see if Jesus would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were up to. He asked, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?" (14:3). They were afraid to answer Him. Then Jesus healed the man and let him go and turned to His hosts, "*If your ox or donkey fell into a ditch on the Sabbath, would you rescue it?*" Of course they would, and everyone knew it.

Then, to heighten the tension in the room, Jesus told a parable that highlighted more issues. In that day dinner party guests were not assigned places at the table, but when the dinner bell rang, they rushed to get the best seats. Jesus described how the Pharisees pushed and rushed to get the place of honor, like children playing musical chairs. Jesus corrected their manners and tells them they should instead choose the lowest seat for themselves. If the host sees where you are sitting, he will say, “You are to be my guest of honor. Please sit in the seat of honor.” Then someone else will have to move. This is just good manners, Jesus said, and an important principle for us as believers. He also encourages us to do something kind for those who have nothing, for those who can’t pay us back.

Back at the dinner, the tension continues and no one says a word. To break the ice, a guest fires off a pious cliché about eating bread in the kingdom. But Jesus doesn’t let their self-righteousness go unaddressed. He tells another story about a host who invites people over for dinner but no one wants to come, each making their own excuse. So the host tells his servants, *“Go to the city streets and alleys and get everyone who needs a good meal—anyone who wants to come, welcome them in. Fill the house! But nobody originally invited gets a bite from the table.”*

Of course, this is like God’s invitation to us to come to Him for eternal life. You can’t buy your way to this feast. You can’t elbow your way in. You come to this dinner by the grace of God (see Ephesians 2:8-9). You receive this dinner invitation like receiving a gift. The only thing that will exclude anyone from heaven is a refusal to accept the invitation. This engraved invitation is for you. Jesus Christ wrote it with His blood and invites you to the great table of salvation.

If you reject God’s invitation, He will honor your choice and exclude you. Jesus tells us to make our relationship with God the most important thing in our lives. By comparison, everything else looks like hate.

PARABLE SNAPSHOTS

The Gospel of Luke also records other parables Jesus used to teach. Here’s a snapshot of them:

Jesus asks if we would ever build a tower without calculating what it would take in cost, man-hours, and material to finish the project. He wanted to communicate it costs something to be His disciple. Think it over, friend. Count the cost before you decide.

Or, Jesus asks, would a king invade another king's territory without first deciding whether it is possible to win? If he can't win, won't he try to work out a truce? *"If you're not willing to sacrifice what is dearest to you, you can't be my disciple,"* Jesus said. There's a difference between being a believer and being a disciple. Unfortunately, not all believers are Jesus' disciples.

If you have ears, listen to God's Word! Nothing is more worthless than salt that has lost its saltiness. May the Lord deliver us from being useless Christians.

Then Jesus told one of His most loved parables: The Prodigal Son. But to get Jesus' point, we'll look at three pictures that belong together.

The first picture is of a lost sheep. The shepherd had 100 sheep, and one got lost. So he went to look for it. When he found it, he put it on his shoulders, the place of strength. This is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ out looking for those who are His own. When Jesus starts out with 100 sheep, He will come through with 100 sheep.

The second picture is of a lost coin. Jesus asks, *"If a woman has ten pieces of silver, if she loses one piece, doesn't she sweep the house, and look diligently for it till she finds it?"* The coin was probably part of the row of coins that formed a headpiece that let everyone know she was married. To lose a part of it was like losing a stone out of your wedding ring. The woman pictures the Holy Spirit whose ministry is to make sure that each one who belongs to the Bridegroom will be present for the wedding. Every coin will be in place. Every person is valuable to Him.

The third picture is a glorious masterpiece which only Dr. Luke records. Imagine the Lord painting first the background of the story on the canvas. It's a lovely home and out in front there stands a father and two boys. The home has everything you could want—love, joy, fellowship, comforts—but the younger son wanted out from under his father. So the boy left with his pockets full of money, every bit his father had given to him. He didn't get it by his ability, he didn't get it because he was clever, and he didn't get it because he had worked hard. The money he had in his pocket was there because he had a very generous father. So the boy leaves his father and his home.

Now our scene shifts to a far country where the boy lived it up for a time. He enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season, but all too soon he had nothing left in his pockets. Not only is he in a bad way financially, but so is the country. The grass he thought was greener, has now dried up. The boy doesn't know what to do. Afraid to go home, his friends were gone and

he couldn't get a job. When Jesus described him working in a pig sty and eating their slop, every Jewish person listening that day winced because they couldn't go any lower than that.

Now, some might say, *this must be the place where this sinner gets saved.* But that's not the story Jesus is telling. This is about a son out of fellowship with his father, who now hits bottom. He was living with the pigs, but he was not a pig—he is still a son.

This parable reveals the heart of a Father who will not only save a sinner but will also take back a son that sins.

“Now,” Jesus said, *“the son came to himself.”* Sin makes us see the world incorrectly and ourselves in the wrong light. Now the boy thinks about home. He humbles himself and begins to think intelligently.

He pictures his father's house. And there's the dad, who's been looking out the window every day since his boy left. He knew one day his boy would be coming down the road ... and now here he comes. The father then did something amazing. When our Lord got to this part of the parable, no doubt those listening had to blink back some tears. The boy should have been punished, but instead when the boy was still a ways off, the father saw him and ran down the road to him. The boy was in rags and he reeked of pigs, but the dad hugged and kissed him.

The boy had memorized a little speech about not being worthy to be his son, but the dad interrupted him and said, “My son was dead and is alive again” (15:24). The father then wraps the boy in clean clothing after he'd been washed. (The Lord cleanses His sons who come back to Him from a far country and covers them with the robe of righteousness in Christ.) He gave his son his ring, the insignia that entitles him to all his rights as a son. The son is brought back into his original place in the father's house. He says, *“You're my son. I'll cleanse you, I'll forgive you, I'll bring you back into the place of fellowship and usefulness.”*

A son is a son forever.

But there's another Prodigal Son in this parable—the elder brother. While this joyous reunion is happening, this son is complaining. He's the *real* Prodigal Son. He was so angry that his wayward brother was being honored with a party that he wouldn't join the feast. His father had to beg him to come in.

Like this older brother, some Christians try to live for God but they don't lay hold of all their spiritual blessings in Christ. God says, *"It is all yours; everything that I have belongs to you—take it."* Our heavenly Father is rich in spiritual blessings and they belong to us, but He will not force them on us. We must reach out and take them for ourselves. The story closes with the elder son out of fellowship with his Father. The Father, however, left the door to fellowship wide open.

Sinner friend, if you have never trusted Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are not the Father's son. You can become a son only by putting your faith and trust in Christ who died for you. If you accept Christ and come to Him, God becomes your Father and He will never shut the door on you. If you leave Him and one day return, He will be waiting to wrap His arms around you. That's how wonderful He is!

NEXT: Where do our bodies and souls go after we die?

LESSON 9

MONEY, DEATH, AND HELL



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 16–17**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 16:1-18** and **Luke 16:19–17:37**

Some topics attract attention like flies. Jesus touches on many of those core topics here in this survey of parables, instruction, and discipleship.

The first is a parable about money and ambition. On the surface it looks like Jesus praises a crook. Unlike the other Gospel writers who use comparison, Luke often tells parables of contrasts. This is what it is *not* like

In this parable, the Lord tells us about a man who lived by the world's laws, which first demand "self-preservation." A rich man put a steward in charge of his estate. But the steward wasted his boss' property. Rather than give account for the losses and risk getting fired, the steward called everyone who owed his boss money and shrewdly negotiated their debt—different terms for everyone. And the scheme worked. The rich man got richer and praised his steward for his worldly wisdom according to his worldly dealings.

The Lord Jesus said, "For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light" (16:8). What? That sounds like Jesus is siding with the world. No, Jesus says we should be strategic and wise the same way, but for what is right. We should use our money for good.

Money is not evil in itself. The *love of money* is the root of all evil. For believers, money is just a tool. Our use of money is a spiritual discipline; we should be wise in how we manage what God gives us. Our Lord said we should lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven.

Do you make smart use of your money? Do you use it to gather spiritual wealth? God will hold you responsible for what He gives you—not only for giving it, but for investing it where it will yield the highest dividends in people reached with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Jesus sums it up with the challenge, “*Will God trust you with heavenly riches if you are not wisely managing what He has given you on earth?*” God sees behind your bank account and knows if you are honest in small things, then He can entrust big things to you. If you serve money here, then it’s not possible to serve God, too.

The Pharisees listening to Jesus teach felt convicted by this message. (They really loved money.) God knew their hearts and He knows yours. We can put up a front with each other but not with God.

In another parable, again concerning a wealthy man, Jesus drew from real life and actually named names. This story tells of a rich man who lived and died without God. Jesus spoke as naturally about life after death as He speaks of this life.

In the parable, the rich man and a beggar named Lazarus died on the same day—two men on opposite sides of life’s spectrum. One lived on the top of culture, the other in extreme poverty.

Most people wrote Lazarus off. The rich man probably had buildings named after him. When the beggar died, they just threw his body into the Valley of Gehenna, a garbage dump continually on fire. But the minute the beggar stepped through death’s doorway, angels became his pall bearers and carried him into Abraham’s Bosom.

The rich man also died and was buried. He had a big funeral, and the preacher pushed him all the way to the top spot in heaven. The only trouble is the preacher got his directions mixed up; the rich man went the other way.

Notice two things we learn about life after death: The lost go to a place of conscious torment, and people know each other after death; we do not lose our identities.

In Greek, the word *hell* is hades, meaning “the unseen world.” Actually, *hell*, as we think of it, has not yet been opened up for business. The Bible doesn’t speak of it till Revelation 20:10 when it tells us hell’s first occupants will be the Antichrist and the false prophet.

When they died, Lazarus and the rich man went to the unseen world, the place of the departed dead. Death equals separation, not extinction.

When we physically die, our spirit moves out of our body. Our spiritual death means we will be eternally separated from God. When Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, he died. Sin immediately separated him from God. People are dead while they live (see Ephesians 2:1).

To understand this parable, we must know that Sheol or hades (translated *hell* in the New Testament) is divided into two parts: paradise (which Jesus called Abraham’s Bosom) and the place of torment. After Jesus died on the cross but before He rose again, He descended into hades, entered the paradise section, emptied it, and took everyone into God’s presence. No one occupies the paradise section of hades today. (See Ephesians 4:8-10.)

The place of torment will deliver up the lost for judgment at the Great White Throne (see Revelation 20:11-15). All who stand at this judgment are lost, and they will be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death.

When the rich man died, his spirit went to the place of torment with others who are lost. The beggar went to the compartment called paradise or Abraham’s Bosom. Going through the doorway of death certainly changed their status. Their eternal destinies weren’t because they were rich or poor, but was determined by their heart condition. The rich man becomes the beggar, while the beggar is now the rich man.

Through this entire section the Lord has been saying that man cannot judge by the outward appearance who is spiritual and who is dead.

What about today? Where do our bodies and souls go after we die? Since Jesus conquered death at His resurrection, when followers of Jesus Christ die today, their bodies go into the grave and return to dust, but their spirits go to be with Christ. (See 2 Corinthians 5:8.) The lost today still go to the place of torment in hades. In fact, it’s the only part of hades still occupied.

Our body is merely the physical house we live in. When we die, we move out of our old homes. You can do anything you want with the old house after it is deserted, but the important thing is what happens to the spirit after it has left the body.

Heaven is a real place. The moment you die you will either go there to be with Christ, or you will go to the place of torment where you will ultimately be judged and then cast into the lake of fire. God never intended the latter as an end for anyone from the human family. The lake of fire was made for the devil and his angels (see Matthew 25:41). You *choose* your final destination.

There is a great gulf fixed between heaven and hell, Jesus made that very clear. You must decide in this life where you will go after your death. You do not get a second chance after death.

Many people think that if someone could return from the dead to tell them what it was like, we would all choose to receive God's gift of salvation. Well, Someone *has* come back from the dead. His name is Jesus Christ. They did not believe Him any more than they believed Moses and the prophets.

Today is the day to decide where your spirit goes after death. Do not delay making your choice. You will have no opportunity after death.

HOW TO GET TO HEAVEN—OTHER VIEWS

As Jesus taught, many views came up about what it means to follow Him.

In Jesus' day as well as today, some people believe if they follow the Sermon on the Mount and are good neighbors and try to love people, that someday God is going to pat them on the back and say, "What a fine person you are. You have earned your way to heaven." Even if you *could* keep the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount (you can't), you are doing only what you are supposed to do, Jesus said. Why would you be saved for that? Real salvation is a *gift from God*; you cannot work for it. Keeping God's Law is what God's people do because they want to please God (not to be saved by doing it).

One of the greatest delusions of our time is that man is going to improve himself and his world; that he is going to build the Kingdom of God without God. He expects to bring in the Millennium without Christ as King. As we will see, Jesus says differently.

THANK GOD

As the Lord traveled on His way to Jerusalem, He passed through a town where ten men who had leprosy stood at a distance. They cried out to Jesus from a distance, *“Please, Jesus, have mercy on us. Heal us!”*

Jesus had compassion on them and told them to go show themselves to a priest (common practice to be allowed back into the community). As they went, they discovered they were all healed. One of them, a Samaritan, turned back, ran to Jesus and fell at His feet, thanking Him and loudly glorifying God.

Then Jesus did a second thing for him—He forgave his sins. The other nine lepers were healed but were not saved. Thankfulness should constantly fill the Christian’s heart.

Why do you go to church on Sunday? Isn’t part of your worship to thank Him for all He has done for you? About the only thing we can give God is our thanksgiving. How wonderful it is just to thank Him.

THE KINGDOM TO COME

On another day, a Pharisee asked Jesus about the kingdom of God—what it is like and when it will come. Jesus told him the kingdom of God was in their midst, in the person of the King, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He was right *then* standing in front of them.

Jesus spoke a great deal about the Kingdom that is still to come. His eyes were fixed on the future—the change coming and His return to earth. He warns His followers not to be deceived about His return.

Jesus spoke of His return in two phases. The first is when He come in the clouds and raptures His church to meet Him (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Jesus does not touch ground. In this passage in Luke, Jesus tells us about the second phase of His return, when He returns to earth to establish His Kingdom. This will take place after both the Rapture and the Great Tribulation.

The first time Jesus came, no one recognize Him because they were looking for a conquering Messiah to deliver them from Rome. The next time He will come in glory to establish His Kingdom. His coming and purpose will be as public as lightning.

The first time, Jesus came to die for our sins. He came by way of the Cross to rescue us. He outlined God's program very clearly: He would suffer and be rejected by His people.

He compared people in the future to two past generations—like in the days of Noah when people lived like God didn't exist and in Lot's day when God said judgment was coming and people simply didn't believe it.

In Noah's day, God took the righteous out of the world and those who were lost remained to die in the flood. And God wouldn't destroy Sodom until Lot had run out of it. Neither will He bring the Great Tribulation to this earth (which happens just before Jesus returns to the earth) until He takes His own out of the world.

God has a people in the world today who are just like Lot. Although they have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, they compromise with the world. Yet as believers, they will be taken out of the world before the day of judgment. Today the world doesn't listen to the church. As in Lot's day, they mock the warning when all that is needed is for them to believe God.

One of the great paradoxes of Scripture is that if you try to be saved on your own terms, you'll lose your life. But if you are willing to lose your control and turn your life over to Jesus Christ, you'll be saved.

As Jesus considered the Cross, just days away now, this view of the future took its proper place.

**NEXT: God *wants* to hear and answer your prayer.
If you believe that, how would you pray differently?**

LESSON 9



FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. “Some topics attract attention like flies. Jesus touches on many of those core issues here in this survey of parables, instruction, and discipleship.” What does this passage say about these topics and in what ways can we make these relevant today?

MONEY:

DEATH:

HELL:

REAL SALVATION IS A

gift from God;



YOU CANNOT WORK
FOR IT.



THRUtheBIBLE

LESSON 10

PRAYERS AND PUBLICANS



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 18–20**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 18**, **Luke 19**, and **Luke 20**

As we continue our study of Jesus' final days before the Cross, it's good to pause and consider the Lord Jesus Himself. Jesus is a real man; He's human. He's also God in the flesh, with skin on. He was not any less God because He was man. Nor was He any more man because He was God. If you could have been with Him in this day, you would have enjoyed His company. In His presence you would have the best time you ever had. He would have made you laugh and made you think. He would have looked into your eyes like He knew you, which of course, He does. We'll see all that in how Jesus interacts with people along the road to Jerusalem.

Jesus knows all about faith and fear. We are living in days, as He described, when men's hearts fail them because of fear. In one parable He pictured our need to "always ... pray and not lose heart" (18:1)—because those are our choices.

There once was a judge who cared more about his advancement than righteous decisions. A woman desperate for help came to him for justice, but he couldn't be bothered with her. The funny thing was, she wouldn't leave until she got his help. So reluctantly, he listened.

Some describe this lesson as persisting in prayer—as though somehow God will hear if you hold on long enough. Instead, the Lord says, *“When you come to God in prayer, do you think that God is an unjust judge?”* No, He says, God *wants* to hear and answer prayer. If you believe that, how would your prayers change? Go to God knowing He wants to hear your request and He wants to answer.

Jesus tells us more about prayer in His parable about the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee was at the top of the religious ladder. The publican (a tax guy) was at the bottom. When the Pharisee prayed, he revealed his prideful heart. *“Thank you, God, that I am better than other men”* Jesus said the Pharisee was just talking to himself—his prayer never got out of the rafters. All he did was have a pep talk; he patted himself on the back and went out proud as a peacock. God never heard that prayer.

Meanwhile the tax man, a sinner as low as they come, a guy who sold out his country for money, slumped in the shadows, his face in his hands, not daring to look up, said, *“God, give mercy. Forgive me, a sinner.”* As a publican, he was not allowed in the temple and had no access to that mercy seat in the Holy of Holies. He said, *“Lord, if you could only make a mercy seat for me! I want to come.”*

Jesus said *that* man was heard. Why? Because Jesus was on the way to the cross to make a mercy seat for him. Christ is the mercy seat for our sins, and for the sins of the whole world. (See 1 John 2:2.)

It’s no surprise that along the way to Jerusalem, little children flocked to Jesus. The disciples tried to keep them away, but Jesus welcomed them. God have mercy on any adult who keeps children from God. Little children will follow your example. Even though they too have a fallen nature, before a child reaches an accountable age, the only decision they can make is one suggested to them. They trust in you. They will do what you want them to do.

Also along the way, Jesus met a young leader who wanted to know how to get eternal life. He carefully followed the first part of the ten commandments dealing with man’s relationship with man. But he lacked a relationship with God. Jesus invited him to follow Him—but he needed to first sell everything he had (and he had a lot). Jesus knew his money stood in the way. For another person it might have been something else. What stands in your way of following Jesus?

Another man got Jesus' attention along the way near Jericho. He cried out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" (18:38). He may have been blind, but he had great faith that Jesus could heal him.

"What do you want from me?" Jesus asked him. He said, *"Master, I want to see again."* And Jesus healed him instantly because of His faith. After he was healed, he followed Jesus with his eyes open. What will he see in a few days? Jesus dying on the cross. Multitudes of people today with perfect vision have not yet seen Jesus' death on the cross related to their lives and the forgiveness of their sins. If you have not yet done so—*look and live!*

Another man in Jericho was on a certain path far from God. Zacchaeus was the chief publican and he made his profession pay. He turned his back on his country and gave up his religion. He had gone down a one-way street chasing riches, and he knew of no way to get back to the mercy seat. He wanted mercy, and our Lord knew that.

When Jesus passed through Jericho, the crowds overwhelmed him. Zacchaeus couldn't get close to Him, so he climbed a sycamore tree in order to watch the parade. Only Jesus knew he was up there. When Jesus looked up that sycamore tree and saw Zacchaeus, He probably laughed. Picture Him saying, *"Get down here, Zacchaeus. I'm going to your house for dinner."*

No one witnessed Jesus and Zacchaeus' dinner conversation, but when the door opened later that day, Zacchaeus was a new man. He admitted his guilt of robbing the poor and promised to make right the things he had done wrong. When our Lord talked to people He usually spoke of two things: (1) our need and (2) God's ability to meet our need. Zacchaeus knew he was a sinner, and so did everyone else. Jesus told him there was a remedy for sin. He said, *"I am going to Jerusalem to die on the cross so that there will be a mercy seat for you, Zacchaeus."*

The only way the world will know that you are converted is by what they see in your life. If it were not for Zacchaeus' changed life, no one would have known the old publican got saved. Zacchaeus showed his faith by his works. He did not talk about his faith; he demonstrated it. The world is not *listening* for something today; it is *looking* for something. Zacchaeus had what the world is looking for. Jesus had dinner with him and his life changed.

Jesus is still entering and passing through your town wherever it is, and He wants to have dinner with those who do not know Him. He wants to talk about your soul and salvation. What about it? Has He passed through your home? Has He knocked on your heart's door? Have you let Him in?

JESUS ENTERS JERUSALEM

By piecing the Gospel accounts together, we see Jesus entered Jerusalem once a day on three separate days. The first day, Saturday (the Sabbath), Jesus entered as Priest. The next day, Sunday, Jesus cleansed the temple as King. And on Monday, Jesus wept over Jerusalem and entered the temple and taught and healed. He entered as Prophet. On this third day, He came in riding a young colt. The crowd spread their clothes on the path for Him and waved palm branches—a picture of a warrior returning victorious from battle.

The crowd did not know the full significance of their action (a few days later another crowd cried, “Crucify Him!”). Even the disciples didn’t recognize how important this scene was until later. But Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem got the attention of the Roman rulers, upset for two reasons: Jesus accepted the reverence and loyalty of these followers, and He did not silence them. But the Lord Jesus recognized eternal and significant issues were at stake here and that to quiet His followers would force the silent stones to cry out.

This so-called triumphal entry ended at the cross. When Jesus Christ enters Jerusalem on His second time, it will be the *true* Triumphal Entry. This first time was to die for our sins. By His death and resurrection, salvation is offered to us. The next time, He will come as Judge.

Every day in this important week before the Cross, Jesus taught in the temple and continued to battle the religious leaders in pointed questions and answers. They tried to trap Him, but He always brilliantly engaged them. Finally, Jesus silenced them by telling them the parable of the vineyard.

The owner of the vineyard kept sending servants to the farmer to see how things were going, Jesus said. One by one the servants were beaten. The parable became all too clear to the leaders. God sent prophet after prophet to Israel, and they were absolutely rejected. Many of them were stoned and killed. Finally the Father sent His Son.

Jesus Christ was the Son, and He let these religious rulers know He knew their plan to kill Him. They were going to crucify Him, and God was going to permit it. They could not, however, thwart God’s purposes—to save. The stone they rejected, God will use as the cornerstone of the new building He was constructing.

Today we can fall on that Stone, who is Christ Jesus, and be saved. When we come to Him as a sinner, broken in spirit, broken in heart, He will save us.

This parable infuriated the religious rulers. They got Jesus' message loud and clear.

Three groups hammered Jesus with questions. The first, the Herodians, hoped to trap Jesus. *"Should we pay taxes to Caesar?"* It was their trick question. If Jesus had said "yes," then He would have put Caesar ahead of Moses and ahead of their Messiah. If He had said "no"—not to pay tribute to Caesar—then He would have been arrested by Rome.

But Jesus' answer was masterful. He asked for the Roman denarius (perhaps He didn't have any money). He held up the coin so everyone saw Caesar's image on it. *"Give Caesar what is his and give God what is His."*

The Jews owed Rome something for the use of their coins, their roads, and their law and order. Caesar had something coming to him. But God had something coming to Him also. He provided all the utilities: lights, air, water, and everything we need to survive. We have both an earthly and a heavenly obligation. Citizens of heaven pay taxes down here. Pilgrims down here should deposit eternal wealth in heaven.

The second group of religious leaders were the Sadducees. They watched Jesus handily answer the Herodians and Pharisees, but they thought they could trip up Jesus with a question with no answer. But Jesus called out both their lack of knowledge of Scripture and their lack of faith.

The Sadducees rejected anything supernatural and denied the miraculous. They didn't believe in the Resurrection and they believed Scripture had errors all through it.

After Jesus rose from the dead, many Pharisees became Christians. The Sadducees, however, persecuted the early church (see Acts 3-4). They refused to believe in Jesus' resurrection. The Sadducees were the worst enemies the gospel of Christ ever had—whether in the first or the twentieth century.

Finally, Jesus concludes this Q & A time by asking the scribes a question using Psalm 110. *"How could King David, speaking of a future descendant, call his own great-great-great-grandson his Lord?"*

Jesus' answer drew a line in the sand. The only way David can call Him his Lord is for that Lord to be Jesus Himself. The Lord must be virgin born to be the Son of God. Jesus makes it very clear: He is teaching about His own virgin birth. Jesus says David wrote Psalm 110 by the Holy Spirit and the psalm witnesses about Him, the Messiah.

There was no mistaking who Jesus said He is: He is Messiah, Son of God, come to die for the sins of the world. He will die, be buried, and be raised from the dead on the third day. Believe this and you will be saved. Reject this and follow on the path to hell and eternal separation from God. The line is that clear.

NEXT: Did you know the Lord prays for you today?

LESSON 11

WHEN WILL THIS HAPPEN?



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 21:1–22:38**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 21** and **Luke 22:1-34**

Near the end of His earthly ministry, in an important moment with His disciples, Jesus sat on a hill overlooking Jerusalem and talked about the things to come. At the time, much of what Jesus said was prophecy. Now we see it through history's lens.

From the Mount of Olives, the disciples looked across the Kidron Valley at the magnificent Temple Mount. *"It's amazing,"* they said. The valuable stones, the rich furnishings, the wealth—all so impressive.

Jesus told them soon its magnificence would be gone. The temple would lie in rubble, not one stone left on another. Much like the riches of this world that will soon pass away.

"When will this happen?" The disciples asked. *"What will be the signs?"*

History tells us Titus the Roman besieged Jerusalem in 70 a.d. The disciples who were alive then, about 40 years later, likely remembered Jesus' words when they looked over the battlements of Jerusalem's walls and saw the banners of Titus' army unfurled. *This is the day the Lord talked about.* (That will be people's experience again during the last days.)

What will be the signs?

With a prophetic eye to the future, Jesus then described the times leading up to the end. There will be false Christs, He said. Many men had declared themselves to be messiahs in His day. Even today many claim supernatural power. They may even talk a great deal about Jesus and move themselves into His place and take the glory that should be His.

Wars will intensify toward the end of the age and fill an entire season until the Lord returns. Earthquakes, famines, diseases, and signs from heaven will be common.

Then specifically, the nation Israel will suffer persecution and will need to be ready to testify about God. And about the 144,000 Jews who will be indestructible during the Great Tribulation, Jesus said they will be betrayed and hated but will survive. Jews will suffer more than any other time in history.

When the Lord described what will happen in 70 A.D., He drew a miniature picture of what will happen in the last days. Some claim that kind of travesty could never happen a second time. The Lord said it would happen, and it did, and He says it will happen again.

As He said, later that first century, the Jews were scattered. Titus put them in slavery all around the Roman world. They built the great Colosseum in Rome. From the day Titus entered Jerusalem, two thousand years ago, Gentiles have controlled Jerusalem. “Holy places” in Jerusalem are held by Gentiles. And there stands the Mosque of Omar, the “Dome of the Rock” where their temple should be. Our Lord said Jerusalem would be trodden down of the Gentiles until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled.

Are we in the last days? Are these things beginning to come to pass?

Yes, things are bad today. Political crises and social distress cause great concern. Physical disturbances are overwhelming, but they are going to get much worse in the last days. All we know for sure is that our salvation and redemption is nearer now than when we first believed. Jesus is coming back—you can know this for sure.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (21:33). “*Be aware,*” He said, “*don’t let down your guard today, and don’t give up.*”

These are great days to live for God! He has not called you to change the world—that’s His business. He has asked you to live for Him, and to get His Word out. Isn’t it comforting to know what He wants you to do?

Jesus further instructs: Watch and pray so you will be counted worthy to escape these coming days. What makes you worthy? Only your position in Christ Jesus. Trust Him as your Savior, and commit your way to Him. If you've done that, and if you're alive at the Rapture, you'll meet Him in the air when He calls His church to Himself.

When Jesus taught this on the Mount of Olives, Scripture says people got up at dawn to go listen to Him. Wouldn't you have loved to have been with that group to hear Him?

THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

But not everyone received Jesus' word. Among those who sat and listened to Jesus were those who plotted His death. The time was getting closer.

The religious rulers would have arrested and killed Him on the spot, but they were afraid of the people. Thousands were in Jerusalem for Passover, and they loved to listen to Jesus.

Among Jesus' own disciples, there was one who didn't believe. Judas rejected Jesus' claim to be Messiah and the enemy of our souls used that against him. Like into a vacant building, Satan "entered" Judas and began to control him.

One day when the religious rulers were wondering how they were going to take Jesus, Judas comes along and offers to betray Him. The plot was: Wait until the crowd leaves Jerusalem. Wait until we can get Him alone so people will not know what we are doing. Judas should wait and let the religious rulers know when the time was right. But their plan was useless, because Jesus forced them to act immediately. As they ate the Passover together for the last time, Jesus told Judas, "*What you're planning to do, do quickly,*" and Judas did just that.

In Passover tradition, they passed the cup several times, but the Lord did not drink the last cup, the cup of joy. *Did He ever drink it?* On the cross they gave Him vinegar to drink. Hebrews 12:2 says, "... for the joy that was set before Him [He] endured the cross"

On the dying embers of the fading feast of Passover, the Lord Jesus Christ fanned into flame the new feast of the Lord's Supper. "He took bread, gave thanks, and broke it Likewise He also took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you'" (22:19-20).

The Lord took two of the most fragile elements in the world as symbols of His body and blood. Bread and wine—both will spoil in a few days. He declared that the bread spoke of His body and the wine spoke of His blood. The bread speaks of His body broken—not a *bone* broken but a broken *body* because He was made sin for us (see 2 Corinthians 5:21).

For centuries the Passover feast had looked forward to the Lord's coming and His death. Now in the shadow of the cross, this is the last Passover. The Passover feast has now been fulfilled. When we gather about the Lord's Table today, we remember Him. We look back to what He did for us on the cross, and we look forward to His coming again. (See 1 Corinthians 11:26.)

The disciples present didn't fully grasp all that Jesus was telling them that night. While Jesus washed their feet and told them of things to come, they argued among themselves about who was the greatest. Right in the shadow of the cross these men are grasping for position.

In contrast, the Lord tells them He has taken the lower position. That is what He did when He took our place on the cross. It's like a master getting up from the table and telling his servant, "Sit down and eat, and I will serve you." When Jesus Christ came to earth, all mankind should have been His servant, but instead He served mankind. He set a table of salvation and invited us to feast.

The Lord is gracious to His disciples and praises them for continuing with Him through His ministry on earth. He tells them they will have a special place in His kingdom. Why? These men bridged the gap between the Old and New Testaments. They came out of the Old Testament's way of doing things and established the ground for the New Testament. They will not only eat and drink at the Lord's table but will also sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. That will be their position.

As the Last Supper ended, Jesus gives Peter a special message. He told him that He has prayed for him, that Satan wanted to destroy him, but Jesus had prayed for his faith to be strong and then with that stronger faith that he would strengthen other followers.

The Lord knew Peter would deny Him that night, and yet He said, "*I pray for you that your faith won't fail.*" Peter didn't believe that he could deny his Lord, but he did—before the night was over.

After the Lord restores Peter to fellowship, Peter goes through a tremendous change of heart and mind that will strengthen and help the body of Christ. The one who has been tested is the one who is really able to help others, even if they fail and must come back to the Lord.

Did you know the Lord prays for you today? He knows when you are moving toward the place of failure and stumbling. If you belong to Him, He prays that your faith won't fail. You may fail Him, but if you belong to Him, your *faith* will not fail—because He has prayed for you. The Lord doesn't pray for the world. He died for the world, but He prays for His own that they will be kept while they are in the world.

The Lord Jesus Christ prays for you today. You may not pray for yourself but He has prayed for you. What a beautiful picture of His love!

In this final night together, Jesus warns His own of the difficult days ahead. He reminded them, *“Remember when I sent you out without anything? What did you lack?”* *“Nothing,”* they said. Now He sends them out on a new mission with a new message. And they will have a new audience because they will take the message that Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the world beyond Israel and to the world.

NEXT: What was the difference between the two thieves?

LESSON 11

FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Jesus' discussion of things to come can be seen today as both history (some things have happened) and prophecy (some things are yet to come). How does this give you confidence that Jesus is coming back for us? What should we do in the meantime?

2. Did you know the Passover feast Jesus celebrated with His disciples (the Last Supper) is linked to the Lord's Table, or Communion, that we celebrate as the body of Christ? What are your new insights into this celebration?

3. "Did you know the Lord prays for you today? He knows when you are moving toward the place of failure and stumbling. If you belong to Him, He prays that your faith won't fail. You may fail Him, but if you belong to Him, your faith will not fail—because He has prayed for you. The Lord doesn't pray for the world. He died for the world but He prays for His own that they will be kept while they are in the world." How does this encourage/strengthen you?

LESSON 12

FROM THE GARDEN TO THE CROSS



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 22:39–23:43**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 22:35-62** and **Luke 22:63–23:43**

Gethsemane is holy ground; we need to remove our shoes as we stand on this sacred spot. We can't go with Jesus into His experience here, but must stay outside with the disciples and listen in the darkness to Jesus' suffering soul. As our hearts break for Him, we should thank God for the One who pressed the cup of our sorrow and suffering to His lips and drank it to the very dregs. He drank the bitter cup so that ours might be sweet. We should worship Him as we watch Him in the garden, though we cannot comprehend the mystery of what He accomplished there.

In Gethsemane, the Lord wrestled with an unseen foe. At the beginning of our Lord's ministry, Satan tempted Him in the wilderness. He offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would worship him (and skip the cross). After Jesus defeated the tempter in the wilderness, Satan left Him "for a season." Now at the end of the Lord's earthly ministry, Satan tempts Him to avoid the cross again.

The Lord told His disciples He would suffer many things and that His enemies would put Him to death. The first time Peter heard this he reacted, "Never!" The Lord knew where that word came from and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan" (4:8). Satan's theology has no place for the cross of Christ.

Jesus took Peter, James, and John with Him to Gethsemane to pray. The three men fell asleep, but the Lord agonized in prayer. He asked His Father if the cup might be removed. Some say that Jesus was afraid to die—or afraid of the means of death. But the Roman cross holds no merit. If Jesus had died any other way, it would have had just as much value. His death has the merit.

It was not the suffering of death Jesus asked to be removed, it was “the cup” that was repulsive. He would bear our sin and be the punishment for us. Jesus is the Holy One of God—pure and blameless. At the cross, our vile and disgusting sin was put upon Him. While the world rejects the Holy One of God, the spotless Savior was made sin for us.

It was here, under the shadow of the cross, that Satan offered Jesus the crown without the cross. But the Lord had come to do His Father’s will, and so He could say, “Not My will, but Yours, be done” (22:42). The victory of Calvary was won in Gethsemane.

Only in Luke’s Gospel do we learn that just as angels served the Lord after His temptation in the wilderness so they strengthen Him again in the garden. And only Luke (always the physician) tells us about how Jesus sweat great drops of blood. He physically agonized over the conflict that confronted Him. Even here, the Lord shed His blood for us, and we should bow in reverence and worship.

Christ’s heart broke over our lost souls. He bled and died for our eternal forgiveness. He loved a lost world so much that He went to the very depths of hell itself to offer us salvation.

Stand in the hush of Gethsemane and listen. Do you hear the sob of His soul? Do you hear the falling drops of blood? Look through the olive trees and see Him bending low in agonizing prayer, the Savior who took upon Himself our humanity. He is now just hours from the cross.

When Jesus won the battle in Gethsemane, He roused the disciples and challenged them to pray so they wouldn’t give in to temptation. And while He spoke, the soldiers’ torches filled the darkness, with Judas leading the way. He walked straight to Jesus and kissed Him on the cheek, the identifying signal to the soldiers (Jesus, in His humanity, looked like everyone else).

Judas knew where the Lord liked to hang out, and he led the enemy straight to Him. How dastardly to use a kiss, a badge of love and affection, to betray Jesus Christ. And so, according to prophecy, Jesus was delivered into the hands of sinful men.

Darkness and light met at the cross of Christ.

As the soldiers led Jesus away, Peter followed from afar. Jesus was first brought before Annas, who some believe was the real rascal beyond the plot to kill Jesus. Peter lingered in the courtyard, moving towards his shameful fall.

While the farce of Jesus' trial was in progress, Peter felt ashamed and scared to be known as Jesus' disciple. When the others sitting with him recognized his Galilean accent and assumed he was with Jesus, Peter denied it and changed crowds. Then again, his weakness to talk too much got him in trouble. As he denied knowing Jesus, a rooster crowed, the tell-tale sign Jesus had given him earlier.

If Peter had left things like this, he would have ended like Judas Iscariot, but just then, the soldiers were leading Jesus out and He looked right at Peter.
He knew!

Peter ran and bitterly wept. He loved Jesus, and sincerely promised to be loyal to Him. He just didn't know his own weakness. He had not yet come to the place where he saw no good in the flesh at all. He wept genuine tears of repentance.

Any child of God can come back to God, no matter what they've done. Peter was as bad as Judas—he did not sell Him, but he denied Him. The difference between Judas and Peter is that Peter repented. Our Lord prayed Peter's faith would not fail.

Thus began a long night of illegal trials. After Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas the high priest, they took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. He usually came to Jerusalem during the time of Passover to keep an eye on the crowds who came to celebrate the feast. Caiaphas had accused Jesus of violating Mosaic Law but that wouldn't matter to a Roman, so they accused Jesus of treason.

Imagine this scene. Here is a carpenter in peasant robes standing before the highest Roman official in the land. Pilate asks Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" Jesus just says, "It is as you say" (23:3).

The Jewish religious leaders have arrested Him, but Pilate wanted to let Him go. Jesus had committed no crime for which He could be charged.

But now the Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of leading a revolution. He rebelled against authority, they said. Can't you see the religious rulers jumping up and down and doing everything they could to see Jesus was convicted?

Pilate wanted to get off the hook, too. When he heard Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Him to Herod, also in Jerusalem for the feasts. Galilee was under Herod's jurisdiction. Let him solve his own problems.

Herod was glad to see Jesus. For a long time he had heard about Jesus' miracles and he wanted to see Him perform. But our Lord didn't have one word for Herod. As part of the notorious family, Herod had already passed the point of no return, already on his way to a lost eternity.

When Herod saw Jesus wouldn't play his games, he mocked Him, put one of his old robes on Him to taunt Jesus' claims of royalty.

Since there was nothing else Herod could do, he sent Jesus back to Pilate. They had once been enemies, but now they come together in opposition to Jesus.

Pilate knew Jesus was innocent; they couldn't accuse Him of any crime. So he had Jesus flogged and then planned to release Him. Wait! If Jesus was guilty—punish Him. If He was innocent, set Him free. To whip Him and then let Him go was dirty compromise.

Then Pilate had another idea. Because it was Passover, he could release a prisoner. *Why not release Jesus?*

Pilate tries, but can't escape making a decision about Jesus. Really, Pilate is on trial here and Jesus is his judge. Jesus isn't trying to escape, but Pilate is. Pilate thinks of the easy escape of releasing either Barabbas or Jesus. To him the decision was obvious. But Pilate didn't consider the depth to which religion can sink when it goes wrong. He was startled when the crowd demanded Barabbas to be released. Pilate decided Jesus was innocent, yet handed Him over to be crucified.

Pilate finally had to make a decision, just as every man today has to make a decision relative to Jesus Christ. What have *you* decided about Him?

Now Jesus is on His way to the cross. He comforted women crying for Him along the way. *"Don't cry for me,"* He said. He does not want our sympathy; He wants our faith. He did not die to gain our sympathy. He died to save our souls.

At Calvary, the middle cross was ready for Jesus. On either side, two thieves already hung. They were likely part of Barabbas' band since Jesus was taking his cross.

The crowds taunted and ridiculed Jesus. The Lord asked His Father to forgive the crowd for crucifying Him. If He had not done this, they would have been guilty of committing the unpardonable sin of killing the Son of God.

The religious rulers mocked Him saying, *"If you are the Christ, come down off that cross!"* But if Jesus had, He would not have been the Christ. He wouldn't have fulfilled all of Isaiah 53, which speaks of His death. Because Jesus Christ stayed on the cross, we can be healed of sin, the awful plague of mankind.

The soldiers also mocked him, offering him vinegar, and telling Jesus that if He was the king of the Jews that He should save Himself. In Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, they wrote *"This is the King of the Jews"* on a banner and nailed it over Jesus' head, describing His "crime." They wrote it in Greek, the language of education, literature, and science. They wrote it in Latin, the language of law and order, of military and government. And Hebrew was the language of religion. When Christ returns to set up His Kingdom, He will be the political ruler, the educational ruler, and the spiritual ruler of this universe. How accurate the sign was!

Of course, the thieves on either side of Jesus ridiculed Him at the start. But during the six hours they hung there, especially the last three hours, one thief saw something unusual taking place. He recognized this One dying next to him was not dying for Himself but for another. Although he knew Barabbas should be on that cross, he also seemed to realize He was dying for *him*. He recognized this death on the cross was a transaction between God and the Man, and the Man on the cross was *God*. Then he turned to Him in faith.

"Remember me when You come into Your kingdom," he whispered to Jesus.

That very day this thief who was not fit to live on earth, according to Roman law, went to be with the Lord. This man was a bad thief, not a good one, but because of his faith in the Son of God he became a saved thief. He had faith to believe that after His death, the Lord Jesus was coming into a kingdom. Obviously, this thief had traveled far theologically while hanging on that cross.

These two thieves had been arrested for the same crime, tried for the same crime, condemned for the same crime, and were dying for the same crime. The difference between them? One thief believed in Jesus Christ and one did not.

“Friend,” our Lord said to that thief, *“today you’ll be with Me in paradise.”*
He went into the presence of God because of his faith in the Man who hung beside him on a cross.

**NEXT: “Are you the only one in Jerusalem
who doesn’t know what happened?”**



JESUS DID NOT
DIE TO GAIN OUR

sympathy.

HE DIED TO

save our souls.



THRU the BIBLE

LESSON 13

HE'S NOT DEAD ANYMORE



Begin with prayer



Read **Luke 23:44–24:53**



Listen at [TTB.org/Luke](https://www.TTB.org/Luke) to **Luke 23:44–24:7** and **Luke 24:7-53**

As a physician, Luke had sat beside many people as they died. He witnessed their struggle to breathe and their final gasp. But Luke tells us Jesus died differently. He died voluntarily. He dismissed His Spirit and entrusted Himself to His Father. And He did it with a loud voice—hardly typical of someone whose life was ebbing away.

The centurion, too, had witnessed many men die. As he stood at the foot of Jesus' cross, he glorified God and said, "Certainly this was a righteous Man" (23:47). He knew nothing about Jesus yet revealed the beginning of faith in this ominous moment.

The atmosphere around the cross was dreadful. None of the Gospels describe it in detail, because nothing there could satisfy the curious. Just as we had to stand on the fringe at the Garden of Gethsemane, we must now stand on the fringe of Golgotha. We can only look up and trust the One who is dying there for us.

As horrific as this description by Luke is, it doesn't end in death. Jesus Christ's burial and resurrection (always spoken of together) comes next. (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4.)

Before we leave the scene, we must face these facts of the gospel:

- Jesus died.
- He was buried.
- He rose again from the dead.

What does that mean to you? Do you believe He died for you? Do you believe when He was buried, your sins were buried, too? Do you believe your sin question was settled? Do you believe when He rose again, you rose with Him? To believe this puts you *in* Christ. God sees you there. His righteousness became your righteousness; His standing before God became your standing. This position is all any of us could boast in today.

Back at the cross, there was the matter of what to do with Jesus' body. Usually this task was left to family members, but none were there. His eleven disciples had gone underground. But even when some disappeared, other disciples came out in the open.

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, exercised a lot of influence in the community, but when he stood for Christ, he stood alone. When it came time to care for Jesus, Joseph openly declared his faith in the Savior. He takes on the role of family and asks for Jesus' body.

Joseph took Jesus' body down from the cross, wrapped Him in a linen shroud, and put it in the tomb he had bought for himself. Although His disciples had scattered, a small group of loyal women—Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and James' mother Mary, all followers of Jesus—were with Him to the very end. They took note where Joseph buried Jesus so they could return after the Sabbath to finish the task of caring for Jesus' broken body.

On the first day of the week, the women returned to the tomb with the prepared spices, but their efforts were wasted because there was no body in the tomb! Jesus had already left. If you remember, Mary of Bethany had anointed Jesus' body while He was alive and was criticized for wasting precious ointment. Turns out, hers were the only spices put to good use.

At Jesus' tomb, the stone was not rolled away to let the Lord Jesus out but to let us in. Looking in the open doorway, the women met two men in shining robes who said, "*Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen, just like He said.*" Peter, John, and the women all came to Jesus' tomb looking for the dead among the dead. They didn't believe the Lord Jesus Christ would come back from the dead.

When the angels reminded them, the women remembered Jesus saying it. Sometimes you can hear something—and almost know it is true—but don't believe it. The Lord Jesus repeatedly told His disciples He was going to Jerusalem to die and be raised again on the third day. They heard what He said but somehow didn't believe it.

The first people to doubt Jesus' resurrection were His own men. They had to see the evidence for themselves. John tells us in his Gospel that he believed when he looked in the empty tomb. With him, Peter had to think about it for a while.

Later that morning, two men who had followed Jesus were returning to their home in Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked, they talked about all that had happened that weekend. They were grieving Jesus, but didn't believe the news He was alive again. Along the road, a stranger joins their conversation, asking first why they were sad.

Cleopas, one of the men, said, *“Are you the only one in Jerusalem who doesn't know what happened?”* Jesus' crucifixion was public news, and everyone was talking about it.

They told the stranger about their hope Jesus Christ was the Prophet who would redeem Israel, but now it was too late. He was dead. They talked about the women's testimony that His tomb was empty and seeing angels who said Jesus was alive but they didn't believe them, either. They didn't know what had happened—perhaps someone had taken Jesus' body away. No one had seen the Lord.

Then the stranger spoke up and told them their hearts were slow to believe what the Word of God in the prophets had already told them. We see, of course, that this stranger was Jesus Himself. When He talked about His resurrection, He didn't show them the nail prints in His hands to prove Himself, He took them to Scripture. The Lord accepted the Bible's statements fully and believed them wholeheartedly. And so beginning with Moses and all the prophets who had spoken of Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus explained everything in the Old Testament about Himself. (Wouldn't you have loved to have been there, listening to Jesus teach this lesson?)

Jesus Christ says we need two simple and important things to understand the Word of God. First, we must have faith in the Bible. The Bible is a closed book to the critic. He may learn a few facts, but he misses the message.

That said, someone else whose heart is turned in humble faith to God will be enlightened by the Holy Spirit. His eyes will be opened. The Lord said, *"You are a fool not to believe it."*

As the men neared Emmaus, they invited the stranger to stay with them and have dinner. So, Jesus did. He wanted their fellowship. In fact, from now on, He only fellowships with those who believe in Him.

There at the table, as Jesus took bread and blessed it and gave it to them, He opened their eyes to who He was and as quick as that, Jesus disappeared. As late as it was, the men hurry back over the miles to Jerusalem with the wonderful news, sharing the whole time about how their hearts burned earlier when Jesus taught them on the road.

Meanwhile, Jesus also appeared to Peter alone because something needed straightening out between them. Remember how Peter had denied Jesus? We're not told any details of their meeting; Jesus kept Peter's restoration a private thing.

Back in Jerusalem, the disciples were together, listening to the men from Emmaus tell about how Jesus taught them, Jesus Himself stood right in front of them and said, "Peace to you" (24:36). They were terrified, thinking He was a ghost. Jesus said, *"Don't be afraid—it's me."* He showed them His hands and feet and invited them to touch Him. His glorified body was flesh and *bones* (not flesh and blood since His blood had been shed on the cross).

Then He asked, *"Got anything to eat?"* And they gave Him some broiled fish and a honeycomb for dessert. As proof that He was human, Jesus ate it right in front of them. And while He ate, He taught them all about how His death and resurrection had fulfilled what Moses and the prophets and the psalms had taught about Him. And Jesus opened their understanding of Scripture.

The Lord says the Bible can only be understood if the Holy Spirit makes it real to you. Our human intellect is simply not enough to grasp its truths. As He had taught the men along the road, Jesus then "opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures" (24:45). (See also 1 Corinthians 2:14). God's Word is above and beyond comprehension. Our humble prayer needs to be, "Open my eyes so I may see the wonderful things in Your Word."

Finally, Jesus told them to take this message of His death and resurrection worldwide, beginning in Jerusalem and then to the whole world. The message should be that by believing in His name and trusting Him, sinners could be saved. He promised that in His Spirit we would have the power to carry this message to the world.

The last time the disciples saw the Lord on earth, He blessed them. Someday He will come again. First, He will bless His church and then ultimately, judge the world.

Can you not wait to know Him better? May the truth of His Word through Luke's Gospel bless your spirit, enrich your mind, and strengthen your will.

4. How has this study of the Gospel of Luke blessed your spirit, enriched your mind, and strengthened your will to follow Jesus Christ?

A photograph of two men, one Black and one white, smiling and talking to each other outdoors. They are gesturing with their hands as if in conversation. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in a park-like setting.

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THE MOST
IMPORTANT
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A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a smartphone. The phone screen displays a website with several articles, each with a 'Download' button. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

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