

Unit Nine

*The Death,
Resurrection, &
Ascension of Christ*

Annotated Lesson

Outlines

Journey through the Bible
Annotated Lesson Outlines

Unit Nine: The Death, Resurrection, & Ascension of Christ

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Table of Contents

OVERVIEW OF LESSONS.....	177
UNIT 9—THE DEATH, RESURRECTION, AND ASCENSION OF CHRIST	181
LESSON 1—TESTED AND EXAMINED	181
LESSON 2—PRESSED IN GETHSEMANE	186
LESSON 3—ARRESTED BY RELIGION.....	191
LESSON 4—JUDGED (1).....	195
LESSON 5—JUDGED (2).....	199
LESSON 6—THE LORD’S CRUCIFIXION (1).....	204
LESSON 7—THE LORD’S CRUCIFIXION (2).....	210
LESSON 8—THE LORD’S CRUCIFIXION (3).....	214
LESSON 9—THE LORD’S CRUCIFIXION (4).....	218
LESSON 10—THE VICTORY OF THE KING-SAVIOR.....	224
LESSON 11—CHRIST IS RISEN!.....	229
LESSON 12—RESURRECTED AS A MAN.....	234
LESSON 13—RESURRECTING IN DIVINE GLORY	239
LESSON 14—DISCOVERING CHRIST’S RESURRECTION	243
LESSON 15—THE ASCENSION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST	248
LESSON 16—CHRIST THE HEAVENLY KING.....	253
LESSON 17—GOD HAS REACHED MAN!.....	257
LESSON 18—LIVING AND MOVING WITH THE BELIEVERS	261

Overview of Lessons

Unit 9. The Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ (Matthew–John [3])

This unit discusses the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ as revealed in the four Gospels.

Lesson 1: Tested and Examined—The last time the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem He came not to work but to present Himself to be tested and examined by those who would put Him to death. According to Exodus twelve, the Passover Lamb had to be thoroughly examined before it could be sacrificed. As the real Passover Lamb, Christ was examined for several days. He was tested and examined by the chief priests and elders concerning His authority (Matt. 21:23–32), by the disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians concerning giving tribute to Caesar (Matt. 22:15–22), by the Sadducees concerning resurrection (Matt. 22:23–33), and by a lawyer concerning the great commandment in the law (Matt. 22:34–40). Then He muzzled all the examiners by the question concerning Christ (Matt. 22:41–46). These tests and examinations proved that Christ was the perfect Lamb of God, the One who could be offered on the cross for our redemption. **Objective:** To see that before the Lord Jesus was crucified, He was tested and examined to prove that He was worthy to be offered as the Lamb of God. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Matthew 21–22.

Lesson 2: Pressed in Gethsemane—During His final time together with His disciples before His crucifixion, the Lord took them to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. While there, He charged His disciples to watch and pray, and He Himself went off to pray alone. As He prayed three times to the Father, great drops of sweat like blood fell from Him, for the awfulness of the “cup” of God’s will (the cross) lay before Him. During that prayer He experienced a foreshadowing of His bearing man’s sin and God’s wrath. Through His prayer He discerned with finality that the cross was the will of God, and then, strengthened, fully submitted Himself to the will of God for our redemption and to fulfill all Scripture. **Objective:** To see how the Lord struggled in prayer to know and receive the Father’s will. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Praying to fellowship with the Lord and petitioning for our own and others’ needs (III.E.6.). **Chapter(s):** Matthew 26.

Lesson 3: Arrested by Religion—After He had arranged everything for His arrest, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane to prepare for the arrival of His captors, who were led by Judas, a close associate who had betrayed Him. Even though He was the Creator, He allowed Himself to be bound by His creatures so that He might be led to the cross to die for their redemption. At His arrest, all His disciples fled and left Him. Peter tried to follow at a distance, but he eventually fully denied the Lord. Even though He was betrayed by Judas, forsaken by His disciples, and denied by Peter, the Lord Jesus behaved Himself with dignity and composure in the midst of such a situation. The great I Am (John 18:4–6) put Himself into the hands of sinful men! God had become man, and now this God-man was willing to be arrested, tried, and executed. He did not use His power and authority to escape, and He offered no resistance to His captors. What a wonderful

Savior! **Objective:** To see how the Lord Jesus, as the great I Am, willingly put Himself into the hands of sinful men to be arrested, tried, and executed. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 18.

Lesson 4: Judged (1)—Before going to the cross, the Lord was judged by the Jewish leaders and by the Gentile rulers. After passing through this judgment, the Lord was fully shown to be without fault and proven to be the qualified Substitute to die for us on the cross. First the Lord was judged by the corrupt Jewish leaders. When they falsely accused Him, He remained silent, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7 that says He would be like a sheep that is dumb before His shearers. Then when they asked Him if He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, He answered strongly and definitely that He was and that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven. The Jewish leaders, enraged by the Lord's answer, condemned the Lord and brought Him to Pilate, who also questioned the Lord. The Lord again, in the highest standard of human perfection with His all-surpassing divine splendor, stood before Pilate and was found to be without fault. Nevertheless, Pilate unjustly delivered Him up to be crucified. By being crucified, the Lord died according to the Roman mode of execution and fulfilled the prophecies concerning how the Lord would die for our sins. In every way, the Lord conducted Himself in dignity and honor in the hour of judgment. **Objective:** To see the Lord's dignity and honor as a God-man during the hour of judgment in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. **Crucial Matters:** An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Matthew 26–27; Mark 14–15; Luke 22–23.

Lesson 5: Judged (2)—When the Lord was being examined by the Jewish religionists and the Gentile politician, He had no fear of death and boldly faced the terrifying judgment. When the Jewish leaders asked Him about His teaching, He responded by saying, "I have spoken openly to the world....Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard Me" (John 18:20a, 21a). When Pilate asked Him if He was a king, He answered by saying, "You say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I would testify to the truth" (John 18:37). While the Lord was being examined as the Passover Lamb, He examined those who examined Him and exposed their faults. Eventually, Pilate declared three times, "I find no fault in Him." Nevertheless, the Lord was sentenced in man's injustice by blind religion and dark politics. Blinded by their religious hatred toward the Lord, the Jews demanded that Christ be crucified. Darkened by his politics and desire to please the Jews, Pilate set aside justice and sentenced the Lord to death. By this record in John's Gospel, we are inspired to care neither for religion nor for politics. Both worked together to crucify the Lord. We only care for the faultless Christ who willingly submitted to the unjust sentence of death so that He could die for our redemption. **Objective:** To see how the faultless Christ was sentenced to death by blind religion and dark politics in the Gospel of John. **Crucial Matters:** An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** John 18–19.

Lesson 6: The Lord's Crucifixion (1)—After being unrighteously judged and condemned by the Jewish leaders and a Roman politician, Jesus was led away to be crucified. As He hung on the cross, every opportunity was taken during the first three hours to heap indignities upon Him. During the last three hours on the cross, God came in to judge Christ as the totality of sin. After He finished His work of redemption, Christ yielded up

His spirit. When the Lord died, a number of events took place which indicated the universal impact His death had on crushing Satan's kingdom and fulfilling God's economy. Eventually Jesus was buried in a rich man's tomb, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. The Jewish leaders set a guard over the tomb and had it sealed, setting the stage for a clear testimony of His coming resurrection. **Objective:** To see the details of Christ's crucifixion, and to see the tremendous impact Christ's death had upon Satan's kingdom. **Crucial Matters:** An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Matthew 27.

Lesson 7: The Lord's Crucifixion (2)—Instead of being sorrowful or passive about going to the cross, Jesus realized the joy that was set before Him, and went forward without reluctance. He willingly went forth to fulfill the Scriptures that foretold of the time and manner in which He must die. Although the cross was a serious matter of being made a curse on our behalf, Jesus realized that the cross would clear away every negative thing in the universe, and that through death the divine life concealed in His humanity would be released. Furthermore, the resurrection that His death ushered in would produce the many sons of God who would corporately become His eternal counterpart. It was through the Lord's death that so many marvelous and wonderful things of God's economy would be accomplished, including, eventually, the New Jerusalem. **Objective:** To see how the Lord willingly delivered Himself unto death for the accomplishment of God's purpose. **Crucial Matters:** An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Mark 15.

Lesson 8: The Lord's Crucifixion (3)—The Lord's crucifixion lasted six hours, from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. While He was on the cross for the first three hours, the Lord suffered the persecution of men as a genuine martyr for doing the will of God. During the second and final three hours, the Lord was made sin in the eyes of God and died as our Redeemer by bearing our judgment as our Substitute. **Objective:** To see how Christ on the cross suffered the persecution of men and the judgment of God for sin. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Luke 23.

Lesson 9: The Lord's Crucifixion (4)—In this lesson we will examine the accomplishments of the Lord's death as the Lamb of God, the bronze serpent, and the grain of wheat. As the Lamb of God, Christ took away the sin of the world. As the bronze serpent, He fulfilled another aspect of the sin offering by dealing with the ultimate source of sin, the devil, that old serpent. As the grain of wheat, Christ died to release the divine element contained within Him for the producing of many grains of wheat who are His duplication and reproduction. In the Gospel of John, Jesus relates each of these three aspects of Christ to man's acquiring the divine life. The first two, however, are more related to the judicial aspect of the redemption of Christ which clears the way for man to receive the divine life released through Christ's death as the grain of wheat. We will forever enjoy our organic salvation in the divine life based upon the accomplishment of Christ's judicial redemption. **Objective:** To see the significance of the Lord's death as the Lamb of God, the bronze serpent, and the grain of wheat. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** John 1, 3, 12, 19.

Lesson 10: The Victory of the King-Savior—In Matthew we see the King’s victory in His resurrection. In Matthew, Christ’s resurrection was a matter of God’s righteousness. Christ lived a righteous life that culminated in a righteous death, a death which satisfied all of God’s righteous requirements and fully accomplished redemption for us in God’s righteousness. Thus, the righteous God had to raise Christ from the dead. Christ’s resurrection was God’s righteous acknowledgment that His righteousness was fully satisfied. Furthermore, our salvation is eternally secure in the resurrected Christ, for resurrection demonstrated God’s acceptance of His righteous payment on our behalf. Christ was raised for our justification, and the righteous God must recognize us as righteous in Him. **Objective:** To see that Christ’s resurrection, His victory over death, was a matter of God’s righteousness. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Matthew 27–28.

Lesson 11: Christ is Risen!—The resurrection of Christ is the central item of a believer’s faith. Christ came to serve man by dying for man and by dispensing Himself into man in resurrection. The accounts of the Lord’s resurrection in the Gospels portray a wonderful scene of the disciples’ first contact with the resurrected Christ. After three women discovered the empty tomb, Mary the Magdalene (one of the women) went and told Peter and John, who returned with her to the tomb to investigate, and then left. Mary, however, lingered at the tomb, only caring to find the Lord Himself. Because of her seeking, the Lord appeared to her, making her the first person to see the freshly resurrected Lord. Later the same day, the Lord appeared to two of His believers walking along a road, and then to the eleven who were gathered together in a house, where He ate with them. He then charged His disciples to proclaim the gospel to all creation, for whoever believed and was baptized would be saved. **Objective:** To see the plain and glorious fact that Christ was resurrected. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Mark 16.

Lesson 12: Resurrected as a Man—In Luke we see the resurrection of the Man-Savior, especially in His fellowship with the two disciples as a man. First, He was discovered by the women. Then, His resurrection was investigated and confirmed by Peter. Following this, He appeared to the two disciples and opened the Scriptures to them, then appeared to the apostles, opening their minds to understand the Scripture and commissioning them with the gospel. We must see that the Lord Jesus resurrected with a body as a man. In incarnation the Lord had put on humanity, but in resurrection He did not put it off. Today our resurrected Lord is still a man with a human body. He had flesh and bones, and His flesh still bore the scars from His crucifixion. He ate before the disciples, and in His contact with the disciples in resurrection He cared for them in a human way. **Objective:** To see that the Lord Jesus was resurrected as a man. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.). **Chapter(s):** Luke 24.

Lesson 13: Resurrecting in Divine Glory—The main point in the Gospel of John is that after and by His resurrection Christ will come into us and be one with us. God desires to be expressed, or glorified, in His creature, man. This is why God Himself became a man. God, however, was concealed within this man by the flesh of His humanity, which acted as a veil preventing people from seeing God within Him. As mentioned in Lesson 9, when Jesus died on the cross, the shell of His humanity was broken, releasing the riches of the divine glory concealed within Him. Through death and resurrection, the divine life

which was within Jesus was reproduced and multiplied, and Christ's entire being, including His humanity, was brought into glory. In resurrection, Christ imparted this glorified divine life into the believers, producing many sons for the glorification of the Father. We are the many grains of wheat who were produced through the one grain's glorification. All of Christ's brothers are the sons of God, possessing God's life and nature. In the Gospel of John, we see how Jesus' resurrection results in the glorification and expression of the Father, thus accomplishing the eternal purpose of God. **Objective:** To see that after and by His resurrection Christ will come into us and be one with *us*. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing that the goal of God's economy is to mingle God with man and man with God (II.A.4.). **Chapter(s):** John 12, 17, 20.

Lesson 14: Discovering Christ's Resurrection—In the Gospel record, the resurrected Lord first appears to Mary the Magdalene, then to the two who were walking together on the road, and then to the disciples gathered together within a house. Each of these cases presents a principle of how the Lord appears to His loving and seeking believers. First, the Lord appears to us as we seek after Him individually. Second, we find the Lord when we fellowship together with other believers, particularly over His Word. Third, we find the Lord in the meetings. The resurrection of the Lord was an accomplished fact, but only those disciples who were loving and seeking the Lord experienced His resurrection. The discovery of the Lord's resurrection requires the seeking of His believers. May we be those who, like Mary, are not satisfied until we touch the Lord. Then we will become the Lord's corporate Bride who will bring Him back; we will be those seekers who are precious to Him at His second coming. **Objective:** To see that the discovery of the Lord's resurrection requires the seeking of His believers. **Crucial Matters:** Cultivating a vital, personal, and intimate relationship with the Lord (III.E.); Attending the meetings of the church (III.F.2.); Pursuing the Lord with spiritual companions (III.F.4.). **Chapter(s):** Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20.

Lesson 15: The Ascension and Exaltation of Christ—For Christ to be incarnated to become a man, He had to lay aside His form as God. Being found in fashion as a man, He further humbled Himself to serve as a slave, even to the point of dying a humiliating death on the cross for us. It was such a One that God exalted to the throne of the universe. In His ascension, Christ was made both Lord and Christ. Therefore, on the throne today sits a Man who rules for God and as God. There is a Man on the throne! Today, we may know Christ as the ascended Lord. He is the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), administrating the entire universe that we may be saved, matured, perfected, and brought into glory. Furthermore, we may experience this One on the throne, because He is also the Spirit in our spirit. When we live and walk by the Spirit, He reigns within us and we reign with Him over all our situations and environments. **Objective:** To see that the Slave-Savior was exalted in His ascension and, as a Man, was made both Lord and Christ. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on His universal operation—knowing God's sovereignty in the world situation and in His personal care for us (III.C.1.); Living a life under Christ's kingship to reign in life over all things (III.H.). **Chapter(s):** Luke 24.

Lesson 16: Christ the Heavenly King—After training His disciples after His resurrection for forty days, the Lord ascended to the heavens. In His ascension, Christ is anointed to carry

out God's economy. He was made King to rule over all persons, things, and matters outwardly, and He was made Priest to intercede for His believers that they might gain Him inwardly. We are those who have been commissioned by our heavenly King for His propagation in preparation for His return. The Lord charged His disciples to go forth to announce the gospel and disciple the nations. To work with the Lord today we must know both the essential aspect of the Spirit and the economical aspect of the Spirit. To work with the ascended Lord, we must also know how to pray and follow the Lord's leading. As those who are His disciples, we should realize that the Lord is with us, even until the consummation of the age. **Objective:** To see that Christ as the heavenly King in ascension is ruling and reigning over all the earth and is with us all the days until the consummation of the age. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.). **Chapter(s):** Matthew 28.

Lesson 17: God Has Reached Man!—Christ today in resurrection is the reaching of the processed Triune God into man as the Spirit. Not only has Christ become the Spirit in resurrection; in ascension He poured out this Spirit upon all flesh so that all men might receive Him. What God had purposed and desired in eternity has been fulfilled at the completion of Christ's process. Finally, God has reached man! Through His death, Christ cleared away every obstacle, and in His resurrection, He became pneumatic so that as the processed Triune God-man He might enter into all who would open to Him. Therefore, God now flows within man. His process was the channel by which God reached and entered into man. Today, God is still reaching us. Although He has reached us and has entered into our spirit, He still needs to reach every part of our being, from center to circumference. This He will do, yet we can hasten His spreading by our cooperation. Eventually the result of all of God's reaching will be the New Jerusalem, the issue of God mingling Himself with us. **Objective:** To see that through His process, Christ accomplished God's purpose to reach man. **Crucial Matters:** Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing that God has gone through a process to carry out His economy (II.A.3.). **Chapter(s):** John 20.

Lesson 18: Living and Moving with the Believers—John 20–21 is a brief portrait of "all the matters related to the Christian life during the church age: seeking the Lord with love toward Him; seeing the Lord in resurrection; receiving the revelation of the issue of the Lord's resurrection—that His Father is our Father and we are His brothers—by experiencing His manifestation; meeting with the believers to enjoy the Lord's presence; having the Lord breathe the Holy Spirit into us, and being sent by the Lord with His commission and authority to represent Him; learning how to live by faith in the Lord and trust in Him for our daily living; loving the Lord, the natural strength having been dealt with; shepherding the flock for the building of the church; practicing the Lord's invisible presence, with some following the Lord even unto death to glorify God, not by self-will but according to His leading, and some living until He comes back" (John 21:23, footnote 1). In John 20–21 we see how to apply all the matters related to Christ's resurrection to our Christian life. **Objective:** To see that the resurrected Christ is living and moving with His believers. **Crucial Matters:** Cultivating a vital, personal, and intimate relationship with the Lord (III.E.). **Chapter(s):** John 20–21.

Unit 9—The Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ

Lesson 1—Tested and Examined

OBJECTIVE: To see that before the Lord Jesus was crucified, He was tested and examined to prove that He was worthy to be offered as the Lamb of God.

SYNOPSIS: The last time the Lord Jesus came to Jerusalem He came not to work but to present Himself to be tested and examined by those who would put Him to death. According to Exodus twelve, the Passover Lamb had to be thoroughly examined before it could be sacrificed. As the real Passover Lamb, Christ was examined for several days. He was tested and examined by the chief priests and elders concerning His authority (Matt. 21:23–32), by the disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians concerning giving tribute to Caesar (Matt. 22:15–22), by the Sadducees concerning resurrection (Matt. 22:23–33), and by a lawyer concerning the great commandment in the law (Matt. 22:34–40). Then He muzzled all the examiners by the question concerning Christ (Matt. 22:41–46). These tests and examinations proved that Christ was the perfect Lamb of God, the One who could be offered on the cross for our redemption.

BACKGROUND: The knowledge of this truth is necessary regardless of the young people's condition.

CHAPTER(S): Matthew 21–22.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In this lesson we will see how the Lord was examined by the representatives of the Jews prior to His being offered as the Lamb of God, and how the Lord passed every test. It is good to remember at the outset that the One they were testing was God Himself. "We need to be deeply impressed with the fact that the One being examined was the God-man. The very Creator of all was surrounded by His creatures and was examined by them in an insidious and insulting way. Nevertheless, He was patient and was not at all angry. He answered them properly and wisely" (Life-study of Luke, Message 46, p. 396).

- I. **During His last week on earth, the Lord presented Himself for testing that He might die as the Passover Lamb—1 Cor. 5:7; Exo. 12:5; Matt. 21:23–22:46**

To be qualified to be sacrificed for the Passover, a lamb had to be perfect, without any blemish (Exo. 12:5). According to Exodus twelve, the Passover lamb was taken on the tenth day of the month, but it was not slaughtered until twilight on the fourteenth day. During those four days the lamb was examined to make sure it was without any defect, for any lamb found to be with defect would have been rejected by God; its blood would have been ineffectual. The Lord purposely set Himself to come to Jerusalem the week before the Passover so that He might fulfill this type (cf. John 12:1). Before He could be crucified, the Lord had to fulfill all the Scriptures written concerning Himself. Therefore He presented Himself to all in Jerusalem, and particularly to those in authority among the Jews, for their inspection.

When the Lord came to Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders began preparing ways to test Him. "Actually this test was not initiated by them; it was initiated by the [Savior]. He knew that, according to the prophecy, He had to be killed on the Passover as the Lamb of God. The prophecies in the Old Testament specified both the time and the place He would be put to death" (Life-study of Luke, Message 45, pp. 387–388). (More detail on this point can be found in Life-study of Luke, Message 45, pp. 388–389.)

- A. The Lord came as the Lamb of God to die for man's sins—John 1:29
 - B. As the Lamb of God, the Lord lived a sinless life so that He might be the acceptable sacrifice on our behalf—John 1:29; Heb. 4:15; 9:26; Eph. 5:2
 - C. Before being offered up, the Lord was tested and examined by the Jewish leaders to prove that He was qualified to be the Lamb of God—Matt. 21:23–22:46
- II. The Lord passed every test during His examination by the Jewish leaders, and was found to be perfect and without blemish—Matt. 21:27; 22:22, 33, 37–40, 46

During His testing, the Lord was questioned from four directions: regarding authority (about the source of His authority), regarding politics (about paying tribute to Caesar), regarding belief in the resurrection, and regarding the law (about which commandment was the greatest). Just as a lamb would have been examined from every side, Jesus was also. No fault could be found in Him by any of the examiners from any direction. By passing all their tests, the Lord showed Himself to be the unique One qualified to be the Passover Lamb. The Lord, however, was not seeking to be received by the Jewish leaders. The Lord used the leaders' opposition and rejection of Him as the means to be offered as our sacrifice.

- A. He was examined by the chief priests and elders concerning His authority—Matt. 21:23–22:14

"As the One who was being examined, the God-man was frank, genuine, wise, and dignified. But those who were questioning Him were base, subtle, insidious, and dishonest. They did not come either with a proper attitude or in a proper spirit" (Life-study of Luke, Message 45, p. 390). The first matter the leaders among the Jews asked Jesus was concerning the source of His authority. In response, Jesus asked them a question about the source of John the Baptist's authority. This put the examiners on the spot, for if they said John's teaching was from heaven (i.e., from God), Jesus could have asked them why they asked Him the question, for they should have received Jesus as the Messiah already. If they said John's teaching was from earth, they would have been in trouble with the crowd, for the crowd held John to be a prophet sent from God. This exposed the chief priests' and elders' impurity and politics. Following their lying response, the Lord spoke three parables which condemned them for not receiving John's testimony, and indicated that they would be rejected from entering into the kingdom (Matt. 21:32). Furthermore, the Lord told them that He was the building stone that had been prophesied (Matt. 21:42; Psa. 118:22), and that their rejection of Him was also prophesied. Their rejection opened the way for the Lord to give the kingdom to another "nation," made up of those who received the Lord as the King, no matter whether they were Jew or Gentile (Matt. 21:42–43).

- B. He was examined by the disciples of the Pharisees with the Herodians concerning politics—Matt. 22:15–22

The chief priests and elders left Jesus and sent some of the Pharisees with some Herodians to try to catch Jesus in His words (Mark 12:13). "We may say that the Lord Jesus was the Passover Lamb appointed to die for the [entire] family of mankind....Hence, He was examined not only by the Pharisees, the religious party, but also by the Herodians, the political party. This means that the Passover Lamb was examined by both Jews and Gentiles" (Life-study of Luke, Message 46, pp. 398–399). "The Herodians opposed the Pharisees....However, on this occasion the Herodians and Pharisees conspired to trap the Lord Jesus....In verse 17 they said to the Lord, 'Tell us therefore, What do you think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?' This is really an ensnaring question....If the Lord Jesus had said that it was lawful to do this, He would have offended all the Jews who followed the Pharisees. But if He said that it was not lawful, this would have given the Herodians, who stood with the Roman government, strong ground to accuse Him....Thus, one of the two parties opposed this matter, and the other favored it. According to their concept, no matter how the Lord answered their question, He would still fall into their snare.

"The Lord Jesus, however, is wise and knows how to handle every person and every situation....The Lord did not show the Roman coin, but asked them to show one to Him....By having a Roman coin, they had lost the case already....The Jews were under two authorities, the political authority of Rome and the spiritual authority of God. In Jerusalem there was not only the Roman government, but also the temple of God. For this reason, the Jewish people had to pay tax to both systems, to the Roman government and to God's temple. Therefore, the Lord told them to pay to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. This answer shocked the Pharisees and the Herodians, and they were defeated" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 59, pp. 691–692).

C. He was examined by the Sadducees concerning resurrection—Matt. 22:23–33

On that day some of the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, also came to Jesus to ask Him a question. Their question was supposed to illustrate how ridiculous it was to believe in life after death. The Lord, however, exposed their foolishness and shamed them in their lack of understanding of the Scriptures by pointing out that in the Bible, God is called the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Since God can only be a God of the living and not the dead, surely this proves that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are alive. The Lord Jesus expounded the Scriptures "not only according to the letter but also according to the life and power implied within them" (Matt. 22:32, footnote 1). When the crowds heard this, they were again astounded at His teaching. "By giving the Sadducees such an answer, the Lord muzzled them" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 59, p. 694).

D. He was examined by a lawyer of the Sadducees concerning the law—Matt. 22:34–40

Hearing that the Sadducees had been muzzled by the Lord, the Pharisees gathered together again and one of them, a lawyer, put to Jesus a question regarding which of the law's commandments was greatest. Jesus quickly answered, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:37–40). In

speaking this, the Lord revealed that love is the spirit of God's commandments. By such an answer the Lord demonstrated His perfection as the Lamb of God.

E. After passing every test, the Lord muzzled His examiners by asking, "What do you think concerning the Christ?"—Matt. 22:41–46

The Lord now exercised His own authority as the true Leader of Israel to examine the Jewish leaders with a question, "What do you think concerning the Christ? Whose son is He?" (Matt. 22:42). The Lord's question concerning the Christ exposed the real situation of those who tested Him. The Jewish leaders were concerned with religion, politics, belief, and the law, but they were ignorant concerning Christ. "What do you think concerning the Christ?" is the question of questions; if we want to have anything to do with God's economy, we must know Christ. The Pharisees replied correctly that Christ was David's son, but they could not tell the Lord how it was possible that David called Christ his Lord in Psalm 110. "Christ is God; in His divinity He is the Lord of David. He is also a man; in His humanity He is the Son of David. The Pharisees had only half the scriptural knowledge concerning Christ's person, i.e., that He was the Son of David according to His humanity. They did not have the other half, i.e., that He was the Son of God according to His divinity" (Matt. 22:45, footnote 1). "Christ's question of questions concerning His wonderful person muzzled the mouths of all His opposers" (Matt. 22:46, footnote 1). After this, no one dared ask Jesus any more questions. Instead of exposing any fault in Jesus, they proved by their testing that He was sinless, perfect, and fully qualified to die as the Lamb of God.

III. All people will eventually be tested by this question—"What do you think of the Christ?"—Matt. 22:42

A. People have many questions, but most lack a concept of who Christ is

"People today have many questions, but all their questions can be classified into the four categories of religion, politics, belief, and the law. Just as in ancient times, people today care for these things, not for Christ. They simply have no concept concerning Him. But God's concern is for Christ, and Christ's concern is for Himself. Hence He asks, 'What do you think about Christ? Whose Son is He?' This question touches Christ's Person, which is a mystery, the most perplexing matter in the universe" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 59, pp. 695–696). People today are still perplexed about what to do about Christ. If they say they believe He is who He says He is, then they have to explain why they do not follow Him. Many conveniently ignore the subject. Hence, they have no concept concerning who Christ really is. This question exposes everyone's real situation.

B. This question of questions must eventually be answered by everyone

Until people answer this question about Christ, their own lives are in question. As long as people put this question on hold, their own lives are on hold. Everyone needs to find the answer to this question. Since Christ is the central meaning of the universe, people must resolve the question of who He is so that their own lives might find their center and meaning.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: As the Jewish leaders were carrying out their examination of the Lord Jesus, fueled by anger and jealousy, they were unwittingly setting the stage for a wonderful and complete vindication of the Lord's person and work. It is amazing that in such a dark situation we can see a beautiful unveiling of our wonderful Christ for us to appreciate.

Through this lesson we can help the junior highers develop an appreciation of the purity, and unsurpassed worth of the sinless, perfect Christ unveiled in Matthew 22. Impress them that the Lord's whole life was being examined there. Everything He ever said or did was being scrutinized, not by honest men in search of the truth, considering Him innocent until proven guilty, but by men trying to find Him guilty that they may crucify Him. The Lord's examination spanned the course of His whole life. Ask the junior highers how they would fare if tried in such a thorough manner. Would they be found to be perfect, without blemish, not guilty on any count? How about the words they spoke to their parents? Or the tone in which they spoke them? The more we see how imperfect we are, the more we will appreciate our spotless Savior. In applying this lesson in such a way, be careful not to linger on the imperfections of the young people. Once they have been exposed, help them to turn their eyes back to the loving, forgiving, and perfect One, who died for them and all their imperfections, and who is now saving them in His life (Rom. 5:10).

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Paint the picture of the Jews' examination of the Lord Jesus. They asked Him questions concerning religion, politics, faith, and Bible interpretation. After all their examinations were over and they had found no fault with the Lord, He in turn asked them a question. The question of questions is "What do you think concerning the Christ?" Religion, politics, faith, and Bible interpretation cannot save us. After all the questioning, everyone was clear about religion, politics, faith, and Bible interpretation. However, the Pharisees could not answer Jesus' question, "What do you think concerning the Christ?" They did not know who Christ was. Some of the gospel friends may be like this, not knowing who Christ is. In this passage we can see that Christ is both God and man. The only way for us to be saved is through Christ. We must confess that He is God incarnated to be a man, and with a humble heart, receive Him as our Savior. (See *Gospel Outlines*, Subject sixty-six, "The Question of Questions.")

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Luke*, Message 45, pp. 387–390; Message 46, pp. 396–399; *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 59; Matt. 22:32, footnote 1; 22:45, footnote 1; 22:46, footnote 1.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Luke*, Messages 45–46; *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 59; Matt. 22:32, footnote 1; 22:45, footnote 1; 22:46, footnote 1; *Gospel Outlines*, Subject sixty-six, "The Question of Questions."

Lesson 2—Pressed in Gethsemane

OBJECTIVE: To see how the Lord struggled in prayer to know and receive the Father's will.

SYNOPSIS: During His final time together with His disciples before His crucifixion, the Lord took them to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. While there, He charged His disciples to watch and pray, and He Himself went off to pray alone. As He prayed three times to the Father, great drops of sweat like blood fell from Him, for the awfulness of the "cup" of God's will (the cross) lay before Him. During that prayer He experienced a foreshadowing of His bearing man's sin and God's wrath. Through His prayer He discerned with finality that the cross was the will of God, and then, strengthened, fully submitted Himself to the will of God for our redemption and to fulfill all Scripture.

BACKGROUND: Though the concepts in this scene are deep, the young people can grow in their appreciation for the Lord simply by seeing His great suffering on their behalf. The burden of the lesson is presented primarily in Roman numeral two.

CHAPTER(S): Matthew 26.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In Gethsemane the Lord Jesus struggled in prayer until He knew that it was the Father's will for Him to drink the "cup," that is, die on the cross.

- I. **After He established His supper of the new covenant, Jesus went with His disciples to the garden of Gethsemane to meet His betrayer and those who would arrest Him—Matt. 26:30–31, 45–47**

- A. **This was the last time He would be together with His disciples before His crucifixion—Luke 22:15–18**

On the night of the Passover, Jesus established His supper with His followers. During that time many of the disciples argued over who among them would be the greatest (Luke 22:24). Peter, the foremost disciple, declared that he would go to prison or even die for the Lord. They had shown Him that they had two swords with which to protect Him (Luke 22:38). Their words and actions were almost comical. They were certainly no comfort to the Lord during this time. Immediately after the Lord completed establishing the table as a practice symbolizing the new covenant He was about to establish through His blood, He took them to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, where He often went with His disciples (Luke 22:39; John 18:2). This was to be the last time He would be with them before going to the cross.

- B. **On the way to Gethsemane, Jesus revealed to His disciples many marvelous things about God's economy—John 14–17**

On the way to the garden, Jesus unveiled the great revelations concerning being abodes in the Father's house, branches in the Triune God's divine organism, and the Spirit's child, as well as many other high and deep matters in John 14–16. Then He prayed the marvelous prayer recorded in John 17. He knew this was His last opportunity to share these matters with them before His death. In light of their behavior, it doesn't seem that they were able to understand much of what He was speaking about at the time.

II. In the garden, Jesus was inwardly pressed, even unto death, and took aside Peter, James, and John to watch and pray with Him—Matt. 26:36–46

When they arrived at the garden, Jesus took aside Peter, James, and John to pray.

A. Jesus withdrew and fell on His face and prayed that He might obediently carry out the Father's will—Matt. 26:39

Once they had gone a distance, Jesus charged the three disciples to pray and then left them to pray alone.

1. Being in great distress and agony, He went before His Father three times in prayer—Matt. 26:39, 42, 44

The word "Gethsemane" means "oil press." Jesus' experience at Gethsemane was one of being pressed in His soul as He confronted the nearness of His crucifixion. It is difficult for us to fathom what Jesus was experiencing. We may know what it is like to be pressured by an upcoming final exam or stage performance, but these do not compare to what Jesus was experiencing. He was going to offer Himself as the all-inclusive sin offering to God. He would have to taste death on behalf of all things. To do this He would have to become associated with two things that He hated and were completely contrary to His nature—sin and death. On the cross Jesus was to be made sin in the eyes of God. He was going to bear in His body the punishment for every sin we ever committed. What kind of deep experience this was! Jesus experienced the death penalty for each sin every man has ever committed. As the sin offering, Jesus would become fully identified with sin and bear the full force of the Father's judgment. Although He would remain essentially God during His crucifixion, economically He would experience being forsaken by God. Thus at the cross He would have to face something He had never experienced before: separation from God, His Father.

2. As He prayed, His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down upon the ground—Luke 22:44

As Jesus prayed, the terribleness of what lay before Him bore down upon Him until He was sweating out blood. How greatly He was being pressed within! "[T]he Lord was 'in the grip of a shuddering horror in the face of the dreadful prospect before Him'" (Life-study of Mark, Message 45, p. 390; cf. Mark 14:33). Even though He came to the garden of Gethsemane with the purpose of being captured, the Lord felt the awesome weight of the task that had been determined for Him by the Triune God in the divine plan. "The shadow of the cross came over Christ completely at that time....It was as if He saw, at that moment, all the sin and evil of the world, the awesomeness of God's wrath, and Himself in the midst of them both. This was a foreshadowing of His bearing man's sin and God's wrath. Because of this He suffered such pain. Yet these were merely shadows of His coming crucifixion" (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 6, p. 673).

3. The Lord prayed that He might "drink" the "cup" arranged for Him in the Father's will—Matt. 26:39, 42; Luke 22:42

We should not think that Jesus carried out the Father's will like an unfeeling robot. These verses reveal to us something of the fellowship the Son had with the Father as

He considered what lay before Him. Now that the moment had come, Jesus had one last time to express His desire to remain in His present state of continually being one with the Father. In the end, however, Jesus received this "cup" prepared for Him in this highest sacrifice in obedience to the Father's will, even though this cup was death, even a death under God's judgment on a cross of shame. After praying in this way, He was strengthened to take the cup of God's judgment (cf. Isa. 51:17, 22) and drink it to the full, even to the dregs. It was for this that Jesus took upon Himself a body of flesh (Heb. 10:4–10). The Lord's utterance in His prayer in Matthew 26:39 is very particular: "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will." The Lord was always submissive to the Father's will, and He would drink the cup—suffer death on the cross—only if it was the Father's will for Him to do so. The focus of His attention was God's will, and He earnestly sought to know God's will. According to Watchman Nee, "The Lord's prayer in Gethsemane is the highest expression of submission to God's authority. Our Lord's submission to God's authority far exceeds His sacrifice on the cross" (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 47, p. 113). In other words, it was a greater thing for the Lord to submit to God and agree to take the cup of the Father's will than it was for Him to endure the cross. Through His prayer He knew with assurance that the cup, that is, the cross, was the Father's will, and He was ready to drink that cup because it was the Father's will. "He was not afraid of the cup, but His holy nature was fearful of bearing sin. Before He put the cup and God's will together, He was still able to say, 'If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.' But immediately following, He said, 'Yet not as I will, but as You will.' Hence, in the garden of Gethsemane, we see that He single-heartedly chose God's will and single-heartedly rejected everything that was not God's will" (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 17, p. 119).

**B. The Lord returned from His prayer three times to find the disciples sleeping—
Matt. 26:40**

During the Lord's intense exercise in prayer, His disciples were unable to watch with Him. "After taking Peter, James, and John, the Lord went to pray alone. When He returned from praying the first time, He found the disciples sleeping (v. 40). The Lord Jesus had told them seriously that His soul was 'exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,' and He had asked them to watch with Him (v. 38). But it seemed to them that nothing was going to happen and that everything was peaceful. Perhaps the disciples fell asleep because they had been tired out by the Lord's presence. According to the other Gospels, Peter and John were the ones sent ahead to prepare the room for the Passover. Perhaps they were tired from all the events of the day. Peter might have said to himself, 'I would like to stay away from Jesus for a little while. Since I cannot get away from Him, let me take a little sleep. The Lord may need to pray, but I need to sleep.' This was a full exposure of the fact that Peter was unable to make it in following the Lord. It is also a portrait of our situation. We love the Lord, but like Peter we may get tired out from being in His presence....According to verses 40 and 41, when the Lord came to the disciples and found them sleeping, He said to Peter, 'So, you were not able to watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is ready, but the flesh is weak.' In spiritual things our spirit is often ready or willing, but our flesh is weak"

(Life-study of Matthew, Message 69, pp. 796–797). We should also realize that we need to exercise our spirit in our daily lives so that when the hour of trial comes upon us, we will be ready. Because of His prayer, Jesus, as a man, was ready for what was coming upon Him. The disciples were not.

III. After His prayer, Jesus went forth to carry out the Father's will by offering Himself as the unique sacrifice for our sins—Heb. 10:5–7; Luke 22:37

A. Through His prayer, Jesus had the assurance that it was God's will that He die on the cross—Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42

At first the "cup" and God's will were two different things. But through His prayer He knew with assurance that the "cup" was the Father's will, and He was ready to drink the "cup" because it was the Father's will. It was God's will that the Lord Jesus die on the cross for us, and the Lord was completely submissive to God's will. Thus strengthened by His prayer, Jesus went forth to meet Judas, His betrayer, and to hand Himself over to His captors. "After His prayer in Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus was ready to be arrested, tried, sentenced, and put to death. Everything and everyone had been prepared, and He had had thorough prayer with the Father. By means of that prayer, He had the confirmation that it was God's will for Him to die to replace all the offerings. Therefore, after that prayer, He was ready to be arrested by the chief priests, elders, and scribes" (Life-study of Mark, Message 46, p. 399).

B. After His prayer, Christ went forth to accomplish redemption for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose—Heb. 10:9–10

In Luke 22:42 Christ prayed that the Father's will would be done. Jesus was offered up according to the predetermined will of God (Acts 2:23), as purposed by God in eternity past. "The Triune God determined in His divine plan in eternity past that the Second of the divine Trinity should be incarnated and die on the cross to accomplish His eternal redemption for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose (Eph. 1:7–9). Hence, the Second of the Trinity was ordained to be the Lamb of God (John 1:29) before the foundation of the world, that is, in eternity past (1 Pet. 1:19–20)...After man's fall, lambs, sheep, calves, and bulls were used for God's chosen people as types (Gen. 3:21; 4:4; 8:20; 22:13; Exo. 12:3–8; Lev. 1:2), pointing to Him who was to come as the real Lamb foreordained by God....In His prayer here, immediately before His crucifixion, He prepared Himself to take the cup of the cross. He was willing to do this unique will of the Father for the accomplishment of the eternal plan of the Triune God" (Life-study of Luke, Message 50, pp. 436–437).

IV. The cup of the Father's will is also for us to take—Mark 10:37–40; Rom. 12:2

"The will of God is perfect, good, and acceptable. It is acceptable to us, and it will continue to be so if we are occupied with the will alone. There is something in us, something of God, that will never be satisfied with anything less than the will of God. We should live by this" (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 46, Chapter 181, p. 1220). "If the Lord had not chosen death Himself, it would be possible for us to not die and love our life. But let us pay attention to one thing: we have the ability to choose what is placed before us...We should not allow our circumstances to make the choices for us" (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 17, p. 120). We must be those who actively seek to do God's will.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Portray the scene in the garden of Gethsemane as vividly as possible and enlarge upon the Lord's comment, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). We need to recognize that when it comes to doing sinful or worldly things, the flesh is always ready and willing. But when it comes to doing God's will, our flesh is weak and resisting. Therefore, we need to exercise to have a strong and willing spirit (1 Tim. 4:7). If we practice to exercise our spirit to pray in our daily living, we will be ready for any situation and we will experience being one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). However, if we only know the Lord in the meetings, and ignore Him in our daily lives, we will not be prepared to be those who can carry out God's will on the earth. We need to learn to exercise our spirit to fight against natural tiredness and "boredom" (see *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 69, pp. 796–797). Therefore, we need to spend time to pray in a serious and earnest way. If we are such persons, we will not run away like the disciples nor fight back with a sword like Peter did when Judas came with the soldiers to arrest the Lord. Instead, we will be able to face whatever the Lord has prepared for us in His will, while enjoying God's supply to meet the need of that situation. Furthermore, in the meetings, we will be able to supply life no matter how tired we may feel, because we have learned to exercise our strong and willing spirit to touch the Lord through prayer instead of being defeated by our weak, unwilling flesh. Impress and encourage the young people regarding their "willing" spirit (Matt. 26:41).

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Present a clear picture of what happened from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, unveiling the incredible love that compelled the Lord Jesus to suffer and die on our behalf. Touch on the details of the Lord's suffering on the cross found in Psalm 22:11–18. "I hope that whoever reads these few lines will ponder over these verses from the Bible until the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus becomes a vivid reality before their eyes. Alas, His death was the most cruel death in the history of the world. No one ever died as He did! Because He was full of compassion to redeem all sinners, He died such a death. Readers, if the punishment of the lake of fire cannot cause you to fear, you should be moved by the love He demonstrated on the cross and receive Him" (*The Christian* (4), Message 3 of Gospel Messages, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 6, pp. 678–679). For a complete gospel message on this matter, also see *The Christian* (4), Message 3 of Gospel Messages, *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 6, pp. 678–679.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Praying to fellowship with the Lord and petitioning for our own and others' needs (III.E.6.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 69, pp. 793–797; *Life-study of Mark*, Message 46, pp. 397–399; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 50, pp. 434–437.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 69, pp. 793–798; *Life-study of Mark*, Messages 45–46; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 50, pp. 434–437; Message 51, p. 439; *Life-study of John*, Message 42, pp. 505–506; *The Christian* (4), Message 3 of Gospel Messages (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 6, pp. 671–679); *Authority and Submission*, Chapter 1 (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 47, pp. 109–116); *Conferences, Messages, and Fellowship* (6), Chapter 181 (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 46, pp. 1219–1220). *Notes on Scriptural Messages* (1), Issue No. 16 (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 17, pp. 111–120).

Lesson 3—Arrested by Religion

OBJECTIVE: To see how the Lord Jesus, as the great I Am, willingly put Himself into the hands of sinful men to be arrested, tried, and executed.

SYNOPSIS: After He had arranged everything for His arrest, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemane to prepare for the arrival of His captors, who were led by Judas, a close associate who had betrayed Him. Even though He was the Creator, He allowed Himself to be bound by His creatures so that He might be led to the cross to die for their redemption. At His arrest, all His disciples fled and left Him. Peter tried to follow at a distance, but he eventually fully denied the Lord. Even though He was betrayed by Judas, forsaken by His disciples, and denied by Peter, the Lord Jesus behaved Himself with dignity and composure in the midst of such a situation. The great I Am (John 18:4–6) put Himself into the hands of sinful men! God had become man, and now this God-man was willing to be arrested, tried, and executed. He did not use His power and authority to escape, and He offered no resistance to His captors. What a wonderful Savior!

BACKGROUND: In lessons 2–8 the young people do not necessarily have to have any personal application. The knowledge of their Lord's suffering and death is inspirational and touching. Furthermore, it is foundational knowledge for their entire Christian life. At most you may wish to present these lessons in such a way so that the young people can identify with the Lord's suffering, that is, to compare some of their experiences to what the Lord experienced. For two thousand years the dying Savior has brought men to salvation and consecration.

CHAPTER(S): Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 22; John 18.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

The four Gospels give us a detailed account of how the Lord Jesus was arrested by religion (Matt. 26:47–56; Mark 14:43–52; Luke 22:47–65; John 18:1–11). Discuss the details of each narrative, pointing out how the Lord was betrayed by Judas and forsaken by all His disciples. Spend some time with Peter's denial as recorded in Luke 22:54b–62. The focal point of this lesson, however, should be the Lord Jesus Himself—how He behaved Himself with dignity and composure in the midst of such a situation. He was the great I Am (John 18:4–6), yet He was willing to put Himself into the hands of sinful men to be arrested, tried, and executed.

I. In the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord was arrested secretly by the religious leaders with the help of Judas, the disciple that betrayed Him—Matt. 26:47, 55

A. The Lord took the initiative to go to the garden that He might be arrested—Mark 14:42; John 18:1–8

The Lord went to the garden in order to be arrested. He had been arranging for His arrest so that it would coincide with His being offered up as the true Passover Lamb. For this He instigated many events, including His testing by the Jewish officials during the past four days, and His betrayal by Judas (see John 13:26–27).

B. Those who came to arrest the Lord were led by Judas, one of His own disciples—John 18:2–3

Relate how Judas indicated to those who followed him how they would know the Lord, how he hailed and kissed the Lord, and how the Lord responded (Mark 14:44–46). "The Lord knew that Judas would betray Him [John 13:11, 21–27]. He did not avoid it. This also proves that He voluntarily delivered Himself to be processed. Satan utilized the false

disciple of the Lord to put Him to death, not knowing that by doing this he afforded the Lord the opportunity to be processed" (Life-study of John, Message 42, p. 506). "If it had been a stranger who had led the crowd to the Lord, it would not have been so painful to Him. But the one who led the crowd in arresting Him was one who had been so close to Him for three and a half years. Humanly speaking, this hurt the Lord Jesus" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 69, p. 797).

**II. The Lord allowed Himself to be taken by those who came to arrest Him—
Matt. 26:51–54; Luke 22:51; John 18:4–8**

Unless He had allowed them, no one would be able to arrest the Lord. The Lord Jesus willingly allowed Himself to be arrested by the unrighteous Jewish leaders so that God's purpose could be fulfilled. Throughout His arrest, the Lord Jesus conducted Himself with the utmost dignity and composure.

A. The Lord allowed Himself to be taken so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled—Mark 14:49

When the leaders with their soldiers came to arrest Jesus, He rebuked them for coming secretly at night when they could have easily apprehended Him any day of the week while He was at the temple. "The God-forsaking and God-offending opposers, afraid of the people who had warmly welcomed the [Savior] and were gladdened by His speaking (Mark 12:37), dared not arrest Him in the daytime or in a public place like the temple. Instead, they arrested Him subtly in the deep night, as though arresting a robber (Luke 22:52)" (Life-study of Luke, Message 51, p. 441). In Mark 14:49, the Lord said to them, "Day after day I was with you in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me." Yet He allowed Himself to be taken, saying, "But may the Scriptures be fulfilled." The Lord went along with this unjust treatment for the sake of fulfilling God's Word. The Lord often declared that whatever He did was for the fulfillment of Scripture (Luke 18:31; 22:37; John 13:18, etc.). Many prophecies in the Old Testament foretold how and when the Lord was to die as the unique Lamb of God. The Lord was faithful to work out all these details for the fulfillment of all the Scriptures written concerning Himself.

B. The Lord allowed Himself to be taken because it was part of the cup of the Father's will—John 18:11; Matt. 26:53

The Lord could have asked the Father, and the Father would have sent Him twelve legions of angels to rescue Him from any kind of army (Matt. 26:53). However, He would not use His power and authority to escape, and He offered no resistance to His captors. The Lord recognized that His arrest was part of the cup that the Father had given Him, and He was willing to drink it (John 18:11). Jesus recognized that His being taken was for the accomplishment of the Father's will, that He become the replacement for all the offerings (Heb. 10:5–7). If He were not offered in this way, God would have no way to dispense Himself into man.

C. The Lord allowed Himself to be taken because it was their hour—Luke 22:53

The Lord did not manifest Himself as the King of the Jews at this time, for it was not the place or time for this. The Jewish people were ruled over by these appointed leaders, and the Lord submitted Himself into their hands to be bound according to their decision, for they were the ones in authority. Hence it was their hour. Their hour was the hour of the

authority of darkness (Luke 22:53), for they were fully under the authority of darkness, i.e., they were fully usurped by Satan.

D. The Lord who allowed Himself to be taken was the great I Am—John 18:4–6

When the Lord asked whom they were seeking, the soldiers answered, "Jesus the Nazarene." To this, Jesus replied, "I am." When they heard this, they drew back and even fell to the ground. "They were frightened at this word 'I am,' which is the meaning of the name 'Jehovah.' This indicates that the One they came to arrest was Jehovah God....All He had to do was speak one word and His captors would have been dead. How could they have seized Him if He were unwilling to be captured?" (Life-study of John, Message 42, p. 507)? The people were going to lay hands upon God Himself to bind Him. Yet He, their Creator, allowed Himself to be bound by His creatures so that He might be offered up for their sakes. They even saw Him heal the ear of the high priest's servant during His arrest. Surely they should have considered who it was they were arresting. "The One arrested was the very God, God in a man. This means that God was arrested by His creatures, and even arrested in a way of falsehood. Should not the just and righteous God have judged them immediately? But instead of judging them, He tolerated them. He accepted being arrested in order to accomplish redemption both for His followers and for those who arrested Him" (Life-study of Luke, Message 51, p. 442).

III. At His arrest, the Lord was forsaken by all His disciples and denied by Peter, the foremost disciple of the Lord—Matt. 26:56, 69–75

Not only did the great I Am allow Himself to be arrested and abused by sinful men, He even suffered His own disciples' forsaking and denying Him. In the garden, the disciples had just proclaimed how they would never be stumbled or deny the Lord, even unto death (Mark 14:27–31). However, as soon as the trial came, they all denied Him. What a suffering this must have been to the Lord.

A. At His arrest, the Lord's disciples all left Him and fled—Mark 14:50

The disciples were shown to be utterly powerless to carry out their declarations of faithfulness to the Lord. The Lord was ready to suffer the death of the cross, but His disciples were not yet equipped to follow Him in His suffering. It is one thing for the Lord to be persecuted by His enemies, but to be betrayed by His most intimate friends and disciples must have hurt Him much more.

B. After His arrest, Peter attempted to follow at a distance, but when implicated as one of the Lord's followers, Peter utterly denied the Lord—Luke 22:54–62

The Lord had told Peter that he would deny Him three times before a rooster would crow that morning, but Peter staunchly proclaimed he would never do such a thing. Among the disciples, Peter was one of two who did follow to see what was going to happen (the other was probably John—see John 18:15). Then, as he sat with some servants around a fire, a servant girl identified him as one who had been with the Lord. Peter denied even knowing the Lord. When a short time later a second person accused him as being one of the Lord's disciples, Peter again denied it. About an hour later, a third man insisted that Peter was one who had been with the Lord. Peter denied the Lord a third time, and immediately a rooster crowed. At this, the Lord turned and looked at Peter. We can only imagine what kind of look that was. When their eyes met, Peter remembered what the Lord had told him,

and he ran out and wept bitterly. At the same time the Lord was suffering the utmost persecution from His opposers, He was also suffering the utmost denial by His disciples.

IV. The account of the Lord's arrest portrays the Lord's dignity and composure in the midst of such a situation

The One who was being arrested was the great I Am (John 18:4–6), yet He put Himself into the hands of sinful men. God had become man, and now this God-man was willing to be arrested, tried, and executed. He did not use His power and authority to escape, and He offered no resistance to His captors. Throughout His arrest and trial, the Lord conducted Himself with the utmost dignity and composure. What a wonderful Savior He is!

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: It is extremely important that right after a person has believed in the Lord, he confess to others that he is a Christian. Every baby learns to speak by speaking. We should not wait to learn how to speak. Furthermore, confession with the mouth is how we are saved in the first place (Rom. 10:10). Every new believer should look for opportunities to confess the Lord: to their friends, classmates, neighbors, and relatives. Confessing the Lord right away after we get saved saves us much trouble in the long run. Unless people know we are a Christian, they will keep trying to include us in their sinful activities. Once they know we are believers, we are protected from a lot of things. It is a fallacy to think, as some do, that we should just improve our behavior without speaking about the Lord to our friends. If we do not confess the Lord's name, they will not associate a change in our behavior with the Lord. Furthermore, not confessing the Lord's name is really just to leave ourselves an excuse for poor behavior. If we leave a "back door," we set ourselves up for failure. For further reading on this topic, see *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, Chapter 4, "Confessing with the Mouth," pp. 55–67 (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, v. 48).

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Within every man is the realization that God is real and that He is coming to judge everyone according to righteousness. Also, within every man is the realization that he is sinful and unable to meet the standard of God's righteousness. Therefore, having no way of salvation, people are waiting in fear for the coming judgment. At His time of need, all those with the Lord abandoned Him, leaving Him alone to face an unjust arrest, malicious trial, cruel beating, and shameful death. At that critical moment, they turned away from their Savior. How about you? Have you also been denying the Lord for so long, turning away from Him again and again? Maybe you have even fallen into a habit of dismissing Him. What if this had been the Lord's heart toward you? There would indeed be no hope! Yet deep within, even though you may have been trying to "put Him off" and refuse His calling, you do have the thought, "One day I must surely choose Him, for I know He is the only hope to fill this vast sense of vanity within and to save me from my sins which deserve the righteous recompense of judgment." This is the time to respond. The Lord, in His faithfulness, took a definite and costly stand for you; now, it is time to take a stand for Him. Today, you must indeed make a choice: at this critical moment are you going to choose Him or forsake Him? His choice toward you in this matter has already been made—He longs for you to open and receive Him. What will your choice be? Choose Him!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of John*, Message 42, pp. 506–507; *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 69, p. 797; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 51, pp. 441–442.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of John*, Message 42; *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 69; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 51; *Messages for Building Up New Believers*, Chapter 4, "Confessing with the Mouth," pp. 55–67 (*Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, v. 48).

Lesson 4—Judged (1)

OBJECTIVE: To see the Lord's dignity and honor as a God-man during the hour of judgment in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

SYNOPSIS: Before going to the cross, the Lord was judged by the Jewish leaders and by the Gentile rulers. After passing through this judgment, the Lord was fully shown to be without fault and proven to be the qualified Substitute to die for us on the cross. First the Lord was judged by the corrupt Jewish leaders. When they falsely accused Him, He remained silent, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 53:7 that says He would be like a sheep that is dumb before His shearers. Then when they asked Him if He was the Christ, the Son of the living God, He answered strongly and definitely that He was and that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven. The Jewish leaders, enraged by the Lord's answer, condemned the Lord and brought Him to Pilate, who also questioned the Lord. The Lord again, in the highest standard of human perfection with His all-surpassing divine splendor, stood before Pilate and was found to be without fault. Nevertheless, Pilate unjustly delivered Him up to be crucified. By being crucified, the Lord died according to the Roman mode of execution and fulfilled the prophecies concerning how the Lord would die for our sins. In every way, the Lord conducted Himself in dignity and honor in the hour of judgment.

CHAPTER(S): Matthew 26–27; Mark 14–15; Luke 22–23.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Before dying on the cross, the Lord was examined from all different directions in order to prove that He was qualified to be our Substitute. This examination began from the temple, where the chief priests and the elders questioned Him regarding His authority (Matt. 21:23), and continued until He reached the last step of the examination—the judgment by the Jewish leaders and the Roman rulers (Matt. 26:57—27:32). During this hour of judgment, we see the Lord's dignity and honor as a God-man. Amidst the false accusations of the Jewish leaders and the corrupt handling of the Gentile rulers, the Lord conducted Himself in the highest standard of human perfection with His all-surpassing divine splendor. After passing through this last examination, the Lord was found to be without fault. Therefore He was qualified to be the unique Substitute to die for all of us. In this lesson we will consider Matthew, Mark, and Luke's account of the judgment and in the next lesson we will consider John's account of the judgment.

I. The Lord was judged by the Jewish leaders, representing the Jews—Matt. 26:57–68; Mark 14:53–65; Luke 22:66–71

The Lord was first judged by the Jewish leaders, representing the Jews. Matthew 26:59 says, "Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking false testimony against Jesus so that they might put Him to death." The Sanhedrin was the highest court among the Jews (Acts 4:5–6, 15; 5:27, 34, 41) and was a council composed of the chief priests, the elders, the lawyers, and the scribes. Although they worshipped God and taught people about God, their falsehood was fully exposed in their judgment of the Lord Jesus. They repeatedly sought false testimony against Him through the mouths of many false witnesses, but could not find any (Matt. 26:59–61; Mark 14:55–59).

**A. The Lord did not answer a word when questioned regarding His behavior—
Matt. 26:62–63a; Mark 14:60–61; Isa. 53:7**

Although the Lord was unjustly accused with false testimonies, He did not utter a word to vindicate Himself. He stood before the Sanhedrin like a sheep before His shearers and thus fulfilled the word in Isa. 53:7 which says, “He was oppressed, and it was He who was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.”

**B. The Lord answered strongly when questioned regarding His Person—
Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69–70**

Concerning His behavior the Lord did not answer His accusers, but concerning His person He answered strongly and definitely (see Mark 14:62, footnote 1). When asked if He was the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord said, “You have said rightly. Nevertheless I say to you, From now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64). Here the Lord indicated that He is the Son of Man not only before His crucifixion but also after His resurrection in ascension (Acts 7:56), and even in His coming back on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64). The high priest asked the Lord if He was the “Son of God” but the Lord answered with “the Son of Man,” answering in the same way He had answered the devil who tempted Him in the same way in Matthew 4. For the accomplishing of God’s purpose, the Lord needed to be a man; thus the Lord stood on His ground as a man before His accusers. After hearing the Lord’s word, the high priest tore his garments and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses?” (Matt. 26:65). They then spit in His face, blindfolded Him, beat Him with their fists, slapped Him, and said, “Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who hit You?” (Matt. 26:66–68; Mark 14:65). Amidst all this, the Lord was victorious, never vindicating Himself and never fighting back.

**II. The Lord was judged by the Roman governor, representing the Gentiles—Matt. 27:1–26;
Mark 15:1–15; Luke 23:1–25**

“Under God’s sovereignty [He] was judged not only by the Jewish leaders as a sheep before the shearers (Isa. 53:7), but also by the Roman governor as a criminal before the accusers. He was judged in this way so that He might die to save sinners with His life as a ransom (Mark 10:45), not only for the Jews represented by the Jewish leaders, but also for the Gentiles, represented by the Roman governor” (Life-study of Luke, Message 51, p. 444).

A. The Lord was unrighteously condemned to death by Pilate—Matt. 27:26

Although the Roman law was the strongest in the world, the execution of that law was very weak by the Roman rulers. Pilate was such a ruler (an agent of Caesar in Judea, A.D. 26–35). He was unfair in his dealing with the Lord. Knowing that Barabbas was guilty and that the Lord was innocent, he unjustly asked the Jews, “Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?” (Matt. 27:17). When the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to destroy Jesus (Matt. 27:20–23), Pilate timidly and irresponsibly washed his hands before the crowd and said, “I am innocent of this man’s blood. You see to it yourselves” (Matt. 27:24). Although Pilate found no cause of death in the Lord (Luke 23:22), Pilate released Barabbas (a murderer), and condemned Jesus to death (Matt. 27:26). This shows how utterly unrighteous Pilate was. Yet the Lord again conducted Himself in dignity and honor.

Amidst the false accusations of the Jews, the Lord did not vindicate Himself, so that Pilate marveled greatly (Matt. 27:13–14; Mark 15:2–5).

B. The Lord was unjustly scourged by Pilate—Matt. 27:26

Pilate not only unrighteously condemned the Lord to death (the One in whom he found no cause of death), he also scourged Him before delivering Jesus up to be crucified. (Scourging was a form of punishment or torture in which a person was whipped severely.) This utterly exposed the darkness and injustice of politics. However, this injustice also fulfilled Isaiah 53:5 and 8.

C. The Lord was sovereignly delivered up to be crucified according to the Roman way of execution—Matt. 27:26

“The Jewish death penalty was carried out by stoning (Lev. 20:2, 27; 24:14; Deut. 13:10; 17:5). Crucifixion was a heathen practice (Ezra 6:11) adopted by the Romans for the execution of slaves and heinous criminals only. The Lord Jesus’ being crucified was a fulfillment not only of the Old Testament prophecies (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13; Num. 21:8–9) but also of the Lord’s word concerning how He would die (John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32). These could not have been fulfilled by stoning” (Matt 27:26, footnote 2).

III. The Lord was mocked by heathen soldiers—Matt. 27:27–32

After the Lord was judged and before He was crucified, He suffered under the unjust treatment of the governor’s soldiers. The soldiers took Jesus into the praetorium, gathered about Him the whole cohort, stripped Him, put a scarlet robe around Him, placed a thorny crown on His head, mocked Him, spit on Him, and beat the thorns into His head. Then they led Him away to be crucified (Matt. 27:27–32). Throughout all these indignities, the Lord conducted Himself as a God-man full of dignity and honor. He did not rebuke the soldiers, nor did He open His mouth to utter a protest or complaint.

IV. The Lord was dignified and honorable as a God-man in the hour of judgment

“The accusations of the Jewish religious leaders exposed their falseness and deceitfulness in their religion, and the judgment made by the Roman rulers exposed their darkness and rottenness in their politics. At the same time, the Man-Savior again was vindicated in His human perfection of the highest standard, with His all-surpassing divine splendor. This was the strongest sign that He was fully qualified to be the Substitute for the sinners for whom He intended to die” (Luke 23:24, footnote 1). The Lord was judged as a man by both the religious and political worlds in their corruption. Throughout all the unrighteous and corrupt judgment, and the unjust and cruel treatment He received, the Lord Jesus conducted Himself in a manner full of dignity and honor as a God-man. In contrast with the darkness and corruption of both religion and politics, the Lord Jesus shone forth as a testimony of God.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: On a chalkboard, draw two columns. In one column, itemize all the injustices of the Jewish and Gentile leaders: (1) the Jewish leaders sought false testimony against Him (Matt. 26:59); (2) they accused Him of having blasphemed (Matt. 26:65); (3) they spit in His face (Matt. 26:67); (4) they beat Him with their fists (Matt. 26:67); (5) they slapped Him (Matt. 26:67); (6) they blindfolded Him and told Him to prophesy who was the one hitting Him (Matt. 26:68; Mark 14:65); (7) the chief priests and the leaders accused Him before Pilate (Matt. 27:12); (8) Pilate and Herod passed Him back and forth between one another (Luke 23:5–12); (9) Herod’s soldiers mocked Him and despised Him (Luke 23:11); (10) Pilate unjustly delivered Him up to death and released Barabbas, a murderer, in His stead (Matt. 27:26); (11) Pilate

scourged Jesus (Matt. 27:26); (12) Pilate's soldiers stripped Him, put a scarlet robe around Him, put a crown of thorns on His head, beat Him on the head, and mocked Him (Matt. 27:27-32). Then, in the second column, itemize the Lord's dignified composure in the hour of judgment as a sheep before His shearers (Isa. 53:7): (1) He allowed His accusers to lead Him away to be judged (Matt. 26:57); (2) He remained silent before the false testimonies of the Jews (Matt. 26:62-63; Isa. 53:7); (3) He answered strongly concerning His being the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62); (4) He further responded to the Jewish leaders by letting them know that they would see Him as the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64); (5) He remained silent when He was accused before Pilate (Matt. 27:12); (6) He remained silent when questioned by Herod (Luke 23:9); (7) He was without fault, even in the eyes of Pilate, a corrupt Gentile ruler (Luke 23:4). Impress the young people with how wonderfully the Lord conducted Himself during His hour of judgment and how He died for all those who mistreated Him. Actually, we were represented by those sinful, mistreating people (being no better than the people in the first column), but the Lord died for all of us sinners. What a wonderful Savior!

GOSPEL APPLICATION: In the Old Testament, before an animal could be offered to cover the sins of the children of Israel, it first had to be carefully inspected to make sure it was without defect of any kind. So scrupulous was the examination and so high was the standard that if even a single spot or blemish was found on the animal, it could not be offered. Throughout the inspection, the animal would remain quiet in the hands of the ones who, if no fault was found in it, would offer its perfect life as a covering for their sinful lives. This kind of offering was repeated for thousands of years in the Old Testament, requiring the sacrifice of countless animals to be offered. Just as with the offerings of old, the Lord Jesus had to be examined as well. The more we see the Lord as the spotless and sinless One, the more we spontaneously realize how sinful we are. After living a perfect human life according to the highest standard of righteousness, the Lord was arrested by lawless men, unjustly judged and accused by the Jewish leaders, and unrighteously scourged before being sentenced to death by the cowardly political Roman governor, Pilate. Yet, He was found to be without fault, emerging righteous from the fury of their unrighteous examination. Having thus been examined and found to be spotless, the Lord went on to the cross, that He, the Righteous, might die on behalf of us, the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18). "The way is clear, now all can come" (*Hymns*, #1109, stanza 1). He came as the Lamb of God, lived a perfect human life, died on behalf of us all, shed His precious blood for the forgiveness of our sins, and now in resurrection, as the life-giving Spirit, is able to be received by us as our life (John 1:29; 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:45; Col. 3:4). Receive Him now as the sin-removing and life-giving One.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Mark*, Message 46, pp. 399-403.

REFERENCES: Luke 23:24, footnote 1; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 51, pp. 442-448; Mark 14:62, footnote 1; *Life-study of Mark*, Message 46, pp. 399-403; *Recovery Version Outline of Mark*, pp. 233, 235; Matthew 27:26, footnote 2; *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 57, p. 669; Message 69, pp. 798-801; Message 70, pp. 805-809; *Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 38, pp. 341-346.

Lesson 5—Judged (2)

OBJECTIVE: To see how the faultless Christ was sentenced to death by blind religion and dark politics in the Gospel of John.

SYNOPSIS: When the Lord was being examined by the Jewish religionists and the Gentile politician, He had no fear of death and boldly faced the terrifying judgment. When the Jewish leaders asked Him about His teaching, He responded by saying, "I have spoken openly to the world....Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard Me" (John 18:20a, 21a). When Pilate asked Him if He was a king, He answered by saying, "You say that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I would testify to the truth" (John 18:37). While the Lord was being examined as the Passover Lamb, He examined those who examined Him and exposed their faults. Eventually, Pilate declared three times, "I find no fault in Him." Nevertheless, the Lord was sentenced in man's injustice by blind religion and dark politics. Blinded by their religious hatred toward the Lord, the Jews demanded that Christ be crucified. Darkened by his politics and desire to please the Jews, Pilate set aside justice and sentenced the Lord to death. By this record in John's Gospel, we are inspired to care neither for religion nor for politics. Both worked together to crucify the Lord. We only care for the faultless Christ who willingly submitted to the unjust sentence of death so that He could die for our redemption.

CHAPTER(S): John 18–19.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In the last lesson we saw from the gospel of Matthew, Mark, and Luke how the Lord was dignified and honorable in the hour of judgment. Such dignity and honor is again seen in John's account. In addition, we want to see from the Gospel of John how the Lord was sentenced to death by two particular things: religion and politics. Religion is blind and politics is dark, and both worked together to crucify the Lord. Many of the utterances of both the Lord and His examiners are new in this account; therefore it would be worth reading John 18:12–19:16 together with the young people.

I. The Lord was examined in His dignity by mankind—John 18:12–38a; 11:25

Just as in the other Gospels, we see in the Gospel of John how dignified the Lord was while being examined. "Chapters eighteen and nineteen of John's Gospel are quite particular. In these chapters the Lord certainly did not behave Himself as an ordinary man. However, our understanding of these chapters may be natural. When we read John 18 and 19, we may sympathize with the Lord in a natural way and pity Him for all His sufferings. But in these chapters we do not have a picture of a pitiful situation—we have a portrait of a victorious Person. Therefore, in our reading of these chapters we should not feel sad and sympathize with the Lord. Instead, we need to see that these chapters are a record of the victory of Christ's resurrection life. John 18 and 19 are an exhibition of the unbreakable resurrection life. In everything recorded in these chapters the Lord behaved Himself as the One who is the resurrection and the life (11:25). This wonderful Person is life, and in these chapters this life is exhibited" (The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John, Chapter 59, p. 548).

A. He was examined as the Passover Lamb—John 1:29; Exo. 12:2–6

At the beginning of the Gospel of John, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to Him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Then, three

and a half years later, the Lord was crucified on the day of Passover as the real Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). In the Old Testament, before the Passover lamb was slain on the day of Passover, it was first examined to ensure that it had no blemishes (Exo. 12:2–6). The examination of the Lord Jesus by mankind was a fulfillment of this type. Before He was crucified on the day of Passover, He was examined and proven to be without blemish. For this reason Pilate declared, “I find no fault in Him” (John 18:38b). Therefore, He was qualified to pass over sinners. (See John 18:13, footnote 1 and Mark 12:37, footnote 1).

B. He was examined by the Jews according to God’s law in their religion—John 18:12–27

The Lord was first examined by the Jews according to the law of God in their religion. During this examination, the high priest asked the Lord regarding His disciples and His teaching (John 18:19). The Lord answered in a very dignified way, saying, “I have spoken openly to the world; I always taught in the synagogue and in the temple, where all the Jews come together, and I spoke nothing in secret. Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard Me, concerning what I spoke to them; behold, these know what I said” (John 18:20–21). “While the high priest was examining and judging the Lord, the high priest was being judged by the Lord in His dignity (18:19–21). The Lord was fearless and spoke to the high priest in a very dignified way. While the Passover lamb was being examined, the examiner was being examined by Him, and the blemishes of the examiner were exposed” (Life-study of John, Message 42, p. 510).

C. He was examined by the Gentiles according to man’s law in their politics—John 18:28–38a

It was sovereign of God that the Lord was not only examined by the Jews according to the Jewish law but also by the Gentiles according to the Roman law. According to the Jewish law, death was by stoning (John 18:31; Lev. 24:16), but that mode of execution would not have fulfilled the Lord’s word regarding how He would be lifted up as the bronze serpent (John 3:14; 18:32). Since the Jewish nation was not in power and had lost its right to execute criminals, the Jewish leaders transferred the Lord to the Roman authorities who had recently adopted crucifixion as their mode of execution. This was decided under God’s sovereignty for the fulfillment of the prophecies (Psa. 22:14–16; John 12:32–33). The following points show how the Lord underwent this examination in a dignified way.

1. The Lord testified that He was the King of the kingdom of God—John 18:33–37a

Pilate, while judging the Lord, was himself being judged by Him. Pilate was timid, but the Lord was dignified. Pilate was fearful of the Jewish people. But the Lord was fearless and answered Pilate by saying, “My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My attendants would be struggling so that I would not be delivered to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not from here.” The Lord stood before the timid Pilate as a dignified King whose kingdom was not of this world.

2. The Lord testified to the truth—John 18:37b

After testifying that He was a king, the Lord said, “For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, that I would testify to the truth. Every one who is of the truth hears My voice” (John 18:37b). “The Triune God is the reality in the

universe, and the Lord Jesus came to testify concerning this reality....For the Lord to testify to the truth means that He testified that the Triune God is the real content of the universe" (The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John, Chapter 56, p. 521). Pilate then responded to the Lord by asking the Lord, "What is truth?" (John 18:38a). Pilate did not know what truth was and he himself was not true. He was a false person exposed and put to shame by the Lord.

3. The Lord was found to be without fault—John 18:38b; 19:4, 6; 1 Pet. 1:19

After examining the Lord, Pilate declared three times that He was without fault (John 18:38b; 19:4, 6). The Lord was the spotless, unblemished Lamb of God (1 Pet. 1:19).

II. The Lord was sentenced to death in man's injustice by blind religion with dark politics—John 18:38b-19:16

"After the Lord Jesus was examined, He, the perfect One, was sentenced in man's injustice (18:38b-19:16). This unjust sentence exposed the blindness of religion and the darkness of politics (18:38b-39; 19:1, 4-5, 8-14, 16)" (Life-study of John, Message 42, p. 512).

A. The Jewish religionists were blinded by their religion and hatred—John 18:39-40; 19:6-7, 12, 15

In this portion of the Word, we see the blindness of the Jewish religionists; everything they did was deceitful and full of falsehood. "They were the prominent ones among the Jews, yet they were not concerned about the things of God. Their only concern was that this Jesus, who called Himself the Son of God, was threatening their position by what He did and said. If they allowed Jesus to go on, their position would be in jeopardy, and their dignity would be bankrupted. Therefore, they hastily tried to remove Jesus so that they could maintain their personal prestige" (Collected Works of Watchman Nee, Volume 38, Chapter 47, pp. 342-343). They were evil, hypocritical, deceitful, and full of pretense. Ultimately, in their hatred, they rejected the most righteous One and chose a robber instead (John 18:40). Despite Pilate's word that the Lord was faultless, they yelled, "Crucify! Crucify!" (John 19:4-6).

B. The Gentile politician was dark in sentencing the Lord to death—John 18:38b-39; 19:1, 4-5, 8-14, 16

Pilate declared the Lord to be faultless three times, yet Pilate, in order to please the Jews, released Barabbas, a robber, and delivered up the Lord to be crucified. Here we see the darkness of politics. Pilate was timid and fearful of the people and acted as an example of a true politician. He set aside justice and delivered the righteous One to death.

C. The Lord submitted to the unjust judgment in order to die for our redemption—John 19:1, 11, 16; 10:17-18

The Lord did not resist when He was unjustly sentenced to death. Rather, He willingly submitted to the judgment of death for the sake of our redemption. His behavior in facing this judgment proves He is the resurrection and the life. In John 19:1 He willingly suffered Pilate's scourging without turning away. In John 19:2-3 He quietly accepted the insulting of the soldiers who put a crown of thorns on His head, clothed Him in a purple garment, mocked Him, and slapped Him. In John 19:10, when Pilate threatened the Lord by saying that he had the authority to release the Lord or crucify Him, the Lord without any fear of

death said, "You would have no authority against Me if it were not given to you from above; for this reason, he who has delivered Me to you has the greater sin." We would have been fearful but the Lord had no fear of death. In man's injustice He was sentenced to death by blind religion and dark politics. But for our sakes, He willingly went to the cross so that we might be redeemed and might have life abundantly (John 10:10-11).

III. In God's economy there is no place for religion or politics; we should only care for the faultless Christ

Religion is blind and politics is dark. Both worked together to pronounce the unjust sentence upon Christ. We should not care for religion or politics; we should only care for the faultless Christ who came into the world to testify to the truth and who submitted to an unjust judgment so that He could die for our redemption. The blinded religionists did not care for Him and the dark politician did not care for Him, but we care for Him and love Him as the resurrection and the life who passed through the examination of the rulers and died for our redemption.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: From the time the Lord was betrayed by Judas to the time He was crucified, everything the Lord faced was troubling, distressing, terrifying, and oppressive. Situation after situation arose that would have frightened the boldest among us. Nevertheless, each situation provided an environment to prove what kind of person the Lord was. In John 11:25 the Lord said that He was the resurrection and the life. "How can we know that the Lord is life? It is by His going into death and not being subdued by it. The Lord was not frightened, troubled, controlled, or governed by death. As we read these two chapters [John 18 and 19], we discover that when the Lord went into death, He conquered and subdued it" (*Life-study of John*, Message 42, p. 508). The following examples show that in every death situation, He was life: (1) When Judas came with the cohort (with their weapons), He boldly and voluntarily went forth to offer Himself into their hands (John 18:4). Could you have done this? (2) The Lord had such composure when they came to arrest Him that He took care of His disciples in an easy manner (John 18:8). Would you have been at ease in this situation? (3) He answered His examiners boldly without a hint of the fear of death (John 18:20-21, 34-37; 19:11). (4) He willingly suffered Pilate's unjust scourging (John 19:1). (5) He quietly accepted the soldiers' mocking (John 19:2-3). (6) He was nailed to the cross without resistance (John 19:18). We also face many difficult situations. In all these environments we should recognize that Christ lives within us as the resurrection and the life, and nothing can suppress or discourage Him (Gal. 2:20; John 11:25; Isa. 42:4). Our prayer should be, "Oh, may I know this resurrection life, / In every kind of death its pow'r outpoured, / In my experience ever realize / This life is nought but Christ my living Lord" (*Hymns*, # 639).

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Religion is man's invention to do things for God without Christ. The first instance of this can be seen in Cain's offering to the Lord in Genesis 4. The Lord's desire was that man would offer the sacrifice of the firstlings of the flock to Him as Abel did, yet Cain offered vegetables to the Lord. Abel's sacrifice was accepted by God, whereas Cain's was not. "Cain offered the fruit of his own labor to God (Gen. 4:3). He brought the fruit of the ground with no blood for shedding. This means that he had rejected God's way of redemption which he had heard from his parents. God's way of redemption as revealed to Cain's parents was that of a sacrifice in which the blood was shed, for without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Heb. 9:22)...Cain did not care for God's way; he invented his own way according to his concept....[He] was the first to invent religion....Jude 11 speaks of those who 'have gone in the way of Cain.' What is the way of Cain? It is to do good to please God and to worship God presumptuously by man's own effort and according to man's own invention under the devil's motivation. The way of Cain is to worship God religiously without Christ"

(*Life-study of Genesis*, Volume 1, Message 23, pp. 305–306). Cain's boast was in the fruit of his own labor. To the religious ones, their trust is also in their own labor—what they can do to please God, though devoid of the living person of Christ. Turn away from your boast in your own labor. Turn away as well from your own concepts of trying to please God by your own righteousness, which in His eyes are as filthy rags, unable to save you (Isa. 64:6, Eph. 2:8). Turn instead to the living Jesus and His way of salvation having faith in what He has done in shedding His blood for the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 11:6; Matt. 26:28; Col. 1:12–14).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of John*, Message 42, pp. 508–512.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of John*, Message 42, pp. 508–512; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 51; *Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 38, Chapter 47; *The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John*, Chapters 55–59; John 18:13, footnote 1; Mark 12:37, footnote 1; *Hymns*, #639.

Lesson 6—The Lord's Crucifixion (1)

OBJECTIVE: To see the details of Christ's crucifixion, and to see the tremendous impact Christ's death had upon Satan's kingdom.

SYNOPSIS: After being unrighteously judged and condemned by the Jewish leaders and a Roman politician, Jesus was led away to be crucified. As He hung on the cross, every opportunity was taken during the first three hours to heap indignities upon Him. During the last three hours on the cross, God came in to judge Christ as the totality of sin. After He finished His work of redemption, Christ yielded up His spirit. When the Lord died, a number of events took place which indicated the universal impact His death had on crushing Satan's kingdom and fulfilling God's economy. Eventually Jesus was buried in a rich man's tomb, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. The Jewish leaders set a guard over the tomb and had it sealed, setting the stage for a clear testimony of His coming resurrection.

CHAPTER(S): Matthew 27.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

This lesson takes as its focus Matthew's account of the Lord's crucifixion. The young people could follow along in their Bibles as this lesson is shared with them.

I. The sinless Lord Jesus who came to die for man's redemption was mocked and killed by those He was dying to save—Matt. 27:33–44

The Lord was on the cross for six hours. In the first three hours He was persecuted by men for doing God's will; in the last three hours He was judged by God to accomplish our redemption. (This matter will be covered in detail in Lesson 8.)

A. The Lord was led to Golgotha, the "Place of a Skull," to be crucified—Matt. 27:33

After the Lord was judged, He was led to a place outside the city walls to be crucified. (We get the word "Calvary" from the Latin name with the same meaning.)

B. The Lord was given wine to drink mingled with gall, but He would not take it—Matt. 27:34

This was to tempt the Lord by giving Him a way to escape the full weight of what He had to suffer on the cross for our redemption. He was determined, however, to fully drink the cup that the Father had prepared for Him without any dulling or stupefying influence.

C. After nailing Him to the cross, the soldiers divided the Lord's garments among themselves—Matt. 27:35

While the Lord was suffering in humiliation on the cross, the soldiers callously divided His garments, the only things the Lord owned on this earth, among themselves. This fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22:18. The fact that the Lord could not even wear His garments on the cross indicates further what a shameful death He experienced for us.

D. The charge against Him was printed and hung above His head—Matt. 27:37

The sign read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." Although they did it to mock the Lord and the Jews, by this official charge they recognized Jesus as the rightful heir to David's throne, and thus the Messiah prophesied in the Scriptures.

E. He was crucified between two robbers—Matt. 27:38

Jesus hung between two common thieves. This fulfilled the prophecy that His grave would be among the wicked (Isa. 53:9). As one who died as a criminal, Jesus' body should have been cast down and buried without any honor or notice.

F. He was mocked and blasphemed by all who surrounded Him and passed by—Matt. 27:39–44

The soldiers had mocked Him before His crucifixion. Now all the people who passed by also mocked and blasphemed, including the two thieves who were being crucified alongside Him. They did not realize that He was being put to death for their sins. Thus, during the first three hours Jesus hung on the cross, from about nine in the morning until noon, every form of scorn and mockery was heaped upon Him by man. Death by crucifixion was a most shameful death. The Lord suffered the reviling in silence. He never spoke back at His revilers. Never in history had a man died such a dignified death. The shameful death of the Lord's death served as a dark background against which the Lord's dignity could be fully manifested. The Lord in His dignity stands out in strong contrast to all those who are being exposed in their unrighteousness.

II. After suffering all of man's indignities, Jesus was judged and forsaken by God—Matt. 27:45–50

After men had done everything they could to heap indignities upon Christ during His first three hours on the cross, God Himself came in to judge Christ. During the last three hours on the cross, God counted Him as our Substitute who suffered for our sin, and because of our sin God forsook Him.

A. From the sixth to the ninth hour, darkness fell upon all the land—Matt. 27:45

During the final three hours Jesus hung on the cross, starting at noon, God caused a darkness to fall upon the land. Such a darkness must certainly have caused a great fear and wonder among the people. It was during this time that God came in to judge Jesus as though He were the unique sinner responsible for all the sins of mankind. "In the sight of God during those hours the Lord was a totality of sin" (Life-study of Luke, Message 52, p. 454).

B. The Lord cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"—Matt. 27:46

In both His eternal preexistence and in His earthly existence, Jesus had never experienced being separated from fellowship with His Father. This must have been the most difficult thing that Jesus ever experienced. God, however, had to forsake Jesus on the cross in order to execute His judgment upon Jesus for our sins. "Isaiah 53 reveals that this was the time God put our sins on Him. In the three hours from twelve noon to three o'clock in the afternoon the righteous God put all our sins upon this substitute and judged Him righteously for our sins. God forsook Him because during these hours He was a sinner there on the cross; He was even made sin. On the one hand, the Lord bore our sins; on the other hand, He was made sin for us. Therefore, God judged Him. This was altogether a matter of righteousness" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, p. 812). (Upon hearing the Lord's cry, one of the soldiers mockingly offered Him some vinegar to drink (Luke 23:36), and the rest said, "Let Him be. Let us see if Elijah is coming to save Him,"

for they thought He was crying out for Elijah to save Him. This was a final indignity to be heaped upon the Lord.)

C. The Lord cried out once more and died, yielding up His spirit—Matt. 27:50

After He had drunk the last drop of the cup that was required by God's righteousness, Jesus cried out and yielded up His spirit. The Greek word for "yielded up" here also means "dismissed." He did not allow Himself to die until every debt of sin had been completely paid. It was only after His death had fully accomplished its objective that Jesus allowed His spirit to be released from His suffering body, having successfully completed His redemptive ministry. Thus, Jesus was not killed by man. He yielded up His spirit only when His work in the first stage of His ministry was finished (John 10:17–18; see also Luke 23:46; Matthew 27:50 and footnote 1).

III. The impact of Jesus' death was testified to by many events and by many witnesses—Matt. 27:51–56

The impact of the death of Jesus was universal in scope and eternal in time. It destroyed forever the power of God's enemy, Satan, and it formed an eternally secure foundation upon which man could come to God and upon which God could carry out His eternal purpose within man. This was signified by many events and witnessed to by those who were present.

A. The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom—Matt. 27:51a

"This signifies that the separation between God and man was abolished, because the flesh (signified by the veil) of sin taken by Christ (Rom. 8:3) had been crucified (Heb. 10:20). The words 'from the top to the bottom' indicate that the rending of the veil was God's doing from above. Because sin had been judged and the flesh of sin had been crucified, the separation between God and man was taken away. Now the way to enter into the presence of God is open for us. What a wonderful effect of the Lord's death! His death was not martyrdom; it was an act of redemption" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, pp. 812–813).

B. The earth was shaken and rocks were split—Matt. 27:51b

"The shaking of the earth signifies that the base of Satan's rebellion has been shaken, and the splitting of the rocks signifies that the strongholds of Satan's earthly kingdom have been broken. Hallelujah, the Lord's death tore the veil, shook the base of Satan's rebellion, and broke the strongholds of Satan's kingdom! What a death! Praise the Lord for His death! Because God's righteousness was fully satisfied, Christ's death could be so effective" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, p. 813).

C. Many saints who had died came forth from their tombs—Matt. 27:52

"The opening of the tombs signifies that the power of death and Hades had been conquered and subdued, and the raising of the bodies of the saints signifies the releasing power of the death of Christ....In typology, the firstfruits of the harvest were not a single stalk of wheat, but a sheaf of wheat, typifying not only the resurrected Christ, but also the saints who were raised from the dead after His resurrection, as revealed here" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, p. 813).

D. The centurion and soldiers confessed that Jesus was the Son of God—Matt. 27:54

The soldiers who had just treated Jesus with such cruelty were greatly terrified when they realized they had just crucified the Son of God. If we were the soldiers, how would we feel for crucifying the Son of God? Yet, we all should realize that we did have a part in putting Jesus on the cross. It was our sin and separation from God that caused Him to die.

**E. A number of women who had ministered to Jesus looked on from a distance—
Matt. 27:55**

Although His disciples all had fled, in Matthew's account we are told that the women who followed Jesus were present to witness His crucifixion. We should all aspire to be such faithful and simple "women." Unlike the disciples who argued about who would be greatest and declared their readiness to die for the Lord, these women simply followed the Lord and only cared for His presence. Before experiencing the Lord's death and resurrection, we are like those natural disciples who ran away after arguing who would be the greatest. After we become His lovers, however, we simply follow Him wherever He goes, even if it is to the cross. Those who follow the Lord surely will witness great things throughout their lives.

IV. The Lord was buried by a rich man—Matt. 27:57–66

This was a fulfillment of the prophecy made in Isaiah 53:9.

**A. Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate's permission to take the body of Jesus—
Matt. 27:57–58**

Joseph was a rich disciple of the Lord. He daringly came to Pilate to ask permission that he might take the body of Jesus.

B. Joseph took Jesus' body, wrapped it in linen, laid it in his own tomb, and rolled the stone in front of the tomb while two of the Marys looked on—Matt. 27:59–61

"The Lord Jesus was wrapped in a clean linen cloth and laid in a new tomb....Mary the Magdalene and the other Mary sat opposite the grave to witness the burial. This kind of burial was for the fulfillment of Isaiah 53:9. This righteous One was surely worthy of such a burial" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, p. 814). In doing this, these followers of the Lord probably gave what they thought was their final farewell to their dear Master.

C. The chief priests and Pharisees asked Pilate's permission to secure the tomb, and they sealed the stone and set a guard over His grave—Matt. 27:62–66

"Verses 65 and 66 say, 'Pilate said to them, You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how. And they went and secured the grave with the guard, sealing the stone.' This was intended by the opposing Jewish leaders as a negative precaution, but it turned out to be a strong positive testimony of the Lord's resurrection. Without such a sealing, the resurrection of Christ would not have been as significant" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, p. 814).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Using Matthew's record, point out all the unrighteous things that were done to Jesus prior to His crucifixion. So many indignities were unrighteously heaped upon Christ during the hours prior to His being nailed to the cross. He was arrested secretly. The priests and Jewish leaders slapped Him, spit in His face, and mocked Him. They took counsel about how to kill Him, even though He had done nothing wrong. False accusations were brought against Him before Pilate, who, after publicly proclaiming that he could find no fault with Jesus, bowed to the unrighteous demands of the crowd and had Jesus scourged

(severely whipped with cords containing pieces of metal) and handed Him over to be crucified. The soldiers placed a kingly robe upon Him and crowned Him with a crown of thorns to mockingly hail Him as the King of the Jews. They also spit upon Him and beat Him upon the head as He wore the thorny crown, causing the thorns to bite into His flesh. They did not even do their job to get the cross to Golgotha; they forced a bystander to carry it instead. Finally, they nailed this blameless, sinless Man to the cross. While He was on the cross, He was mocked and blasphemed by the people He had come to save. "[T]he Christ who exposed man's unrighteousness to the uttermost also bore all the unrighteousness He had exposed. He firstly exposed man's unrighteousness and then He bore it on the cross. This is like housecleaning. If you do not clean, you may not see the dust hidden under the furniture. In cleaning a room the dust is firstly exposed. Then it is swept into the dustpan. Likewise, on the day of the Passover, the Lord Jesus firstly exposed all the 'dust,' all of man's unrighteousness. Then He cleaned up the 'dust' He had exposed. Oh, the very presence of the Lord Jesus exposed every particle of hidden 'dust' in the whole universe. Eventually, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself became the 'dustpan,' and all the 'dust' was collected upon Him....Thus, after all man's unrighteousness had been exposed, it was borne by Christ on the cross....The complete unrighteousness of mankind was heaped upon the Lord on the cross so that God's righteousness could be manifested. The righteous God came in to exercise His righteousness by judging all this unrighteousness. This is the reason that through Christ man's unrighteousness eventually turned into God's righteousness. By this we have been saved" (*Life-study of Matthew*, Message 71, p. 817).

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Fallen man has three basic, yet most serious, problems involving three parties: God, Satan, and himself. Man's problem between himself and God is that there is a barrier between them. That barrier is man's fallen and sinful flesh that prevents man from coming to God. However, in the universe there is not only God but also His enemy Satan, who uses the earth as the base for his rebellion. This evil one binds man under the slavery and fear of death (Heb. 2:14–15). Therefore, the problem between man and Satan is that man is under a power, a slavery—the fear of death. Finally, man has a problem even within himself. Throughout his life, he is driven to search for satisfaction, trying anything to quench the thirst within him. When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, many marvelous and meaningful events transpired, showing the effectiveness of His death to solve man's problems and meet man's needs. Immediately after the Lord cried out with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit the veil in the temple was torn from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:51a). "This signifies that the separation between God and man was abolished, because the flesh (signified by the veil) of sin taken by Christ (Rom. 8:3) had been crucified (Heb. 10:20). The words 'from the top to the bottom' indicate that the rending of the veil was God's doing from above. Because sin had been judged and the flesh of sin had been crucified, the separation between God and man was taken away" (*Life-study of Matthew*, Message 70, pp. 812–813). Not only so, when the Lord Jesus died on the cross, the earth (signifying Satan's base of rebellion) was shaken, and the rocks (signifying the stronghold of Satan's earthly kingdom) were broken (Matt. 27:51b). The breaking of the rocks also pointed back to the record in Exodus 17. When the rock (typifying Christ) that followed the children of Israel in the wilderness was smitten, a river of thirst-quenching water was released (Exo. 17:6; 1 Cor. 10:4). Such a river is still flowing and available to satisfy man's inward searching for satisfaction. Finally, the power of death, holding man in bondage and slavery under its fear, was conquered, subdued, and removed by the Lord's death on the cross, as shown by the tombs of the saints who had died being opened and their bodies being raised (Matt. 27:52). After dying such a death-conquering, Satan-defeating, and life-releasing death on the cross for us, the Lord Jesus resurrected as the life-giving Spirit to apply

all that He has done and to fill you with Himself as life. Oh hallelujah, what a death and what a life!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 70, pp. 808–814; Message 71, pp. 815–817.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Matthew*, Messages 70–71; *God's New Testament Economy*, Chapter 3, pp. 48–49; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 52, pp. 454–455.

Lesson 7—The Lord's Crucifixion (2)

OBJECTIVE: To see how the Lord willingly delivered Himself unto death for the accomplishment of God's purpose.

SYNOPSIS: Instead of being sorrowful or passive about going to the cross, Jesus realized the joy that was set before Him, and went forward without reluctance. He willingly went forth to fulfill the Scriptures that foretold of the time and manner in which He must die. Although the cross was a serious matter of being made a curse on our behalf, Jesus realized that the cross would clear away every negative thing in the universe, and that through death the divine life concealed in His humanity would be released. Furthermore, the resurrection that His death ushered in would produce the many sons of God who would corporately become His eternal counterpart. It was through the Lord's death that so many marvelous and wonderful things of God's economy would be accomplished, including, eventually, the New Jerusalem.

CHAPTER(S): Mark 15.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

When the time came for Him to die, our Lord did not go to the cross in a sorrowful, resisting, or even passive way. Within Him was a full realization of all the great matters that would be accomplished in the divine economy through His death. "We may say that the greatest miracle in the universe was the Lord's entering into and accomplishing His all-inclusive death. According to Hebrews 12, the Lord was happy with what lay before Him (v. 2). He knew that there was a joy set before Him. Therefore, He went up to Jerusalem that He might accomplish God's purpose through His death. What a great step that was in God's economy" (Life-study of Mark, Message 34, p. 303)! The previous lesson presented the scene of the Lord's death. This lesson reveals why the Lord was willing and even eager to experience such a death.

I. The Slave-Savior as the Slave of God was prepared to die and willingly submitted to God's will to accomplish God's redemption—Mark 14:34–36

"The Slave-Savior was a slave of God, and as such He had no choice concerning the place and time of His death. Both the place and the time were determined by His Master. Furthermore, it was determined by a counsel of the Trinity of the Godhead that the Slave-Savior would be delivered to the Jewish leaders and be rejected by them (Acts 2:23)" (Life-study of Mark, Message 30, p. 269). As the Slave-Savior, the Lord willingly and obediently carried out the role assigned to Him in the divine economy, which was to die as the unique Sacrifice for mankind. The Lord even considered that His food was to do the will of His Father (John 4:34).

A. The Lord purposely came to Judea from Galilee to be crucified—Luke 9:51; Mark 10:1 and footnote 1; Mark 10:32

The Lord Jesus willingly went forth to fulfill the Scriptures that foretold of the time and manner in which He must die. "We need to ask ourselves why, after He had been ministering in Galilee for about three years, the Slave-Savior suddenly rose up and went to the south, to the district of Judea and beyond the Jordan. He did this because the time of His death was approaching. He had to die in the year prophesied by Daniel. Furthermore, according to the type of the Passover Lamb, He had to die on the Passover, that is, on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish calendar" (Life-study of Mark, Message 30, p. 269). The Lord had to fulfill the types and prophecies concerning Him. This required Him to keep a strict schedule and arrange a great many things. "He knew the year, the month, and the day. He knew that He would be put to death on the Passover....Knowing

this, He went boldly to Judea, not wanting to be delayed. He knew that it was necessary for Him to be in Jerusalem four days before the Passover. That was the period of time when the Passover lamb was examined. The Lord Jesus certainly knew all the prophecies and types concerning His death. He knew, in particular, that He would be crucified on Mount Moriah, another name for Mount Zion. The Lord knew that He should not be crucified in Galilee. It was necessary for Him to be crucified on Mount Moriah, at the very place where Abraham offered Isaac and received God's provision. The Lord also knew that He would be put to death by being crucified, by being lifted up on a pole, as typified by the bronze serpent in Numbers 21:8–9" (Life-study of Mark, Message 30, pp. 270–271). The Lord had to take care of coordinating so many details in order to fulfill Scripture.

**B. The Lord accepted the cup of the will of God to be crucified on the cross—
Mark 14:36**

Although the cross was a serious matter of being made a curse on our behalf, Jesus realized that it was the will of God for Him. In the garden of Gethsemane the Lord prayed that He might drink the "cup" arranged for Him in the Father's will (Matt. 26:39, 42; Luke 22:42). The Lord did not want to go to the cross to suffer and die, yet He received this "cup" prepared for Him in obedience to the Father's will. The Lord was always submissive to the Father's will, and He would drink the cup—suffer death on the cross—only if it was the Father's will for Him to do so. After His prayer, Jesus went forth to carry out the Father's will by offering Himself as the unique sacrifice for our sins (Heb. 10:5–7; Luke 22:37). (See Lesson 2 for more details on this point.)

II. The Lord endured the cross and despised the shame because of the joy set before Him—Heb. 12:2

To be made sin on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21) and to taste death on behalf of everything (Heb. 2:9) were not joyful matters. However, we must realize that before Him there was something other than just His suffering death under God's judgment. The Lord Jesus had a joyful expectation that His cross would also accomplish something unspeakably glorious. Jesus realized that the cross would clear away every negative thing in the universe, and that through death the divine life concealed in His humanity would be released. Furthermore, He realized that His death would accomplish the will of God for the carrying out of God's economy.

A. The Lord realized that all the negative things in the universe would be destroyed and cleared up through His death—Heb. 2:14; John 1:29; Rom. 8:3; 1 Cor. 15:45b; Eph. 2:14–16

The Lord realized that His death would clear up all the negative problems in the universe, including sin, sins, Satan, the world, and the old, fallen creation. What a great cleansing was accomplished by Christ's death on the cross! Even the middle wall of partition that divided the people was destroyed through His cross.

B. The Lord realized that His divine life and glory would be released through His death—John 12:23; 17:1

"When the shell of the Lord's humanity was broken through His crucifixion, which was the baptism He went through, all the elements of His divinity—His divine life and His divine glory—were released. In Luke 12:50 the Lord Jesus said, 'I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how I am pressed until it is accomplished!' The Lord's baptism was His

crucifixion. He longed to be baptized, to be crucified, in order to be released. He was pressed, constrained, in His flesh, and He desired to be released by the baptism of His death. Through the breaking of the shell of His humanity by His death, His glory was released. His release was His being glorified. We need to praise Christ for His death because His death was His release" (The Issue of Christ being Glorified, Chapter 2, pp. 15–16).

C. The Lord realized that through His death and resurrection, many sons of God would be produced to glorify the Father—John 12:23–24

The Lord realized that through His death His divine life would be released to produce many brothers (John 12:23–24; Rom. 8:29). Prior to His death, Jesus abode alone as the only "grain" of life (John 12:24). In order to not remain alone, the one grain of wheat had to fall into the ground and die. Through His death and resurrection, the Lord became the Firstborn among many brothers. What a joyful prospect!

D. The Lord realized that through His death and resurrection, the church as His Bride would be produced—Eph. 5:25

The Lord realized that, just as in the type of Eve being formed out of Adam, the church would be formed out of Him as He "slept" on the cross. At His death, a soldier pierced His side, and blood and water came forth. The blood was for redemption, and the water signified His very life with which the church was produced. The Lord had the church in view as He died on the cross. "Christ...loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Eph. 5:25). We can also apply this to ourselves individually as the members in the church. Paul also said, "[Christ] loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20). Christ had each of us in view as He died on the cross. God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son to die for us (John 3:16).

III. The Lord's death accomplished these many marvelous and wonderful things of God's economy which will eventually consummate the New Jerusalem

The New Jerusalem is the consummation of everything Christ accomplished on the cross. His death terminated and cleared up all the negative things in the universe. His death released His divine life and glory and produced the many sons of God to glorify the Father. Furthermore, His death on the cross produced the church as His bride. Eventually the New Jerusalem is produced as the ultimate fruit out of the Lord's death.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Read Mark 15 with the young people and point out the Lord's willingness to be crucified. Show how the Lord answered nothing in Mark 15:4–5 to defend Himself. Also show that when they offered Him wine mixed with myrrh (for pain relief), He would not take it. The way the Lord faced His death was not like the way we would face death. For Him, it was the culmination of His purpose for coming to earth, that is, to accomplish redemption and release His life (Mark 10:45; John 12:24). This purpose drove Him to the cross. He was so much for God and God's purpose that He was willing to carry it out even at the cost of suffering and death. That is why the Bible says, "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross..." (Heb. 12:2). In this lesson we want to show the young people that the Lord did not take the easy way out. He did not choose to escape, and He did not answer anything to defend Himself. Rather, for the purpose of God, He chose to do God's will. Too often today, young people look for the easiest way to escape responsibilities. Some even go to the extent of lying to escape them. This was not the Lord's way. He courageously and willingly took the full responsibility to go to the cross and suffer death for us. Such a One is now living and working

in us as the Spirit to carry out God's purpose. This often requires us to take the difficult path. Are we willing to do God's will even though it may be hard? Are we willing to take the difficult way for God and His purpose? The Bible tells us, "For it is God who operates in you both the willing and the working for *His* good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). Encourage the young people to learn of the Lord to be willing to carry out God's purpose at any cost. We can pray, "Lord, You are operating in me to do Your will. Lord, I need Your empowering. Amen."

GOSPEL APPLICATION: When the Lord Jesus died on the cross, He was not merely motivated by the legal necessity to satisfy the righteous demand of God's law and release man from the slavery of sin. He was also motivated by love, to give Himself up to produce, purchase, and sanctify the church to be His Bride (Matt. 5:17; Rom. 7:22–24; 8:1–4; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25–27, 32). Yes, He died for you to save you, to redeem you back to Himself, and to fill you with life, but He also died for you because He loves you. His joy, His desire, is to have the church produced and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21:2). "Therefore let us...put away every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and run with endurance the race which is set before us, looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1–2). The good news today is that because of the Lord's willingness to suffer death for us, you can not only put away encumbrances and sin, but also look away to such a charming One, who loved you and gave Himself up for you (Gal. 2:20). Open to receive Him, and join the greatest love story in the universe.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: An understanding of the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Mark*, Messages 32, 46–49; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 42, p. 362.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Mark*, Messages 30, 32, 34, 46–49; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 42, p. 362; Mark 10:1, footnote 1; *The Issue of Christ Being Glorified*, Chapter 2, pp. 15–16.

Lesson 8—The Lord's Crucifixion (3)

OBJECTIVE: To see how Christ on the cross suffered the persecution of men and the judgment of God for sin.

SYNOPSIS: The Lord's crucifixion lasted six hours, from nine in the morning until three in the afternoon. While He was on the cross for the first three hours, the Lord suffered the persecution of men as a genuine martyr for doing the will of God. During the second and final three hours, the Lord was made sin in the eyes of God and died as our Redeemer by bearing our judgment as our Substitute.

CHAPTER(S): Luke 23.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

This lesson focuses on the two sections of the Lord's experience on the cross. Before presenting this lesson, the serving ones should carefully read Message 52 of the Life-study of Luke.

I. For the first three hours on the cross, the Lord Jesus suffered the persecution of men—Luke 23:26–43

During the first three hours He hung on the cross, from nine in the morning until noon, the Lord suffered as a martyr persecuted by men for doing the will of God.

A. The Lord Jesus was put on the cross by men—Luke 23:25, 33

"How would you answer the question concerning who killed the [Savior]? Some may say that we killed Him and others, that God killed Him. Others may say that the Lord was put to death by religion and politics, or that He was killed by our sin. We should not try to answer this question by our imagination. Instead, we need to come to the honest and accurate record of the Scriptures, especially the record in the Gospel of Luke....As we read the record in this Gospel, we see that the Lord Jesus was put on the cross by man. He was accused by the religious leaders, sentenced to death by Roman rulers, especially Pilate, and then put on the cross by the Roman soldiers" (Life-study of Luke, Message 52, p. 451).

B. The Lord suffered ridicule, sneering, and mocking by the Jewish leaders and the Roman soldiers—Luke 23:35–39

As He hung on the cross, the chief priests, scribes, and elders mocked Him by saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. He is King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe on Him. He trusts in God; let Him rescue Him now if He wants Him, for He said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27:42–43). If, however, the Lord had saved Himself, He could not have saved us! They did not realize that He was dying so that they might be forgiven of their own sins against Him. Even the thieves who were being crucified on each side of Him reproached Him (Matt. 27:44). The soldiers mockingly offered Him vinegar to drink and said, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!" (Luke 23:36–37). Everyone who passed the Lord on the road also blasphemed Him and wagged their heads at Him. According to Psalm 22, the Lord felt as though He were surrounded by raging bulls (Psa. 22:12). Here the serving one should read Psalm 22:1, 7–8, and 12–18 to the young people. (In the eyes of unbelievers today, the Lord's cross is still a thing of mockery—1 Cor 1:18, 23.)

II. For the second three hours on the cross, the Lord Jesus suffered the judgment of God for sinners to accomplish a vicarious death for them—Luke 23:44–49

"The first three hours were the time of man's persecution. We may say that during those hours the Lord Jesus was a martyr. Then at noon, with darkness coming upon the whole land, God came in. This darkness was a sign of God's judgment of sin. Whereas man persecuted the [Savior] during the first three hours of His crucifixion, God came in during the second three hours to judge Christ as our Substitute. It was in these hours that God put all our sins upon Him and considered Him a sinner as our Substitute....[D]uring the second three hours, He was the Redeemer" (Life-study of Mark, Message 47, p. 407). "During the hours from noon until three o'clock, God put all our sins upon the Lord Jesus. In the words of Isaiah 53:6, 'the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.' The darkness signifies that God had put our sins upon Him. Furthermore, 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that God made Him to be sin for us. Hence, God not only put our sins upon Him; He even made Him to be sin on our behalf. This took place during the second period of three hours" (Life-study of Luke, Message 52, p. 454). "By the time of [the end of the first three hours], men had exhausted their deeds. They had done everything they could. At that time, God came in to judge this crucified Savior and to forsake Him" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, p. 811).

A. Darkness came over the whole land because God had laid on Him the sins of the whole world—Luke 23:44–45; Matt. 27:45; Isa. 53:6

"At exactly noontime darkness came over the whole land and remained until the ninth hour, until three o'clock. This darkness was caused by God, and it was an indication that God had come in to judge the One who was hanging on the cross" (Life-study of Mark, Message 47, p. 407). "[D]arkness came over all the land because our sin and sins and all negative things were dealt with there..." (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, p. 811). The Word does not say that darkness merely covered Golgotha or even the city of Jerusalem, like a large cloud might, but it says the entire good land was covered with darkness, even though it was the brightest time of the day.

B. The Lord was forsaken by God and judged as the unique sinner—Matt. 27:46

"When the Lord was suffering the persecution of man, God was with Him, and He enjoyed the presence of God. But at the end of the first three hours, God forsook Him, and darkness came. Unable to tolerate this, the Lord shouted loudly, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 70, pp. 811–812). "Because the Lord is God's beloved Son, God always delighted in Him. But because God regarded Him as our Substitute, as the One who bore our sins and was made sin for us in God's sight, God forsook Him. In the sight of God during those hours the Lord was a totality of sin....All our sins were put on the [Savior]. The root of our sins is the sin that came into mankind from Satan. This sin indwells us. When our sins were put on the Lord Jesus, He was made the very sin that indwells us. Therefore, both the root—indwelling sin—and the fruit—our sins—were put upon Him. As such a One, He was judged by God according to His righteousness. First Corinthians 15:3 says, 'Christ died for our sins.' First Peter 2:24 tells us that He Himself 'carried up our sins in His body onto the tree.' These verses indicate that Christ bore our sins and died for them. Hebrews 9:28 says that Christ was 'once offered to bear the sins of many,' and verse 26 in the same chapter says, 'He has been manifested for the putting away of sin by His sacrifice.' Both sin and sins were dealt with by His death once for all" (Life-study of Luke, Message 52, pp. 454–455). "In the sight of God, Christ became a great sinner. Because Christ was our Substitute and was even

made sin for us, God judged Him and forsook Him” (The Conclusion of the New Testament, Message 37, p. 390).

**C. The veil of the temple was torn down the middle from top to bottom—
Matt. 27:51**

“Matthew 27:51 tells us that the veil of the temple was torn in two ‘from the top to the bottom.’ This tearing of the veil signifies that the separation between God and man was abolished, because the flesh (signified by the veil) of sin, of which Christ had taken on the likeness (Rom. 8:3) had been crucified (Heb. 10:20). ‘From the top to the bottom’ indicates that the rending of the veil was God’s doing from above” (Life-study of Luke, Message 52, p. 454). This veil was the inner veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies in the temple. God tore this veil open to indicate that He had accepted the offering of Jesus as our Substitute, and that we might freely come to Him again, having “boldness for entering the Holy of Holies in the blood of Jesus” (Heb. 10:19).

III. As He died for our redemption, the Lord died as God essentially, but was forsaken by God economically—Acts 20:28; Matt. 27:46

“As we consider the Lord’s crying out...[‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'], we need to ask an important question: Did God leave Christ? The Lord said that God forsook Him, and to forsake means to leave. Therefore, in some way God left Him....But in what sense did God leave the Lord Jesus? How are we to understand this matter, inasmuch as it involves a major problem related to the Trinity? Does God’s forsaking of Christ mean that the One who remained on the cross was merely a man and no longer had the divine nature? If this were the situation, then the Lord’s redeeming power would not be eternal, for there would not be the divine, eternal element in it. We must be very careful, therefore, in answering the question concerning what it meant for God to forsake the crucified Christ” (Life-study of Mark, Message 48, pp. 413–414).

A. Essentially, Christ was God as He died on the cross—Acts 20:28

“Essentially, on the cross Christ was God....When Jesus was dying on the cross, God was dying there. One line from a famous hymn by Charles Wesley says, ‘Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?’ (See Hymns 296). Jesus was God, and He died on the cross not only as a Man but also as God. Therefore, even when He was on the cross He was still the Son, with the Father, and by the Spirit” (God’s New Testament Economy, Chapter 3, pp. 48–49). “We have seen that Christ was conceived and born of the Holy Spirit essentially. The Holy Spirit was one of the essences of His being. As the Lord Jesus grew up and lived on earth, He had the Holy Spirit within Him essentially” (Life-study of Luke, Message 52, p. 455).

B. Economically, Christ was forsaken by God as He died on the cross—Matt. 27:46

“[W]hen He was baptized, He had the Holy Spirit as an essential part of His being. However, when He was baptized, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him economically. This means that the Lord Jesus had the Holy Spirit as one of the essences of His being essentially, and also that the Holy Spirit descended upon Him economically. This does not mean, of course, that there are two Holy Spirits. It means that the one Holy Spirit has two aspects—the essential and the economical. The essential aspect was for the being, the existence, of the Lord Jesus, and the economical aspect was for His work, His ministry. Now we need to see that when the Lord Jesus was on the cross dying for our sins, God was

in Him essentially. Therefore, the One who died for our sin was the God-man. But at a certain point the righteous God, while judging this God-man, left Him economically. God's forsaking of Christ was an economical matter related to the carrying out of God's judgment" (Life-study of Luke, Message 52, pp. 455–456). "Economically, God left Him while He was dying His vicarious death for sinners (Matt. 27:45–46)" (God's New Testament Economy, Chapter 3, p. 48). It was during the final three hours the Lord was on the cross that God forsook Him, leaving Him economically.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Read Luke 23 with the young people and point out that the Lord's crucifixion lasted for six hours, with two sections of three hours each. In the first three hours, from 9 A.M. until noon, He was suffering the persecution of men (Luke 23:26–43). During the last three hours, from noon until 3 P.M., He was suffering the judgment of God (23:44–49). Use the points of this annotated lesson to point out the objective facts relating to the Lord's death. There may not be the need to get into Point III with the junior highers, "As He died for our redemption, the Lord died as God essentially, but was forsaken by God economically." Rather, emphasize the points in I. and II. to show that the Lord Jesus suffered at the hands of both men and God. Impress them that this was to carry out the will of God and that the Lord went willingly to the cross to die for our sins. It would be good to conclude this lesson by having the young people spend a few minutes in personal prayer for confession of their sins, thanking the Lord for dying for us all.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: It was because of the great love of God that the Lord Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins (John 3:16). During the first three hours of the Lord's crucifixion, from 9 A.M. until noon, He was persecuted at the hand of man because of His faithfulness to the will of God. But beginning at noon, God placed all the sin of all mankind, for all of time, on the Lord. Darkness covered the whole land (Matt. 27:45). This terrible scene lasted from noon to 3 P.M. During this time every sin ever committed was placed on the Lord Jesus while He bore God's righteous judgment in our stead. Because the Lord took the place of sinners, bore our sins, and was made sin for us, God was forced to turn His back on His beloved Son (1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Pet. 2:24; Isa. 53:6; 2 Cor. 5:21; Matt. 27:46). It was at this time the Lord cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). He suffered such a death because He "so loved the world" and desires that none would perish, "but would have eternal life" (John 3:16). On God's side, this is what He did and what He desires. On our side, we need to respond by receiving Him and all that He accomplished in love for us. We can do this simply by believing. Instead of judgment, He offers us forgiveness, and instead of death we can receive eternal life (Col. 1:14; John 3:16)! Believe into Him and receive Him, He who suffered death for you, desiring that you would be saved from God's judgment and pass out of death into life (John 5:24)!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Luke*, Message 52.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Luke*, Message 52; *Life-study of Mark*, Message 47, pp. 407–408; Message 48; *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, Message 37; *God's New Testament Economy*, Chapter 3, pp. 48–49; *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 70, pp. 811–812.

Lesson 9—The Lord's Crucifixion (4)

OBJECTIVE: To see the significance of the Lord's death as the Lamb of God, the bronze serpent, and the grain of wheat.

SYNOPSIS: In this lesson we will examine the accomplishments of the Lord's death as the Lamb of God, the bronze serpent, and the grain of wheat. As the Lamb of God, Christ took away the sin of the world. As the bronze serpent, He fulfilled another aspect of the sin offering by dealing with the ultimate source of sin, the devil, that old serpent. As the grain of wheat, Christ died to release the divine element contained within Him for the producing of many grains of wheat who are His duplication and reproduction. In the Gospel of John, Jesus relates each of these three aspects of Christ to man's acquiring the divine life. The first two, however, are more related to the judicial aspect of the redemption of Christ which clears the way for man to receive the divine life released through Christ's death as the grain of wheat. We will forever enjoy our organic salvation in the divine life based upon the accomplishment of Christ's judicial redemption.

BACKGROUND: It will take the young people years to fully grasp the significance of the Lord's death, nevertheless, their knowledge can begin today. Perhaps you could both minister the points and then give the young people time to memorize and repeat. This is a kind of beginning for them to enter the reality.

CHAPTER(S): John 1, 3, 12, 19.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

The Gospel of John emphasizes that Christ came that we might receive God as life (John 10:10b). John reveals to us that even the Lord's death was for life. In John's Gospel, Jesus is particularly depicted as the Lamb of God, the bronze serpent, and a grain of wheat. The issue of the Lord's death as each of these is life.

I. The Lord died as the Lamb of God for our judicial redemption—John 1:29

The Jewish people might have been unimpressed or even disappointed when John the Baptist announced that Jesus was the Lamb of God. They wanted someone to come as a great leader (cf. John 6:15). They were hoping John would point out someone and say, "Here is the one we have been waiting for! Behold, the great Lion of the tribe of Judah!" It did not seem that someone who came as a little lamb could be the deliverer they were all waiting for. They did not realize that what they needed was not someone who would save them from their outward situation; what they needed was someone who could save them from their inward condition.

A. As the Lamb of God, Jesus came to take away the sin of the world—John 1:29

Ever since man fell, sin had become man's unique problem. Sin had been injected into the human race; from birth all people were constituted sinners (Rom. 5). Jesus came to deal with the most basic problem everyone faced—their separation from God. Because of sin and sins, no one, not even the Jews, could come forward to receive God, for God is righteous and must condemn sin. As the Lamb of God, Jesus came to take away the sin that separates man from God.

B. As the Lamb of God, Jesus came to die for our sins as our unique Substitute

Through incarnation, Christ took upon Himself blood and flesh. The primary reason He took upon Himself a human body was so that He could become the Lamb of God to be our

Substitute. As such an innocent and sinless offering, He was accepted in our place on the cross. This was Jesus' work of redemption as our sin offering. As the Lamb of God, Christ fulfilled the type of the Passover in Exodus twelve. Furthermore, as the Lamb of God He is the replacement and totality of all the offerings (see Heb. 10:9 and footnote 1). Besides Jesus, there is no more offering for sin (Heb. 10:18–20). Furthermore, those who offer this Lamb also eat this Lamb (Exo. 12:3–8). In this way, His sinless, holy nature gets into us and replaces our sinful, fallen nature. We are really saved from sin by the Lamb of God!

C. Through Christ's sacrifice as the Lamb of God, we receive God's judicial redemption and God's organic salvation—Rom. 5:10

As mentioned above, the goal of Christ coming as the Lamb of God is that we might receive life (John 10:10b). Since God has accepted Christ as our sin offering, we now have the boldness to come forward to God, for Christ as the Lamb of God has fulfilled all of God's righteous requirements (Heb. 10:19). We are redeemed judicially; God cannot reject us from receiving His life. Since Christ has offered Himself as the Lamb of God, God must save those who come forward to Him in Christ. Christ's offering Himself as the Lamb of God is the eternal base upon which we enjoy God's organic salvation. This organic salvation saves us from sin and brings to us all that God is for our enjoyment and participation.

II. The Lord died as the bronze serpent to terminate the evil nature of Satan in our flesh—John 3:14–16

Those who heard John say that Jesus was the Lamb of God must have been surprised. But it must have sounded even more surprising when Jesus told Nicodemus that the Son of Man must be lifted up as a bronze serpent. It is one thing to be a lamb, it is another to be a serpent. To be our sin offering and Substitute, however, the Lord had to be a bronze serpent as well as a lamb.

A. Jesus said He would be lifted up just as Moses lifted up the bronze serpent in the wilderness—John 3:14

The Lord indicated to Nicodemus that He, as the Son of Man, was the fulfillment of the type of the bronze serpent mentioned in Numbers twenty-one. In this portion in Numbers, the children of Israel were being bitten by poisonous snakes. God instructed Moses to fashion a bronze serpent and to lift it up upon a pole. Whoever looked upon that bronze serpent lived. It is significant that the serpent that was lifted up was not a poisonous serpent. This serpent did not have the serpentine nature. Instead, it was made of bronze, which signifies God's judgment. Furthermore, to be lifted up upon a pole in such a way also denotes God's judgment. We all know that the serpent signifies Satan. Why would Christ say that He had to be judged in the form of Satan?

1. All mankind has become serpentine, and all are dying from the bite of the serpent—Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:33; Num. 21:6

Satan's nature entered into mankind through the fall, making all men serpents, or, we might say, serpentine (cf. Matt. 3:7; 12:34; 23:33). Jesus was telling that refined and religious gentleman, Nicodemus, that he was a serpent. Whether we are good or bad, we all are serpents. The Lord as the Lamb of God took away the sin of the world, but through Christ as the bronze serpent, we ourselves were judged. As those who had become serpents in the eyes of God, our rescue could only take place through a

judgment. We needed someone in the form of the serpent, but without the poison of the serpent, to be judged in our place. God so loved the fallen, serpentine race that He sent His Son to be judged in our place (John 3:16). We should have been judged, but instead a Substitute was lifted up who bore all the judgment, though He had no sin, no poison, in His being.

2. Jesus came in the likeness of the flesh of sin, but without sin, to destroy the serpent—Rom. 8:3; Heb. 2:14

Satan, the serpent, is the source of sin, therefore Satan must be destroyed as well as sin. Jesus' death as the Lamb of God dealt with sin, while Jesus' death as the bronze serpent dealt with Satan, the source of sin. We were bitten in the garden of Eden when Adam was bitten by the serpent and poisoned by him. Therefore it was necessary for our Savior to be crucified as the bronze serpent, as the serpent in form, in order to deal with Satan, the old serpent. It was through being crucified as the serpent that the Lord Jesus crushed the head of the ancient serpent, the devil (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 12:9). In this way, He judged the ruler of this world (John 16:11) and dealt with his world, the satanic system. This is why Jesus had to be in the likeness of the flesh of sin, yet without sin (Rom. 8:3).

B. All those who look at Christ lifted up as the bronze serpent shall live—Num. 21:8; John 3:14–15

Those who were bitten by the serpents in the wilderness did not need healing, they needed life, for they were dying. The same is true today. The entire human race is dying because of the serpent's poison. Whoever looks upon the Lord lifted up as the bronze serpent will live. The goal of the Lord's being lifted up was that everyone who believed might have eternal life. In this section of the Word, the Lord ties His being lifted up as the bronze serpent with regeneration. By means of Christ becoming the bronze serpent, those who were serpentine (as Satan's race and Satan's increase) become divine (as God's race and God's increase). Again, John's Gospel reveals that Christ's death was for us to receive God as life.

III. The Lord died as a grain of wheat to release the divine life that it might be imparted into us—John 12:23–24

No aspect of Christ's death is so clearly related to life as His death as a grain of wheat (John 12:24). Again, this word did not fit the natural concept of those who heard it. "At this point, according to the worldly view, Jesus was in His golden time....Because the Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, a great crowd of the Jews highly esteemed Him and warmly welcomed Him...by shouting, 'Hosanna, blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!' Humanly speaking, this very hour was the most glorious time for the Lord while He was on earth" (Life-study of John, Message 26, p. 311). Even the Greeks who were in Jerusalem for the Passover sought to meet with Jesus. "If we had been there, or if such a welcome were extended to us, we would have said, 'Praise the Lord. Now is the time for us to do something to glorify God.' The Lord Jesus, however, was not excited....He said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it abides alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit'....This was His reaction toward the glory of human honor. What is the way for a grain of wheat to multiply? It is not by being welcomed or honored, but by falling into the ground to die" (Life-study of John, Message 26, p. 312). (Please also read The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John, Chapter 32, pp. 303–304.)

A. The Lord Jesus came as a grain of wheat in order to fall into the ground and die—John 12:24

The Lord likened Himself to a grain of wheat who had come to die so that what was within Him might be increased and multiplied. This increase and multiplication would mean that He would no longer abide alone. Up until the time of Christ's death and resurrection, Christ was the only begotten Son of God. Through the process of His death and resurrection, Christ became the Firstborn among many brothers, who are the same as He is in life and nature. Praise the Lord that we are Christ's reproduction as the many grains produced through His death and resurrection!

B. Through His death as a grain of wheat, the divine life and glory contained within the shell of His humanity were released and He was reproduced in multiplication

The humanity, or, we could say the flesh, that Christ took upon Himself when He was incarnated, formed a shell which concealed His divinity. God Himself was concealed in Christ as the grain of wheat. Since God is glory, we can also say that the divine glory was concealed within the shell of His flesh. The divine life that was in Christ was also concealed within Him. All those who lived around Him never really knew who He was, not even His mother. Before a seed dies, we do not know what its contents are. Before His divine life and glory could be released and expressed, the shell of His humanity had to be broken. This is why the Lord had no fear of death, for a grain of wheat is only released and increased through death. The Lord felt constrained by all the divine riches that He contained, and longed that His "baptism" on the cross would be accomplished (Luke 12:50). When the shell of Christ's humanity was broken on the cross, the divine life was finally released from within Him so that He could impart it into His believers in resurrection. Through this, a fire was cast upon the earth, which is still spreading over the earth today (Luke 12:49).

C. The multiplied grains are the many sons of God and Christ's increase for the expression of His glory—Heb. 2:10

As the many grains who contain the life of the first grain, we express the first grain as His exact reproduction. We are the multiplication of the expression of Christ for His glorification, which is also the Father's glorification in His many sons.

D. The many grains are blended together as one loaf to be the church—1 Cor. 10:17; John 12:24 and footnote 1

When we meet for the Lord's table, the bread we partake of is a symbol of Christ's mystical body. The Lord became food to us through His death and resurrection as the grain of wheat. We must stress again—His death was for life! The one grain was multiplied into many and the many grains have become blended together into one, which one loaf is the Body of Christ as His increase and enlargement. The church as the Body of Christ is just the multiplication and reproduction of Christ. It is something totally out of Christ through His death and resurrection.

E. We have all become grains of wheat for life-supply and life-producing—John 12:24

Although we cannot be the Lamb of God or the bronze serpent to die as a sin offering, we can become food for others as the grains of wheat produced out of the unique grain. As the many grains, we are the "much fruit" brought forth in Christ's resurrection. As the many

grains, we are His duplication. Therefore, we should also give ourselves to be put into death that the life within us might be released and become a supply to others for the further multiplication and increase of Christ.

IV. On the cross the Lord's side was pierced, and out flowed blood and water—John 19:34

The Lord's death on the cross accomplished both God's judicial redemption and God's organic salvation. His judicial redemption is so that we may receive Him as life (John 3:14–15; 1:12–13, 29) and enjoy His organic salvation. John was the disciple who witnessed and testified of the blood and water that issued forth from the Lord's pierced side (John 19:34). The blood was for redemption; the water was for the impartation of life. The Lord died on the cross to redeem us that we might have the judicial position and right to receive Him as life, and to destroy the one who was the source of all the problems. The Lord also died on the cross to release the divine life that He might impart it to us in His resurrection. Is this not marvelous? "The Lamb of God took away our sin, the One typified by the brass serpent destroyed the old serpent, Satan, and the grain of wheat released the divine life. Hallelujah, sin has been taken away, Satan has been destroyed, and the divine life has been released" (Life-study of Luke, Message 70, p. 596)!

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: This lesson can be used to show the young people that in the universe there are three parties—God, Satan and man. The Lord Jesus died on the cross as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world to recover man (John 1:29). He also died on the cross as the bronze serpent to destroy Satan (John 3:14). Lastly, He died as the grain of wheat to fulfill God's purpose by releasing His divine life concealed within the shell of His humanity so that we can be regenerated (John 12:24). This lesson can be presented very much like lesson six of *God's Full Salvation, A Lesson Book* entitled "The Fall of Man." There we see man has two problems, one objective because of sin and the other subjective because of our nature. There is an illustration of this—a child who disobeyed his parents and drank some poison. This resulted in two problems: disobedience resulted in an offense toward the parents, and taking in the poison resulted in a medical emergency. Man is like the disobedient child. In the garden of Eden, he not only disobeyed God, but also took in the sinful nature. Christ dying as the Lamb of God solves the objective aspect of our sin (John 1:29). Christ dying as the grain of wheat solves the subjective aspect of our nature (John 12:24). Finally, Christ as the bronze serpent destroys God's enemy (John 3:14). These are some of the marvelous "facts" of the Bible regarding Christ that need to be taught to our young people, who, in junior high are not too young to understand and enjoy these marvelous aspects of Christ. Use some of the points from the annotated lesson to strengthen and confirm these three items.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Not only does God need man for His purpose, God also loves man. Because He loves man, He came in to save man in such a way that would satisfy His righteousness and fully remove every trace of sin as a result of the fall. "We see in the Old Testament that when Adam sinned, he should have died. But God killed a lamb for him and clothed him with garments from the skin of the lamb to cover up his nakedness....God used the lamb to be the substitute for man, to shed its blood for the sins of man; thus the lamb became the clothing for man to cover himself before God. From that time on, throughout all the generations man could only come before God through the lamb. It is only through the shedding of a lamb's blood for our sins that we can be accepted by God" (Gospel Outlines, Subject Ninety-eight, "The Lamb of God," p. 204). In the New Testament, when the Lord Jesus, the Son of God, began His ministry, John the Baptist introduced Him as, "The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). All those who heard this knew the significance of the lamb—the sin-covering sacrifice offered throughout the Old Testament. But now the Son of God, as the Lamb of God, prepared by God from the foundation of the world (1 Pet. 1:19–20;

Rev. 13:8) to take away the sin of the world, was being presented to them—as He is now being presented to you. This precious One was slain on the cross as our substitute, to bear and take away all our sins. “Because He bore and took away the sins of man in such a way, today, the blood He shed can wash away the sins of man and solve the problem between man and God” (*Gospel Outlines*, Subject Ninety-eight, “The Lamb of God,” p. 205). What must we do to receive such a salvation? Confess, repent, and receive. Confess that Jesus, as the Lamb of God died for your sins. Open to His shining that you would repent of your sins before Him. Then, simply receive this wonderful Lamb of God as your Savior, who both needs and loves you.

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of John*, Message 4, pp. 44–45, Message 9, pp. 110–115; Message 26, pp. 309–321; *The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John*, Chapter 32, pp. 303–304.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Genesis*, Message 20, pp. 257–261; Message 21, pp. 279–280; *Life-study of John*, Message 4, pp. 44–45; Message 9, pp. 110–115; Message 26, pp. 309–321; *The Fulfillment of the Tabernacle and the Offerings in the Writings of John*, Chapter 1, pp. 16–17; Chapter 4, p. 42; Chapter 7; Chapter 9, pp. 91–92; Chapter 10, pp. 99–103; Chapter 11, pp. 114–115; Chapter 32, pp. 303–307; *The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father with the Divine Glory*, Chapter 1; Chapter 2, pp. 13–16; Chapter 3, pp. 21–22; John 12:24, footnote 1; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 70, p. 596; *Gospel Outlines*, Subject Ninety-eight, “The Lamb of God.”

Lesson 10—The Victory of the King-Savior

OBJECTIVE: To see that Christ's resurrection, His victory over death, was a matter of God's righteousness.

SYNOPSIS: In Matthew we see the King's victory in His resurrection. In Matthew, Christ's resurrection was a matter of God's righteousness. Christ lived a righteous life that culminated in a righteous death, a death which satisfied all of God's righteous requirements and fully accomplished redemption for us in God's righteousness. Thus, the righteous God had to raise Christ from the dead. Christ's resurrection was God's righteous acknowledgment that His righteousness was fully satisfied. Furthermore, our salvation is eternally secure in the resurrected Christ, for resurrection demonstrated God's acceptance of His righteous payment on our behalf. Christ was raised for our justification, and the righteous God must recognize us as righteous in Him.

BACKGROUND: The truth concerning God's righteousness is necessary for the young people's spiritual foundation. Emphasis should be on clarity.

CHAPTER(S): Matthew 27–28.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

I. In Matthew, Christ's resurrection is a matter of righteousness

Matthew focuses on Christ as the King of the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom is a matter of righteousness; therefore, for Christ to be the proper King of the kingdom, He must be shown to be righteous. In Matthew, God confirms that Christ is righteous and qualified to be the King by raising Him from the dead. Hence, in Matthew, Christ's resurrection is related to righteousness. "We need to have this concept as we read Matthew 28. In this chapter we cannot find a hint that the resurrection of Christ is related to power. However, if we read carefully, we can find that it is related to righteousness. Perhaps you have wondered why in this chapter, a chapter concerned with Christ's resurrection, Matthew includes the account of the bribery of the Roman soldiers [Matt. 28:11–15]. This is mentioned for the purpose of exposing man's unrighteousness. The opposite of unrighteousness is not power, but righteousness. Because of His righteousness, God was held responsible to raise Christ up from the dead. Therefore, Christ's resurrection was according to God's righteousness. This was the reason that Matthew inserted the historical account of the bribery of the soldiers. No other Gospel mentions this. Matthew includes it to show that Christ's resurrection was related to God's righteousness, which is versus man's unrighteousness" (Life-study of Matthew, Message 72, pp. 822–823). In His judgment and crucifixion, Christ was shown to be fully righteous. In contrast, the leaders of Israel at that time were shown to be utterly unrighteous in their schemes and dealings. Their unrighteousness serves as a black background against which Christ's righteousness stands out in a crystal clear manner.

II. After Christ had fulfilled all righteousness, God raised Him from the dead— Matt. 3:15; 1 John 2:1c; Rom. 4:25; 5:18b

Christ lived a life that fulfilled all righteousness (cf. Matt. 3:15). The culmination of Christ's righteous living was the "one righteous act" (Rom. 5:18b) which accomplished redemption in God's economy. On the cross, all of man's unrighteousness was laid on Christ, and He was judged in a righteous way by the righteous God as a substitute for our sins (Isa. 53:6; 1 Pet. 2:24). Because Christ fulfilled all the requirements of God's righteousness, God was

responsible in His righteousness to raise Christ from the dead. According to His righteousness, God had to judge Christ on the cross. Also according to His righteousness, God had to release Christ from death and raise Him from the dead. Romans 4:25 links resurrection with righteousness, saying that Christ was “raised for our justification.” Hence, resurrection is not only a matter of the divine power, but of righteousness. Christ’s resurrection manifested God’s righteousness, and also justified us according to God’s standard of righteousness (Rom. 4:25), even to make us “the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

A. Jesus lived a sinless life as a child and as an adult, and was heard by God because of His piety—Heb. 5:7; Luke 2:52; John 1:29; 1 Pet. 2:22–23

In Hebrews we are told that God raised Jesus from the dead in response to, or in recognition of, Jesus’ piety. “Piety” here does not refer to a religious lifestyle; instead it refers to a walk and living that is according to righteousness. From the manger to the cross, Christ lived an absolutely righteous life. As One who lived by the divine life of the righteous God, Jesus was able to do this. Because He lived a completely righteous life, He was qualified to die on our behalf, and He was qualified to be resurrected by God. As a child, Jesus was without sin. Even as a child, He lived a life of obedience and purity. He resisted any temptation to lie or to be covetous of what someone else had. He was absolutely obedient to His parents (Luke 2:51). He never spoke a word misrepresenting the truth, nor did He ever do anything out of spitefulness towards others. What a pure childhood He led! How different it was from ours! As an adult, Jesus was also without sin. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God. Surely his recommendation implied that Jesus was without any spot or blemish in His character, and without sin in His nature.

B. Jesus fulfilled every righteous requirement of God and all Scripture written concerning Him—Matt. 26:54; Mark 14:49–50; Luke 24:27

Not only did Jesus live a life apart from sin; He also actively fulfilled all of God’s righteous requirements and all Scripture. To avoid anything negative that would disqualify Him from being our Sin Offering was one thing; to positively carry out all that was ordained for Him by God was another. Jesus was careful to accomplish all that God required of Him (John 19:30).

1. Jesus fulfilled all righteousness—Matt. 3:15

In His living, Jesus fulfilled all righteousness. One example of this is given in Matthew 3:15. God ordained that His people in the old creation should enter into His new dispensation through baptism. Since Jesus in His flesh was an Israelite related to the old creation, it was fitting for Him to take the lead to be baptized (Matt. 3:15 and footnote 1). His entering into baptism (a picture of termination) was to fulfill righteousness in an active way. “Termination and germination is the highest righteousness. The Lord Jesus, as the King of the heavenly kingdom, took the lead to be terminated. In this way He fulfilled righteousness in the eyes of God....Through baptism the Lord Jesus entered into the gateway of righteousness, and then He walked continually along the pathway of righteousness. Therefore, He was the just One, the righteous One (Acts 3:14; 7:52; 22:14)” (Life-study of Matthew, Message 10, pp. 127–128).

2. Jesus fulfilled all Scripture—Matt. 21:42; Mark 15:28; Luke 4:21; 24:27; John 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36

In addition to actively fulfilling all of God's righteous requirements, Jesus also had to fulfill all the Scriptures written concerning Him. For instance, He had to die on Passover after being examined by the Jewish rulers for four days as the real Passover lamb. In order to fulfill this type, He had to be found faultless, and yet be rejected (Matt. 21:42). Furthermore, the day He had to die was established by the prophecy in Daniel 9:25–26. He could not just die on any Passover; it had to be that particular year. In order to fulfill these and so many other types and prophecies, Jesus had to coordinate so many events together as He was ministering on the earth.

C. Jesus fulfilled His earthly ministry by dying His triumphant death—Matt. 26:54

Jesus fulfilled the course of His earthly life and ministry without any blemish or failure. He fulfilled every requirement necessary for Him to accomplish a death and resurrection which could carry out God's economy. Upon the cross, after He had suffered the full judgment of God in our place, He cried out, "It is finished!" What a victory! What a triumph! The work of Christ's death was all-efficient. There was nothing lacking or left that was undone. His work of redemption on our behalf was complete. Committing His spirit to God, He died, and the earthly stage of His ministry was concluded. It was finished! It is finished! His life and death accomplished all that God intended and required.

III. God raised Christ from the dead as a matter of righteousness—Heb. 5:7

In the Gospel of John, Jesus said that He has the power to raise Himself up from the dead. In that Gospel, the emphasis is upon the Lord as life. Nothing can hold down the resurrection life! In Matthew, however, the Lord's resurrection is a matter of righteousness. God raised Jesus from the dead because God is righteous, and Jesus had fulfilled all righteousness. For Jesus to be left in Hades after fulfilling every righteous requirement of God would not have been righteous. God, however, is righteous in all His acts (Dan. 9:14); therefore, He raised Christ Jesus from among the dead. The kingdom of the heavens is a matter of righteousness (Isa. 16:5); righteousness is even the foundation of God's throne (Psa. 97:2). In Isaiah 53:11 we are told that after God would make Jesus an offering for sin, it would be given to Jesus to see the result. This implies resurrection. Furthermore, in Acts 2:31 and Acts 13:37 it is revealed that God could not allow Jesus, His Holy One, to suffer corruption or to be abandoned to Hades. Because God is righteous, and because of Jesus' righteousness (which culminated with His death on the cross—Rom. 5:18), God raised Jesus from among the dead (Heb. 5:7). Now Jesus is established as a man on the throne in the heavens. What a victory! Jesus triumphed in every trial and passed every test. He was tempted in all respects like us, yet He never once gave in to unrighteousness (Heb. 4:15). Therefore, God raised Him from the dead and made Him Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). Hallelujah for Jesus' victory! Praise the Lord for the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 1:1 and footnote 9)!

IV. Our salvation is eternally secure in the resurrected Christ—Rom. 3:26

A. Because of righteousness, God must justify those who are of the faith of Jesus—Rom. 3:22, 26

Because God is righteous, He must accept those who believe in Christ. After raising Christ, He would never put Christ into Hades again. Therefore we can know that we are eternally

secure in our salvation in Christ, for as long as Christ is in resurrection, we will be saved. What a secure salvation Christ has wrought for us! Since God's throne is based upon righteousness, God could never reject us (Psa. 89:14; 97:2). If Jesus' sacrifice had been unacceptable to God, God would not have resurrected Jesus. Hence, the resurrected Christ is the "receipt" of our eternal salvation. He has issued us a most wonderful "receipt," the resurrected Jesus, God's own Beloved Son! Jesus Himself is the security of our salvation, and He Himself is our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; Jer. 23:6). This is why the Bible says that the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16–17).

B. God must give life to those who are justified until they are saved to the uttermost—Rom. 5:18–19

Our regeneration was based upon Christ's righteous act of dying on the cross for our sins. When Jesus died on the cross, blood and water issued forth (John 19:34). The blood was for the cleansing of sin, and the water was to give life to whomever the blood cleansed. Since we were cleansed by the Lord's blood, the Lord in resurrection imparted the divine life released through His death into us. Our spirit is life because of righteousness (Rom. 8:10)! Today this life is constituting us righteous by spreading out from our spirit into our entire being (Rom. 5:19; 2 Cor. 5:21b). We were constituted sinners, but today God must constitute us righteous by His life, based upon Christ's redemptive work.

C. Today in resurrection Jesus is not only on the throne; He is also in our spirit—Rev. 22:1, 3; Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:11, 16; 2 Tim. 4:22

In resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit, and now He lives within us (1 Cor. 15:45b; Col. 1:27). On the day of resurrection, the Lord breathed Himself into the disciples as the breath of life (John 20:22). Today we must learn to live by our resurrected Lord who is the Spirit within us. The One who is resurrected, and who is resurrection, is right now within us! The Lord is in resurrection as the righteous One living right within us to constitute us with Himself as righteousness. Through such a process, one day we will all be constituted righteous and we will all be qualified as His righteous ones (Matt. 13:43) to live in the kingdom under the reigning of Christ as our King.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: This lesson can be presented in a way to show the two forces behind God's salvation—love and righteousness. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16a). But, we must see that without the righteousness of God being fulfilled there could be no way for God's love to reach man for salvation. The Lord's death on the cross was to fulfill the demand of God's righteousness. This was accomplished during the last three hours on the cross when God "laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6). Use lesson nine in *"God's Full Salvation, A Lesson Book"* entitled "The Basis of Salvation—God's Righteousness" as a way to present the concept of God's righteousness to the young people. Once they understand this concept go on to show them that Christ being raised from the dead was a matter of righteousness and of God's acceptance of His offering for sin (Points III. & IV. of annotated lesson). You may feel to conclude by asking the young people to pray, thanking the Lord for dying for their sins and releasing them from judgment because of His righteousness.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Righteousness is the foundation of God's throne (Psa. 89:14). Therefore, God must do all things in a righteous way—according to righteousness. Even God's salvation of man needs to be carried out righteously. According to the law of God, the righteous penalty of sin is death (Ezek. 18:4b; Rom. 6:23). Yet, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God

(Rom. 3:23); there is not so much as one that is righteous (Rom. 3:10). Therefore, according to God's righteous law, every man is worthy of death. But according to God's loving heart, He desires that all men be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). What then is God to do? God cannot simply turn His back on His righteousness on account of His great love for man. If man is to be saved, it must be done in a way that fully satisfies the righteous demands of God's law. To do this, our God provided a wonderful way of salvation, satisfying both God's righteousness and saving us from the penalty of death. He did this by becoming a man in the likeness of the flesh of sin to live a perfect, sinless, human life (John 1:14; Rom. 8:3; Heb. 4:15). Then He offered Himself to die as the unique, spotless Lamb of God, once for all, to take away the sin of the world (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10; John 1:29). Then on the third day, He resurrected from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4). His resurrection proves that God's requirements were satisfied by His death for us, that we are justified by God because of His death, and that in Him we are accepted before God (Rom. 8:3-4; Rom. 4:24-5:2). By our believing into the Lord Jesus, all that He accomplished in His righteous living, redeeming death, and life releasing resurrection is applied to us in faith (Acts 26:18; Gal. 2:16, 20). Thus, the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel through faith, giving us a salvation that is eternally secure in the resurrected Christ (Rom. 1:16-17; John 10:28; Rom. 3:24; 1 Cor. 15:21-22; Rom. 8:1)!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Matthew, Messages 71 and 72.*

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Matthew, Messages 71-72; Message 10, pp. 127-128; God's Full Salvation, A Lesson Book, Lesson 9.*

Lesson 11—Christ is Risen!

OBJECTIVE: To see the plain and glorious fact that Christ was resurrected.

SYNOPSIS: The resurrection of Christ is the central item of a believer's faith. Christ came to serve man by dying for man and by dispensing Himself into man in resurrection. The accounts of the Lord's resurrection in the Gospels portray a wonderful scene of the disciples' first contact with the resurrected Christ. After three women discovered the empty tomb, Mary the Magdalene (one of the women) went and told Peter and John, who returned with her to the tomb to investigate, and then left. Mary, however, lingered at the tomb, only caring to find the Lord Himself. Because of her seeking, the Lord appeared to her, making her the first person to see the freshly resurrected Lord. Later the same day, the Lord appeared to two of His believers walking along a road, and then to the eleven who were gathered together in a house, where He ate with them. He then charged His disciples to proclaim the gospel to all creation, for whoever believed and was baptized would be saved.

CHAPTER(S): Mark 16.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Before sharing this lesson, be sure to read lessons 12 and 14, for they also cover some of the same passages.

I. Christ's resurrection is the central item of our Christian faith—Rom. 10:9; 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:1–4; Mark 16:14–15; Luke 24:46

The central item of a believer's faith is the resurrection of Christ. In order to be saved, we must believe in our heart that God has raised Christ from the dead (Rom. 10:9). If a person is to be saved, he must call upon the Lord. Would a person call on Jesus if he thought He was dead? If we do not believe that the Lord rose from the dead, we will not seek to contact Him (Rom. 10:14). If we do not agree that Christ is in resurrection, we will not open up our being to call upon Him and receive Him. Furthermore, Paul tells us clearly that if Jesus was not raised from the dead, our faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:14). Christ was raised for our justification (Rom. 4:25). God's raising Christ from the dead indicates that He is satisfied with Christ's vicarious death on our behalf. If Christ is not raised, then we are not justified. Hence, when we preach the gospel, the central item of the faith that we proclaim is, "Christ is risen!" (cf. Acts 2:32).

A. Christ came to serve man by dying for man and by dispensing Himself into man in resurrection—Mark 10:45

Mark's Gospel portrays Jesus as One who came to serve God and man. Hence, we can refer to the Christ Mark portrays as the Slave-Savior. The Slave-Savior's greatest service was His death and resurrection. In His redemptive service, Jesus died on the cross to release us from sin, sins, our old man, Satan, the world, and every other negative thing. It was through His death that the Lord also released the divine life that was contained within Him. Christ's death opened the way for His resurrection; through death He entered into resurrection. In His resurrection, He now serves God by ministering this divine life into us that we might live by the resurrection life. Because Christ became such a servant to God for us, we have been recovered back to God for the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose. Praise the Lord for such a Slave-Savior! Today He is bringing us into His process until we are fully in resurrection with Him.

- B. Christ as the Slave-Savior was resurrected to complete His work, to complete His accomplishment of redemption—Rom. 4:25; Luke 9:22; Matt. 16:21**
- C. The way to confirm the Lord’s resurrection is to contact Him as the resurrected Lord—Rom. 10:13**

Whoever calls upon the name of the resurrected Lord shall be saved. This is because when we call upon His name, we touch the person of this resurrected One. However, those who do not believe cannot experience the wonderful reality of the Lord in resurrection (Rom. 10:11–12). We are saved today because we believe in Christ’s resurrection.

II. The Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week—John 20:1a

- A. Early in the morning the empty tomb was discovered by three women—Mark 16:1–8**

- 1. The three women had come to anoint the Lord’s body—Mark 16:1**

Mary the Magdalene, Mary “the mother of James” (Jesus’ mother), and Salome, three lovers of the Lord, had arisen while it was still dark and were hurrying to the tomb with spices they had purchased to anoint the Lord’s body.

- 2. The three found the stone rolled away from the entrance of the tomb—Mark 16:4**

As they approached, they wondered how they were going to get to the Lord’s body, since a great stone had been rolled over the entrance. (If it had been us, we might not have even thought of trying to do anything, realizing that the tomb had been sealed.) But, to their amazement, they found the stone had been rolled away! Thus, it was three weak and seemingly foolish sisters who first discovered the tremendous fact of the Lord’s resurrection. May we all be such “foolish” lovers of the Lord!

- 3. Within the tomb they beheld an angel who charged them to tell the disciples “and Peter” that Jesus had risen and was going before them into Galilee—Mark 16:5–7**

Within the tomb the sisters were alarmed to find an angel sitting who appeared as a young man clothed in white. This angel informed the sisters that the Lord had been raised. He even told the sisters to look at the empty place where they had laid Him. Then he instructed them to tell the disciples “and Peter” (see Gospel Application below) that the Lord was going to meet them in Galilee as He had told them. When the sisters heard this, they ran out of the tomb trembling with astonishment. (At this point, as recorded in the Gospel of John, Mary the Magdalene went to Peter and John, who investigated but left again. Mary, however, lingered in the garden still unable to comprehend what had happened to the Lord’s body.)

- B. The Lord first appeared to Mary the Magdalene—Mark 16:9; John 20:11–17**

The Lord arose early on the first day of the week and first appeared to Mary the Magdalene (from whom He had cast out seven demons). Tell here the moving story of how the Lord appeared to Mary as recorded in John 20:11–17 (this account will be treated in more detail in a later lesson). Afterwards, Mary reported to the mourning disciples that she had seen the Lord alive, but they did not believe her (although John tells us in John 20:8 that he believed when he saw the empty tomb).

C. The Lord appeared later to two who were walking in the countryside—Mark 16:12–13

The Lord appeared in a different form to two of the Lord's followers as they were walking in the countryside. These brothers reported to the disciples that they had also seen the Lord alive. The disciples did not believe these excited witnesses either.

D. Afterward, the Lord appeared to the eleven disciples as they were eating—Mark 16:14

The Lord finally appeared directly to the eleven disciples and reproached them for not believing the reports of those who had seen Him. It was at this time that He asked them to touch Him, even His wounds, and He ate with them, proving He was truly with them as a man in resurrection!

III. The resurrected Lord charged the disciples to proclaim the gospel—Mark 16:15–16

As the resurrected Lord, Jesus charged His disciples to proclaim what He had accomplished to all people, even to all creation! He sent the disciples out as witnesses to His resurrection (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 3:15). They witnessed to people that the Slave-Savior, who had died for man, was now in resurrection. Actually, the gospel is the resurrected Christ Himself. What a wonderful gospel the disciples possessed!

A. The gospel was to be proclaimed to all creation—Mark 16:15

"This reveals that God's redemption, accomplished by the Slave-Savior through His death and resurrection, is not only for man, the leading one in God's creation, but also for all the creation. Hence, all things, whether on earth or in the heavens, were reconciled to God, and the gospel should be proclaimed to (in) all creation under heaven (Col. 1:20, 23). Based on this, all the creation expects to be freed from the slavery of corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8:19–22)" (Mark 16:15, footnote 2). "In 16:15 the Lord said to His disciples, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all the creation.' Then verse 20 tells us that they went out and preached everywhere. This indicates that we also should go forth to tell the nations, and even all the creation, of the wonderful Slave-Savior, His all-inclusive death, and His marvelous resurrection" (Life-study of Mark, Message 51, pp. 441–442).

B. All who believe and are baptized shall be saved—Mark 16:16

"In verse 16 the Lord went on to say to the disciples, 'He who believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he who does not believe shall be condemned.' To believe is to receive the Slave-Savior (John 1:12), not only for forgiveness of sins (Acts 10:43) but also for regeneration (1 Pet. 1:21, 23), so that those who believe may become the children of God (John 1:12–13) and the members of Christ (Eph. 5:30) in an organic union with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19). To be baptized is to affirm this, by being buried to terminate the old creation through the death of the Slave-Savior and by being raised up to be the new creation of God through the Slave-Savior's resurrection....To believe and to be so baptized are two parts of one complete step for receiving the full salvation of God. To be baptized without believing is merely an empty ritual; to believe without being baptized is to be saved only inwardly without an outward affirmation of the inward salvation. These two should go together....Mark 16:16 does not say 'who does not believe and is not baptized shall be condemned.' This indicates that condemnation is related only to not believing; it is

not related to not being baptized. Believing itself is sufficient for one to receive salvation from condemnation; yet it needs baptism as an outward affirmation for the completion of one's inward salvation" (Life-study of Mark, Message 51, pp. 438–439). Therefore we should tell people about baptism as well as believing in Christ, for baptism as the outward affirmation of our inward belief is the completion of a normal salvation experience. The Lord considered His death on the cross to be His baptism (Luke 12:50). It was through this baptism that He entered into resurrection. We too enter into the experience of the resurrection life through baptism. Baptism plants those who believe in Him into His death that they may grow with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, even to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:4–5). Furthermore, as those who have believed and have been baptized, we are separated unto the Lord. The world is behind us on the other side. Now we are living in resurrection with Christ. By faith we must stand upon the fact of our baptism to live a life that is fully separated unto our resurrected Lord. Praise the Lord! What a wonderful gospel we have. In order to speak this to others, we need to experience the reality of baptism in our daily lives.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Using the following three points, we can present the “science” of salvation to the young people: (1) By the resurrection of Christ, we see that God accepted His offering for sin and raised Him from the dead as proof of this acceptance. Now, since there is nothing between God and us, He can freely come into us and be mingled with us to carry out His complete salvation because our sins have been taken away. (2) When Christ resurrected He became the life-giving Spirit. To believe in the resurrection of Christ is critical as it was in resurrection that “the last Adam became the life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45b). According to John 1:12–13 when we believe into Him, we receive Him. Whom do we receive? We receive the Christ who is now the life-giving Spirit! Praise the Lord, He is not dead but risen! (3) By believing into Him, we receive Him and are “saved.” Romans 10:9 says, “That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” The resurrection of Christ is the great divide between sinner and saint. Those who believe in the resurrection of Christ are saved and those who do not are condemned. Verse 10 goes on to say, “For with the heart there is believing unto righteousness, and with the mouth there is confession unto salvation.” The points on the annotated lesson present the facts of the Lord’s resurrection and that His resurrection was witnessed by many. Conclude by showing that it is the resurrected Lord who lives in our spirit. Go around in a circle and have the young people all call on the Lord by exercising their mingled spirit as the way to enjoy the resurrection of the Christ who indwells them.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Why do you continue in your denying of Him? If you knew His heart toward you, all the denial would melt away and you would run to Him. Maybe you need to hear the words, “and Peter.” After the Lord was crucified, a rich man laid Him in a new tomb (Mark 15:43–46). Very early on the third day, three women who loved the Lord came to the tomb seeking Him (Mark 16:1–2). But an angel was there to tell them of the Lord’s resurrection and to instruct them to go tell His disciples and Peter of His resurrection (Mark 16:5–7). Why was the Lord so concerned that Peter specifically would be told of His resurrection? On the evening the Lord was unrighteously arrested and cruelly treated, Peter did something he had told the Lord he would never do: he denied Him, not once, but three times. When he did this, the Lord turned and looked at him, causing him to flee in tears (Luke 22:54–62). This was Peter, one moment strongly declaring his faithfulness to the Lord, even unto death, the next moment shamefully denying Him, firstly with words, then with an oath, and finally with cursing and swearing (Matt. 26:35, 70, 72, 74). Perhaps Peter thought, “He knows what I have done. He

turned and looked at me. What should I do? I dare not come close to Him again, because of this sin which separates me from Him—I denied Him!" But when the women came from the empty tomb they were told to tell the disciples "and Peter" of the Lord's resurrection. "Here was a fallen, sinful Peter, a Peter who had denied the Lord. Yet the Lord specifically mentioned him. This is the gospel.... 'And Peter' means 'and you'—'you' who have failed like Peter. May you see the Lord's heart for you. If you see the Lord's heart, you will run toward Him" ("And Peter," *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 18, pp. 252–253, 254).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Mark*, Message 51.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Mark*, Message 51; "And Peter," *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*, Volume 18, pp. 252–253, 254.

Lesson 12—Resurrected as a Man

OBJECTIVE: To see that the Lord Jesus was resurrected as a *man*.

SYNOPSIS: In Luke we see the resurrection of the Man-Savior, especially in His fellowship with the two disciples as a man. First, He was discovered by the women. Then, His resurrection was investigated and confirmed by Peter. Following this, He appeared to the two disciples and opened the Scriptures to them, then appeared to the apostles, opening their minds to understand the Scripture and commissioning them with the gospel. We must see that the Lord Jesus resurrected with a body as a man. In incarnation the Lord had put on humanity, but in resurrection He did not put it off. Today our resurrected Lord is still a man with a human body. He had flesh and bones, and His flesh still bore the scars from His crucifixion. He ate before the disciples, and in His contact with the disciples in resurrection He cared for them in a human way.

BACKGROUND: At the end of this lesson, there is a possible application to daily Bible reading. Young people need frequent reminders regarding their Bible reading. They stop and start often. This is normal. At every stoppage, they simply need more inspiration and encouragement. Eventually, if we persist, it will become their habit.

CHAPTER(S): Luke 24.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Use the stories to show how Christ in resurrection was a man. Today, He is still a man on the throne in the heavens.

I. The Lord was raised up by God as a vindication of His life and work—Rom. 4:25

"...God's raising Him from among the dead was a sign that He was justified and vindicated by God. God raised Christ from the dead as a proof that He justified what the Lord was and what He did on earth....If God had not come in to raise Him up from the dead, this would have meant that God did not justify Him....Romans 4:25 says that Christ 'was delivered because of our offenses and was raised because of our justification.' The death of Christ fulfilled and satisfied God's righteous requirements so that we may be justified by God through His death (Rom. 3:24). Christ's resurrection is a proof that God was satisfied with His death for us....God's raising up Christ from the dead was His justification and vindication of what Christ was and did. From this we may have the assurance that God has accepted what Christ did for us on the cross. We are justified by God because of Christ's death, and in Christ, the resurrected One, we are accepted before God" (Life-study of Luke, Message 54, pp. 466–467).

A. His resurrection was discovered by the women early in the morning—Luke 24:1–11

At early dawn on the first Lord's Day, women arrived at the tomb with spices they had prepared to anoint the Lord's body. According to Mark, these women were Mary the Magdalene, Mary the mother of James (also the mother of Jesus), and Salome (the mother of James and John). They had seen Joseph of Arimathea lay Jesus in the tomb on Friday, the day Jesus died. They had been unable to anoint Him, for the Sabbath had begun Friday evening, and Saturday was also a Sabbath, for it was a feast day. At evening a new day began (Hebrew days begin in the evening—Gen. 1:5b), so they could purchase spices to anoint the Lord with. Now they were hurrying at first light to complete their service to the Lord for His burial. (Actually, Mary the Magdalene had already taken care of this by anointing the Lord in John 12.) When they arrived, they found the stone rolled away and

the tomb empty. As they were wondering about this, two men stood by them in dazzling clothing and said to them, "Why are you seeking the living One among the dead? He is not here but has been raised." These angels went on to remind them of how the Lord told them that He would be delivered to sinful men to be crucified and on the third day rise up. After hearing this, the women returned to tell the disciples, but the majority of the disciples thought it nonsense, and did not believe them.

B. His resurrection was investigated by Peter and John—Luke 24:12; John 20:2–10

Peter and John, however, rose up and ran to the tomb. John arrived first, being younger, and looked in, but did not enter the tomb. Peter then arrived and entered the tomb and saw the linen wrappings and face napkin laying neatly where the Lord had lain. John then also entered and saw what Peter had seen. John tells us at this point, that he believed the Lord had indeed risen from the dead, even though they did not yet understand what had happened (John 20:9). Peter and John then left in wonder.

C. The Lord in resurrection appeared to two other disciples and walked with them to Emmaus—Luke 24:13–35

Two of the Lord's disciples (not of the eleven) were walking to Emmaus, a town about seven miles from Jerusalem. As they were walking, they were talking about all the events of the past few days. Perhaps at times they were sorrowful and at times they were perplexed; surely they had witnessed one shocking event after another. The Lord had entered triumphantly into Jerusalem and His followers witnessed how He muzzled all those who opposed Him. What a glorious time that must have been! Then He was arrested by their own leaders, handed over to Pilate, and put on a cross. What a shock to those who thought this was the time Jesus might be restoring Israel to its former glory! Suddenly their hopes were smashed. But now some were saying the grave in which He was laid was empty, and angels had been seen who said that He was living. There was surely much to talk over as they were walking. Suddenly, a Stranger drew near and began to walk with them. (In some way they were prevented from recognizing Him.) He asked them what they were talking about. They looked sad, but also were surprised that this Stranger was unfamiliar with the recent events. Surely every person in Jerusalem was aware of what had happened. How was it He did not know? They told Him of the things they knew concerning Him. At this, the Lord exclaimed, "O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and enter into His glory (Luke 24:25–26)?" Then He opened to them the entire Scriptures concerning Himself. As they drew near to their destination, they asked Him to stay with them since evening was approaching. They sat down to eat, and as He broke the bread their eyes were opened to recognize Him, and He disappeared. At this, they rushed back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples that they had seen Jesus.

D. The Lord appeared to all the disciples in the house and commissioned them with the gospel—Luke 24:36–49

As the two disciples were relating all this to the eleven, the Lord Himself stood in their midst, saying, "Peace to you." They were terrified, thinking perhaps they were seeing a ghost, but the Lord showed to them His pierced hands and feet and invited them to touch Him. It still seemed too good to be true, so the Lord asked them to give Him some food, and He ate. This was real proof that He had resurrected with a body, and not just as a spirit.

He then reminded all of them of how He had spoken with them concerning how all the things written concerning Him had to be fulfilled and He opened their mind to understand the Scriptures concerning Himself, including the fact that repentance for forgiveness of sins in His name would be proclaimed starting from Jerusalem. Thus He charged them to remain in Jerusalem until He would send forth the promise of His Father (the outpouring of the economical Spirit of power) upon them. It was sometime during this talk that Jesus breathed into His disciples the Holy Spirit (John 20:22). What an unspeakably wonderful day!

II. The Lord Jesus Christ resurrected as a man with a body—Luke 24:39–40

In incarnation the Lord had put on humanity, but in resurrection He did not put it off. Today our resurrected Lord is still a man with a human body!

A. He had flesh and bones, and His flesh still bore the scars from His crucifixion—John 20:24–28; Luke 24:37–39

The Lord invited the disciples to touch Him to prove that He was a resurrected man with a body, and not a ghost.

B. He ate before the disciples—Luke 24:41–43

This was further proof that He was still a man in resurrection.

C. He cared for the disciples in a human way—Luke 24:36–39; John 20:15–16; Luke 24:15–30

Even in resurrection, the Lord still did not appear to the disciples as the almighty God in unapproachable light. Rather, He appeared as a man in a very approachable and human way. He brought peace to the frightened disciples (Luke 24:36–39). He responded to Mary's seeking of Him (John 20:15–16). He walked with the two despondent disciples as they left Jerusalem for Emmaus, listened to their foolish talk, explained the Scripture to them, and even turned in to lodge with them (Luke 24:15–30). How human and approachable the Lord was!

D. His body was a body in resurrection—Luke 24:36–37

When the Lord appeared to the disciples, they thought He was a ghost, and they were startled and frightened. "They could not understand how He could suddenly appear in the room. The door was closed, and no one opened it. Nevertheless, the Lord appeared with a physical body....Here we see the Man-Savior's resurrected body, which is spiritual (1 Cor. 15:44) and a body of glory (Phil 3:21). The Lord's appearing was very mysterious, and we cannot understand it fully. He came into the room as the Spirit, yet with a physical, touchable body. The prints of the nails could still be seen. The place in His side that had been pierced with a spear could still be seen and touched. Not only was the Lord's body visible and touchable, but He was able to eat food. 'And while they still did not believe for joy and were marveling, He said to them, Do you have anything to eat here? And they handed Him part of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate before them' (vv. 41–43). We do not understand how the Lord Jesus as One with a spiritual body was still able to eat material food" (Life-study of Luke, Message 55, pp. 475–476).

III. The resurrected Lord commissioned the disciples by opening their minds to understand the Scriptures concerning Him—Luke 24:25–32, 44–49; Eph. 1:17–18; 2 Cor. 3:12–16

In resurrection, the Lord commissioned the disciples to proclaim the forgiveness of sins. “The Man-Savior’s meeting with the disciples in Luke 24 was the right time for Him to commission them to preach the forgiveness of sins. After pointing out to them that it was written that Christ should suffer and rise up from the dead on the third day, He told them that ‘repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things’ (vv. 47–48). Forgiveness of sins could be proclaimed only after the Man-Savior’s vicarious death for the sinners’ sins had been accomplished and had been verified by His resurrection (see Rom. 4:25)” (Life-study of Luke, Message 55, p. 477). Along with His commission, the Lord opened the Scriptures to the disciples (Luke 24:32), opened their eyes to see Him (Luke 24:31), and opened their minds to understand the Scriptures concerning Him (Luke 24:45). To be commissioned by the Lord, we must allow the resurrected Lord to open our minds to understand the Scriptures concerning Him until our hearts burn within us (Luke 24:32, 44–49).

A. The Lord opened the Scriptures and the eyes of the disciples—Luke 24:31–32

“In 24:13–35 the Man-Savior opened the Scriptures and also the eyes of the disciples....Verse 27 tells us that ‘beginning from Moses and from all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.’...The Scriptures are mentioned twice more in this chapter. Verse 32 speaks of opening the Scriptures, and verse 45 of understanding the Scriptures. In the Scriptures there is a full record, a complete revelation, concerning Christ and His death and resurrection. However, because these matters were not opened up to the Lord’s followers, He came to them in order to open the holy Word to them. The Lord also came to them for the purpose of opening their eyes....The Savior walked with them (v. 15) and stayed with them (v. 29), but it was not until they offered the loaf to Him and He broke it that their eyes were opened to recognize Him....Once their eyes were opened, they recognized Him. Not only did the eyes of these two disciples need to be opened; the eyes of Peter, John, and James also needed to be opened....In this portion of the Word the Man-Savior opened the Scriptures and also opened the eyes of His disciples” (Life-study of Luke, Message 54, pp. 471–472).

B. The Lord also opened their mind to understand the Scriptures—Luke 24:45

“Just as the Man-Savior had opened the Scriptures to the disciples on the way to Emmaus, He now opened the Word to those gathered in the room. He also opened their minds to understand the Scriptures [Luke 24:45]....[T]he entire Old Testament [is] a revelation of [the Savior] and...He [is] its center and content. The fact that He opened the mind of the disciples indicates that in order to understand the Scriptures our mind needs to be opened by the Lord Spirit through His enlightening (Eph. 1:18)” (Life-study of Luke, Message 55, p. 476). If the Lord leads, you may feel to apply this point to the young people by speaking on the need for daily Bible reading and the need to turn our heart to the Lord when we come to the Word.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: When the Lord resurrected from the grave, He came forth, not only as a Spirit, but as a man. Because it may be somewhat hard to understand that the Lord in resurrection is the life-giving Spirit and a resurrected man at the same time, the following four examples of the Lord appearing to the disciples as a man may be helpful: (1) On the day of resurrection He appeared to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13–35). They did not recognize Him until He broke the bread. Then, before He disappeared, their eyes were opened to see that it was the resurrected Christ who was with them. (2) Also on the day of

resurrection, He appeared to the disciples in the upper room. He asked them "Do you have anything here to eat?" Then He ate some broiled fish before them. He was there as a physical man, eating fish with His disciples (Luke 24:36–49). (3) After eight days He again appeared to His disciples. He said to Thomas, "Bring your finger here and see My hands, and bring your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27). (4) John 21:1–14 also shows us how the Lord manifested Himself to the disciples physically after He resurrected. Why did He do this? John 20:26, footnote 3 says, "After the Lord came in verse 19, eight days before, there is no plain word or hint in John's record that the Lord left the disciples. Actually, He stayed with them, though they were not conscious of His presence. Hence, His coming in verse 26 was actually His manifestation, His appearing (see John 21:1, footnote 2). Before His death the Lord was in the flesh, and His presence was visible. After His resurrection the Lord became the Spirit, and His presence was invisible. His manifestations, or appearances, after His resurrection were to train the disciples to realize, to enjoy, and to practice His invisible presence, which is more available, prevailing, precious, rich, and real than His visible presence. In His resurrection this dear presence of His was just the Spirit, whom He had breathed into them and who would be with them all the time." Today what we have is the Lord's invisible presence with us all the time. Although we cannot see Him, He is with us invisibly. Just as He was training His disciples to know Him in His invisible presence, the young people too have to realize that He is with us all the time. At the end of the meeting it would be good for them to have a time to pray, thanking the Lord that His presence is with them and that He is so available.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Without the Lord's shining, man, created as a vessel to contain God remains sadly empty, containing only darkness, as he spends his life vainly pursuing what apart from the Lord he will never find: light and satisfaction. What then prevents people from simply turning to the One who can richly supply their need? Fixed between their eyes and the glory of the gospel of Christ lie many veils, placed there by Satan, who through so many subtle ways has been keeping them all in darkness, and therefore painfully empty (2 Cor. 4:3–4). "In principle, anything such as philosophy, religion, or cultural traditions that hinders people from apprehending the gospel of Christ is a veil" (2 Cor. 4:3, footnote 1). As a blind man cannot see the shining of the sun, so the blinding one, "Satan, the deceiver, the ruler of the present age, who dominates today's world and hunts for man's worship by blinding his mind and his thoughts" (2 Cor. 4:4, footnote 1), is trying to keep your eyes veiled to the shining of the gospel. Don't let Satan veil you any longer! Allow the God who said, "Out of darkness light shall shine," to be the One who shines in your heart to illuminate the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4:6). This shining will both illuminate and fill your empty vessel with the priceless treasure of the Christ of glory. "God's shining in our hearts brings into us a treasure, the Christ of glory, who is the embodiment of God to be our life and our everything" (2 Cor. 4:7, footnote 1). Today, through the gospel, you can receive, instead of your darkness, the shining of God as light and instead of your emptiness, Christ as a wonderful, priceless treasure within you. Turn away from the evil one who is even right now trying to keep you veiled by so many blinding thoughts, and who desires to keep you in darkness, groping in vain your whole life for something in the world to fill your emptiness. Turn instead to the shining One who desires to fill you with light and put within you the most precious and satisfying treasure in the universe, Himself!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Luke*, Messages 54–55.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Luke*, Messages 54–55.

Lesson 13—Resurrecting in Divine Glory

OBJECTIVE: To see that after and by His resurrection Christ will come into us and be one with us.

SYNOPSIS: The main point in the Gospel of John is that after and by His resurrection Christ will come into us and be one with us. God desires to be expressed, or glorified, in His creature, man. This is why God Himself became a man. God, however, was concealed within this man by the flesh of His humanity, which acted as a veil preventing people from seeing God within Him. As mentioned in Lesson 9, when Jesus died on the cross, the shell of His humanity was broken, releasing the riches of the divine glory concealed within Him. Through death and resurrection, the divine life which was within Jesus was reproduced and multiplied, and Christ's entire being, including His humanity, was brought into glory. In resurrection, Christ imparted this glorified divine life into the believers, producing many sons for the glorification of the Father. We are the many grains of wheat who were produced through the one grain's glorification. All of Christ's brothers are the sons of God, possessing God's life and nature. In the Gospel of John, we see how Jesus' resurrection results in the glorification and expression of the Father, thus accomplishing the eternal purpose of God.

CHAPTER(S): John 12, 17, 20.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

Sometimes when we talk about someone being glorified, we mean they are praised and exalted. This is not the meaning of glorification in the New Testament. In this lesson we will see that Christ's resurrection was His glorification. Christ's resurrection completed the process by which God could be fully expressed through His humanity, and through which, as the Spirit of the glorified Jesus, He could be multiplied into many others.

I. The God of glory was concealed in Jesus Christ, the God-man

God was embodied in Jesus Christ. In the man Jesus, divinity was fully mingled with humanity, enabling all of God's divine attributes (such as love, light, holiness, and righteousness) to be expressed in Christ's human virtues (such as kindness, patience, etc.). In this sense, Jesus as a man expressed God throughout His human life, even before His death and resurrection. This surely made God happy, for in Christ He finally was being expressed in man. However, the full expression of the splendor of God's glory was concealed within the "shell" of Christ's humanity. It was briefly glimpsed by Peter, James, and John when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain, but otherwise it was concealed within Jesus by the "cloak" of the flesh of His humanity.

II. Through resurrection, Jesus was glorified for the glory of the Father—John 17:1

In John 17, the Lord prayed a wonderful prayer. It began with, "Father, the hour has come; glorify Your Son that the Son may glorify You..." (John 17:1b). Glorification is the subject of the Lord's prayer in John 17. Right after He finished praying, He was arrested and led away to be crucified in answer to His prayer. For the Father to glorify the Son so that the Son might glorify the Father meant that Jesus had to pass through death and resurrection.

A. Through His resurrection, Christ's entire being, including His humanity, was brought into glory

"When Jesus Christ came in the flesh, He was like that little carnation seed. In Him, that is, in His human form, His human shell, were all the beauty and shape of the divine life. All the colorful aspects of the divine life were concealed and confined in that little

Nazarene. One day, He was sown into the earth. After He died, He grew up and blossomed in His resurrection. In His resurrection, the beauty, form, style, color, and riches of life were released and expressed. That was the glorification of the Son. Since all that God the Father is has been embodied in the Son, when the Son is glorified, the Father is also glorified in the Son's glorification" (Life-study of John, Message 38, pp. 458–459). "He...had to be resurrected that He might uplift His humanity into the divine element and that His divine element might be expressed so that His entire being, both divinity and humanity, might be glorified. In this way, the Father would be glorified in Him....In His resurrection, the Lord's divine life was released from within His humanity and imparted into His many believers...and His whole being, including His humanity, was brought into glory (Luke 24:26), and, in that, the Father's divine element was expressed. God firstly answered and fulfilled [the Lord's prayer in John 17:1] in the Lord's resurrection (Acts 3:13–15)" (Life-study of John, Message 38, pp. 459–460).

B. Through Christ's resurrection, many sons were produced for the glorification of the Father—John 20:17; Rom. 8:29

When Jesus rose from the dead, He told Mary the Magdalene, the first person to meet Him in resurrection, "Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17b). Before the time of the Lord's resurrection, He could call His disciples His friends, but not His brothers (John 15:15). On the day of His resurrection, however, the Lord suddenly had many brothers! "As we have seen, the entire Gospel of John points in this direction—toward the reproduction and multiplication of the Only Begotten Son of God. In this way, the Only Begotten Son becomes the many sons (Rom. 8:29). In order to have His corporate expression, God requires the many sons. For this purpose, the Only Begotten Son of God had to be released through death and imparted into us through resurrection" (Life-study of John, Message 44, p. 532).

1. We are the many grains of wheat who were produced through the one grain's glorification—John 12:24

"The Lord's death was for His resurrection. In 12:24 He said that He was the grain of wheat which would fall into the ground and die that it might be released to impart its life into many other grains. In other words, He had to die that He might rise up and become many grains....Without death, He never could have regenerated us to be the members of His Body....The record in the Gospel of John regarding the Lord's resurrection is different from that in the other three Gospels....The Gospel of John always has the viewpoint of life. According to John's Gospel, the Lord has come to be the expression of God to be received by us as life, and He died and resurrected to impart Himself into us as life....The only way in which the Only Begotten Son of God could be reproduced and multiplied was by death and resurrection. For example, the only possible way for a grain of wheat to be reproduced and multiplied into many grains is the way of death and resurrection" (Life-study of John, Message 44, pp. 531–532).

2. We were regenerated through the resurrection of Christ—1 Pet. 1:3

First Peter 1:3 is a very important verse in the Bible, for it tells us that we were all regenerated through the Lord's resurrection. We were born again two thousand

years ago! Romans 8:29 declares that Jesus has become the Firstborn among many brothers. It was at the time of His resurrection that He was born to be the Firstborn Son of God (Acts 13:33; John 16:21 and footnotes), during which time we were “co-born” with Him.

3. **All of Christ’s brothers are the sons of God, possessing God’s life and nature, and becoming the Father’s increased expression on the earth—Gal. 3:26**

Christ’s resurrection resulted in the Father’s glorification, because the Father’s life and nature were multiplied through His death and resurrection. Today, as a result of Christ’s resurrection, God is being expressed through so many believers who are His genuine sons. These sons comprise the churches expressing God’s glory as the shining lampstands in Revelation. Eventually all the sons of God throughout the generations will together express God to the universe as the New Jerusalem for eternity. This expression of God was produced out of Christ’s resurrection.

III. After His glorification, Christ comes into the believers as the Spirit to make us one with Him—John 20:22; 1 Cor. 6:17

In John 7:39, we are told that the Spirit would be able to live in the believers after Jesus was glorified (that is, resurrected). After His resurrection, Christ came to the believers and breathed into them, saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22). The main point in the Gospel of John is that after and by His resurrection Christ will come into us and be one with us. Christ’s resurrection is for His imparting of God into us as life and for His indwelling. Today, the resurrected Lord is the Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17) who has come into us and who has brought us into God (John 14:17; 16:13).

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: This lesson on the resurrection needs to be presented in a simple, objective way. At this point, the fact of the Lord’s resurrection as seen by the example of a carnation seed in point II.A. may be the easiest way to present it. Within the carnation seed is the essence of the carnation seed. Its beauty, shape, size, color, and fragrance are all hidden within the shell of the seed. When the seed falls into the ground it dies and the shell of the seed is broken open. Then, in resurrection, the carnation plant begins to sprout. Through normal growth it buds and eventually blossoms into a beautiful carnation flower. That carnation flower is the glorification of the seed. In the same way, the Lord compared Himself to a grain of wheat (John 12:24). When the Lord went to the cross, He was a little grain of wheat, but through His death and resurrection, He became the many grains. We are these many grains produced in the Lord’s resurrection. Eventually, through daily contact with the Lord, we will grow into the same image as the Lord Himself. The main point to emphasize with the junior high young people is that through their regeneration, Christ came into them as the seed of life and that He desires to grow in them in a normal, daily way unto full maturity. For this there is the need for normal contact with the Lord in our spirit. By reading the Word and by calling on the Lord, the seed within us is nourished and strengthened. This will result in the normal growth and eventual blossoming of the seed within us.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Contrary to the religious concept held by many, God is not content to remain far away in the heavens, nor is He seeking the cold, impersonal, outward, religious worship of man. When we see what is on God’s heart in relation to man, we begin to appreciate the unfathomable heart of love God has toward man. God desires not only to be close to man, but even one with him (1 Cor. 6:17). From the beginning of creation we can see God pressing toward a wonderful, intimate union with man. Zechariah 12:1 says that God “stretched forth

the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth and formed the spirit of man within him." Why did God form such a spirit within man, ranked in importance with the heavens and the earth? God is Spirit. Man must have a spirit to receive and contain God so that God can be one with man (John 4:24). However, when man ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden, his entire being became fallen, and his spirit within him became deadened. The barrier of sin separated fallen man from his holy, pure, and righteous God. Nothing man could do could bridge that gap. The good news we have to present today is that God's heart to be one with man still remains! And although man had no way to reach God, God in His rich mercy, righteously reached man. He did this by becoming a man. He became the God-man Jesus ("the Salvation of Jehovah"), who was called Emmanuel ("God with us") by men (Matt. 1:20, 21-23). Through incarnation, the infinite God became a finite man, accomplished an all-inclusive judicial redemption, and regenerated all those who believe into Him (Heb. 2:9; 1 Pet. 1:3). Every barrier between God and man has been removed. You need only to believe into Jesus with your heart; call on His name and you will be saved into oneness with Him (Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 6:17).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing that the goal of God's economy is to mingle God with man and man with God (II.A.4.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of John*, Messages 38, 44.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of John*, Messages 37-38; Message 40, pp. 485-487; Message 41, pp. 493-497; Message 44; *The Issue of Christ Being Glorified by the Father with the Divine Glory*, Chapters 2-3.

Lesson 14—Discovering Christ's Resurrection

OBJECTIVE: To see that the discovery of the Lord's resurrection requires the seeking of His believers.

SYNOPSIS: In the Gospel record, the resurrected Lord first appears to Mary the Magdalene, then to the two who were walking together on the road, and then to the disciples gathered together within a house. Each of these cases presents a principle of how the Lord appears to His loving and seeking believers. First, the Lord appears to us as we seek after Him individually. Second, we find the Lord when we fellowship together with other believers, particularly over His Word. Third, we find the Lord in the meetings. The resurrection of the Lord was an accomplished fact, but only those disciples who were loving and seeking the Lord experienced His resurrection. The discovery of the Lord's resurrection requires the seeking of His believers. May we be those who, like Mary, are not satisfied until we touch the Lord. Then we will become the Lord's corporate Bride who will bring Him back; we will be those seekers who are precious to Him at His second coming.

BACKGROUND: This is an opportunity to touch the young people concerning a simple, intimate, and pure love for Christ and Christ alone.

CHAPTER(S): Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

The progression portrayed in this lesson is most clearly depicted in Mark 16:9–15.

I. The resurrected Lord appeared to His believers on the day of resurrection

In the Gospel record, the resurrected Lord first appeared to Mary the Magdalene, then to the two disciples who were walking together on the road to Emmaus, and then to the disciples gathered together within a house. Each of these cases presents a principle of how the Lord appears to His loving and seeking believers. First, the Lord appears to us as we seek after Him individually. Second, we find the Lord when we fellowship together with other believers, particularly over His Word. Third, we find the Lord in the meetings. In our experience, we may be led both from individual to corporate experience, or from corporate experience to individual experience. If we are those who love the Lord and seek Him daily, certainly we find Him when we fellowship with others, and we enjoy His presence in the meetings, even supplying Him to others.

A. The resurrected Lord first appeared to Mary the Magdalene—Mark 16:9; John 20:11–17

"The fact of the Lord's resurrection has been accomplished, but it must be discovered and seen. Before Mary the Magdalene came to the tomb, the resurrection in life had in fact been accomplished. But Mary had to discover it by loving and seeking the Lord. This lays down a principle. Today the resurrection of Christ is an accomplished fact, yet so many people have not seen it...If we would make such a discovery, we must first love the Lord and seek Him" (Life-study of John, Message 45, pp. 539–540).

1. Mary the Magdalene was one of the women who came early to the tomb to lovingly care for the burial of the Lord's body—Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1, 10; John 20:1

Mary the Magdalene is the only one of the women arriving at the empty tomb who is mentioned in all four Gospels. The word tells us the Lord cast seven demons out of

her, and that she loved the Lord to the degree that she broke her alabaster box of ointment and poured it all upon the Lord, signifying that she poured out her entire living and future upon Him out of her love for Him. The Lord appreciated her anointing as preparation for His burial, surely knowing that He would receive no such care after His death on the Passover. She was seemingly a foolish person, for she came to seek to anoint the Lord's body again after His death, even when she knew a great stone had been rolled over the tomb.

2. After seeing the tomb empty, Mary ran to tell Peter and John, who returned with her to the tomb—John 20:2–10

Even after the angel told her and the other women that Jesus had been raised from the dead (Matt. 28:2–7; Mark 16:5–7; Luke 24:4–7), she could only focus on the fact that the grave was empty, for she told Peter and John, "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him" (John 20:2). (In John 20:2, the phrase "the disciple whom Jesus loved" refers to John.) It seemed she did not even notice the angels, for she only had a heart for the Lord. Peter and John ran to the tomb, discovered it empty, and then left. "The first one who saw the tomb was Mary, and the first person who entered into the tomb was Peter. Here the brothers are really the brothers because they are clearer in the mind and find it easier to believe the fact than the sisters do. The two brothers saw the empty tomb, the linen cloths, and the napkin, and were very clear that the Lord must have been resurrected. Although they saw the fact, realized it, and believed in it objectively, they did not have the experience subjectively. After being satisfied with the objective fact, they left the tomb. However, Mary, the sister, lingered, for she was still waiting, looking, and expecting" (Life-study of John, Message 45, p. 541).

3. As Mary lingered at the tomb after the brothers had left, Jesus appeared to her—John 20:11–17

It was to such a one, not to Peter or John, that the Lord first presented Himself in the freshness of His resurrection. "The brothers were satisfied with having faith in the fact of the Lord's resurrection, but the sister went further and sought the resurrected Lord Himself, i.e., the personal experience of the Lord" (John 20:1, footnote 2). Tell the story of how Mary was lingering near the tomb, pitiable in her simple-hearted distress (John 20:11). Jesus had to offer Himself to the Father before He could come to His believers in resurrection, yet Mary was there. He could not turn away from such a seeker. Because of her additional seeking, she was rewarded with His appearing. What an astonishing event! The Lord held up His scheduled appointment with the Father to meet with such a one. If we are such seekers, the Lord will be unable to resist us, and will surely come to us.

B. The resurrected Lord joined the two disciples on the way to Emmaus—Mark 16:12; Luke 24:13–32

Mary was an example of someone who was not satisfied until she found the Lord. Her kind of "unreasonable" pursuing of the Lord shows us how we should be in our pursuing of the Lord. We should not stop short until we have touched the Lord! The account of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus reveals another secret of finding the resurrected Lord. This secret is fellowship. These two believers were walking and fellowshiping together

concerning the Lord. As they were fellowshiping in this way, the Lord appeared and entered into their fellowship. As they walked and talked with the Lord, their hearts began to burn within them as the Lord reminded them of one Scripture passage after another. Many times when we fellowship with other believers about the Lord in the Word, we have this kind of experience. The Lord comes to us as we are fellowshiping with others about Him, particularly as we are coming to His Word, and He begins to bring up verse upon verse, one item leading to another.

**C. The resurrected Lord appeared to the disciples who were gathered together—
Mark 16:14; John 20:19, 24–28**

In Mark 16 we are first told that the Lord appeared to Mary as she was individually seeking the Lord. Then we are told that the Lord appeared to two disciples who were fellowshiping together (cf. Luke 24:13–15). Finally, we are told that the Lord appeared to the eleven as they were gathered together. This reveals the third way that we can enjoy the appearing of the resurrected Lord, which is the meetings. We are told that Thomas was not with the other disciples at this meeting (John 20:24). Because he was absent, he missed the first meeting the Lord had with His disciples in His resurrection. It was a serious thing for him to miss the meeting. We need to realize that the Lord is present with us whenever we meet together (Matt. 18:20). Therefore, if we want the Lord's appearing, we should not neglect the gathering together of the believers (Heb. 10:25). Even though the disciples initially did not respond to the reports of the eyewitnesses who had seen the Lord, when they met together they had the Lord's appearing (John 20:19; Luke 24:36). Many young people's meetings are like this. Initially we may be cold and unresponsive, but eventually the Lord does appear, and all are brought into a kind of participation and enjoyment. This is why all of us, cold or hot, need the meetings.

**II. The discovery of the Lord's resurrection requires the seeking of His believers—
John 20:1–17**

"Although the Lord's resurrection had been accomplished, the discovery of it required the seeking of His disciples. The discovery of His resurrection was made by the loving seekers of the Lord Jesus. John chapter twenty shows the kind of person who will realize the Lord's resurrection, the kind of person to whom the vision of His resurrection can be disclosed. How can we have the revelation of the Lord's resurrection? There is such a wonderful and mysterious fact as the Lord's resurrection accomplished in this universe. But how can we know it? How can it be revealed to us? How can we have this vision? Only by loving the Lord and seeking Him....The spiritual discovery, the spiritual revelation, the spiritual vision, depends very much upon seeking the Lord" (Life-study of John, Message 45, pp. 539–540).

A. Without the Lord's appearing, the knowledge of the Lord's resurrection is vain

Many people know about the Lord's resurrection as a historical fact. However, they may not have experienced the resurrected Lord! When the Lord appears to us, then we receive a revelation of the resurrected Christ Himself. Then resurrection ceases to be a mere doctrine and becomes a personal discovery in our experience. "Have you discovered the fact of Christ's resurrection? Have you received the revelation or vision that the Lord has been resurrected? I know you have the knowledge, the doctrine, and the story of His resurrection, but have you discovered the fact of it in the spirit? If we would make such a

discovery, we must first love the Lord and seek Him" (Life-study of John, Message 45, pp. 539–540).

B. The Lord appeared to Mary first because she loved and sought Him the most

"The fact of the Lord's resurrection has been accomplished, but it must be discovered and seen. Before Mary the Magdalene came to the tomb, the resurrection in life had in fact been accomplished. But Mary had to discover it by loving and seeking the Lord. This lays down a principle. Today the resurrection of Christ is an accomplished fact, yet so many people have not seen it....If we would make such a discovery, we must first love the Lord and seek Him" (Life-study of John, Message 45, pp. 539–540). Ultimately, we will not experience that much without seeking the Lord. We should be personally seeking the Lord as Mary was, not satisfied until we find Him.

C. We need the meetings and the fellowship of spiritual companions to stir up our love and seeking for the Lord—2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 10:25

In the account in the Gospels, the Lord appeared first to the one who was seeking Him in a personal way, and appeared last to the disciples in the meetings. Many times in our experience, however, this order is reversed. Most of us initially are like the eleven disciples and not like Mary. Often our experience begins with being drawn by the Lord in the meetings, encouraged to have companions, and eventually acquire the taste for the Lord that causes us to become His seeking lovers. Our seeking increases through our fellowship with others. Then we will be full of the experience and discovery of the resurrected Christ. When we come together, it will be so easy to fellowship with others and to supply the living Christ in the meetings.

III. The Lord will appear to His loving seekers on the day of His second coming—Matt. 25:6; 2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:28; 22:16

We all have to admit that we want to be like Mary. We have this kind of heart. Too often, however, we are like the unbelieving disciples, preoccupied with our own worries and concerns. How could we become those who seek the Lord like Mary? It begins with our coming to be around those who have such a heart. That is why we need to come to the meetings. Then, we should seek out companions who have a heart like Mary's (2 Tim. 2:22). As we are with such brothers and sisters, we experience the Lord's shining and drawing (S.S. 1:4) as He reveals Himself to us more and more, especially through the ministry and fellowship of His Word. It is in this way that we will together become a corporate lover of the Lord, a Bride composed of many "Marys." If we have such a heart, we will not have a heart for anything else other than the Lord Himself. It is to such believers that the Lord will appear in His second coming as the bright morning star (Rev. 2:28). If we are enjoying the Lord in the meetings, with companions, and in our personal seeking of Him, our hearts will eventually cry out, "Where are you, Lord Jesus? We cannot tolerate Your absence! We are here waiting for You!"

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Present the facts of this lesson: the story of Mary at the tomb, the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and the story of the Lord's appearing to the disciples in the upper room on the day of resurrection. Impress the young people that in the Lord's resurrection, He became the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b). As such a Spirit, He is always with the disciples. Formerly, they knew the Lord as a man, but now they have to learn to know Him as an eternal, indwelling, invisible Person who will never leave them. Before, they knew the Lord Jesus physically, but now they must learn to know Him spiritually. We too

have to be impressed that the Lord never leaves us. Therefore, we need to learn how to know such an indwelling, invisible Person. How can we do this? The best way to know the Lord is to love Him. Mary had the Lord's appearing because of her love for Him. Her love forced the Lord to manifest Himself to her. We also need the Lord to manifest Himself to us at school, at home, with our brothers and sisters, and with our parents. One way to know the Lord better is by saying, "Lord Jesus, I love you," again and again, throughout the day. If we do this everyday, our heart will be softened and our spirit will be strengthened to know and love the wonderful, indwelling Lord Jesus.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Those not believing in resurrection "are of all men most miserable," having no future and no hope for the future (1 Cor. 15:19). They fill their days vainly pursuing temporary enjoyment. "If the dead are not raised, let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32b). If you are among such ones, you need to pray for the Lord's merciful appearing to you in resurrection, that He might rescue you from your drunken state of unbelief. Do not be foolish, but consider that what is sown is not made alive unless it dies. When a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, is it not then raised up to produce many grains? This is resurrection! The Lord Jesus likened Himself to such a grain of wheat who fell into the earth, that through death and resurrection He would not abide alone but produce us as the many grains with Him to be the fruit of His resurrection (John 12:24). The Lord died for you and now, in resurrection, He wants to inwardly appear to you. Now is the time! In the midst of an evil generation of unbelief, turn to the One whom death is not able to hold (Matt. 12:39–40; 16:4; Acts 2:24). Turn to the Lord Jesus, who delivered Himself to death, defeated death, and rose from the dead. Pray to Him right now as the One possessing an indestructible life, thank Him for dying for you, and ask Him to come into you as the ever living One who is both God and resurrection (Heb. 7:16; John 1:1; 11:25).

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Cultivating a vital, personal, and intimate relationship with the Lord (III.E.); Attending the meetings of the church (III.F.2.); Pursuing the Lord with spiritual companions (III.F.4.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of John*, Message 45.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of John*, Messages 45–46; *Daily Life for the Meeting Life*; John 20:24, footnote 2.

Lesson 15—The Ascension and Exaltation of Christ

OBJECTIVE: To see that the Slave-Savior was exalted in His ascension and, as a Man, was made both Lord and Christ.

SYNOPSIS: For Christ to be incarnated to become a man, He had to lay aside His form as God. Being found in fashion as a man, He further humbled Himself to serve as a slave, even to the point of dying a humiliating death on the cross for us. It was such a One that God exalted to the throne of the universe. In His ascension, Christ was made both Lord and Christ. Therefore, on the throne today sits a Man who rules for God and as God. There is a Man on the throne! Today, we may know Christ as the ascended Lord. He is the Ruler of the kings of the earth (Rev. 1:5), administrating the entire universe that we may be saved, matured, perfected, and brought into glory. Furthermore, we may experience this One on the throne, because He is also the Spirit in our spirit. When we live and walk by the Spirit, He reigns within us and we reign with Him over all our situations and environments.

BACKGROUND: Christ on the throne, ministering to us, praying for us, and supplying us timely grace and mercy, never ceases to inspire and encourage young people.

CHAPTER(S): Luke 24.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In addition to the lesson outline and notes, it is suggested that Hymns #82, #86, and #96 be enjoyed and mused over as part of the preparation for this lesson.

I. The Lord who humbled Himself to the uttermost through His incarnation, human living, and death, was exalted to the uttermost through His ascension—Matt. 23:12

A. Through His incarnation, Christ exchanged the form of God for the form of a slave—Phil. 2:8

Although in eternity Christ existed in the form of God, at the time of His incarnation He laid aside His divine form in order to take upon Himself the flesh of humanity. He left His throne of glory to trudge amongst men who slandered and abused Him. He experienced the misery of mankind's suffering condition, and was tempted in all respects like us as a man. According to Isaiah, Christ did not even possess a comely human form, but grew up as a root out of dry ground without any comeliness. Furthermore, through incarnation He became involved with everything related to the flesh through the fall. "He was the God of glory. But His incarnation brought Him down from His glory to be a man. He went down to the bottom to belong to the old man. He came in incarnation not to be a part of the new creation, but to be a part of the old creation of God....The flesh of this seed of David is an old man of the old creation involved with Satan, sin, and the world" (The Crystallization of the Epistle to the Romans, Message 1, p. 8). Christ agreed to do all this so that He could take our place on the cross. This was determined by the counsel of the Triune God, and Christ submitted Himself as a slave for our sakes to fulfill it. Thus, the eternal and unlimited Son of God willingly laid aside His divine power, glory, and splendor to labor among His fallen creatures as a little man from Nazareth for thirty-three-and-a-half years.

B. As the incarnated Slave-Savior, Christ humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto the death of a cross—Matt. 27:26–44; Phil. 2:8

“Being found in fashion as a man, Christ humbled Himself. First He emptied Himself by putting aside the form, the outward expression, of His deity and becoming in the likeness of men. Then He humbled Himself by becoming obedient even unto death. Christ was God with the expression of God. Although He was equal with God, He put aside this equality and emptied Himself by taking the likeness of men....Then, being found in the appearance of a man, He humbled Himself. This means that when He was a man, He did not insist on anything. Rather, He humbled Himself to the point of dying on the cross. This is Christ as our pattern....The death of the cross was the climax of Christ’s humiliation. To the Jews this was a curse (Deut. 21:22–23). To the Gentiles it was a death sentence imposed upon malefactors and slaves (Matt. 27:16–17, 20–23). Hence, it was a shameful thing (Heb. 12:2)” (Life-study of Philipians, Message 10, p. 88).

**C. Through resurrection and ascension, God exalted the humbled Christ to the uttermost, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name—
Luke 24:5–7, 50–52; Matt. 28:17–18; Phil. 2:9**

One characteristic of Christ’s human life was that He did not attempt to grasp anything for Himself. Instead, He emptied Himself and He simply received whatever the Father had for Him, whether it was a pleasant matter or a suffering matter. He lived a crucified life, a life under the cross, a life of self-denial. When Christ completed all that the Father had prepared for Him, He cried out, “It is finished!” He truly had lived every moment of His life in submission to the Father. He never lifted Himself up nor sought anything for Himself other than what the Father had prepared. Because of this, God exalted Christ and lifted Him up, making His Name the highest name in the universe. Christ accomplished a living that God can hold up to the universe as a pattern. Today, Christ occupies the highest place in the universe! He is far above every person, place, or matter.

**II. Today in the universe, a Man is seated upon God’s throne reigning over all things—
Rev. 3:21; Luke 22:69**

When Christ resurrected and ascended, He did so as a man! He did not shed His humanity. Rather, in His resurrection He uplifted His humanity into divinity. It is marvelous to consider that a man has been made Lord of all. This is a further reason why Jesus had to become a man. He not only had to be a man to die for our sins; He also had to be enthroned as a man to represent and express God to the universe, to fulfill God’s desire in creating man. Hymn #76, verses 3–4a, say, “Humbled for a season, / To receive a Name / From the lips of sinners / Unto whom He came, / Faithfully He bore it / Spotless to the last, / Brought it back victorious, / When from death He passed; / Bore it up triumphant, / With its human light, / Through all ranks of creatures, / To the central height”! Before His incarnation, Christ did not have a human name. Now, and forever, His name is Jesus! Our God has become a man and now sits upon the throne as a man!

A. In His ascension, Jesus has been made both Lord and Christ—Acts 2:36; 10:36

“As God, Christ was the Lord all the time (Luke 1:43; John 11:21; 20:28). But as man He was made the Lord in His ascension after He brought His humanity into God in His resurrection....In Acts 10:36 Peter speaks of Christ as the One who is ‘Lord of all.’ ‘All’ refers here to all men, all peoples....He is the Lord of all the different races and peoples on earth.

“Acts 2:36 tells us that Christ was made Lord. As we have seen, He was Lord before His ascension, but He was not officially inaugurated into this office....Christ in the Old Testament was Adonai [‘Lord’]. Then He became a man, a despised Nazarene. This very One was Lord even when He was on earth. But it was not until His ascension that He was inaugurated into His lordship. Christ in His ascension was inaugurated as Lord of all, not only of all men, but also of all things.

“As the Lord, Christ now possesses the whole universe, God’s chosen people, and all positive things, matters, and persons. Christ is the Lord not only of God’s chosen people, but also of the angels and of all those who will be in the millennium and in the new heaven and the new earth. Therefore, He is the Lord of the heavens, the earth, and everything and everyone He has redeemed. In ascension He is the Lord of all to possess all....Christ in His ascension is also the Christ for His heavenly ministry. Acts 2:36 reveals that in His ascension Christ was made not only the Lord but also the Christ, God’s anointed (Heb. 1:9), to carry out God’s commission. In ascension He was anointed, appointed by God for His ministry in the heavens. When He was on earth, He was anointed and appointed for His earthly ministry. But in His ascension He was made the Christ to carry out God’s commission through His heavenly ministry” (Conclusion of the New Testament, Message 31, pp. 339–340).

B. As the ascended Lord, Jesus is seated upon the throne of God to reign as the exalted God-man—Rev. 22:1

The One who sits upon the throne today is not merely God, nor merely man. He is a God-man, a man who has fulfilled God’s plan and who expresses God according to God’s purpose, a man in whom God dwells. This is Christ in ascension. Christ on the one hand sits at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3), yet on the other hand, He sits upon God’s throne (Rev. 3:21; 22:3). (There are not two thrones in the universe—see Rev. 22:3 and footnote 5.) Today on the throne in the universe you can find a God-man. He is touchable, yet He is the embodiment of the very unlimited and limitless God.

III. We may know Christ as the ascended Lord today—Heb. 12:2

In the universe today, Christ in ascension is like an immense magnet, drawing us to pursue after Him. He is continually interceding for us that we might come forward to Him (Heb. 12:2, footnote 2).

A. As the ascended Lord, Christ rules over our environment to arrange all things for our perfecting as kings—Eph. 4:8, 11–12

As the ascended Lord, Christ is seated upon the throne to administer all things in the universe for the accomplishment of God’s purpose. Practically, this means Christ operates all things in the universe for our growth as the many sons of God. For our growth He has arranged and is still arranging all events, persons, and things in our environment. If we allow Christ in ascension to rule and reign in our life, we will be perfected to exercise His authority as kings today in our situations and as kings in the future in the coming age.

1. In His ascension, Christ ruled over all things for our initial salvation—Acts 17:26–27; John 17:2; Rev. 1:5; Eph. 1:22

“Do not take your being saved as a small thing. It was accomplished because the Lord Jesus exercised His rulership....Your place of birth was not accidental, but

under His administration. You were born in the right country, the right town, the right family, and at the right time He brought you to Himself” (The Heavenly Ministry of Christ, Chapter 3, p. 20).

2. **In His ascension, Christ is still ruling over all things until we are fully brought into glory—Rom. 8:28–29; Heb. 2:10**

“[In] His ascension...He was inaugurated into His office to carry out God’s eternal purpose, that is, to build up the church and to bring His many brothers into glory” (Life-study of Hebrews, Message 4, p. 48). When we recognize that the Lord’s hand is in everything that happens to us for our glorification as the sons of God (Heb. 2:10; 2 Cor. 4:17), we will willingly receive whatever He arranges for us.

- B. **The ascended Christ in the heavens is also the Spirit by which we may live and walk while here on earth—2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 5:25**

“Apart from the life-giving Spirit making Christ’s ascension real to us, we may think that the ascended Christ has nothing to do with us in our daily living. But every aspect of Christ’s ascension should be part of our daily experience. If we would experience Christ’s ascension, we need to walk according to the Spirit” (Life-study of Mark, Message 51, pp. 440–441). If we do not know how to enjoy Christ as the Spirit, we may not gain the full benefit of all His arrangement in our environment for our growth. If, however, we walk by the Lord who is the Spirit today in our spirit, we will grow and be transformed to become the sons of God who may one day reign with Him as His co-kings.

- C. **When we live and walk by the heavenly Christ who is the Spirit, we reign as kings together with Him in the heavens—Mark 16:19–20; Rom. 5:17**

“[W]hen we are in the Spirit, we are in the heavens” (Life-study of Mark, Message 51, p. 441). Today Christ is in ascension, seated on God’s throne in the heavenlies. We need to realize that, as those who are in Christ, we are also on the throne with Him, having passed through His death and resurrection together with Him. Now we are in the Christ who is in ascension. To experience this fact, we only need to touch our spirit. The Christ in our spirit is the same Christ who is in the heavens. When we live by Him as the Spirit, we reign in life over all things and experience a heavenly life on earth (Rom. 5:17). This is to know Christ’s ascension today.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Remind the young people of the steps of the Lord’s process, from incarnation to ascension. Use Philippians 2:5–11 to show the steps the Lord went through in becoming a man. After the Lord’s death and resurrection, He met with His disciples for forty days and then ascended. Then read with the young people the verses that convey the Lord’s ascension in Acts 1:3–11. In the story of the Lord’s ascension, we have to impress the young people that the Lord Jesus ascended as a man. Today He is on the throne of God in heaven as a man. The ascension of Christ was His inauguration into the highest position in the universe—Lord of all. As such an ascended man He is now reigning over all things. Use the points in III.A.1. & III.A.2. to show the young people how we may know the ascended Lord today in our experience.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Before revealing the exalted Christ to whom every knee should bow and tongue confess as Lord in Philippians 2:9–11, impress the young people with the marvelous, humble, and obedient Christ revealed in verses 5–8. To display the Lord’s humility and obedience in coming as a slave for our salvation, walk through some of the following points

regarding the Lord's life: As the God of the universe and King of kings, the Lord was born, not in a royal palace, but in a lowly manger in a little town (Matt. 2:6), and grew up in a despised region (John 1:46; 7:41, 52). He grew up in full obedience to His parents (Luke 2:51). Before starting His ministry He was baptized, showing that even He, with His perfect humanity, realized that as a man in the flesh He was good for nothing but death and burial (Matt. 3:13–15). When being tempted by the devil to take a stand as the Son of God, He repeatedly chose rather to stand as the Son of Man (Matt. 4:3–11). Even when taken to the wing of the temple and challenged by the devil to cast Himself down, He refused to make a miraculous show of how the angels would bear Him up in their hands (Matt. 4:5–7). Toward the end of His ministry, when the people sought to exalt Him to be their king, He entered Jerusalem on a donkey's colt and told them that His kingdom was not of this world. Rather than live and be exalted by them as a great king, He would die and enter the ground as a small grain of wheat (John 12:12–15, 19b–20, 23–24). Shortly afterwards, while reclining at supper with His disciples whom He loved to the uttermost, realizing that the time had come for Him to depart out of the world, He rose up, laid aside His outer garments, girded Himself with a towel, filled a basin with water, and washed their feet (John 13:1–5 and footnotes 1 & 3 of verse 4). Finally, when a great crowd came to unjustly arrest Him, instead of calling twelve legions of angels to His defense, He told Peter to return his sword to its sheath (Matt. 26:52–53) and He became "obedient even unto death, and *that* the death of a cross" (Phil. 2:8). After presenting a view of such a precious Christ, present Him as the God-exalted One before whom every knee should bow, and whom every tongue should openly confess as Lord!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing, loving, and consecrating ourselves to the Lord based on His universal operation—knowing God's sovereignty in the world situation and in His personal care for us (III.C.1.); Living a life under Christ's kingship to reign in life over all things (III.H.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Luke*, Message 76.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Mark*, Message 51; *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, Messages 31, 77; *Life-study of Luke*, Messages 76–79; *Life-study of Philippians*, Message 10, pp. 87–88; Message 11; *Life-study of Acts*, Message 10; *Life-study of Hebrews*, Message 50, pp. 565–566; *The Heavenly Ministry of Christ*, Chapter 3; *The Crystallization of the Epistle to the Romans*, Message 1, p. 8.

Lesson 16—Christ the Heavenly King

OBJECTIVE: To see that Christ as the heavenly King in ascension is ruling and reigning over all the earth and is with us all the days until the consummation of the age.

SYNOPSIS: After training His disciples after His resurrection for forty days, the Lord ascended to the heavens. In His ascension, Christ is anointed to carry out God's economy. He was made King to rule over all persons, things, and matters outwardly, and He was made Priest to intercede for His believers that they might gain Him inwardly. We are those who have been commissioned by our heavenly King for His propagation in preparation for His return. The Lord charged His disciples to go forth to announce the gospel and disciple the nations. To work with the Lord today we must know both the essential aspect of the Spirit and the economical aspect of the Spirit. To work with the ascended Lord, we must also know how to pray and follow the Lord's leading. As those who are His disciples, we should realize that the Lord is with us, even until the consummation of the age.

BACKGROUND: Every young person is easily cheated by the glitter of the world. It is so very attractive to the eyes. Therefore, our young people must receive a revelation concerning the real situation of the world, the destiny of the Satan-filled world, and the real ruler of the world. A vision such as this will stick in their minds even if they should wander away for a period of time. It can both inspire them and keep them.

CHAPTER(S): Matthew 28.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In previous lessons we have seen how God is ruling over the world situation for His move on the earth. After Christ resurrected and ascended, however, God handed everything over to His Son and anointed Him to rule over all events, matters, and persons for the carrying out of His economy. Since Christ's ascension, God rules the universe through Christ to head up all things in Christ.

I. After training His disciples after His resurrection for forty days, the Lord ascended to the heavens—Luke 24:49–52; Acts 1:1–10

Briefly present the facts concerning the Lord's ascension. After His resurrection, the Lord stayed with His disciples for forty days to teach them concerning the kingdom of God and to train them how to live in His invisible presence. Forty days after His resurrection, He led the disciples out to the Mount of Olives near Bethany, outside of Jerusalem. There He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He was visibly carried up into heaven and parted from His disciples, and a cloud took Him away from their sight.

II. Christ in ascension is anointed to carry out God's economy—Rev. 5:1–14

Standing upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples saw the Lord ascend from the perspective of the earth. John was given to see the other end of the Lord's ascent, the scene of the Lord's arrival in the third heavens. On the one hand, John saw Christ as the Lamb of God who had just been slain. On the other hand, John heard it declared that this Lamb was the Lion of the tribe of Judah who had overcome to carry out God's economy! Christ stepped forward at the time of His ascension to take on a new role in God's economy. He had just accomplished His earthly ministry. Now, in resurrection and ascension, He was inaugurated into His heavenly ministry. On earth He had been anointed to carry out God's economy through His earthly ministry. Now, in the heavens, He was anointed to carry out God's economy through His heavenly ministry.

**A. Christ was made King to rule over all persons, things, and matters outwardly—
Rev. 1:5; 19:16; Rom. 8:28**

This point should repeatedly be impressed upon the young people. This age teaches people that most events are accidental, random, or coincidental. We need to be reminded again and again that the Lord is sovereignly ruling over all events, matters, and persons for the carrying out of His economy. His hand is in every event in nature and in human society from the international level down to the personal level. Nothing happens by accident. There is no such thing as mere coincidence. The Lord today is working in a very detailed way to operate all things together for the execution of God's economy in order to produce the church as His glorious counterpart. Whatever happens among the nations on the earth has some bearing on the church, for in His ascension Christ is working out the world situation for the spread of the gospel and the building up of His Body. People in the world may not recognize God's hand at work, but we should not be so ignorant. Christ in ascension is Lord of all, the Ruler of the kings of the earth, and even the One in whom all things subsist. He is all these things for the church as the focus of God's economy.

B. Christ was made Priest to intercede for His believers that they might gain Him inwardly—Heb. 7:25–26; 8:1

In ascension Christ is not only a King ruling over all events, persons, and matters; He is also a Priest. As our great High Priest, Christ stands before God to intercede for us that we might continually come forward to Him. In ascension He bears us all before God (typified by the precious stones upon the high priest's breastplate) and prays for all the members of His Body individually day by day. What a wonderful High Priest we have! He not only is arranging all things for us, He is also praying for us that we might come forward to Him and fully participate in and benefit from all the things He has arranged so that we might grow unto full sonship.

III. We are those who have been commissioned by our heavenly King for His propagation in preparation for His return—Luke 24:46–50; Acts 1:8

In the previous lesson we saw how we are being perfected to reign with Christ and that we can reign in life today by living Him as the Spirit in our spirit. In this lesson we have seen how Christ is operating all things and interceding for us that we might be brought into glory as God's sons. This is a wonderful realization, but there is still the need for a further revelation. Not only are we Christ's brothers, we are also Christ's disciples, His co-workers. His operation in His ascension is not merely for us as individuals; His operation in ascension is for His move over the whole earth, until His entire Body is built up and His overcomers are manifested for His return. We ourselves need to grow, yet we also need to know how to cooperate and co-labor with the ascended Christ for the propagation of this life into others.

A. The Lord charged His disciples to go forth to announce the gospel and disciple all the nations—Matt. 28:18–19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46–48

As Christ's disciples, we have been commissioned with the gospel of the kingdom (Matt. 24:14). We must begin with our "Jerusalem" (Acts 1:8), that is, where we are, and preach the gospel to those around us, near and far. When we preach the gospel, we also disciple the nations (Matt. 28:19), making them disciples of Christ just as we are.

B. To work with the Lord today we must know both the essential and economical aspects of the Spirit—Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Mark 16:20

After the Lord entered into His ascension, it was given to Him to pour out the Spirit upon His Body. At the time He charged His disciples to wait for the outpouring of the Spirit, He had not yet ascended. Now, today, Christ is in ascension, and the Spirit has been poured out. Not only is the Spirit within us, He is also upon us for power and work. If we would be those who know how to stand with Christ in ascension, we must realize that we have the Spirit both within us and upon us. When we do something in the name of the Lord for the Lord, we have the authority of the economical Spirit, which subdues the enemy, and the power of the Spirit to carry out whatever it is that the Lord desires us to do. We are already fully equipped to work for the Lord. All we need to do is use what the Lord has already equipped us with.

C. To work with the ascended Lord, we must know how to pray and follow the Lord's leading—Rom. 8:26–27; Acts 16:6–7

When Paul was carrying out the Lord's commission, many times He was governed by the Spirit in His journeying. Sometimes the Lord would open a door for the gospel, and Paul would boldly go through that opening. Sometimes the Lord would forbid Paul from going somewhere. In our walking on this earth, we should be very sensitive to the Spirit. Furthermore, we must learn how to pray in a way that touches the Lord on the throne. Instead of just praying for ourselves and those things that concern us, we can pray also for the things which are on the Lord's heart. If we open to the Lord to allow Him to pray through us for His move, our prayer will allow Him a way to carry out His desire on the earth. How great a prayer is this! Most Christians are preoccupied with their own needs. Who will learn how to pray in a way that moves God on the throne to carry out what is on His heart?

D. As those who are His disciples, we should realize that the Lord is with us, even until the consummation of the age—Matt. 28:20

This lesson might best be presented by stressing this final point, while treating the previous two points as somewhat optional. The Lord today is in ascension working out everything. He has triumphed and now reigns as King over all things. As such a One, He is with us. As the Spirit He is continually with us wherever we go. We should be so joyful in the realization of our blessing in Christ. Everything has been accomplished. The world is over. Satan is over. Our failures are over. Why? Because of what Christ has accomplished through His death and resurrection and is now carrying out in His ascension. Nothing can separate us from Christ, nor can anything frustrate Him. See Him now—He is crowned forevermore as the unique Ruler in the universe. As such a One, He is ruling over all men, things, and events for our complete salvation. We are those today who recognize Him as our King, and who labor together with Him for the coming of His kingdom on earth. What a Christ! We are blessed to be joined to such a One.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Read both Revelation 5:1–14 and Acts 1:1–10 together with the young people to see the ascension of Christ from two sides. Relate to them what the disciples saw when the Lord ascended as a man. Also relate the scene in heaven when the Lord ascended. Show how John saw Him both as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and as a Lamb. Develop these two aspects of the Lord as a man in the glory—the Lion and the Lamb. We need

to see how the Lord through His death on the cross and His resurrection was a Lion to defeat Satan and all of his rebellious angels and demons. Then we also need to see that as a man, He was the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Today as a man on God's throne, the Lord Jesus is still a Lion to Satan and a Lamb for us. All day long as we face the evil world with all of its temptations, and Satan with all of his attacks, we have the Lion, who is on the throne in our spirit to overcome every negative situation. Again, we need to be impressed that the Lord as a man on God's throne is still the Lamb of God to take away our sin. He is still the loving, forgiving, and available One in our spirit. Conclude with the young people having some personal prayer of confession. Help them to personally thank the Lord for His defeating Satan and the world as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and for His forgiveness and cleansing of sins as the Lamb of God.

GOSPEL APPLICATION: Without salvation, fallen men are full of sin and are even children of the devil (John 8:44a). Their eyes have been blinded by their evil father who, as a liar and a murderer from the beginning, has been working to continually deceive them, that they all would continue to walk in darkness until they reach their final destination, the lake of fire (John 12:40; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; John 8:44b; Matt. 25:41). Yet God's desire is that all those who are walking in darkness would see a great light, repent, believe into Him, and be saved (Isa. 9:2; John 8:12). While Satan works to blind men's eyes, the Lord has been working to open them. Christ, as the ascended King, has been working in your every environment, ruling over all persons, things, and matters in an outward way to bring you here to this meeting, that your eyes would be opened and that you would be saved. He is not only the King, who has been and still is arranging everything for your salvation, He is also a High Priest who is able to save to the uttermost those who come forward to Him (Heb. 7:25a). As such a High Priest, He lives always to intercede on your behalf, that you would go on after your salvation to continue to gain Him inwardly, day by day, throughout your entire life (Heb. 7:25b). Open and receive Him as your wonderful King-Savior and faithful High Priest!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Living a fruitful gospel life (III.G.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 72.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of Matthew*, Message 72; *The Conclusion of the New Testament*, Message 31, p. 340; *Life-study of Luke*, Message 55.

Lesson 17—God Has Reached Man!

OBJECTIVE: To see that through His process, Christ accomplished God's purpose to reach man.

SYNOPSIS: Christ today in resurrection is the reaching of the processed Triune God into man as the Spirit. Not only has Christ become the Spirit in resurrection; in ascension He poured out this Spirit upon all flesh so that all men might receive Him. What God had purposed and desired in eternity has been fulfilled at the completion of Christ's process. Finally, God has reached man! Through His death, Christ cleared away every obstacle, and in His resurrection, He became pneumatic so that as the processed Triune God-man He might enter into all who would open to Him. Therefore, God now flows within man. His process was the channel by which God reached and entered into man. Today, God is still reaching us. Although He has reached us and has entered into our spirit, He still needs to reach every part of our being, from center to circumference. This He will do, yet we can hasten His spreading by our cooperation. Eventually the result of all of God's reaching will be the New Jerusalem, the issue of God mingling Himself with us.

BACKGROUND: The young people's role in this purpose is simply to receive. They need to be reminded that our job is to enjoy the Lord who has been processed to be our life and life supply. Though the truth may be familiar to us, Brother Lee spoke it to us countless times because we needed to hear it countless times. So do our young people.

CHAPTER(S): John 20.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

In this lesson, the serving one must do everything possible to impress the young people with God's intense desire to reach and enter man, and how Christ through His process accomplished this, having cleared away every obstacle. God now is in man! This is the fulfillment of the desire of the ages. Once God is in man, He is satisfied, and everything will be all right.

**I. In eternity, God's longing was to get into man and become everything to him—
Jer. 2:13; Gen. 2:9, 16; Eph. 1:5, 9**

God's desire has always been to be one with man. Ephesians 1 speaks of "the good pleasure of His will" and "His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself" (Eph. 1:5, 9). God's good pleasure is to dispense Himself into man. It was for this that God foreknew us in eternity past, chose us in Christ Jesus, "predestinating us unto sonship" (Eph. 1:4-5). In eternity past God desired and planned to dispense Himself into you!

II. In time, God began to work out His desire—Gen. 1:1; Eph. 3:9-11; Rev. 4:11

God did not stop with having a good pleasure. To obtain His good pleasure and carry out His heart's desire, He made a purpose in Himself and a plan, an economy, to carry out this purpose. In eternity past, God had already worked out a plan by which He would become embodied in humanity in order to die for man's sins and to become the all-inclusive Spirit to enter into man. The first step for God to accomplish His purpose was His creation of the heavens, the earth, and man (Zech. 12:1). The entire universe and all things in it, including man, were created for God's purpose and His pleasure (Rev. 4:11; Rom. 11:36). After creating man in His image and after His likeness (Gen. 1:26), God placed him in front of the tree of life in the garden of Eden, hoping that man would take Him in as life (Gen. 2:9, 16). Man, however, did not choose God, but was tempted by the devil to reject God and eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, taking in the sinful nature of Satan. By this, man became separated from God.

- A. God created man in His own image with a spirit to receive and contain Him—
Gen. 1:26; Zech. 12:1
- B. God is typified by the tree of life placed in the garden for man to choose Him—
Gen. 2:9
- C. Man, however, did not choose God, but instead became separated from God—
Gen. 3:24; Rom. 3:11–12

III. God Himself came in to accomplish His eternal desire—Matt. 1:23; Col. 2:9

For this point it would be good to give a demonstration of how God was separated from man. This could be done by interposing many things between you (the sharing one) and a young person and then pushing the obstacles aside, leaping over them, etc., in your desire to reach that person. This must be made so impressive. How God desires to reach and enter into man! This is what drives and motivates God. He loves us and desires to be one with us, and will not be at rest until He reaches us. (His reaching us is also His rescuing us, for without Him, we are vanity, our lives are empty and meaningless, and we would be desolate for eternity.)

- A. He became a man that through death He might take away man's sin and clear away every obstacle which separated man from God—Matt. 4:16; John 1:29; Heb. 9:26

Christ took two major steps in order to reach man. These two major steps are two "becomings." The first step was for Him to become flesh, to become a man (John 1:1, 14).

- B. He resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit so that He might enter into man—1 Cor. 15:45; John 7:38–39

Christ's second major step was also His second "becoming." In resurrection, Christ, the last Adam, became "a life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45). By these two major steps God has reached man. This life-giving Spirit is "the Spirit" (John 7:39), the all-inclusive Spirit (Phil. 1:19 and footnotes 3–4). This life-giving Spirit is the Triune God reaching man. In the Gospel of John, the Lord promised to give Himself as the bread of life to the believers by the Spirit (John 6:35, 63), to give Himself as living water to the believers (John 4:10; 7:38), and to come back to the believers as "another Comforter" (John 14:16, 18; 15:26). All these promises were concerning the Triune God reaching man. These were all fulfilled on the evening of Christ's resurrection, when He came and breathed Himself as the life-giving Spirit into His disciples (John 20:22).

- C. He ascended that He might pour Himself out as the Spirit upon all flesh so that whoever believes might open up and receive Him—Acts 2:15–17a, 21, 33; 1 Cor. 12:13 (cf. Acts 1:5)

In order to complete His reaching of the disciples as the Spirit, Christ ascended to the heavens and poured Himself out as the economical Spirit upon all flesh so that the gospel might be preached and men might receive Him as the life-giving Spirit. (This matter was covered in Lesson 16 and will be covered again in Unit 10, Lesson 3.)

IV. In resurrection, Christ breathed Himself into His believers, and in ascension, He poured out His Spirit upon all flesh—John 20:22; Acts 2:33

When Christ in resurrection breathed into His disciples, He said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit." This seemingly small, momentary event was a momentous occurrence of great

significance in the history of God's move in the universe. This Spirit was the very processed Triune God reaching man (John 7:39). At that moment, God entered into some of His believers. Up to that time, He had been confined to one Man (Jesus). Now God had at last reached and entered into some vessels from whom He had been separated because of the fall. These disciples were the first to experience God in this way! This was possible because Christ had cleared away the negative problems through His death and had been processed through death and resurrection to become the life-giving Spirit. As the consummated, processed, all-inclusive Spirit, God today is in a form that can be received by man. Furthermore, when it was given to Christ in ascension to pour Himself out as the Spirit, it was not only for power so that we might work for Him; it was so that men could receive Him! The baptism of the Spirit is for us to drink the Spirit. Hallelujah! What an accomplishment! Christ's accomplishment through His incarnation, human living, death, resurrection, and ascension is the unique accomplishment in the universe, for it fulfilled the eternal purpose of God.

V. Today God is the God who has reached us and who is still reaching us—Gal. 3:2-3, 5

If you have time and are burdened, you may use the following points to apply this lesson to the young people. Through His process, God has reached man. However, He does not want to stop with merely getting into our spirit. From there He wants to spread into every part of our being (Eph. 3:17). He not only wants to reach us by saving us once and for all; He wants to become our moment-by-moment supply, to become everything to us in our daily living. Oh, praise the Triune God for His reaching of man! "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14).

- A. God has reached us and now resides within us, that is, within our spirit—Rom. 8:9-11; 2 Tim. 4:22**
- B. God today is completing His reaching by spreading into all of our inward parts—2 Cor. 3:3, 18; 5:20**
- C. God's flowing Himself into man and in man produces the New Jerusalem as the ultimate issue of God's reaching man—John 4:14; Rev. 21:2; 22:1-2**

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: In this lesson we want to impress the young people with two major points. First, that the Triune God was processed and consummated. Review with them the steps of His process: incarnation, human living, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. When the steps of the process are completed, that means He is consummated. The Triune God's process was consummated in the Lord becoming the Spirit. The Spirit today is the consummation of the processed Triune God. As such a Spirit, He was breathed into His disciples on the day of resurrection (John 20:22), and poured out on the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:33). Second, show the young people that there is another side to this matter of God reaching man. Man was created in God's image and likeness as a three-part vessel, a "God-bottle." But instead of being filled with God, man took into himself the life and nature of Satan. This caused man to be fallen to the uttermost. Man's condition was at the bottom—rebellious, sinful, and dead. How can God reach this ruined man? Through God's process He removed all the obstacles between Himself and man and became the Spirit to be received by man. As we open to the Lord, by turning our heart to Him and exercising our spirit, we receive Him as the Spirit into our spirit. However, He doesn't stop there; He desires to overflow from our spirit into our soul, and eventually even into our body (Rom. 8:11). This wonderful process can be illustrated by the use of three small Tupperware bowls that fit inside each other. Take a pitcher full of water to illustrate the Spirit and pour it into the smallest bowl sitting within the

other two bowls. As this bowl fills and overflows it will fill the second bowl and then the third. Such a simple illustration can be very effective to impress the young people with God's desire to flow out from our spirit to gain our whole being. Conclude by practicing with the young people how to turn their heart to the Lord. Spend some time calling on the Lord together to show how simple it is to receive the Spirit as the ultimate reaching of the Triune God. Go around the room and have the young people call on the Lord several times, each time stronger than the time before. "Oh Lord, Thou art the Spirit! How dear and near to me! How I admire Thy marvelous availability" (*Hymns*, #539, chorus)!

GOSPEL APPLICATION: The content of this lesson is the gospel. Roman numeral one lays a good foundation, showing us God's longing in eternity past to get into man to become his everything. Because of such a longing, such a good pleasure, we can see in Roman numeral two that God began to take some definite steps to gain His heart's desire to reach and be one with man. Here however, we also see that man partook of the wrong tree and therefore became fallen, one with God's enemy, and separated from God. Driven by His desire to reach man, God Himself became a man, passed through death (to take away man's sins and clear away every obstacle which separated man from God), resurrected to become the life-giving Spirit, and ascended that He might pour Himself out as the Spirit upon all flesh, that man may believe into Him and receive all that He is as their salvation. This can be seen in Roman numeral three. Now, just as revealed in Roman numeral four, the resurrected and ascended Christ, who is the life-giving Spirit, can be received by us today if we but open our mouth to breathe Him in by calling on His name (John 20:22; Isa. 12:3-4; Rom. 10:13). Call on Him and God will reach you!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Understanding the basic truths regarding Christ and His person and work in many aspects for our full salvation (II.C.); Knowing that God has gone through a process to carry out His economy (II.A.3.).

BACKGROUND READING: *The Divine Economy*, Chapters 8-9.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of John*, Messages 44, 46; *The Divine Economy*, Chapters 1, 3, 8-9, 15.

Lesson 18—Living and Moving with the Believers

OBJECTIVE: To see that the resurrected Christ is living and moving with His believers.

SYNOPSIS: John 20–21 is a brief portrait of “all the matters related to the Christian life during the church age: seeking the Lord with love toward Him; seeing the Lord in resurrection; receiving the revelation of the issue of the Lord’s resurrection—that His Father is our Father and we are His brothers—by experiencing His manifestation; meeting with the believers to enjoy the Lord’s presence; having the Lord breathe the Holy Spirit into us, and being sent by the Lord with His commission and authority to represent Him; learning how to live by faith in the Lord and trust in Him for our daily living; loving the Lord, the natural strength having been dealt with; shepherding the flock for the building of the church; practicing the Lord’s invisible presence, with some following the Lord even unto death to glorify God, not by self-will but according to His leading, and some living until He comes back” (John 21:23, footnote 1). In John 20–21 we see how to apply all the matters related to Christ’s resurrection to our Christian life.

BACKGROUND: Often it is helpful to point out to the young people the weaknesses and imperfections of biblical characters. This is not to give ground to sin or the world, but rather to illustrate God’s loving care and His unbounded forgiveness through which He restores us to receive Him, enjoy Him, and follow Him. In John 21, although we see Peter’s failure, we also see the Lord’s recovery of Peter, and we know how from here Peter was greatly used by the Lord. Since the young people’s lives are often up and down, this view can strengthen them to rise up once again and follow the Lord.

CHAPTER(S): John 20–21.

OUTLINE WITH FACTS TO TEACH:

This lesson is a summary of the experience of Christ in resurrection as revealed in John 20–21. It is not a doctrinal lesson, but an application of the Gospel of John to us, the believers.

- I. **The last two chapters of the Gospel of John cover the time from the Lord’s resurrection to the time of His coming back, which is the entire span of the church age**

“The span of what is covered in the last two chapters of this Gospel is broad. It begins with the discovery of the Lord’s resurrection and ends with His coming back. Between these two events are all the matters related to the Christian life during the church age: seeking the Lord with love toward Him; seeing the Lord in resurrection; receiving the revelation of the issue of the Lord’s resurrection—that His Father is our Father and we are His brothers—by experiencing His manifestation; meeting with the believers to enjoy the Lord’s presence; having the Lord breathe the Holy Spirit into us, and being sent by the Lord with His commission and authority to represent Him; learning how to live by faith in the Lord and trust in Him for our daily living; loving the Lord, the natural strength having been dealt with; shepherding the flock for the building of the church; practicing the Lord’s invisible presence, with some following the Lord even unto death to glorify God, not by self-will but according to His leading, and some living until He comes back” (John 21:23, footnote 1).

II. After Peter's failure, the Lord shepherded Peter with His unbounded forgiveness and His loving care—John 21

Peter was the first apostle in the early church but, like us, he too was human and had some failures. Perhaps Peter's greatest failure was his denying the Lord three times after boasting that he was ready to die for the Lord. Surely after this failure Peter was extremely discouraged, so much that He even gave up following the Lord and went back to his old occupation of fishing. However, the Lord came in to recover and restore Peter and the other disciples, shepherding them with His unbounded forgiveness and loving care. Tell the story of Peter's backsliding (with the other disciples) in John 21 and the wonderful way the Lord shepherded and recovered them. When we fail in our Christian walk, we too may be discouraged. However, as we open to the Lord, He shepherds us and restores us to receive Him, enjoy Him, and follow Him.

A. The Lord recovered Peter to follow Him and trust in Him for his living—John 21:1–14

Even though we may have seen the vision of many high truths, we also have very human and practical needs and problems. Peter was a witness to the Lord's ministry, death, and resurrection. However, he was concerned for his living and his faith faltered. Hence, he decided to go back to fishing as an occupation. In John 21, the Lord trained Peter and the disciples to live by faith in Him.

B. The Lord restored Peter's love for Him through His intimate shepherding—John 21:15–19

Peter had boasted that he loved the Lord more than anyone else and that he was ready to die for the Lord. Immediately after this boast, he denied the Lord three times. What a miserable failure this was! Perhaps after failing the Lord in this way, Peter felt he could not love the Lord. Thus, the Lord came to shepherd Peter and restore his love for Him (John 21:15–17). Furthermore, the Lord helped Peter to realize that he would indeed die for the Lord, although not in his time, nor by his natural strength (John 21:18–19).

C. The Lord charged Peter to feed His lambs and shepherd His sheep—John 21:15–17

In shepherding him, the Lord restored Peter to his ministry and charged him to feed the Lord's lambs and sheep and to shepherd His sheep.

III. We in the churches today continue to live as the Lord's disciples as portrayed in the last two chapters of John

A. We are those who seek the Lord in resurrection—John 20:1–13

Mary the Magdalene was the first to discover the Lord in resurrection because she sought the Lord with abandon, not caring for reasoning or outward circumstance. She could not tolerate being absent from the Lord. The church life is first and foremost a life of seeking out our living Lord. The church life can never become something dull or dry as long as there are some who are resolutely seeking the Lord like this. Eventually the church becomes the corporate bride of Christ, so our seeking for Him must increase. We should never be satisfied with anything less than the Lord Himself.

B. We have received the revelation from Him that His God is our God and His Father is our Father—John 20:17

The Lord told Mary to go and tell His disciples that He had to ascend to His God and their God, to His Father and their Father. This meant that through the Lord's resurrection, the believers had been produced as His many brothers! In the church we realize that we are the many sons of God, possessing God's life and nature. As such, we are also Christ's brothers. The church is composed only of such ones.

C. We enjoy the presence of the resurrected Lord in our fellowship and in our gatherings—John 20:19

As the disciples were gathered together, the Lord appeared to them and ate with them. Thomas missed this meeting, but the Lord appeared again at the same time the following week, and Thomas found the Lord in that meeting. We find the Lord in the meetings of the church. The first meeting took place on the day of the Lord's resurrection. The Lord has continued to meet with those who gather in His name since that day, and will continue to do so until He returns. In fact, one of the functions of the Lord's table is our declaration of the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor. 11:26). Our declaration in the church is that the Lord's death has accomplished so much, and that the church is enjoying the presence of the resurrected Lord.

D. We receive the resurrected Lord as the Spirit by breathing Him in—John 20:22

On the day of His resurrection, the Lord breathed into the disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. The church began from that time. We became saved and a part of the church when we first breathed the Lord in, and we continue to receive the Lord for our growth and the church's progress by our continued breathing. Today we continue to breathe the Lord in as the Spirit. This is necessary for the church life.

E. We are those whom the Lord has commissioned to spread the gospel over the entire earth—John 20:21–23

As the resurrected One, the Lord charged His disciples to go forth and to preach the gospel. Today we still bear this commission of the Lord. This is our responsibility and our privilege as those who follow the resurrected Lord in the churches. Our gospel is not the low gospel of merely being saved from sin and judgment for a happy eternity; our gospel is the gospel of the kingdom by which men enter into God's economy and go on from stage to stage until the Body of Christ is built up and each member is full-grown in the divine life.

F. We are learning to live by faith in the Lord and to trust Him for our daily living—John 21:3–9

The disciples somewhat momentarily gave up their trust in the Lord's ability to provide for them by going fishing in Galilee. They had been commissioned by the Lord, yet they took a "detour" or a "holiday" from waiting on the Lord for His service. The Lord, however, demonstrated to them His ability to meet whatever need they might have. He could even direct a large school of fish right into their nets. (He was also the One who prevented the fish from going into their nets to make this point clear to them, which was another miracle.) He had breakfast waiting for them when they arrived at the shore. He did not even need any of the fish they had caught. As the Lord's disciples in the church life today, we are learning to trust the Lord for all our daily needs so that our hearts might be free of anxiety and so that we might testify to others how real our Lord is even in meeting the necessities of our daily lives.

G. We love the Lord more than any other person or thing—John 21:15–17

When the Lord asked Peter whether he loved the Lord more than anything else, Peter answered that he loved the Lord, but he used a different word for love, one which indicated personal affection and fondness. The word the Lord used, however, was higher and more absolute. (The reason Peter was grieved the third time the Lord asked Peter whether he loved Him or not, was because the third time the Lord used Peter's word, indicating He even questioned Peter's own type of professed love.) As the Lord has unveiled Himself to us, we have come to love the Lord as our true first love. This kind of love is according to the Lord's value, and not according to our ability to manufacture a love for the Lord. God has poured out His love in our hearts (Rom. 5:5), and the Lord as love is indwelling us. Moreover, as the lovable One He is drawing us to pursue Him. Praise the Lord! In the church life we are all His lovers, single-hearted virgins who have been espoused to Him.

H. We receive the Lord's dealing so that we might shepherd others for the building up of the church as the Lord's flock—John 21:15–17

Peter was chosen by the Lord to take the lead among the other disciples, yet Peter failed more than all of them. The Lord did not give up on Peter; instead He dealt with him with a view to perfecting him for what his function would be. Today we are all being dealt with by the Lord and perfected by Him so that we might be useful in His hands as He has willed. Therefore we should not seek to flee from the Lord's dealing. Instead, we should realize that the Lord is working something in us so that we might play our part in His great plan. This is beyond what we see now, but if we are willing to allow the Lord to deal with us, one day we will realize the goal for which the Lord is working with us.

I. We practice the Lord's invisible presence—John 21:1; 20:19

The disciples were trained by the Lord for forty days after His resurrection to know His invisible presence. Not only do we need to enjoy the Lord as our life-supply by breathing Him in as the Spirit, we also must seek to know His invisible presence with us. It is by exercising in this way that we are able to follow Him and to move by Him. It is also by knowing Him in this way that we are able to face so much discouragement, etc. He is always with us, regardless what the outward situation might be. How heartening!

J. We will follow the Lord until we die or until He returns—John 21:18–23

In John 21:18, the Lord told Peter of what sort of death he would die, and He told Peter not to be concerned whether or not another disciple would live until He returned (John 21:22). This is all up to the Lord. We are simply those who follow the Lord. Whether we rise to meet Him after following Him unto death, or whether we meet the Lord in the air as those who are alive at His coming, the principle is the same. In the church life, we have the opportunity to be His overcomers. To be such ones, we only need to have a heart to follow the Lord. If we are such ones, life works for us, and even death works for us. We are prepared to follow Him into any situation, whether it seems outwardly to be a situation of death or not. To us, He alone is life. To have Him is to have life, and to have it abundantly. This is our testimony as those living for Him in the church age.

JUNIOR HIGH APPLICATION: Read John 21 together with the young people, and point out how the disciples were backsliding by going back to their former occupation of fishing. Then show them the Lord's care and heart to recover the disciples by performing several miracles to convince the disciples that they could depend on Him for everything. After the disciples had

fished all night without catching any fish, the Lord appeared to them and told them to cast their nets on the right side of the boat. Immediately after doing so, their nets were filled with so many fish, they were no longer able to haul them in. When they finally got onto the land, the Lord, without having gone fishing, was there on the shore with a fire of coals, already preparing fish and bread for the disciples to have breakfast. Afterwards, the Lord began to care for Peter in a special way by asking him three times if he loved Him. This helped to expose Peter, who had previously denied the Lord three times, and to restore and uplift his love for the Lord. The Lord also charged Peter to feed the Lord's lambs and shepherd and feed His sheep. This meant that the Lord wanted Peter to take care of those in the church, the Lord's "flock." Through this story in John 21, we can see the Lord's loving care for us, to recover us from all our failures and lead us to love Him more than anything else. We also see how we can live a proper, healthy, and happy life in the church until the Lord returns by loving Him with our first love, that is, our best love, and by taking care of the younger ones in the Lord, while trusting Him and thanking Him all the time for our livelihood. Conclude by having the young people declare "Lord Jesus, I love You more than anything else!"

GOSPEL APPLICATION: After the Lord's resurrection and ascension, He told Mary to go and tell His disciples that He had to ascend to His Father and their Father, and His God and their God (John 20:17). This meant that through the Lord's resurrection, the believers had been produced as His many brothers, the many sons of God, possessing God's life and nature (1 Pet. 1:3; Rom. 8:29; Rom. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:4). Then, on the night of His resurrection, the Lord sweetly met with His disciples, where He told them, "Peace be to you," and then breathed Himself into them as the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-22). To believe into the Lord is to receive the very life and nature of God, thereby becoming a genuine child of God (John 1:12). As a believer, your portion will no longer be among those who, by default, have Satan as their father. Their portion in this age is to remain in darkness and under the authority of darkness, and their inheritance in the next age is the lake of fire, which God has prepared for the devil and his angels (John 8:44; 1 John 3:10; Matt. 4:16; Eph. 5:8; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:15). This is not God's heart for you! If you repent today, He will wipe away your sins and tell you, as He did His disciples, "Peace be to you" (Acts 3:19; Eph. 2:17). Then simply by opening to receive Him by calling on His name, you will be born of the Spirit, having God as your Father (Rom. 10:13; John 3:6; Gal. 4:6). Instead of darkness, you will be qualified for a share of the allotted portion of the saints in the light (Col. 1:12). You will be delivered out of the authority of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of the Son of His love, now and for eternity (Col. 1:13). Receive Christ and receive God as your Father!

CRUCIAL MATTERS: Cultivating a vital, personal, and intimate relationship with the Lord (III.E.).

BACKGROUND READING: *Life-study of John*, Message 48.

REFERENCES: *Life-study of John*, Messages 48-49; *A Word of Love*, Chapter 1, p. 20.

