

LIFE OF JESUS WALK-THROUGH

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EVENT	TOPIC	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
1. JOHN IS BORN	Trust in God	Zacharias Luke 1:5-25 Elizabeth Luke 1:57-80	"His Name is John" tablet
2. JESUS' BIRTH ANNOUNCED	Obey God	Mary Luke 1:26-38 Joseph Matthew 1:18-25	Angel
3. JESUS IS BORN	God became man	Luke 2:1-20	Baby in manger
4. MAGI GIVE GIFTS	Worship Jesus with our gifts	Matthew 2:1-18	Camels
5. JESUS' CHILDHOOD	Obey your parents	Matthew 2:19-23 Luke 2:39-52	Carpenter tools
6. JOHN THE BAPTIST	Stand up for Jesus	Matthew 3:1-12; 4:1-12 Mark 1:1-8,14; 6:14-29 Luke 3:1-18; 9:7-9	Man hands raised
7. BAPTISM OF JESUS	Baptism shows we love Jesus	Matthew 3:13-17 Mark 1:9-11 Luke 3:21-23	Dove down
8. TEMPTATION OF JESUS	Temptation	Matthew 4:1-11 Mark 1:12-13 Luke 4:1-13	Bread
9. WATER TO WINE	Miracles – Jesus greater than nature	John 1:1-11 Lot of fish Lk 5:1-10 Widows son Lk 7:11-17	Pot of water/wine
10. CLEANSE TEMPLE	Anger	John 2:13-22	Temple
11. NICODEMUS	Born Again	John 2:23 – 3:21	Baby
12. WOMAN AT THE WELL	Witnessing	John 4:5-42	Woman
13. JESUS' DISCIPLES	Discipleship	Mt 4:18-22; 9:9-13; 10:24-42; 16:24-28 Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19 Lk 5:10-11; 6:12-16 John 1:19-51	Road sign
14. SERMON ON THE MOUNT	Be kind to others	Matthew 5:1 – 8:1 Luke 6:17-42	Mountain
15. MIRACLES AT THE SEA	Miracles - Jesus cares about people	Mark 4:35 – 5:43 Luke 8:22-48	Arrow at sea
16. FEEDING PEOPLE	Jesus uses little children	5000 Mt 14:13-21; Mk 6:30-44; Lk 9:10-17 4000 Mt 15:32-38; Mk 8:1-9	Loaf of bread
17. JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION	Jesus is God	Matthew 17:1-8 Mark 9:2-8 Luke 9:28-36	God pointing at Jesus
18. PARABLES – Good Samaritan	Help others in need	Luke 10:25-37	Man on donkey

EVENT	TOPIC	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
19. MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS	Listen to Jesus	Luke 10:38-42 John 11:1-44 John 12:1-11	Perfume jar
20. BARTIMAEUS & ZACCHAEUS	Mercy	Matthew 20:29-34 Mark 10:46-52 Luke 18:35 – 19:10	Tree, man in
21. TEARFUL ENTRY	Jesus is King	Matthew 21:1-17 Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:29-44 John 12:12-19	Tear drop
22. JESUS' LAST MEAL	Jesus knows He will die for us	Matthew 26:17-30 Mark 14:12-26 Luke 22:7-38 John 13:1 – 14:31	Cup
23. ARREST & TRIALS	When unfair things happen	Matthew 26:47 – 27:26 Mark 14:43 – 15:15 Luke 22:47 – 23:25 John 18:2 – 19:16	Praying hands
24. CRUCIFIXION	Jesus died for our sins	Matthew 27:31-66 Mark 15:20-47 Luke 23:26-56 John 19:16-42	Cross
25. RESURRECTION	Jesus & our eternal life	Matthew 28:1-10 Mark 16:1-14 Luke 24:1-49 John 20:1-20	Open grave
26. ASCENSION	We will go to heaven one day	Mark 16:19-20 Luke 24:50-53 Acts 1:3-14	Arrow pointing up

These are teaching lessons you can use for children or adults. For each of these sessions I have included an article teaching about the time in the person's life. Read this so you know the material and can teach it to others. Following is a page of questions to ask those you are teaching. This helps those who are learning to understand and apply what you have taught. It also keeps their interest and helps them remember the information in the future. You can read the questions or make a copy to give to each person. There is also a copy of the questions with the answers giving to help you as you teach. You can add to these answers or change them in any way you want.

I have pictures you can print to use or show on an electric device. This helps people to picture what is happening and remember it. It makes the story come alive. You can show the picture to those you are teaching and give them paper and pencil to draw it while you teach. Or you can make a black and white copy of the picture for them to color. To get these pictures email me at jerry@schmoyer.net and tell me which set you would like and I will email them to you as an attachment.

If you have any questions or comments please contact me at jerry@schmoyer.net

1. JOHN IS BORN

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
1. JOHN IS BORN	Trust in God	Zacharias Luke 1:5-25 Elizabeth Luke 1:57-80	"His Name is John" tablet

By Zacharias

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse." (Malachi 3:1; 4:5-6)

With these words the Old Testament closed. For 400 years there was nothing but silence. Many thought God had forgotten His promises to Israel, but not everyone. My parents still believed. They named me "God remembers." My wife, Elizabeth, was named "God's promise." Her parents believed, too. They passed their faith on to us. We needed all the faith we could get, for it wasn't easy to trust God when we were childless. To everyone that was proof of God's displeasure with us. How was I to minister to them as a priest and rabbi if I had God's stamp of rejection? Oh, sure, we prayed and prayed for years but nothing changed. At least it seemed that way for many years. Then the most incredible thing happened (Luke 1:5-10).

THE GROUP OF PRIESTS which I was part of served in Jerusalem during the 8th month of the year. The rest of the year we served in our local communities. The high point of the day was when one priest was chosen to go into the Holy Place to trim the wicks on the lampstand and sprinkle incense on the golden altar. One of us was chosen by lot to go in at dawn and another in midafternoon, which was the more special of the two. Being chosen was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Many priests never ever got the chance. I had never been privileged to do it in all my years of service.

Then one day the lot fell to me! I was ecstatic with pleasure. I was sobered, too, as I remembered that if it weren't for God's grace and mercy, I could be struck dead for approaching His presence. All went well at first, but then as I was offering up the prayers of the nation at the altar of incense all of a sudden there was this great, marvelous being standing there talking to me! I was terrified, thinking this meant my death. It turns out it was Gabriel (Luke 1:11-17).

"Your prayer has been heard" I was told. At first I didn't realize what he was talking about. Then it hit me: the baby! I had stopped praying for that 20 years ago when Elizabeth went through menopause. I don't think she stopped praying for a child until just a few years ago, though.

Now I was hearing that we were to have a child, a son none the less. Here I thought God's answer to my many prayers was "No" but it turns out it was really just "Wait." What's more, this son was to be the one who went before the Messiah, telling everyone to get ready for His coming. Yet, despite all this good news, there was a lot of unresolved bitterness and self-pity inside because of how long God had delayed in answering our prayers. NOW God is going to do this marvelous thing, when we are old. Why not earlier? If He couldn't give us a son when we were younger, how could He do it now that our bodies were too old to have children? Because of my doubt I was told I would be dumb until this son was born (so I better believe it really would happen) (Luke 1:18-20).

BY THE TIME this exchange was over and I went back outside, people were wondering what was happening (Luke 1:21-22). I couldn't even speak the blessing to dismiss them. I just had to wave them away. When my time of service in Jerusalem was over I went back home (Luke 1:23).

I was full of emotion when I went back home: emotion and excitement, but also guilt and remorse. Elizabeth only felt joy (Lk 1:24-25).

I spent the next several months sitting and thinking. I couldn't talk, I couldn't minister, I couldn't even tell when had happened to me in the temple. I wrote it out for Elizabeth and she told everyone. I had plenty of time to think about God's promises to be faithful, such as Isaiah 49:14-15: "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!"

THE FIRST MONTHS weren't so bad. Then Mary came to visit and Elizabeth had someone to talk with. Toward the end, though, it got long! Jewish women were secluded in the home for the last five months of a pregnancy, so everyone had to come here to see her. Women were constantly in and out: talking and giggling. I heard a thousand birth stories, each one more grisly than the one before it. Every ache and pain was analyzed. All they talked about were swollen ankles, upset stomach, can't bend down -- you'd think it was the first time a woman ever got pregnant! Worse of all, I couldn't do anything but sit there and take it all in! Elizabeth got to tell everyone what God said. I did find lots to do in the garden that year -- in fact it was the best kept garden I ever had.

Inside, though, I was really thrilled, for her and for myself. Just to think -- I would really have a son!!! I thought often of Abraham who, despite his own doubts, had a special son from God in his old age. I realized God answers our prayers but in His own time, not ours. Delay is not denial. I learned God answers in His own way. We are to pray the problem, not the solution. I learned He answers in His own power: that's the only way He gets the glory. I could only talk to God, and I did plenty of that!

THEN CAME THE DAY my son was born (Luke 1:57-58). I never saw a bunch of women so excited! I think I was even more excited than them, though. John's birth was the only birth recorded in the New Testament besides Jesus. The whole first week after his birth was constant celebration. Every movement, every cough, every coo, every filled diaper was a big thing!

Then came the 8th day after John's birth, the day of a boy's circumcision. Contrary to all traditions, I didn't name the baby Zacharias after myself. It was almost like I was disclaiming to be his father. It wasn't that, it's just that he had a Father far above me, One who had already chosen his name (Luke 1:59-66). "His name is John" I wrote. 'John' means 'The Lord is gracious,' and indeed He is! Immediately upon that act of obedience God removed my dumbness and I could talk. My first words were those of praise to God, expressing what has been building in my heart for the last nine months (Luke 1:68-79). I was awed and humbled by the privilege and responsibility of raising the one who would be herald of the Messiah. What a blessing!

That little baby was the center of attention and the main topic of conversation in our home as well as our whole village for some time to come. I don't think there ever was a baby more loved! What a joy it was. We felt like teenagers again! We knew we wouldn't have many years with him because of our age, but God blessed and used every minute we had. God kept us alive long enough to see him grow in faith and love for God, and that is what was most important for us (Luke 1:80).

AS FOR ME, I didn't doubt God again. I knew He knew what He was doing. God used my small faith and helped it grow. I trusted His promises to help raise him despite my age. You, too, can trust God's promises in your own life. You can trust Him for strength (Deut 33:25; Isa 40:29), rest (Mt 11:28), victory over sin (I Cor 10:13), forgiveness of sin (Rom 8:1; I John 1:9) and peace (Ps 118:6; Psalm 23:4; Isa 41:10). God can be trusted. God is worthy to be trusted. Try Him and see!

1. JOHN IS BORN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Where was Zechariah when Gabriel appeared to him?

Why was he there? What was he doing?

Why didn't God give Elizabeth and Zechariah any children?

Why doesn't God give us everything we want as soon as we want it?

Why did Zechariah doubt God's promise?

Name some of God's promises:

Do we always believe them or do we sometimes doubt them, too?

What are you having a hard time trusting God for right now?

What promises tell us we can trust Him to keep His promises?

1. JOHN IS BORN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Where was Zechariah when Gabriel appeared to him?

In Jerusalem in the temple in front of the altar of incense in the Holy Place.

Why was he there? What was he doing?

He was offering incense on the golden altar. Incense pictured prayers going up to God.

Why didn't God give Elizabeth and Zechariah any children?

Perhaps to stretch their faith, to have them trust Him even when times were hard.
It wasn't His time to give them children until later.

Why doesn't God give us everything we want as soon as we want it?

He wants us to trust Him and patiently wait for His timing.

Why did Zechariah doubt God's promise?

He and Elizabeth were too old to have children and he lost faith that God can do anything.

Name some of God's promises:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name sake. Ps. 23:1-3

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Mt. 6:33

And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. Phil. 4:19

I will never leave you or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5

Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. Mt. 7:7

But those who hope (wait upon) the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isa. 40:31

I can do everything through him who gives me strength. Phil. 4:13

My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Cor. 12:9

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. 1 Cor. 10:13

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Prov. 3:5-6

The Lord is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me? Ps. 118:6

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and staff, they comfort me. Ps. 23:4

Do we always believe them or do we sometimes doubt them, too?

It is best to always believe but sometimes we, too, doubt God.

What are you having a hard time trusting God for right now?

(health, finances, friends, school, etc.)

What promises of God can help you through this time?

(answers will differ)

2. JESUS' BIRTH ANNOUNCED

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

There are several stories to use with this lesson. You can use all of them or pick which you want to use. You can even make this lesson last more than one week.

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
2. JESUS' BIRTH ANNOUNCED	Obey God	Mary Luke 1:26-38 Joseph Matthew 1:18-25	Angel

By Gabriel

"Don't be afraid!" That's how I start my conversations with humans. Whenever I appear in angel form people fall in fear, so terrified they can hardly speak. They assume I am coming in judgment. Don't they realize that angels only appear to those who have accepted Jesus as their Savior? Don't they remember that those who have done this will NEVER have to fear judgment from God (Romans 8:1)?

MY NAME IS GABRIEL. I come from the very presence of the Lord. When we manifest ourselves among human beings we take on the form of a human being ourselves so as to be able to work in privacy (Hebrews 13:2; Genesis 18:2-10; 19:1ff)). By the way, I've seen some of the pictures you make of us -- babies, feminine, weak and sissy! We are might, powerful soldiers who belong to the army of God!

We are messengers - that's what the Greek word 'angel' really means. We come to earth to help and protect God's people, especially from Satan's demons and their attacks. We are always around, watching you -- but you can't see us! Our purpose is to bring glory to God, not to ourselves. Any attention we get without God getting more is wrong. After all, who would glorify their mailman for delivering a million dollar gift while not acknowledging the one who gave the gift? God gets all the glory, we are just serving Him, as are you.

God created us first, then we watched Him create the universe in 6 days -- since then we haven't been able to stop praising and worshipping Him for Who He is and what He has done (as well as continues to do).

God created millions and millions of us (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 5:1). We are NOT people who have died. We are like humans in that we have a mind, will and emotions. We can only be one place at a time and don't have all knowledge or power, only what we get from God. Unlike you, though, we are not limited to a physical body, we are all male and don't reproduce, and we only had a one-time chance to exercise our free will. That was when Lucifer (now called Satan), the greatest angel God created, rebelled against submitting to God and in his pride and rebellion challenged God's power (Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28). He was immediately cast out of heaven and about 1/3 of the angels followed him. Now they are called demons -- fallen angels. They counterfeit us and try to act as angels of light to mislead mankind, and are quite successful! They oppose God's kingdom and, like their leader Satan, seek to have people follow and worship them. Since earth is their kingdom (Adam gave it to Satan when he sinned) they are very successful. When someone is born into God's family he finds himself living in enemy territory, a source of light among Satan's darkness. That is why we are needed to help you and protect you from this unseen enemy who would torture and kill you if God would allow it.

Of course you know there is no question about who will ultimately rule this earth and the whole universe. Since God Himself came to earth (called Jesus) as a man and took on Satan and all his forces, defeating them on the cross by paying for sin and overcoming all the demons could throw at Him, their ultimate defeat has been certain. There is no question of Who really is

the great ruler of the universe. God is still delaying the final mop-up action, though, until all those who would accept His free gift of salvation do so. Then all hell will break loose!

IN THE MEANTIME our missions are typically restraining actions related to this ongoing rescue program. We move into an area and secure a perimeter of operations from enemy interference. I can't tell you much about our secret operations for enemy soldiers listen to all we say, but I can give you an example. One time Dothan, home of Elisha, was surrounded by the Syrian army. Michael's unit was deployed to ensure the safety of Elisha. The Commander notified Elisha we were there but his servant didn't know that and was alarmed. Elisha sent up a special request for us to unveil, so we executed a partial decloaking and the servant was very impressed! (II Kings 6)

When not fighting on earth we are in heaven at the throne worshipping and praising God (Psalm 103:20-22; 148:1-14; Revelation 5:11-13; 7:11-12). Yes, I guess you could say we are the policemen of the universe, carrying out and executing God's orders and making sure all fallen angels must obey them, too. The only time we were unable to do that was at the crucifixion when we were held back in the darkness so Satan and his forces could do their best to get Jesus to crack. They knew their ultimate victory or defeat lay in defeating him -- and we couldn't help! That was a nightmare! Glory to God, though, He was victorious. Because of that victory He has the final say and uses that power to protect you.

We, as messengers, carry out God's orders (Daniel 10). We bring answers to prayer, prevent accidents, protect believers and children from injury (unless God allows it for a plan and purpose known only to Him). We help you find things when you lose them. We go ahead of you and prepare the path for your daily activities. We watch you to see God's grace at work, and that amazes us! To be quite honest, we angels aren't very impressed with people and their selfish sinfulness. We don't understand why God loves you so much, but you can be glad He does or you'd be nothing! We are therefore very impressed with God and His mercy. Since we no longer have a free will we can't and don't experience His mercy, so seeing it in your lives is a most impressive! I hope you realize what a good deal you have, how much you owe to God's love and mercy! I know you will realize it when you see it all from our perspective. Until then....

Well, anyway -- back to my story. My name is Gabriel, as I said. My name means "God is Great." Michael and I are God's two highest-ranking angels. God has us all divided as an army with generals, colonels, majors, etc., on down to privates. We are called thrones, dominions (Cherubim and Seraphim), principalities and powers.

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE of making many special announcements to people. I interpreted God's revelation to Daniel (8:16; 9:21). I appeared to Zechariah in the temple (Luke 1:11-19). I had good news -- he would have a son in his old age and that boy would be the forerunner of the coming Messiah. That contact didn't go so well, though. Six months later I appeared to a young woman named Mary to tell her she would have a son, the Messiah, while still a virgin (Luke 1:26-29). Shortly afterwards I went to her husband (before they had started living together or consummated the marriage) with the same news (Matthew 1:20-21).

There is one more scheduled appearance of mine on earth, and its one I look forward to as much as you do. I'll announce it with my trumpet. You call it the rapture. We call it our day of vengeance and justice. After centuries of watching enemy forces harasses and cause all kinds of evil, we'll finally be able to take them. With God's power there is no doubt who'll win! Then we'll reign together for all eternity. You will have a much higher position than us and will actually rule over us (I Cor 6:3; Heb 5:2). After all, you are the Bride of Christ and we are but servants, messengers. Still, we'll all praise and worship God for all eternity. We'll proclaim His glory day and night. Why not get started doing that now? Glorify Him for all He has done, is doing and will do for you! He deserves all your praise and much more. See that He gets it!

By Mary

My name is Mary ('Miryam'). It means bitterness. It was the most common girls name in my time because many parents wanted their daughters to grow up to be godly women like Miriam. There was nothing special about me or my family. The only special thing was that God chose to use me. I'll never forget how it all began.

My father was in the field working and mother had gone to the market. I was home alone, mending clothes, and daydreaming about Joseph, the man I was to marry. I didn't know him very well, but we had grown up together. We were each in our teens. I did know Joseph was kind and godly. He was also handsome!

Suddenly I was startled! You know how sometimes you can sense someone standing nearby but haven't seen them? There stood a stranger in the doorway. I assumed he was looking for my father. There was something very different about him, though. He just walked in uninvited! It was a bit scary for men didn't approach women that way. It got even stranger when he spoke. "Hail woman, richly blessed, The Lord is with you."

"Who is this?" I thought. "What does he want? Am I in danger. He doesn't seem threatening but..." He certainly had my full attention!

Like every godly Jewish girl, when I was young I would dream I would be the fortunate woman to give birth to the Messiah. Those days most adults had forgotten about the Messiah and just saw it as foolish girls' fantasies. Our nation had wandered far from God, way into sin. It was especially bad in Nazareth where I lived. It was a corrupt army town with more Gentiles than Jews.

I had all but forgotten those girlish daydreams as I grew older. I didn't catch the man's meaning right away. It seemed impossible to be happening. It seemed like he knew exactly what I was thinking.

"Don't be afraid," he told me. "You have found favor with God." I knew everything I had was by God's grace, that I had done nothing to earn it or deserve it. Why was he reminding me of this?

Then he said it: "You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus." 'Jesus' was a common name, the Greek equivalent to our Hebrew name 'Joshua.' They meant "the Lord is our deliverer."

When what the angel was saying sunk in it made me wonder when this was going to happen. Isn't that the first thing women wonder when they hear they are pregnant? Did he mean I would be pregnant BEFORE being married? Again he seemed to read my mind and answered before I asked. It was almost as if he purposely left this out so I'd wonder and he could emphasize it more.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be barren is in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God."

Nothing is impossible for God. Even having a baby without a human father.

You know, some see me as a celebrity and even worship me. Really all I was was a servant. A servant is the property of his master to use as he decides. It requires an attitude of submission and humility. You might think it was easy to say I was God's servant because of the great blessing He was bestowing on me.

All the implications of the blessing weren't clear to me then, though. What was obvious was the potential cost involved: loss of my reputation and Joseph, criticism and rejection by most people, the discomforts of pregnancy, and a family without a father. I put God before myself and immediately knew I had to obey. It had to be total obedience, no bargaining or hesitating.

I had always been willing to do whatever God wanted, always committed to following Him entirely. "I am the Lord's servant," I replied. "May it be to me as you have said." Now you think of a servant as someone who works agreed-upon hours for agreed-upon wages, then goes home to do what he wants. That's not how it was then. A servant was a slave. He had no time which belonged to him, not a free minute ever. He had no wagers, no home, no opinions -- nothing. That's what I was agreeing to be to God -- His servant to use however He chose. I wasn't a naturally submissive person, but I knew this is what God wanted and what I must do. God chose me and I yielded to Him.

It's hard to explain how the pregnancy happened. It was the most gentle, painless, loving thing that ever happened to me. This soft yet brilliant light just sort of came around me. I felt so warm and secure, just full of total peace. It faded and was gone as quickly as it came. The whole thing was so delicate and gracious.

Still, it wasn't all easy. I needed someone to talk to about this. Joseph was away building houses. Our contact was very limited anyway by Jewish tradition. My parents believed and supported me, but it was hard for them to understand. One day I went to the market. I left home with great feelings of love in my heart. I was grateful for all God had done for me, a poor peasant girl. It overwhelmed me. But in the marketplace my joy turned to sorrow and shame as the glances and whispers rubbed rawness into my soul. I wasn't even able to complete my shopping. I hurried home with my basket still half empty. I had to get away. Who would really understand? Elizabeth!

My parents sent me along with some from our synagogue who were going down to Jerusalem and I made the 4-day trip with them. I was really looking forward to talking to Elizabeth. It was as if the messenger put this idea in my mind when he told me about her miraculous pregnancy, too.

As I got closer, though, I got more and more apprehensive. What if she didn't believe me or mocked me? She was much older, the wife of a godly and respected priest. What would she think of an unmarried pregnant teenager? Would anyone ever believe my story?

She was home cooking when I arrived. She answered my knock with "Who's there?" "Mary of Nazareth, Heli's daughter," I called inside. Immediate revelation was given to her about what had happened to me. Her baby jumped for joy and kicked her. Her joy and acceptance of me was total and unconditional. She praised God for His marvelous works. I was greatly relieved! I didn't have to use the 'speech' I had been working on in my mind as I got closer to their home.

We had a wonderful time together. God provided just what I needed. Soon, however, it was time for me to head home. Her baby was about to be born and I had to return. Traveling back toward home brought reality back to my mind. What about Joseph? He must have heard I was pregnant by now. He would have no way of knowing this was God's baby. What would he think of me? I had to leave all that to God. But how would I support the baby? Everything was new and happening so fast. I was scared and excited at the same time. Feeling the baby move within me was absolutely thrilling! Nevertheless I wondered at times if I could be as good a mother as He needed. Would I be able to meet His needs? What about my needs -- I'd have to keep trusting God to meet them. What would my son be like? What all would life have for Him? Somehow I could sense that there would be pain as well as joy, sorrow as well as pleasure. Time would reveal it all.

For now, I was willing to be God's servant, to have Him use me however He chose. What greater privilege could a person have? What better way was there to spend this short life on earth?

By Joseph

My name is Joseph (Yosef). Those who knew me called me Yosi. Some have said I am the most forgotten character in the Bible. In Christmas pageants even the inn keeper gets a bigger part than me (and there really wasn't an inn keeper). I'm often just a moving prop, following Mary around. That's a tough role for a man, very humbling. Still, it isn't really true. I did have an important part in the story of Jesus' birth. I'd like to tell you about it if you have a minute. My story revolves around my hands. Look at my hands. They tell you that I work with wood and stone. You can see the history of my work in them: scars, calluses and cuts. You can tell a lot about a man by his hands. Farmers have different hands than fishermen. Hands are important to a man. You men understand. We create and produce with our hands. Where would we be without them?

I used my hands to build homes and buildings. Mainly we used stone, but also wood for windows, doors and roof timbers. I worked with my father, first learning from him and then, after my bar mitzvah at age 12, as his partner. We weren't any big 'success' as the world would call it. But family and friends were more important to my father than long hours and lots of money. I'm glad he was that way. I agreed with him. A man must find his fulfillment in his wife and family, not in his job.

You can see why my hands are so important to me. I used them to provide for my family, to love and raise my children. The best thing these hands did, though, was to hold the Messiah, God Himself come to earth as a baby. These were the first hands to ever touch Him. I brought Him into the world with these very hands! You know it does something to a man to see a baby born. Being there when the woman he loves goes through all that brings up emotions and feelings we men usually avoid. I wasn't entirely comfortable with them, but there were good, healthy emotions. There's nothing like holding a newborn baby in your hands to get everything in live in proper perspective! Just think, God used these very hands to raise His son! I never would have thought it would be this way when growing up.

Nazareth was a very ungodly, pagan town. It was a small town full of Gentiles and Roman soldiers. It wasn't a place for a devout Jewish family, but that's where God had put my family. My father was a good role model of a man of God. I, too, committed myself to living for God. I obeyed His law and believed in His promises of a coming Messiah to pay for my sins. It wasn't easy living for God in my time and in Nazareth. There weren't many of us who loved God, even among the Jews.

I did have one friend growing up who loved God as I did. Her name was Miriam. You call her Mary. Our parents were friends and we saw each other each time we went to synagogue. Somehow it became understood that we would one day marry. We got along so well we each looked forward to being together. We shared so much in common. As we became teenagers our friendship developed into a deep love for each other. We weren't allowed much private time together, but we just naturally had a deep bonding of our spirits. It was like we knew what the other was thinking, so we didn't have to always be talking. We each thanked God for His wonderful provision and anxiously awaited the time we could start our own family together.

We were legally married, called the eyrusin. That means the dowry (the mohar) was paid and vows said. All was legally binding. A contract, the ketubah, was signed. We were legally married, called husband and wife, but wouldn't live together until later. There was a 9 - 12 month waiting period to make sure she wasn't pregnant and to give me time to build a room onto our family insula for us to use. It was during this time that my world fell apart!

You know how gossip is. I heard in the worst possible way about Mary being pregnant. The more I checked into it the more I found it to be true. What was I to do? I was forbidden by God's command to marry her. The law said she should be stoned, but that wasn't enforced much any more. I could have her publicly proved wrong and embarrassed so I could get my

dowry back and have my reputation cleared. This is what everyone said I should do. There was another way, though. I could privately and quietly divorce her, lose my dowry and reputation, but protect her from ridicule and criticism. This is what I had decided to do when Gabriel appeared to me in a dream and said it would be all right to go ahead and marry Mary anyway. She really hadn't broken the law for she was still a virgin. The baby was God's! Was I glad! I didn't think anyone would believe me, but I didn't care. Imagine the other construction workers when I told them Mary was still a virgin, it was God's miracle-baby in her! That would be hard on a male's ego.

All I had was one dream to go on. What if I had imagined it, or had wanted it so badly I only thought it happened? I prayed, talked to my parent's and Mary's parents, and decided to go ahead and marry her as I had wanted to do all along.

We went ahead and had the final wedding ceremony, the nissuin. There was a special solemnness and seriousness to it under the circumstances, though. It was nice having Mary as my wife and being able to be in our room to talk and pray together. It was frustrating not being able to be close physically, but we both agreed this was best so there could never be any doubt that Jesus was God's baby and not mine. God can give a man control of his sexual urges, I found. Later we had 4 sons and 2 daughters of our own, but for now it was time to wait. Two of those sons, James and Jude, were leaders in the early church and wrote books that are in the Bible.

It wasn't long, though, before we heard I had to go to Bethlehem for a census and taxation. Only the man was required to go, but Mary insisted on coming to get away from the gossip and stay with me. It took a week to make the 90 mile trip. We slept in tents. Finally we arrived in Bethlehem only to find it full up with others already arrived for the census. A man was kind enough to let us use the cave under his home, where he stabled his animals, for shelter. A man wants the best for his wife, and felt very bad that I couldn't provide any better than that. We were content, though.

We found a midwife to help with the delivery, which came soon after we arrived. Maybe the long trip brought the baby on sooner, but it was a safe delivery and both mother and son were fine. I got to deliver the baby and hold Him first -- with these very hands!

I cleaned out a shelf carved into the wall where food was kept up off the damp, dirty floor and we used that as a bed for the baby. It was amazing how similar His entrance into the world and exit from the world were. There was terrible pain and darkness, His bloody body wrapped in cloths, anointed with perfume, and laid on a stone shelf inside a cave -- both by a man named Joseph! It was my hands that did it the first time, but those of Joseph of Arimathea who did it when Jesus died for I was no longer alive. Anyway, it like He was under the shadow of the cross from the very start!

For thirty years we were best friends, together at home, work and synagogue. We bounced thoughts off each other and were as close as any two human beings can be. I knew Him better than anyone else. My hands touched and worked with His hands for 30 years. I never really understood how He could be both man and God, but I know He was. He was my friend, my son, my Savior. Is He your Savior, too? There's none other. I ought to know.

2. JESUS' BIRTH IS ANNOUNCED

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What are angels and what do they do?

In what ways was the announcement to Mary similar to the announcement to Zechariah?

In what ways was the announcement to Mary different than the announcement to Zechariah?

Why do you think Mary was surprised when the angel told her she was going to have a baby?

Mary said she was willing to be God's servant and do whatever He wanted, no matter what it was. Have you ever told God that? If not, why not tell Him that right now.

Why did Mary go to see Elizabeth?

What friends has God given you to help you when you are in need?

What things did Joseph do that show us he was a godly man?

Is it always easy to obey God?

When are some times that it is hard to obey God?

What can we do to make sure we always obey God?

2. JESUS' BIRTH IS ANNOUNCED

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What are angels and what do they do?

God created angels before He created the world. They worship and serve God.
Angels help us without us knowing it. They protect us and take care of us.
Satan & demons are angels that rebelled and didn't want to follow God so He
threw them out of heaven.

In what ways was the announcement to Mary similar to the announcement to Zechariah?

Gabriel appeared both times and said "Don't be afraid." Then he gave God's message.

In what ways was the announcement to Mary different than the announcement to Zechariah?

Zechariah was a priest and was in the temple. He doubted God's word.
Mary was a young woman at home. She believed God's word.

Why do you think Mary was surprised when the angel told her she was going to have a baby?

She wasn't married and didn't have a husband. God would have to do a miracle.

Mary said she was willing to be God's servant and do whatever He wanted, no matter what it was. Have you ever told God that? If not, why not tell Him that right now.

(let the children pray. You can use the same words Mary used)

Why did Mary go to see Elizabeth?

She needed a friend who would understand and whom she could talk to.

What friends has God given you to help you when you are in need?

(this will be different for each child)

What things did Joseph do that show us he was a godly man?

He was willing to do what was best for Mary, not himself. He prayed for wisdom & guidance.

Is it always easy to obey God?

No

When are some times that it is hard to obey God?

(when we are afraid, when people will criticize us, etc.)

What can we do to make sure we always obey God?

Start each day praying for His help and strength, pray before we do things, etc.

3. JESUS IS BORN

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
3. JESUS IS BORN	God became man	Luke 2:1-20	Baby in manger

By the Shepherds

"Oh, excuse me. I didn't see you approach our fire. Come on over, come closer. It's a cold night, come share our fire. We don't get many visitors here. No one bothers with us. Shepherds aren't very popular, you know.

"I hope the smell doesn't bother you too much. We don't notice it any more ourselves. We don't have many opportunities to wash -- and neither do the sheep! Oh, well, at least we're in the open air!

"I love these dark, crisp nights, don't you? The stars seem so close you can reach out and touch them. You know, this reminds me of another night similar to this one: dark, cool and peaceful. We had surprise visitors then, too. Only they were angels. Say, you aren't angels, are you? No, I didn't think so!

"Anyway, back to my story. Where was I? Oh, yes. I was going to tell you about that special night. You know, whenever anything important is to be known, God makes it known to us. We wouldn't have known that night was special if God hadn't told us. No one else would have!

"Because we were shepherds we had no civil rights. We couldn't be a witness in court, judges thought we were untrustworthy. We couldn't sell wool or milk from our flocks, people would assume we stole it. The Mishnah, our book of laws and rules, said, 'No one should feel obligated to rescue a shepherd who has fallen into a pit.'

"Fortunately God didn't feel that way about us, or we would never have known what happened that night. As it turns out, we were the ONLY ones to find out. Why did God choose shepherds to give this wonderful news? Could it be that we are humble and open, close to nature and God? Perhaps it was because David himself was a shepherd here in these same hills. That's where he wrote many of his psalms of praise to God.

"Anyway, we kept sheep for several people. Many of our sheep were for the temple sacrifices. Possibly the next Passover lamb was in our flock. We shepherds knew about sacrifice and shedding innocent blood. The sacrifices hurt us much more than the priests who had no connection to the sheep. We knew them by name, raised them by hand from birth, and were closely attached to each one.

"The night I was telling you about was a cool night, in the 40's. We had a fire to keep warm. After it was over we talked about how it must have all come about. Probably the angels silently drifted downwards toward earth, hovering and taking up assigned positions, until Gabriel moved to the front and gave the command. Instantly they were all totally visible, like a flash! The light was God's glory shining on earth. It was the brightest I've ever seen, but it didn't hurt my eyes. It was a relaxing, peaceful light. The sheep weren't even scared by it.

"Then there was Gabriel. I'm telling you the guy was huge! He told us to not be afraid, but that he brought us good news of great joy for everyone. 'Today in the town of David a Savior has been born you; He is Christ the Lord,' he said. 'This will be a sign to you. You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'

"All the angels joined in shouting, 'glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests.'

"Our response was to just fall on our knees in praise and worship. It just came naturally, without really thinking about it. We praised God for His truth, keeping His promises to send the

Messiah. We praised God for His power in coming as a baby. We praised God for His grace, mercy and love in sending the Messiah. We joined the angels in praising God for this wonderful news. We had often talked and speculated about the promised Messiah: would He come in our lifetime? Would we even know it if He did come? Would the nation receive Him, for most didn't care about God's promises any more? We didn't have time to think about all of that -- things were just happening too quickly!

"We naturally were very interested in seeing this Messiah baby. It sounded impossible, though, that the Messiah would be found in a feed trough in a cave! Why not the fanciest palace in Jerusalem? We didn't ask, we just went to town.

"We left one man to watch the sheep. They were safe in the enclosure as long as one man sat in the entrance. The rest of us went to see the Messiah. To find Jesus you must be willing to leave all you have: occupation, possessions, even your own sleep and ease.

"There He was, in a manger all right! We were the only ones who were told, it seems. What a privilege! I was struck by how small and helpless He seemed. Why didn't He come as a full-grown man, like Adam did? We were told about his miraculous conception, but his birth was as natural and normal as every one else's. To be honest, it was hard to picture Him as God, sitting on David's throne forever, worshipped by all creation.

"We had an excellent time with Mary and Joseph, talking and praising God. It was encouraging for them to have someone to share their joy. It was confirming to them to hear us repeat what the angels told us. It was motivating for us to meet and know them. We wanted to serve God as completely as they were. In the months to come we spent many hours with them. We had a special bonding between us that lasted long after they moved.

"This whole evening is one we would never forget. We left there, continually telling others what we had seen. We never tired of telling the story. It wasn't until many years later that we realized the culmination of the whole story and just how important this baby would be.

"I thank you for listening to my story and sharing our fire. Before you leave, though, there's one more thing I'd like to say. This isn't just a history lesson. This is to show you the importance of worshipping and praising Jesus. We are created to glorify God.

"We bring glory to God when we receive His free gift of salvation. Each time we admit sin and confess it, we are recognizing sin is our fault. When we make excuses we are, in effect, blaming God for our sin. Taking the blame for our own sin glorifies God. When we live with an attitude of bringing glory to God in all we say and do instead of putting ourselves first we are glorifying and worshipping God. Witnessing to others, of course, does the same. Trusting God no matter what is a way of showing our love and faith. It complements Him by recognizing His sovereignty. Prayer, likewise, glorifies God by showing our need for Him. All these are ways of worshipping God.

"There's no greater joy in life than comes when one is worshipping God. There's no better way to spend your time. God is certainly worthy of it and deserving of it. We'll be doing it for all eternity, so why not start now. Get a little taste of heaven on earth -- worship and praise God!"

By Simeon

Hello. My name is Simeon, or Simon. It's the same name, just written differently. It's a common name: Simon Peter, Simon the Pharisee (Lk 7:36-50), Simon the Leper from Bethany, Simon the father of Judas, and me. I had a common, everyday name, and lived a common, everyday life. I had no great social status, no office, no standing. I was a priest and considered that a great privilege, although most of the other priests considered it a nuisance and a burden. There were a small group of us who stayed faithful to Jehovah, loved His word, and awaited the promised coming Messiah. The others, however, just went through the motions of acting religious.

Unlike most priests, like Zacharias, who lived in various parts of Palestine and took turns in the temple, I lived in Jerusalem all year round. I counted this a great privilege and loved to serve God in any way I could. I often thought of the promised deliverer God would send, and often looked at the babies I dedicated in the temple, wondering if one might be Him.

I was especially alert when I saw what happened to Zacharias after he came from the Holy Place and couldn't talk. Word spread that an angel had talked to him inside. I knew it was a foreshadowing of great things to come. I felt God assuring me through His Spirit communicating to my spirit that the Messiah would come during my lifetime, and I would actually get to see Him! How I would recognize Him I had no idea, I just left that to God.

One day it actually happened. It started like every other day. I performing my duties in the temple: receiving sacrifices, singing with the priestly choir in the morning and afternoon, dedicating babies who were brought in, accepting offerings of cleansing, and serving in any way I could. One young couple, no different than anyone else, came in looking lost and confused. I immediately went to them to see if I could help. They came for the mother's purification from childbirth and the baby's dedication. As I spoke to them a strong impression came over me that this was the Messiah! At first I was confused: this common family and baby were no different than thousands I had seen come through here. The feeling was so strong, though, that I couldn't deny its truth. I recognized immediately that this was the way God revealed truth to my spirit, and I rejoiced in what was happening. My senses became sharper and I became more intense in what was happening.

Despite the press of the crowds, the sounds of trumpets, singing, people shouting and animals moving about it was like we four were alone. I received the offering for the mother's purification. This was standard procedure. Childbirth and its accompanying pain was a constant reminder to women of the sin and uncleanness that came from Eve to all people. The innocent blood offering was a picture of God's coming Messiah shedding His innocent blood to pay for all sin. They were poor and could only offer the minimum sacrifice for the mother and son as well.

It was optional, but some Jewish couples chose to have their firstborn sons dedicated to the Lord when they reached 40 days old. This was recognizing that the firstborn belonged to God since He didn't take their lives in Egypt.

As I held the baby the reality of it all just washed over me. "Sovereign Lord," I said as I dedicated Him, "as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel (Luke 2)." Tremendous peace and joy flooded my soul, such as I never had before or since.

I noticed the parents were aware that this was a very special time for me. I explained to them what God has been showing me. They told me their story about the baby's conception and birth. I was especially interested in the message to the shepherds. I knew many of the shepherds from the Bethlehem area, just 5 miles down the road, were part of the godly remnant, those few still loving God and awaiting the coming of His Messiah. Others were wanting the Messiah to come, but they looked for a military leader to lead a revolt and throw off the yoke of Roman bondage. We knew better. What a blessed time we had talking there, in a world all of our own. I would think of that conversation many times in the years following it.

It was obvious God put us together on purpose. Not only was He keeping His promise and blessing me in a very special way, but He was providing friendship and encouragement for this young couple who felt so out of place in such a massive place of noise and turmoil. I could tell they immediately relaxed and a close bond was formed between us.

As the intensity of our conversation wore down I started to become more aware of the swirl of activity around. I was no longer totally wrapped up in myself but started thinking of others who also were awaiting this Messiah. I couldn't wait to tell them He was here!

Then out of the corner of my eye I noticed Anna, a woman of over 100 years of age who had been a widow for 84 years. She was an educated, talented woman who had a deep love for God. She was in the temple every moment the gates were open, worshipping God continually. She seldom even left to eat, preferring to fast often as she prayed and praised He Maker and Creator. We had often talked of God's promises and shared together our hope in the soon coming of the Son of David.

Evidently she had noticed me first, and seeing the focus of my attention started making her way through the crowd to us. God's Spirit had already firmly placed the thought in her mind that this was the Messiah, so I hardly had to say anything in the way of introduction or explanation. Her years of dedication and commitment to God gave her a special closeness, an insight few had into His workings. We listened in fascination to her words of praise and encouragement to the baby's parents. What a special woman she was! It was extra special to share my joy with someone as dear to all God's people as Anna.

Before long, though, I had to get back to my duties. Anna spent the rest of the day with them, showing them around the temple and rejoicing in God's work with them.

I never saw them again, but I never forgot the special time we shared together. I thought of it several times a day for the rest of my life. I talked to others about it, and so did Anna. Some of the younger priests were very interested, and I tried to encourage them to keep their faith in God and not fall into the patterns of hypocrisy and empty ritual that were so common everywhere. Men like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were especially interested, and I prayed often that the words we spoke to them would germinate and take root in their hearts. Who knew what the future would hold? I knew I wouldn't be alive when this baby grew to manhood, nor would Anna, but perhaps some we told these things to would be able to recognize and follow Him when He made His mission known. What a blessed privilege they would have. I envied them, but was ever so grateful for the opportunity God gave me that day.

3. JESUS IS BORN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did God Himself come down to earth to be a person like us?

Why did God Himself come to earth as a baby?

Why was Jesus born in a dirty stable with animals instead of in a king's palace?

Why do you think God chose shepherds to reveal His Son to?

How do you think seeing God's Son affected the shepherds? How did it change them?

What would you have thought if you had seen baby Jesus in a manger in a stable?

Do you think being born in a stable and growing up without a lot of money helps Jesus know what we go through because He went through it, too?

What hard things are you facing now that Jesus also went through and understands?

Who were Simeon and Anna?

They waited a long time for God to answer their prayers but continued to patiently trust God. Do you ever get impatient when you have to wait for something?

What can you do to become more patient?

3. JESUS IS BORN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did God Himself come down to earth to be a person like us?

In order to die for our sins on the cross He had to be a man like us while still being God.

Why did God Himself come to earth as a baby?

To go through everything we go through in life, so we know He understands.

Why was Jesus born in a dirty stable with animals instead of in a king's palace?

So that we know He understands our lives. He was very humble.

Why do you think God chose shepherds to reveal His Son to?

They were rejected and looked down on by others but not by God.

How do you think seeing God's Son affected the shepherds? How did it change them?

They knew God remembered them and cared about them. Hopefully they lived for Him.

What would you have thought if you had seen baby Jesus in a manger in a stable?

(answers will vary, let the children answer as if they were there)

Do you think being born in a stable and growing up without a lot of money helps Jesus know what we go through because He went through it, too?

Yes, He knows what we go through not just because as God He knows everything, He knows because He went through it Himself.

What hard things are you facing now that Jesus also went through and understands?

(let the children share difficulties they are facing)

Who were Simeon and Anna?

People who believed God would soon send His Son as Messiah.

They waited a long time for God to answer their prayers but continued to patiently trust God. Do you ever get impatient when you have to wait for something?

(let the children share)

What can you do to become more patient?

Pray each day for the fruit of the Holy Spirit, especially patience (Galatians 5:22-23)

4. MAGI VISIT

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
4. MAGI GIVE GIFTS	Worship Jesus with our gifts	Matthew 2:1-18	Camels

By Herod

"Who are you? What do you want here? How did you get past the guards? Why are you people always pestering me for something?"

"All right, if you won't go away, tell me what it is you want. Let's hear your complaints! Everyone wants something from me. Most would steal my very kingdom if they could!"

"I tried to be a good ruler, but they just took advantage of that. When I was harsh, they complained to the emperor. There's just no pleasing you Jews, is there?"

"So who are you anyway? You aren't going to say, are you? And it looks like you won't go away. Well, if you insist on staying you'll have to hear me out. There are two sides to every story, you know. Maybe if you saw my side you'd cease your continual rebelling. I doubt it, but there's always a chance, so I'll tell you my story. One thing I ask -- listen with an open mind. Forget anything you may have heard about me. All right? OK."

"My story begins when the Romans won control of Palestine from the descendants of the Macabeans. My father, Antipater II, was made ruler of this area. However he was killed in civil war and I took over. I had decided that I wanted to be rich and powerful. I thought that would give me peace and security. For 33 years I ruled over Israel, and had untold wealth and power -- but I never found the peace and meaning I was searching for. My life was filled with turmoil, within and without."

"It seems I was always fighting for my kingdom. When Pompey, Cracius and Julius Caesar were fighting for control of Rome I threw my lot with Pompey and gave him my army. When he was killed by the Egyptians I lost my fortune and kingdom. Before long, though, Julius was surrounded by the Egyptians and I was able to rescue him. Therefore I was made king of Palestine again. Cleopatra became a very bitter enemy for I was given much of her land to rule. I was just 26, reputed to be the best hunter and horseman in the world. I was a great wrestler, tall, charming, athletic, strong and handsome."

"During these years Mark Antony, the Calvary officer, and I were friends. When he and Octavius fought Casius and Brutus I backed them instead. When they lost I, too, lost my riches and kingdom. I went to them, offered them my loyalty, was forgiven and made king again."

"When I returned to Israel the Hasmoneans led the Jews in a revolt and I almost lost my kingdom again. To make peace I married the last Hasmonean, Mairamne. It was a disastrous mistake. I loved her better than all my other wives, but she never loved me."

"Meanwhile Antony fell in love with Cleopatra and gave much of my kingdom to her. I had to go to him and argue to have my land back. Then Antony divorced his wife, Octavius' twin sister, to marry Cleopatra. Octavius fought him and I helped Antony, but Antony lost and so did I. I went to Octavius and told him I was just loyally supporting my friends and now would support him, too. He made me king again."

"Five times I honestly raised a fortune, and each time I lost it. I was naturally gifted in raising money, but it never brought the satisfaction I thought it should. I developed the largest kingdom in the Roman empire, almost as big as when Solomon was king. Jerusalem became one of the greatest Roman cities. I built the hippodrome, theater, and many grand public buildings. I developed a complex water system and a fine defense. I built forts throughout the kingdom. I freed Galilee from bandits. I also rebuilt Caesarea, Decapolis, Athens and other

cities. I was considered the greatest non-Roman in the Roman Empire (I was half Jew and half Arab). Even at 65 I was considered the best archer in the empire. I was fair, generous and tried to give the people I ruled a good life.

"When famine hit Palestine I gave up my fortune again to buy food so they wouldn't starve. Do you know what they did when the famine ended? They raised an army and revolted against me! I tell you, those Jews were the hardest people in the empire to rule. They were stubborn, self-centered, deceitful, dishonest and totally uncooperative. There was no reasoning with them. They never liked me, despite all I did for them. I never found what I was looking for in popularity, either. The power I held over those who feared or respected me was empty, too.

"Fear of death started to torment me. Fear of losing my kingdom and fortune again were ever present. Why was I alive anyway? What good was life -- we all ended up dead anyway! All this started affecting my mind. I began to build 'walls' around myself. Why try to be kind and fair? If I couldn't get love, I would rule by force. I was told there was a better way, that God revealed promised to His chosen people, the Jews, that a Messiah would come to pay for sin and bring peace to all. If He chose the Jews for special privileges I certainly couldn't respect Him! I did respect some of those who claimed to believe in His promises and live for Him, though. There was an honest advisor I had who was Jewish, a general whom I respected and trusted who became a 'godfearer,' a proselyte to Judaism, and an old housekeeper who had a deep faith in God. I noticed they had something others didn't, something I was looking for. Because of my pride I kept putting off pursuing it, though. I thought about it a lot, but didn't want to admit the Jews had anything I needed.

"The last 10 - 15 years of my life were pure torture. I developed Arterio Sclerosis, Psychosis, and ulcers. The pressures of the 30 years I spent fighting for my kingdom were taking their toll. I suffered from rapid mood changes and delusions of persecution. My heart and kidneys weren't functioning properly and I started poisoning myself. I had constant pain and diarrhea the last several years of life. My lower bowels were gangrenous and filled with maggots. It got so bad I attempted suicide to find relief but failed.

"I became a wild man, eliminating anyone in my way. I set up my man as high priest in Jerusalem to keep the peace, but when he became too popular I invited him to my palace, got him drunk and drown him in my swimming pool. I even killed Mariamne, the wife I loved, for plotting against me. My insane jealousy and fear of losing her drove me to it. My conscience then tormented me so much I almost was driven insane.

"I killed my favorite 2 sons for trying to kill me. They were twins, sons of Mariamne, and I strangled them with my own hands. I murdered Antipater I, the next in line for my throne, five days before I died. I killed thousands, many of them relatives, in my paranoia and fear.

"One minor incident during this time was the killing of a couple dozen baby boys near Bethlehem. The Jews totally missed that one, but my spies didn't. They brought me word about the birth of this supposed 'king.' I wasn't going to take any chances, so I had all the boys there killed.

"By this time I'd given up trying to find peace. There was no such thing. My power and riches didn't provide it, but I wasn't about to give them up. They were all I had!

"On my deathbed I ordered all the noblemen herded into the hippodrome to be killed by the army when I died. I knew no one would mourn me, but this way I knew there would be mourning in Jerusalem when I died. Unfortunately they didn't carry it out. My soul entered eternity without God or salvation in 4 BC when I was 69 years old, after ruling for 33 years.

"My descendants ruled awhile after me, but never found what I was looking for, either. What about you? Are you looking to riches, power, popularity and grand accomplishments to meet the emptiness within? It won't happen! That is a dead-end street. I know, I followed it to its end. There must be a way, but that isn't it! Thanks for listening to my story. I hope it turns out better for you than it did for me!

By Magi

In the final years BC there was a strange kind of expectation for a coming King. Most countries and thinkers were aware of this premonition. They thought He would come through Judah. This affected the whole 'mood of nations everywhere. The west (Rome) and east (Persia) both felt it. I want to tell you about what it was like to see this King of the universe face to face when He came! What a privilege that was!

Isaiah describes Him this way: "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory' (6:1-3)."

John also saw Him and tells us about it: "At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. ... From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. (4:2-11)." I'm here to tell you that that King left heaven to come to earth, to be born in a cave to a young couple far from home. I know. I saw them! I am a Magi.

Magi is a Greek word that roughly translates to "wise men who are king-makers." "We three kings of orient are" is all wrong. We were not three but hundreds, we were not kings but king-makers, and weren't from the orient but near east.

"Magi" is the name of the priestly tribe of the Medes, like Levi among the Jews. We were skilled, capable, respectable and highly educated men. We held knowledge others had no access to, thus your word 'magic' comes from our name. We were so respected even bandits wouldn't rob us. We ruled as a body. We chose and trained the kings of the east.

We were very religious, having worshipped Zoroaster exclusively until Daniel came and became the top magi during his time in Babylon. He taught us about Yahweh (Daniel 2:10,27,48; 4:7,9; 5:11; 6:4) and a godly minority among us have followed Him from Daniel's time until my day, 600 years later. We knew it was about time for this king of the universe we awaited to be born. Daniel's prophecy that He would be cut off 483 years after the Jews were allowed to return to Israel was the key (9:24-27). We knew He'd have to be born soon to grow up and fulfill that prophecy. We were watching the skies for a star to announce His coming. Balaam had prophesied a star out of Jacob (Num 24:17) and that's what we looked for.

When it appeared we knew it was no natural event such as a conjunction of planets, a nova or a comet. It wasn't really a 'star' but was literally 'something that shines, blazes in an incredible way.' That's why the Bible doesn't use the normal word for 'star' to describe it (Luke 2). It was really God's Shekinah glory coming to earth once again. What made it certain for us was that this new shining appeared in Coma, near Virgo. Virgo, the virgin bringing forth the branch and the seed (stars in her hands) was a picture of Israel in general and Mary in particular. Coma elaborated on this, showing this King was to come to this virgin as a baby. Some stars are even named 'Jesus' in it!

As astronomers we were very interested in this, as believers we wanted to meet this King ourselves. We knew He was coming to Israel so we went to its capital, Jerusalem. That was a 5 month trip of 1,000 miles. It took months to get supplies corrected and business taken care of so we could take this year-long trip. Dozens of us went, protected by a thousand of the best Cavalry in the world, servants, luggage, etc. We all rode splendid horses, we were the best horsemen in the world at that time. Thousands of camels carried our baggage.

When we got to Jerusalem we assumed He would be the talk of the town. Imagine our surprise when no one knew and no one cared! People were more concerned about our visit than the birth of their King! Herod was particularly disturbed, and no one knew what he'd do.

You see, our country, Persia, was large and powerful while Rome was weak at this time. Jerusalem was almost defenseless with most of its soldiers gone to fight in Armenia. Thirty years before cavalry had come from Persia and chased Herod to Rome where he needed a large army to recapture his kingdom. We had come to fight Rome here in Palestine in 63, 55 and 40 BC. To make it worse, the Jews would have supported us in a revolt if we started one. As it was, we had more than enough soldiers to take over the area. Everyone knew we were looking for a new king for Persia, and old Herod

was so mentally off he'd destroy anything that even seemed like a threat. The Jews were more upset about what he'd do to them than about us or the birth of their King.

Oh, they knew the prophecies about His being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2) and when we got that information from them we moved on to Bethlehem. Funny, none of them bothered making the 5 mile trip to see their King. That was hard for us to understand when we had come so far as such great expense to see THEIR King!

We knew the general direction of Bethlehem, but not where the boy would be. God's Shekinah glory appeared to move before us and lead us to His home in Bethlehem, the same as the Shekinah glory had gone before the Jews when they left Egypt on their way to their promised land.

Mary and Joseph had stayed in Bethlehem with friends like Zachariah and Elizabeth nearby. Back home in Nazareth they would face gossip and rejection. Here they found peace and acceptance. They had long ago moved into a local home as Jesus turned from a baby to a toddler. They had been there almost a year when we arrived.

It was so wonderful seeing this One Whom we knew to be the King of the Universe, God Himself in human form. We bowed and worshipped Him and had a great time talking and sharing with His parents. It seemed to be very meaningful and encouraging to them to have us come so far. I guess the local ignorance of their Son and even the rejection they were facing was wearing on them. They were quite young, it was surprising to see as much maturity in them as we did.

When you love someone you want to give them gifts. We gave gifts to our God then and there. In our land we were more separated from Him, now we could make it up. We gave kingly gifts: gold (crowns were made of it), frankincense (pure incense, used in worship to our pure God) and myrrh (ointment for dead bodies, recognizing that this God was also a man). We gave these gifts for these reasons. We could have given silver, diamonds or money but we felt these better expressed the praise and worship in our heart. We had no idea how poor they were, or that they would need these riches that very night to finance their sudden flight to Egypt and sojourn there for several years. God knew, and provided through us before they could even know their need and ask for His provisions.

What an impact our arrival had on the neighbors! All too suddenly, though, God told us to leave and go home a different way. As honest men, we assumed Herod was honorable in his desire to find out more about this Child. God knew his heart, though, and enabled us to somehow slip through his chain of forts, bypass his patrol, and lose his spies as we left. That was truly a miracle of God. We would have stayed longer, but we were glad for the time we did have to worship our King.

When the neighbors saw us gone in the morning, and the family with the King gone, too, they assumed we had taken them back to Persia to make Him king there. I wish we could have done that, but it wasn't God's plan. When Herod tried to kill Him God had already rescued Him. God has His plan and nothing would thwart it. It was too bad those 2 dozen or so boys had to die. They were the first casualties in this phase of the warfare between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. I'm very glad I was on the side of the King!

Years later we heard that He had presented Himself as King (Matthew 21:5, etc.) but that He was rejected. Only a crown of thorns was given Him. One day, though, He will return as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev 19) and then all will be forced to bow in recognition of Him. I'm glad we could voluntarily bow out of love and devotion, no matter how much it cost us. What about you? Is He your king? His kingdom now is in the hearts and lives of His people. Does He rule and reign as King of your heart and life? We were king-makers, but so are you. Only you can make Him King of your life!

4. MAGI VISIT

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Herod?

What kind of a man was he?

Why didn't he follow God?

Who were the magi (wise men)?

They are Gentiles like us, but they came from far away to see Jesus. Aren't you glad that everyone is welcome to come to Jesus?

Why do you think they stopped what they were doing, left their families and spent all that time and money to see Jesus?

Why didn't the religious rulers go to Bethlehem to see baby Jesus, even though they knew He was born there?

How do you think the magi (wise men) felt when they saw Jesus?

The magi (wise men) worshipped Jesus and gave Him gifts. Do you worship Him? Do you give Him gifts?

Why does Jesus want us to worship Him and give Him gifts today?

What gifts does Jesus give you?

What is the best gift Jesus ever gave you?

Have you thanked Him for it? If not please thank Him right now.

4. MAGI VISIT

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Herod?

Herod was the man the Romans appointed to be the ruler over everyone in Palestine.

What kind of a man was he?

At first he was kind but he became very angry and evil when he grew older.

Why didn't he follow God?

He was very proud of his money and power and didn't want to serve God.

Who were the magi (wise men)?

They were special men from the east (Persia) who appointed and trained kings in their country. They had heard about the Messiah from Daniel and came to worship Him.

They are Gentiles like us, but they came from far away to see Jesus. Aren't you glad that everyone is welcome to come to Jesus?

Yes!

Why do you think they stopped what they were doing, left their families and spent all that time and money to see Jesus?

They loved God and wanted to honor Him as well as see His Son, their Savior.

Why didn't the religious rulers go to Bethlehem to see baby Jesus, even though they knew He was born there?

They were too proud to humble themselves. They thought only of themselves.

How do you think the magi (wise men) felt when they saw Jesus?

It was the most special day of their lives and they thanked God for their Savior.

The magi (wise men) worshipped Jesus and gave Him gifts. Do you worship Him? Do you give Him gifts?

(let the children answer)

Why does Jesus want us to worship Him and give Him gifts today?

It is one way we can thank Him and show Him we love Him. That brings joy to Him.

What gifts does Jesus give you?

(answers will vary)

What is the best gift Jesus ever gave you?

(answers will vary)

Have you thanked Him for it? If not please thank Him right now.

(let them pray and thank God for what He has done for them)

5. JESUS' CHILDHOOD

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
5. JESUS' CHILDHOOD	Obey your parents, God	Matthew 2:19-23 Luke 2:39-52	Carpenter tools

Taken from Mary's Diary

If Mary would have kept, some of the things she wrote may have been something like this:

5 BC (in a stable in Bethlehem)

My precious baby, Jesus, was born last night. What a time we had finding a room. We ended up in a stable, but God was with us. Angels told shepherds and they came to share our joy with us. Joseph is so proud, even though he knows he isn't the father. We both consider it a privilege and honor to raise God's own Son!

5 BC (in a home in Bethlehem)

(Later) Well, we moved into a house in Bethlehem. We don't want to go back to Nazareth where there is so much gossip and criticism. People say I got pregnant by a Roman soldier and won't believe this is God's miracle baby! It's nice having time alone with Joseph after the busy start our marriage got off to. Being near Zacharias and Elizabeth is special, as well. Here, in the town of our ancestor David, we feel extra close to God. We are near enough to Jerusalem to visit the temple as well. We've enjoyed getting to know Ana and Simeon better after that first meeting when we dedicated Jesus. How nice it is to have a small support group of believers who can support us and encourage us! Everyone needs fellowship and we thank God for providing these people for us! I don't know what the future holds, but I know for now we are content and happily enjoying our new son Jesus.

2 BC (in Egypt)

Here we are in Egypt. I never thought we'd move here, but the decision was made for us. We had a surprise visit by the magi, king-makers from the East. When they left God sent an angel to warn us that Herod wanted to kill our baby so we fled that very night! We know God wanted us to leave and so we obeyed Him. It was very hard to leave our comfortable little home. Leaving our friends and relatives was even harder. We weren't even able to tell them where we were going – we just disappeared! I know it had to be that way to protect us, but it must have been very hard on them. Hearing about the baby boys who were killed was very hard as well. We sent word to Zacharias and Elizabeth as soon as we could and they told our other friends.

Fortunately God had sent the magi to give us many valuable gifts so we have been able to finance our trip and time here in Egypt. God thinks of everything! We are living in a colony of Jews. There have been Jews in Egypt since Joseph came here. Not all of them left when Moses led the people out. Then many other Jews moved here for safety when Babylon was attacking our country. While we missed our friends, we met others who became close to us. It is a hard time, though. Obeying God isn't always easy – but it is always right! Joseph and I have gotten much closer and our marriage has grown stronger. This has stretched our trust in God and made our faith stronger as well.

Jesus is growing up before our eyes. He walks now and talks. He is so cute, yet very obedient. Little James was just born so now Jesus will have a little brother to play with. He seems to love James already and wants to help take care of him. James does seem to have a stubborn streak in him, however!

1 BC (To Nazareth)

When Herod died God told Joseph we were to return to Israel. Of course we obeyed. We wanted to go back to Bethlehem where we had privacy, friends and good memories, but God showed

through another angel dream that Archelaus, who now ruled in Judea, made that area unsafe for us and our son, Jesus. God wanted us to return to Nazareth and, although that isn't where we wanted to be, we were committed to doing God's will before our own. Nazareth was a quiet country town in Galilee, far from Jerusalem and Judea. Gentiles and Roman soldiers outnumbered Jews there and, while it wouldn't have been our choice, it was God's choice for us. Because of that Jesus grew up in Nazareth and was a 'Nazarene' as prophesied.

4 AD (In Nazareth)

Jesus is now 8 years old. My how fast He is growing! He loves playing with His younger brothers James and Jude, and well as His sisters. I'm expecting again, too. Jesus is such a great help with all the work to do here! I love Him so much and He loves us as well.

Jesus has finished His schooling at home and started working with His earthly father, Joseph. They build houses from stones and wood. Sometimes they make furniture as well. He also is going to the synagogue school for boys where He is memorizing much of the Old Testament while learning to obey God. He is also learning Hebrew, which we use when we worship. He is very fluent in Aramaic, which we speak at home and Greek, which the Gentiles around us speak. He is learning Latin as well for that is the language used for business. It's good to see Him spending so much time with His father. They have grown very close. I can see why God chose such a fine, godly man like Joseph to raise His Son. They are closer than any father and son I know.

While Jesus has heard stories about His birth and how He is different from His brothers and sisters in that God impregnated me with Him, He is humble and giving. He is always willing to serve anyone in need and has a great appetite to learn Scripture and about God. He has a deep love for God and is learning to obey God as well as us.

8 AD (In Jerusalem)

What a time we had in Jerusalem last week! Jesus is 12 and so we took Him to the temple for the first time for His bar mitzvah – recognition that He has become a man. All males who can do so are required to go to the temple for the 3 main feasts: Dedication (in December), Passover (in April) and Tabernacles (in September). We had a great time there with family and friends who also made the trip. Jesus was enthralled by the temple and wanted to learn all He could.

However on the way home we realized Jesus wasn't with our group. We assumed He had left with another family or friends that left town a little after us, but when we all gathered that evening we realized He wasn't with us! We really panicked! We felt like such awful parents! The next day we rushed back to Jerusalem and there He was, still in the temple, asking questions of the religious leaders and learning all He could. They were very impressed with His insight and spiritual perception. Since He was now a 'man' He took seriously His responsibility to learn about God so He could better obey His heavenly Father as He has always obeyed us.

28 AD (In Nazareth)

Jesus is now 32 years old. What a fine man He has become. As a mother I am so very proud of Him! I keep remembering His birth and the words from God about how He would be different, how He would be God's very own Son. While I am thrilled about that I am also concerned for Him for He is so loving and sensitive. I hate to see Him go through anything painful, but who am I to interfere with God's plan. James, Jude and the others have long since married and have children of their own. The oldest are approaching their teens. Meanwhile Joseph still lives at home with us. I'm glad to have Him here and He and Joseph are the very best of friends, but I know others see Him as strange and different for never marrying. I believe that has to do with God's plan for Him as the Messiah – God Himself among us. I sometimes wonder how much He knows about this: is He aware of His uniqueness and mission? Sometimes I feel He suspects, other times I'm not sure. He certainly has lived a normal life like all the rest of us and faced the same things we all face. He still learns to obey God in all He does. I know that is a lesson He will need to learn as God unfolds His plan for Him and for us through Him. I thank God for choosing us to raise His Son and I'm so glad I obeyed God when He revealed His plan to me. If only all His children would obey Him, how much better everything would be!

5. JESUS' CHILDHOOD

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why didn't Mary and Joseph want to return to their home town, Nazareth?

Why did they go to Egypt? Do you think this was easy to do?

How were Mary and Joseph able to afford the trip to Egypt and life there?

What do you think it would have been like to have Jesus for an older brother?

Why did Jesus stay in the temple when He was 12 instead of going home with His parents?

How do you think Jesus felt when everyone else was getting married and having children but He still stayed at home? Do you think it was hard for Him when others made fun of Him for being 'different'?

Jesus grew up the same as all of us. How does it make you feel to know He went through everything go through and knows what it is like? (read Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16)

What examples of obedience do we find in this lesson?

Why is it sometimes hard to obey God? When is it hardest for you to obey God?

5. JESUS' CHILDHOOD

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why didn't Mary and Joseph want to return to their home town, Nazareth?

They didn't want to go back because of the gossip and criticism. Mary was pregnant before they were married and people gossiped about them. That hurt them so they wanted to stay away.

Why did they go to Egypt? Do you think this was easy to do?

They went to Egypt because an angel told them to go. It must have been very hard to suddenly leave their home and friends in Bethlehem, especially after a long and busy visit with the mage (wise men). They went in obedience to what God wanted. Joseph obeyed God when he was told he could marry Mary and he is obeying God again. Even when we don't understand everything, we must still obey.

How were Mary and Joseph able to afford the trip to Egypt and life there?

The magi (wise men) had given them many valuable gifts. God had provided the money they needed even before they knew they would need it. They didn't even have to pray – God already answered. He provides for many of our needs before we are aware of them as well.

What do you think it would have been like to have Jesus for an older brother?

He was always kind and loving, never did anything to hurt his brothers or sisters. But living with someone perfect can be hard if your parents expect you to be perfect, too.

Why did Jesus stay in the temple when He was 12 instead of going home with His parents?

He wanted to learn everything He could about His heavenly Father, God.

How do you think Jesus felt when everyone else was getting married and having children but He still stayed at home? Do you think it was hard for Him when others made fun of Him for being 'different'?

It must have hurt a lot. Nobody likes to be criticized, but He knew He was obeying God even when it was hard.

Jesus grew up the same as all of us. How does it make you feel to know He went through everything go through and knows what it is like? (read Hebrews 2:14-18; 4:15-16)

It is comforting to know He understands what we go through because He has gone through it Himself. We can talk to Him about anything because He knows by experience what life is like.

What examples of obedience do we find in this lesson?

Joseph obeyed God in going to Egypt, then back to Nazareth. Mary obeyed God by trusting her husband when God led him. Jesus obeyed God by following God's will for His life.

Why is it sometimes hard to obey God? When is it hardest for you to obey God?

It is hard to obey because our sin nature causes us to be self-centered and want things to go our way. (answers will vary)

6. JOHN THE BAPTIST POINTS TO JESUS

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
6. JOHN THE BAPTIST	Stand up for Jesus	Matthew 3:1-12; 4:1-12 Mark 1:1-8,14; 6:14-29 Luke 3:1-18; 9:7-9	Man hands raised

By John the Baptizer

You know, every time I think about earth I get this strange pain in my neck! I'm getting it right now. I wonder what causes that? Maybe it has to do with the last thing that happened when I was on earth. Let's see, what can I remember? I remember being in a dark, damp, cold and filthy dungeon for over a year. I remember trying to keep my faith in God despite the miserable conditions I found myself in. I was confused about the rejection of the Messiah I came to proclaim.

Then bright sunlight entered my cell as the door was thrust open. After weeks of darkness the light blinded me. Before I could see what was happening I was dragged outside, beaten, hit, spit on, and then forced to kneel with my head over a cutting block. I remember thinking, "I going to die!" I didn't have any fear, just peace. I did have some unanswered questions: If Jesus was the Messiah, why were people rejecting Him? Why did He let them turn against Him -- and me? Did I do something wrong? Then instantly I was in His presence and everything was bright and warm and beautiful. Those questions no longer meant anything. It was all behind me and eternity with Jesus lay ahead. There was no more looking back. I guess you could say I was the first to lose my head for Jesus!

MY NAME IS YOKHANAN (or Yehohanan). You call me John, the one who baptized. I was a PK that turned out right. I won't tell you a lot about my birth, for I'm sure you know the story about Gabriel coming to my father (Luke 1). I had wonderful, godly parents. However I didn't have them long enough. They were quite old when I was born, and when they died I was on my own. I grew up in the wilderness wearing animal skins and eating locust and honey. I had taken a Nazarite vow, which meant I never cut my hair, ate grape products or touched a dead person or animal. I never married.

I could have been a priest, but knew that wasn't what God wanted. God was preparing me to be an evangelist for Him, but unlike your evangelists today. People had to make a 2-day trip to come see me. When there I pointed out their sins as clearly as possible (Mark 1:1-6). God was using me to be a 'herald' - one who went before a king telling people to get the roads fixed and country safe for his welcome. I did this by calling the people to be baptized as an outward sign of their inner repentance (Mt 3:1-12; Mk 1:1-8; Lk 3:1-18).

I started in the fall of AD 29, near the time of Rosh Hashanah which focused on repentance. Since it was the start of a Sabbatical year when all planting and unnecessary work ceased for a year, many were free to come hear me preach. This turned the people's hearts to things of God. I knew this was a start, something God would use in a very big way.

I knew I was getting the people ready for the Messiah and was to point everyone to Him. I had an idea who it was from stories I heard from my mother and father when young. They told me about my cousin Jesus and His miraculous conception and birth. I spent many hours studying the prophecies of the Messiah, and as far as I could tell He had fulfilled every one so far.

Still, when He came and asked me to baptize Him I wasn't sure. We spent several evenings talking about this, our parents, and the work God was starting through us. I felt HE

should be baptizing ME! Still, I submitted to His will and baptized Him so He could identify with my message and the people's needs (Mt 3:13-17; Mk 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-23). What a privilege that was -- the highlight of my life! Immediately He left for 40 days to seek God's will and spend time with God (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13).

By the time Jesus had returned fall had turned to spring (we had no winter in our climate). It was the year AD 30. I was still baptizing in the Jordan, moving up the Jordan valley and living off the land. I later found out that the day Jesus was tempted by Satan was the same day I was tempted in the same way (John 1:19-34). The religious leaders came and thought I was the Messiah. I, too, was tempted to be proud and take God's glory as my own. With God's help I didn't though. I told them I was just a voice, a spokesman for God. I wasn't the electricity, just the material that conducted it.

When Jesus returned the next day, Friday, I told everyone he was the Lamb of God, come to take away the sins of the world (John 1:35-51). Some of my followers understood, but most were looking for a king to defeat the Roman armies. Saturday I sent John and Andrew to Jesus and they invited James and Peter, their brothers. All of us were related in one way or another and had known each other to some extent before this time. On Sunday, when Jews could again travel, They took Philip and Nathanael and the whole gang went to Cana to a family wedding. There Jesus would do His first miracle (John 2).

LET ME FINISH UP MY STORY, though. I continued to point my followers to Jesus, but less than a year later I was arrested for pointing out Herod's sin of adultery. After another year in prison I was beheaded (Mark 6:17-29). I was willing to give my life for Jesus, the One who would give His life for me. I counted it a real privilege. It turned out I was just the first of many to do so.

Matthew suffered martyrdom by being slain with a sword at a distant city of Ethiopia. Mark expired at Alexandria, after having been cruelly dragged through the streets of that city. Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece. John was put into a caldron of boiling oil, but escaped death in a miraculous manner, and was afterwards banished to Patmos. Peter was crucified at Rome with his head downward. James the Greater was beheaded at Jerusalem. James the Less was thrown from a lofty pinnacle of the temple, and then beaten to death with a fuller's club. Philip was hanged up against a pillar at Heiropolis in Phrygia. Bartholomew was flayed alive. Andrew was bound to a cross, where he preached to his persecutors until he died. Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies. Jude was shot to death with arrows. Matthias was first stoned, and then beheaded. Barnabas of the Gentiles was stoned to death by the Jews at Salonica. Paul after various tortures and persecutions, was at length beheaded at Rome by the Emperor Nero.

It hasn't stopped there. Believers have been persecuted and killed for their faith throughout the centuries. In the past year it's been estimated that 160,000 have died for their faith. More have died for Jesus during the last century than in all previous centuries combined. As the end gets near, Satan steps up his attack against God and his people. Don't be surprised. Jesus told you "In this world you will have trouble," but then He adds: "But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) I was just a friend of the Bridegroom, YOU are the bride (John 3:27-30). You have a much greater position and privilege in the kingdom. Love Him. Live for Him. And if necessary die for Him. He's worth all that and more!

6. JOHN THE BAPTIST POINTS TO JESUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was John the Baptizer?

What was his life and dress like?

What was his message to those who came to hear him?

What does the term 'Messiah' mean?

Why did John use the term 'Lamb of God' to describe Jesus?

Which followers of John's became followers of Jesus?

How did John die?

What does 'martyr' mean? What other disciples were martyrs?

Why does God sometimes allow His people to die early and horrible deaths?

If God willed it, would you be willing to die for Him?

What can you do to live for Jesus today? How can you show Him by your life?

6. JOHN THE BAPTIST POINTS TO JESUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was John the Baptizer?

He was a cousin of Jesus' who God called to tell people that the Messiah was coming and then to tell his followers that Jesus was that Messiah.

What was his life and dress like?

He wore animal skins and ate locust and honey. He lived in the wilderness and dedicated his life to God.

What was his message to those who came to hear him?

He told them to repent and turn from sin so they would be ready to accept the Messiah when He came.

What does the term 'Messiah' mean?

It refers to God Himself who became man and was therefore God and man in one Person. He came to pay for the sins of the world so we could be in heaven with God.

Why did John use the term 'Lamb of God' to describe Jesus?

The Jews thought the Messiah would be a soldier who would lead armies against Rome, but that's not what Jesus came to do. By calling Him "Lamb of God" they would understand He was the fulfillment of the sacrifices of lambs they made at the temple. Especially they would remember the lamb who died on Passover so they would live. This is what Jesus came to do.

Which followers of John's became followers of Jesus?

John, Andrew, Peter, James, Philip and Nathanael.

How did John die?

John was beheaded when in prison.

What does 'martyr' mean? What other disciples were martyrs?

A martyr is someone who dies for their faith. All except John were martyred, including Paul.

Why does God sometimes allow His people to die early and horrible deaths?

We don't know why God sometimes allows His people to die early and horrible deaths. We know He has a reason, though, and that everything He does is done out of love for us. Sometimes it is for a lesson or message to others. Always, though, it is to glorify Himself in some way and that is what we all want to do in life and in death.

If God willed it, would you be willing to die for Him?

He died for us and paid for all our sins for all eternity, so if we would die for Him it would just mean we would go to heaven sooner. It would be an honor and privilege if God chose that for us. That is His choice to make, but it is up to us to live for Him each day. Sometimes it would be easier to die for Him than live for Him each day of our lives.

What can you do to live for Jesus today? How can you show Him by your life?

Answers will vary, but by living as Jesus would in love and forgiveness, in kindness and joy we can show others what Jesus is like.

7. BAPTISM OF JESUS

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
7. BAPTISM OF JESUS	Baptism shows we love Jesus	Matthew 3:13-17 Mark 1:9-11 Luke 3:21-23	Dove down

By John the Baptizer

One of the most exciting moments in American history was when Colonel Travis drew a line in the dust at the Alamo and Jim Bowie, Davey Crockett and 130 others crossed the line to volunteer to die for the freedom of others. It's a recurring theme in history. There is the lone Calvary soldier who stays behind to hold up the Indians for a few minutes so the rest of the troop can escape to freedom. Or there is the doughboy in World War I who goes behind enemy lines to destroy a machine gun nest so his buddies can safely advance, knowing he won't make it back. Then there is the World War II pilot who doesn't bail out of his plane when hit but stays with it to make sure it crashes safely and not where others will be killed. Or it may be the marine in Viet Nam who dives on a live grenade to take the impact in his own body and save the others in his patrol. Many examples could be given, but the greatest one happened 2000 years ago in a place called Palestine. I was the one to draw the line in the dust for my cousin Jesus to cross over. He is the one who took the stand, who was willing to die for us all.

IT HAPPENED THIS WAY. God had called me to be the herald of the Messiah, the one announcing the way and telling everyone that He was coming (Mark 1:1-6). I had been preaching and baptizing at the Jordan River. My message was one of repentance from sin and turning to God for cleansing, as pictured in baptism (Mt 3:1-12; Mk 1:1-8; Lk 3:1-18). The Jordan River was only about 10' wide and 3-10' deep. Many traveled for several days to come hear me. Most who came responded, but others came to mock and spy for the religious leaders. It was the fall, near Rosh Hashanah when the focus is on repentance, of AD 29. Since the Sabbatical year was just starting people were thinking more of spiritual things and they had more time to come to hear me.

It was about this time that Jesus lay down his tools for the last time, took a slow breath, gave his father Joseph a long hug, and walked out of the carpenter shop for the last time. He went home, got a few things, hugged Mary, and headed south. They had anticipated this day for a long time and often talked about it. They were all excited about what was to come, but it was still a very solemn, serious time.

During the 60 mile walk to be found by me Jesus had plenty of time to think. He could have turned back at any time and know one would have known. But He didn't.

WHEN JESUS ARRIVED where I was baptizing he spent several days on the fringes of the crowd, watching and thinking, awaiting God's perfect timing. One evening when I was alone He approached me. We talked through most of the night. We had heard about each other often from our parents. The last time we were together we were too young to remember. We talked about family, for we were relatives. There was an instant rapport between us, for we each knew our lives were intertwined in God's will. We were the only two who realized what was about to happen, and even our understanding was very foggy and incomplete. Still, we really appreciated the support we received from each other.

We disagreed, though, about who should baptize whom! I realized I was to obey and serve Him, so I baptized Him. Although He was sinless it was His way of identifying with my message as well as the people He came to save. What an event that baptismal was! I'll never forget it. The heavens opened and God's Spirit came down. God Himself voiced His approval of this step of obedience Jesus was taking (Mt 3:13-17; 1:9-11; 3:21-23). What made it such a big deal was that it was a public commitment to be the Messiah, a stepping across the line in front of everyone. The line was crossed. His mission had begun. However someone else was watching and by this public stand knew He was the Messiah. That was Satan.

7. BAPTISM OF JESUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why was Jesus baptized?

What happened when Jesus was baptized and why?

Why was God so pleased with Jesus?

If Jesus was God, why did He need the Holy Spirit to help Him?

Why was being baptized so significant to Jesus?

Why didn't John want to baptize Jesus?

Why are Christians today baptized?

Will a person go to heaven if they have accepted Jesus as Savior but have not been baptized?

Have you been baptized? What did it mean to you?

After you have been baptized, what can you do to show that you love Jesus?

7. BAPTISM OF JESUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why was Jesus baptized?

It was God's way to show everyone that He was identifying with John's message and the people's sin. He didn't have sin to be removed, but He was showing He was a person like them. God wanted Him to be baptized and He obeyed.

What happened when Jesus was baptized and why?

God's Holy Spirit came upon Him in a special way to enable Him to do the work of the Messiah. God Himself said that He was pleased with Jesus' commitment to follow Him.

Why was God so pleased with Jesus?

Because He was submitting His will to God the Father and was willing to be the One who paid for the sins of the whole world.

If Jesus was God, why did He need the Holy Spirit to help Him?

Philippians 2:5-11 says that when God the Son became the man Jesus He voluntarily laid aside that part of His deity that would have made life easier so He could face everything as we face it. He was sinless and holy, but He voluntarily laid aside His power and knowledge as God so He'd face life and death as we do. He had to do that to be our substitute. He did His miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. That's why He spent so much time in prayer.

Why was being baptized so significant to Jesus?

He was publicly committing Himself to follow God's will for His life and be the Messiah. By doing so His ministry was beginning. Others would know and so would Satan.

Why didn't John want to baptize Jesus?

He didn't think He was worthy. He knew who Jesus was and felt Jesus should baptize him.

Why are Christians today baptized?

It is our way of showing everyone that we died with Jesus (under the water) and have come back to new life in Him (up out of the water). The water doesn't cleanse, only Jesus' blood cleanses. But doing it in water publicly shows everyone we have accepted Jesus as Savior and want to live for Him.

Will a person go to heaven if they have accepted Jesus as Savior but have not been baptized?

Yes. We should want to be baptized to follow God but that doesn't add to our salvation. The thief on the cross with Jesus wasn't baptized but Jesus said he would be in heaven.

Have you been baptized? What did it mean to you?

(answers will vary as they share)

After you have been baptized, what can you do to show that you love Jesus?

(answers will vary)

8. TEMPTATION OF JESUS

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
8. TEMPTATION OF JESUS	Temptation	Matthew 4:1-11 Mark 1:12-13 Luke 4:1-13	Piece of bread

By John the Baptizer

IMMEDIATELY HE WENT INTO THE WILDERNESS to get alone with God to pray, commune, ask for guidance and direction, and have time to think. God's Spirit drew Him (Mt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13). For 40 days Jesus prayed, worshipped and strengthened His commitment to whatever God had for Him.

Now Jesus had often been tempted in His life. He faced all the normal temptations children, adolescents, young adults and then single adults face. He even felt them more keenly because that contrasted so sharply with His innocence and perfection. But none of those temptations was anything like what He was hit with in the wilderness. He had been tempted to draw back and not be baptized, to not even leave the carpentry shop. Now the temptations took a new turn.

For one thing, they came at a time when He was very open and vulnerable. After fasting for 40 days hunger hits big time! He was totally drained physically, emotionally and spiritually. He was at a high point in being anxious and ready to be the Messiah of the world. That's when Satan hit Him, offering Him easy ways to be the Messiah. He wanted to have the end justify the means.

Some may wonder if Jesus could really be tempted? He certainly could. Could He sin? Yes and no. When He became man He set aside the use of divine attributes which would have made His life as a man easier, things such as omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence (Phil. 2:6-8). He was still God in that He was perfect, holy, righteous, just, etc. As a man He could certainly have sinned, but as God He couldn't. If He would have sinned in His humanity, His deity would have stopped it. However He resisted sin in His humanity and therefore never had to have sin stopped by His deity. This would have disqualified Him to be our substitute on the cross. It's like a car with a governor that won't let it go over 65 MPH, but the driver never goes that fast so it never needs to kick in. Jesus was God. He could have sinned but He didn't. He was certainly tempted to, though!

He was tempted **PERSONALLY**, to reactivate His omnipotence and make stones into bread so He could eat. It would have meant impatience at God's timing and providing for Himself instead. He was then tempted **NATIONALLY**, to throw Himself down from the temple where everyone would be impressed as angels caught Him. They surely would have seen Him as God and crowned Him Messiah then and there, but He knew the cross had to come before the crown. Finally He was tempted **UNIVERSALLY**. Satan offered Him rulership over the whole world. He was offering Him the authority he got from Adam when Adam sinner. This temptation worked with the first perfect man, so Satan was sure it would work with the second, but it didn't. Again, Jesus knew He had to obey God's timing only, and He could not shortcut the cross. The end never justifies the means.

At His baptism Jesus was proclaimed Messiah. At His temptation He was proven Messiah by defeating His number one challenger. There would be more battles, that was sure.

But for now the issue was decided. Angels came and ministered to Jesus, feeding and encouraging Him.

How does this apply to us? If Jesus took such a stand for us, we must also take a stand for Him. Jesus is worth dying for, but Jesus is also worth living for! We, too, can have victory over sin and temptation, but only in God's strength, never in our own.

This story illustrates the point nicely. A modern jet on the runway was a beauty. It was equipped with the latest technology and weaponry. The jet could fly at supersonic speeds, and quickly race to great heights. If an enemy plane were in the vicinity, the jet's pilot could destroy that plane miles away, before the plane's pilot could even see him. An Air Force pilot climbed into the jet and off he flew, leaving the earth far behind as he soared above the clouds. Although no one was looking, the pilot straightened himself in his seat. He was naturally proud of his jet, and of himself for qualifying to fly such a sophisticated mode of transportation. After he reached cruising altitude, the pilot heard a strange noise. He took off his helmet, and recognized the noise--it sounded like someone gnawing on rubber or plastic. Peering down below the instrument panel, to his horror the pilot saw a rat, out of his reach and gnawing on the main electrical wire between the jet's controls and its engine. If the rat were to cut through that line, the jet would careen out of control, and crash immediately. The pilot's first instinct was to descend--an emergency landing. But he had flown so far that there was not enough time to land. So he decided to ascend--maybe the rat couldn't survive at a higher altitude. The pilot put on his oxygen mask, boosted power to the jet's engine, and quickly climbed as high as he could go. Soon the gnawing sound ended. When the pilot landed safely, he found the rat--dead. The only way we can have victory over sin, the only way we can stand for Jesus, is to live above this world and move as close to Him as possible. If that isn't where you are, you're in danger!

8. TEMPTATION OF JESUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Is this the first time Jesus was ever tempted?

What made these temptations different from others?

If Jesus was God and was sinless and perfect, could He have given in to the temptation and sinned?

What were the three temptations Satan offered Him?

1.

2.

3.

What did Jesus do to resist? How was He able to have victory?

Do you know any Bible verses by memory? Which ones?

What are some of the temptations Satan uses against Christians today?

What Bible verses can you memorize and use against these temptations?

8. TEMPTATION OF JESUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Is this the first time Jesus was ever tempted?

No

What made these temptations different from others?

When we commit to following God and doing His will Satan always attacks harder. He focuses on legitimate needs but tries to get us to meet them on our own instead of waiting for God to provide. The things Jesus was tempted to do weren't 'wrong' but they weren't God's perfect will for Him. He tempts us in the same way.

If Jesus was God and was sinless and perfect, could He have given in to the temptation and sinned?

Yes. Jesus had a free will like us. He didn't have a sin nature. He was like Adam before Adam sinned in that way. If He would have sinned He couldn't have been our Savior for He would have had His own sins. God cannot sin, but Jesus resisted temptation as a person, just like us.

What were the three temptations Satan offered Him?

1. Make stones into bread: instead of waiting for God to provide for Him, He would take things into His own hands and feed Himself. Satan wants us to be impatient and not wait for God.
2. Throw Himself down from the temple: everyone would be impressed to see angels catch Him and they would make Him Messiah and King – but He wouldn't go to the cross to pay for our sins. Satan offers us short-cuts so we can make life easier for ourselves, but that's not God's way.
3. Offered rulership over the whole world: this worked when Satan tried it with Adam ("make you like God") but it didn't work with Jesus. Jesus knew He had to trust God's way and God's timing. Again, He would have avoided the cross. That made it tempting. Satan wants us to find the easy way to serve God, without difficulties, but that isn't God's will.

What did Jesus do to resist? How was He able to have victory?

He knew God's will because He knew the Bible. He quoted the Bible each time. Each quote was from Deuteronomy. The Word of God is our offensive weapon, our sword (Eph 6:17).

Do you know any Bible verses by memory? Which ones?

(let them say the Bible verses they know)

What are some of the temptations Satan uses against Christians today?

(answers will vary)

What Bible verses can you memorize and use against these temptations?

(answers will vary – have them say the Bible verse from memory or look it up and read it. They can write down a list of verses to use for different temptations). Listed below are

some Bible verses to use for various temptations. Spend lots of time making sure they know verses they can use:

Our Adversaries Will Be Defeated: Deuteronomy 32:43; Philippians 1:28; Deuteronomy 33:27

Victory is Promised: I Corinthians 15:57; I Chronicles 29:11; Proverbs 21:31; I John 5:4, 18; Rev. 12:11; 15:2; Romans 8:37; II Corinthians 2:14; John 16:33

God Promises To Fight For Us: I Samuel 14:47; Jeremiah 1:8

No Weapon Formed Against The Believer Can Prosper: Isaiah 54:17

Jesus Is Constantly Praying & Interceding On Our Behalf: I John 2:1; Hebrews 7:25

God Is Always With Us: Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5; Matthew 18:20; John 14:16, 21; Revelations 3:20

Confession Means Cleansing & Forgiveness: I John 1:8-9; Thessalonians 5:23-24; I Timothy 4:5; Luke 11:13; II Timothy 2:21; Jude 1; Romans 8:33-39; Titus 3:4-5

God Hears & Answers Prayer: Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:9; Jeremiah 33:3

We will never Be Separated From God: Romans 8:35-39; John 10:27-29; 3:36; 5:24

God Will Meet All Your Needs: Philippians 4:19; Psalm 84:11; Romans 8:32; I Samuel 12:24

There Is No Need To Worry: Matthew 6:25,34; I Peter 5:7; Isaiah 40:11; Matthew 5:38-39; Psalm 37:1-9; Jude 24

God Promises His Care & Protection: Deuteronomy 33:27; Genesis 17:1; Jeremiah 23:24; 32:7

Everything Will Work Out Right In the End: Romans 8:28

You Won't Ever Face Anything You Can't Handle With God's Help: I Corinthians 10:13

Peace Is Available No Matter What: John 14:27; Romans 5:1; Colossians 1:20; Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:6-7; Matthew 11:28-30; II Timothy 1:7

Trials Are Allowed To Bring Spiritual Growth: Psalm 119:67,71,75; 94:12; Isa. 48:10; Rom. 5:3

The Believer Has Nothing To Fear: Proverbs 3:25; Isaiah 14:3; Psalm 34:4; Joshua 1:9; 10:8; 23:9-11; Leviticus 26:8; Exodus 14:13; I Samuel 17:45-47; II Samuel 22:33-35,40-41

We Are Assured Of Eventual Triumph Over Our Adversaries: Acts 2:39

Victory Is Guaranteed Us: I Corinthians 15:57; Romans 8:37; I Chronicles 29:11; I John 5:4, 18; II Chronicles 32:8; Revelation 3:5; 21:7

God Will Help Us Carry Our Burdens: Nehemiah 4:10; Matthew 11:30; Psalm 55:22

God Promises Comfort: Psalm 23:4; Lamentations 3:22-23; Matthew 5:4; 11:28-30; John 14:16, 18; John 14:16, 18; Romans 15:4; II Corinthians 1:3-4; II Thessalonians 2:16-17

God Will Give Us Courage: Proverbs 38:1; I Corinthians 16:13; II Timothy 1:7

Guidance Is Promised: Psalm 32:8; Isaiah 30:21; 58:11; Luke 1:79; John 15:13

God Will Help In Your Sorrow: Proverbs 10:22; Isaiah 53:4; John 16:22; II Corinthians 6:10; I Thessalonians 4:13; Revelation 21:4

Wisdom Is Promised Those Who Ask: James 1:5; 3:15-17; Luke 16:8; 21:15; I Cor. 2:5; 3:19

Rejecting Wrong Thoughts: II Corinthians 10:5; Psalm 139:23-24; 141:3-4; Isaiah 26:3-4; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:18-21

Power of the Word of God: Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12; Isaiah 55:11; 59:21; Psalm 119:81, 105, 111-112; Proverbs 30:5; Lamentations 2:17; 3:37; Matthew 24:35; John 5:24; 8:51; 15:7; Romans 10:17

God's Promise of Angelic Intervention: II Kings 6:17; Psalm 34:6-7; Psalm 91:11; Daniel 6:22; 10:5-14; Acts 12:15

9. WATER TO WINE

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
9. WATER TO WINE	Miracles – Jesus greater than nature	John 2:1-11	Pot of water/wine

By Nathanael,

Have you ever wondered what happened to the 56 men who signed the Declaration of Independence for the United States of America? Five signers were captured by the British as traitors, and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army, another had two sons captured. Nine of the 56 fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the Revolutionary War. What kind of men were they? Here are some examples. Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts, and died in rags. Thomas McKean was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay, and his family was kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him, and poverty was his reward. At the Battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis, had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. The owner urged General George Washington to open fire. His home was destroyed, and Nelson died bankrupt. John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and his grist mill were laid waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home to find his wife dead and his children vanished. A few weeks later he died from exhaustion and a broken heart.

TAKING A STAND for what you believe means there'll be a price to pay. Freedom is never free. It always costs someone something. Our spiritual freedom is free for us, but it cost Jesus everything. It cost Him His very life. He wouldn't have had to die. He could have become King of Israel and avoided the cross if He'd have done things my way. Now I'm glad He didn't, but at the time I couldn't understand it.

MY STORY STARTS in the Spring of AD 30. I was with Philip at the Jordan River listening to John preach (John 1:19-51). The religious rulers had been challenging John but he handled it quite well. The next day, Friday, John pointed out Jesus as the "Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world." John, Andrew, James and Peter spent Saturday, the Sabbath, talking with Him. On Sunday, when we could travel, they headed up to Cana and invited Philip and me to go along. We were all invited to the same wedding for we were all related in one way or another. It was my first time with Jesus, but I was immediately convinced He was the Messiah for He knew what I was doing as well as thinking before I even met Him!

It took a couple days to walk up to Cana and we talked the whole way there: first about family and relatives we had in common, then about Israel, and finally about the prophecies of the coming Messiah. Since it was a Sabbatical year we had more time and interest than usual in such things. We arrived in time for the wedding, which was on Wednesday (as was traditional).

Since **CANA WAS MY HOMETOWN**, several extra people stayed at my home. We told our families about what had happened at the Jordan and especially about Jesus being the Messiah. We wondered if He would say anything about that here. What He did was more impressive than anything He could have said (John 2:1-11). He turned normal drinking water into the best-tasting wine we ever had! Only He did it privately, secretly. Word got out He had done it, but if He'd have done it in front of everyone, and continued to do miracles for the people, they surely would have made Him king right then and there. But then He wouldn't have gone to the cross...

Salome, Mary's sister was there with her husband Zebedee and their sons, James and John. Their friends and fishing partners, Andrew and Peter, were there, too. They had all

walked there with Jesus from John's baptizing. Philip was a friend to them all, as was Nathaniel who lived in Cana. Others who also became disciples may well have been there as well. Alphaeus (Clopas) and wife may well have traveled there with Mary. Their sons, James the less and Judas Thaddaeus, were also fishermen. Some feel that Thomas and Levi (Matthew), the twins, were also there children. Thus the circle of early followers and disciples was also a family circle composed of people who knew each other and Jesus. Their children would have been mostly grown and married, leaving them free to travel with Jesus. Later Jesus' own half-brothers, James and Jude, would also be part of the group. They must have heard some stories about Jesus' miraculous birth. They had met Him at family gatherings such as holy days, weddings and even funerals. It wasn't always possible to get together for funerals, though, because they were held the same day as death and those a distance away couldn't find out and come in time. In a hot climate a dead body needed to be buried as soon as possible.

Anyway, when everyone arrived in Cana there must have been much talk and speculation about what happened when Jesus was baptized and what John had told them. Mary must have heard and, like any mother, was anxious to show off her son to everyone. This would finally and totally repair her reputation of being pregnant before marriage. No wonder she was anxious for Jesus to show Who He really was. But wasn't this the same temptation as Satan had used earlier -- show off your powers so people will accept you? Jesus again resisted, politely but firmly telling His mother no.

Since weddings usually lasted several days, and as today several days of drinking fermented drink and wine would cause drunkenness, the best wine was served first while tastes were more sensitive and alert. Here, though, Jesus made wine better than the best they had bought. This was proof of His deity, and word spread, even though He did the miracle in secrecy and privacy. He did help the people out, but not in a show-off way.

I learned later that Jesus didn't do miracles just to impress people. They were His 'calling card,' His proof that He was God. They were a means to an end (to get people to listen to and believe His message) and not an end in themselves. This is called His first "miraculous sign." All Jesus' miracles were 'signs.' A sign is made to point to something else, to focus attention elsewhere, to give information needed. Jesus didn't do miracles for their own sake, He did them as a sign that He was God. Anyone could claim to be God, but only one who could do things only God could do was really God. Miracles were a means to an end, Jesus' eternal calling card. They were not an end in themselves. That's why not everyone was healed. That's why miracles appear groups in the Bible: time of Moses and Joshua, time of Elijah and Elisha and time of Jesus and apostles. The next grouping of miracles will be in the tribulation, again to show that those who do them have God's power. This is the only way they will be seen as superior to Satan's counterfeits and substitutes. Miracles proved that Jesus was God. We don't need miracles today, for God's Spirit is at work showing us inside that Jesus is God. Do you listen to His voice? Are you believing His message? He has eternal life available for all who will ask -- that's the greatest miracle there is!

Anyway, after the wedding we all went to Capernaum (John 2:12) because that is where most of our group lived. Soon it was time to go to Jerusalem for the Passover (John 2:13). We all made the 100 mile trip together.

WHAT A CELEBRATION it was! Our excitement about the Messiah coming, and us coming with Him, made it extra special. Most of the others weren't as sure as I was that He was the Messiah, but we all believed to one extent or another.

Unfortunately our hopes were dashed soon after we got to Jerusalem, for Jesus did about the worst thing He could have possibly done! He totally offended the religious leaders and turned them against Him for good (John 2:14-22). Oh, sure, I know they cheated the people by charging high rates to exchange regular money for temple money, then charged inflated prices for sacrifices since there was no competition. I know they were using the temple as a money-making place, renting space to any

merchant who could pay. I know they were hiding robbers and thieves who were bribing them. It made all of us angry. But when Jesus upset the whole system and drove them out, putting them out of business during the most profitable time of the year, I knew there would be trouble. There was. Still, Jesus knew that doing what was right was more important than doing what was popular. I admired Him for that. I knew it was prophesied that the Messiah would do this (Malachi 3 and Psalm 69:9). I guess that's part of the price that has to be paid for doing what's right. Taking a stand is always costly. What's nice to know is that God always uses our courageous actions for His honor and glory! He did then and He still does today.

THIS IS A TRUE STORY of something that happened just a few years ago at USC. There was a professor of philosophy there who was a deeply committed atheist. His primary goal for one required class was to spend the entire semester attempting to prove that God couldn't exist. His students were always afraid to argue with him because of his impeccable logic. For twenty years he had taught this class and no one had ever had the courage to go against him. Sure, some had argued in class at times, but no one had ever "really gone against him" (you'll see what I mean later). Nobody would go against him because he had a reputation. At the end of every semester, on the last day, he would say to the class of 300 students, "If there is anyone here who still believes in God, stand up!" In twenty years, nobody had ever stood up. They knew what he was going to do next. He would say, "Because anyone who believes in God is a fool. If God existed, He could stop this piece of chalk from hitting the ground and breaking. Such a simple task to prove He is God, and He can't do it." And every year he would drop the chalk onto the tile floor of the classroom and it would shatter into a hundred pieces. All of the students could do nothing but stop and stare. Most of the students were convinced that God couldn't exist. Certainly, a number of Christians had slipped through, but for twenty years they had been too afraid to stand up. Well, a few years ago there was a freshman who happened to get enrolled in the class. He was a Christian, and had heard the stories about this professor. He had to take the class because it was one of the required classes for his major. And he was afraid. But for three months that semester, he prayed every morning that he would have the courage to stand up no matter what the professor said or what the class thought. Nothing they said or did could ever shatter his faith, he hoped. Finally, the day came. The professor said, "If there is anyone here who still believes in God, stand up!" The professor, and the class of 300 people looked at him, shocked, as he stood up at the back of the room. The professor shouted, "YOU FOOL! If nothing I have said all semester has convinced you that God doesn't exist, then you are a fool! If God existed, He could keep this piece of chalk from breaking when it hit the ground!" He proceeded to drop the chalk, but as he did, it slipped out of his fingers, off his shirt cuff, onto the pleats of his pants, down his leg, and off his shoe. And as it hit the ground, it simply rolled away, unbroken. The professor's jaw dropped as he stared at the chalk. He looked up at the young man and then ran out of the lecture hall. The young man who had stood up proceeded to walk to the front of the room and share his faith in Jesus for the next half hour. 300 students stayed and listened as he told of God's love for them and of His power through Jesus.

Never hesitate to take a stand for Jesus, even if it costs you something. He didn't hesitate in taking a stand for you and look what it cost Him! Don't take the easy way. Remember Paul's words: "Be on your guard, stand firm in the faith; be men of courage, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13).

9. WATER TO WINE

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Tell about a time when you had to take a stand for Jesus in front of other people? How did it make you feel? What happened as a result?

Why did Mary ask Jesus to do a miracle to help?

Why did Jesus call her 'woman' and correct her?

Why was it so bad to run out of wine at the end of the banquet?

If Jesus told Mary 'no' why did He do the miracle anyway?

Why did Jesus do miracles?

What lessons can we learn from this miracle?

If Jesus cared about their 'little' problems then, does He still care about your 'little' problems today? Give some examples of problems we have that Jesus cares about?

In Cana the wine jugs were empty and Jesus filled them. Is there anything in your life or heart that feels 'empty'? Is there anything you are almost out of and would like Jesus to fill?

9. WATER TO WINE

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Tell about a time when you had to take a stand for Jesus in front of other people? How did it make you feel? What happened as a result?

(answers will vary, let them share some events in their lives)

Why did Mary ask Jesus to do a miracle to help?

Perhaps she wanted to show the whole family what a wonderful Son she had. It shows she knew He could meet needs and help.

Why did Jesus call her 'woman' and correct her?

Now that He was following God's plan for His life He couldn't take orders from her as His mother. He was acting as her Savior, not her son. The relationship changed. "Woman" was a term of respect so He was being very polite to her.

Why was it so bad to run out of wine at the end of the banquet?

Weddings lasted several days. It was the duty of the hosts to have enough food for everyone while they were there. The wine was the main drink. It was a very weak wine. Water was unsanitary so they drank this weak wine instead.

If Jesus told Mary 'no' why did He do the miracle anyway?

He did it His way and at His timing to help out. He knew that everyone would find out and start expecting more of Him. Talk would spread. There would be no turning back.

Why did Jesus do miracles?

They were a sign to show others that He was God. By showing by His works that He was God then they would listen to His words and trust what He had to say.

What lessons can we learn from this miracle?

(answers will vary but can include

- Jesus is God and can do miracles
- Jesus cares about peoples daily problems and needs
- we can't tell Jesus what to do but must wait for His timing, He will do right

If Jesus cared about their 'little' problems then, does He still care about your 'little' problems today? Give some examples of problems we have that Jesus cares about?

(answers will vary)

In Cana the wine jugs were empty and Jesus filled them. Is there anything in your life or heart that feels 'empty'? Is there anything you are almost out of and would like Jesus to fill?

(answers may vary – it could be joy, peace, courage, patience, etc.)

10. TEMPLE CLEANSED

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
10. CLEANSE TEMPLE	Anger	John 2:13-22	Temple

By Eleazar, A Levite who was a guard at the temple

The strangest thing happened today! Somebody came into the temple and disrupted the whole operation. I know lots of people wanted to do such a thing, and I really can't blame them, but I never thought anyone would dare try much less be able to bring it about. Maybe I better go back to the beginning so you understand.

The temple in Jerusalem is the location of God's throne among His people. It is the religious, social, civil and spiritual center of Judaism and is very sacred to all Jews everywhere. However many of the Jews had turned God's house into a place to make money, and not always legally. You see, a large market had grown in the outer court where Jews and Gentiles could both go. Called 'Anna's Bazaar' after the High Priest responsible for it, it was hated by all because it cheated us in the name of religion. First of all, we weren't allowed to use Roman money because it had Caesar's picture on it and that was considered a 'graven image' and forbidden. Therefore we had to exchange it for temple money when entering the temple. Since the money changers had a monopoly on this service they charged rates as high as 50%. The average worker earned a penny a day. It would take 10 work days or two weeks to earn 10 cents. The money changers would take our 10 cents and give us back 6 cents in temple money.

That isn't the end of it, though. We needed the money to buy sacrifices for that is the way God required us to worship and thank Him as well as confess our sins. Sacrifices had to be approved by the priests to be offered, for no 'unclean' animals could be sacrificed. The priests never approved animals we brought with us, forcing us to buy animals there to use. Then they charged high prices for them. A pigeon that could be bought for half a penny outside the temple would cost 5 or 6 cents in the temple. Therefore a workman would have to work 10 days and save all of it just to buy a half-penny pigeon for a sacrifice!

Not only were sacrifices sold in the temple, anything and everything was sold. It became the central shopping district in Jerusalem with men yelling the praises of their wares, people loudly dickering over prices, animals making noises and complete bedlam everywhere. That totally interrupted any spirit of worship those who came to the temple sought.

Crowds were everywhere! The temple became a shortcut for those going from one side of Jerusalem to another. It was a little-hidden fact that Annas and the priests hid robbers and criminals in the caverns under the temple – for a price of course.

No wonder everyone hated this place! We were cheated and we couldn't worship. It was NOT what God had in mind when He designed it. There was nothing we could do about it. In fact I was assigned to keep the peace and protect those who were taking advantage of their fellow Jews. What a job! But what could I do? Nothing!

The other guards felt the same way. Perhaps that's one of the reasons we didn't do anything to stop the man when He started overturning tables and chasing the cheats out of the temple. I got the feeling, though, that even I had tried to stop Him I wouldn't be able to move. It was like some strange force were holding me and the others back. Could it have been angels doing this? Perhaps God really was behind Him and His work?

Who was this man? I was told His name was Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee. My friend Isaac, another guard, said He has seen the man calmly braiding a whip out of cords used to tie animals. Obviously He wasn't out of control in a rage but was rationally doing something He must have long ago decided needed doing. As a Jewish male, He would have come to the temple three times a year since He was 12, so this must have been building from some time. Why explode now? I was also told He was just baptized by a man named John the Baptizer and those present were claiming He was the Messiah, God Himself among us! This, His first act with that title, was something it was prophesied that the Messiah would do. What a way to make a statement!

The friends that came with Him, as disciples following their rabbi (teacher), seems surprised and shocked by the whole scene as well. Obviously they weren't consulted as to the wisdom of such an action. They were as taken back as the rest of us and clearly didn't know to do or how to react. Following such a Man would be anything but boring!

While His actions must have pleased the common people, it was the worst possible beginning He could have had with the religious rulers. To be accepted as the Messiah, wouldn't He want and need their support? Putting them out of business at the busiest time of the year was no way to gain their approval, but certainly He must have known that!

It was obvious He was taking a stand about some of the abuses that had cropped up in Judaism. This action made Him known in Jerusalem, and each of us had to decide what we thought. The rulers were totally against Him. The poor were in support of Him. Most of the rest of us weren't too sure one way or the other but were reserving out decision until we knew more about Him. I heard that Nicodemus slipped out talk to Him this evening. I guess he wanted more information as well.

You know, I've been thinking about this all day. I guess there is a time when we should be angry and things we should be angry at. When others are taken advantage of or harmed, especially in the name of God, the righteous indignation we feel should motivate us to take action to right the wrong. There are times I should get angry and things I should get angry at. I can't use anger to cover over my own hurts or to gain control of a situation, but it should cause me to take positive action when a wrong needs to be corrected. I need to think about this more and understand it better. I think I'll ask God for wisdom to know when and how I should express anger as well and when I shouldn't. That Man has certainly given me a lot to think about as well.

10. TEMPLE CLEANSED

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Jesus show His anger in this way? Why didn't He just pray about it and let God take care of it?

Is anger sin? Did Jesus sin by this anger?

How can you tell when your anger is sin or not?

What causes you to get angry? Is it sinful anger or righteous indignation?

What are some things you should get angry at?

How should you handle your anger when you get angry at these things?

What are some things you should NOT get angry at?

What does it mean to forgive?

What can you do to keep from getting angry when you shouldn't or after you have gotten angry?

10. TEMPLE CLEANSED

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Jesus show His anger in this way? Why didn't He just pray about it and let God take care of it?

Sometimes God wants us to take a stand and act instead of just letting Him do it for us. There is a time to trust God and wait for Him to act. But there is another time He wants us to act.

Is anger sin? Did Jesus sin by this anger?

When anger focuses on some evil or wrong done to an innocent person it is righteous indignation and good. When the anger is because we didn't get our own way or because someone or something hurt us it is sinful and wrong.

How can you tell when your anger is sin or not?

Ask yourself what caused the anger in you. It doesn't matter what the other person did, no one can 'make' you get angry. They may have done something to hurt you, but why did you react in anger instead of feeling the hurt? Ask yourself, in this situation what would Jesus do? Would He get angry or not? That will help decide.

What causes you to get angry? Is it sinful anger or righteous indignation?

(answers will vary – usually when we don't get our own way, when someone hurts us or isn't kind to us, etc.)

What are some things you should get angry at?

We should get angry at sin, at things that hurt innocent people or children, when someone is taken advantage of, when someone isn't fair to someone else, etc. We are to get angry at the sin, not the sinner!

How should you handle your anger when you get angry at these things?

Anger at these things is to motivate us to do something to correct the wrong. We can't act in anger, we need to act calmly but firmly. But we must take a stand against the sin itself.

What are some things you should NOT get angry at?

When my anger comes from my pride and wanting to control things, when I don't want to yield and humble myself, when I insist on being right, when I want to get others to do what I want, then it is wrong to get angry. Also, when something that hurts my feelings, makes me feel bad, makes me feel rejected or is critical of me then I need to feel the hurt as hurt and take that hurt to God. I need to forgive and ask Him to heal the hurt in me.

What does it mean to forgive?

Forgiving means to give up my right to see the other person suffer for the pain caused me. That's what Jesus did on the cross. We take the hurt to Jesus and don't see revenge on the person who caused the hurt.

What can you do to keep from getting angry when you shouldn't or after you have gotten angry?

Stay close to Jesus by praying and reading the Bible every day. Write down every time you get angry WHY you got angry so you start to see a pattern and can realize ahead of time what to watch out for. Confess your sin each time you get angry and ask God to forgive you. Apologize to the person you were angry at.

11. NICODEMUS – BORN AGAIN

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
11. NICODEMUS	Born Again	John 2:23 – 3:21 John 7:45-52 John 19:38-42	Baby

By Nicodemus

Well, its finished. We just buried Him. I don't think I'll ever get used to seeing a body after its been crucified. It hardly looks human anymore! This time is the worst of all. A million emotions flooded my heart: grief, sorrow, but especially guilt and remorse. It's funny how you see things differently AFTER an event than before. Too often fear rules and dominates. Then afterwards one is left with only regrets. I've had more than my share, but none worse than my fear of letting others know I was a follower of Jesus. I lived with that mistake, but maybe my story can help you not do the same thing. I hope so, for regret is a miserable emotion to live with.

MY NAME IS NICODEMUS. I was a top religious ruler in Israel. I held a high, powerful position. I was very rich and influential. I was extremely well educated and one of the top scholars of my day. You could say I had it all -- outwardly that is. I guess I had too much, because I didn't want to jeopardize it for what REALLY mattered.

My story starts in the summer of AD 30. It was the time of the Passover. Jesus was in Jerusalem with some of His followers and had just cleansed the temple (John 2:13-22). I could understand why He did it, but I knew it wouldn't be a popular move! In one way I wanted to learn more about Him, for what I had heard and seen appealed to the emptiness inside me. But I didn't want to risk losing my hard-won position and prestige. I never liked to be criticized. So I came to Jesus as night (John 2:23 - 3:21).

It was more convenient then for we were both busy during the day, but I must admit that the privacy was important to me, too. What I heard that night changed my life forever! It's like Jesus knew the inner emptiness and longing of my heart, like He understood it better than I did. He showed me the solution wasn't in external religious observance, but in an inner new birth. I needed a personal relationship with Him, not the admiration of my peers, to meet my need. My pride and fear kept me spiritually blinded to what he was saying. In the weeks and months that followed, however, I couldn't forget them. As I investigated more and more into His claims I came to believe that He was God, the Messiah come to earth. I put my faith in Him and considered myself a supporter and follower of His, but I never let anyone know. I was afraid.

Some years ago Premier Khrushchev was speaking before the Supreme Soviet and was severely critical of the late Premier Stalin. While he was speaking someone from the audience sent up a note: "What were you doing when Stalin committed all these atrocities?" Khrushchev shouted, "Who sent up that note?" Not a person stirred. "I'll give him one minute to stand up!" The seconds ticked off. Still no one moved. "All right, I'll tell you what I was doing. I was doing exactly what the writer of this note was doing--exactly nothing! I was afraid to be counted!"

THAT WAS ME. I remember one time, about 2 years after I spoke with Jesus, when the Sanhedrin was talking about Jesus and how to get rid of Him. It was obvious they were jealous of Him and His popularity with some of the people. I couldn't stand it any longer so spoke up, but what I said was very weak. "Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?" (John 7:51). It was better than silence, but not much better. My fear controlled me. You know, usually the fear itself is worse than the thing we fear! So it was with

me. I can see how Satan was using my fear to keep me silent. His lie was that I can take my stand soon, but not quite yet.

There is an ancient story about three demons who were arguing over the best way to destroy the Christian mission in the world. The first demon says, "Let's tell all the Christians there is no heaven. Take away the reward incentive and the mission will collapse." The second demon says, "Let's tell all the Christians there is no hell. Take away the fear of punishment and the mission will collapse." The third demon says, "There is one better way. Let's tell all the Christians that there is no hurry" and all three immediately say, "That's it! All we have to do is tell them there's no hurry and the whole Christian enterprise will collapse."

I CONTINUED TO PUT OFF taking a public stand for Him. Five months later it was too late. "One of these days" is none of these days. I missed my opportunity. Caiaphas had his was. Judas played right into their hands. Jesus was dead. I never had taken a public stand for him. Funny, I should have then felt safe from disclosure. I knew I wasn't going to be exposed, for no one knew of my faith but me! Instead of feeling safe I just felt miserable. Fear does that to a person.

When I heard that Joseph of Arimathea was asking Pilate for Jesus' body I went right to him. I didn't know he was a follower? Who else among our number were? None of us spoke out. What if I would have spoken out, might several others have then found the courage to follow my lead? I'll never know. We all took the easy way.

Anyway, I made it known publicly where I stood by helping bury Him (John 19:39). That night I couldn't help remembering the earlier night 2 1/2 years ago, when I listened to His words. If only I'd have chosen differently. If only I'd have taken a stand for Him like He took for me! Instead I had the shame, guilt and regret of letting my fear rule my decisions.

BUT GOD WAS GRACIOUS. He forgave me and used me anyway. Sure, I ended up losing all I had among the Jews, as I feared would happen. You know, though, when it did happen it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be! I had something so much more important to me now, something that REALLY met my inner needs. I had Jesus.

I went ahead and was baptized by Peter and John. I had to leave Jerusalem and eventually was killed for my faith. It was all worth it, though! Jesus was always with me helping me through it all. He will help you, too, if you stand up for Him. Don't be like me and live with regrets. Don't wait until it is too late, like I did! Don't put Jesus off. He won't let you down!

I recall a story about a man who had to cross a wide river on the ice. He was afraid it might be too thin, so he began to crawl on his hand and knees in great terror. He thought he might fall through at any moment. Just as he neared the opposite shore, all exhausted, another man glided past him nonchalantly sitting on a sled loaded with pig iron. How like some Christians! Headed for Heaven, they tremble at every step lest the divine promises break under their feet. They need only to look at the context of Isaiah 12:2 to realize that God is their salvation and the Lord is their strength and song. By resting completely upon Him and taking His promises at face value, we can drive out the paralyzing fear that hinders our effectiveness in serving Christ. The biblical antidote always works: "I will trust, and not be afraid."

11. NICODEMUS – BORN AGAIN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Nicodemus go to see Jesus at night?

Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be “born again” (John 3:3). What does that mean?

Can you say John 3:16 by heart? If not, it is a good verse to memorize.

What are some lessons we can learn from Jesus about how to tell others about salvation?

Why didn't Nicodemus take a stand for Jesus before the Sanhedrin (John 7:45-51)?

When do you face fear of standing up for Jesus? What is it hard for you to talk about Him?

What can you do to overcome fear?

Why did Nicodemus take a stand and let everyone know he believed in Jesus after the crucifixion when he didn't do that before?

Tell about a time when you took a stand for Jesus and how it turned out.

11. NICODEMUS – BORN AGAIN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Nicodemus go to see Jesus at night?

It was more convenient since both were busy during the day and couldn't have privacy to talk. Perhaps Nicodemus didn't want anyone to know what he was doing.

Jesus told Nicodemus he had to be "born again" (John 3:3). What does that mean?

It means we must be born spiritually. Our physical bodies came alive at our physical birth. We come alive spiritually when we are born spiritually. When we accept Jesus as Savior the Holy Spirit lives in us and gives us new life.

Can you say John 3:16 by heart? If not, it is a good verse to memorize.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

What are some lessons we can learn from Jesus about how to tell others about salvation?

Witnessing lessons:

1. Use every opportunity to tell about Jesus, even if late at night and tired
2. Witnessing means listening and not just talking, Jesus listened to Nicodemus
3. Patiently repeat, explain, illustrate – Jesus talked about birth, wind, serpent lifted up
4. Don't get bogged down at one point – don't argue, stick to the main point of salvation
5. Use questions – Jesus asked Nicodemus questions to teach, make point
6. Lead people to trust you & your experience – tell them what Jesus has done for you
7. Warn about God's judgment on unbelievers – Jesus warned about hell if reject

Why didn't Nicodemus take a stand for Jesus before the Sanhedrin (John 7:45-51)?

He was afraid of what others would say because most of the men were against Jesus. They would have criticized him and he might have lost his position and job.

When do you face fear of standing up for Jesus? What is it hard for you to talk about Him?

(answers will vary)

What can you do to overcome fear?

Pray for courage. Memorize Bible verses about fear and quote them as soon as something you start feeling fear. Proverbs 3:25; Isaiah 14:3; Psalm 34:4; Joshua 1:9; 10:8; 23:9-11; Leviticus 26:8; Exodus 14:13; I Samuel 17:45-47; II Samuel 22:33-35,40-41

Why did Nicodemus take a stand and let everyone know he believed in Jesus after the crucifixion when he didn't do that before?

He realized Jesus was God and Messiah even before the crucifixion. He knew he should have taken a stand for Jesus much earlier so knew he couldn't deny Him anymore,

Tell about a time when you took a stand for Jesus and how it turned out.

(answers will vary)

12. WOMAN AT THE WELL

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
12. WOMAN AT THE WELL	Witnessing	John 4:5-42	Woman

WOMAN AT THE WELL (John 4:5-42) Prompted by the Holy Spirit, Jesus chose to return home to Galilee by going through the region of Samaria to the city of Samaria. He was still ministering in relative obscurity, just beginning to make Himself known to the nation Israel. As important and pressing as this work was, individual souls were even more important. God always puts people before programs.

Left alone at the well, Jesus met and spoke with a woman who came in the hottest part of the day to get water. She probably did this to be alone, for other women wouldn't think much of someone with 5 husbands, and now living with a man she isn't married to. While seeking for love, she ended up settling for lust -- a common substitute even today. Jesus knew this and sought her out to meet that need with His unconditional love.

She was shocked that a Jew, especially a man, especially a rabbi would seek her out and actually initiate a conversation with her! That just wasn't done! What's more, He asked to drink from her water bucket. Jews just didn't touch non-Jews, nor anything they touched -- He would be ceremonially unclean if He drank her water!

While He asked her for water, it was really He who wanted to give her -- spiritual water to refresh and satisfy her for her whole life. She was confused and unsure, but certainly interested! When she finally understood just what He was offering -- eternal life -- she jumped at the chance to have it. Having ascertained to her satisfaction that He was the Messiah, God Himself come to earth, she went back to town and told everyone about His miraculous offer.

Jesus ended up staying there for several days to meet the needs of those who were interested in His free gift of salvation. It must have been really encouraging to Jesus to have this wholehearted response, especially after the opposition He was already receiving from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem.

Many believed and started following Jesus. This set the foundation for a great revival in that area under the leadership of Philip and other disciples after the resurrection. Truly everything went very well in this encounter by a well!

By Nicodemus

What a change Jesus made in my life! Where would I have been if He hadn't gone out of His way to speak to me (John 3)? Next He headed north and spoke to a woman at a well in Samaria (John 4). He approached us differently, but gave the same message to each of us. I've often thought about those encounters. Using Jesus as my example, not only of how to live but also of how to witness, has always helped me. I'd like to pass some of these lessons on to you.

1. Use every opportunity to tell about Jesus. Jesus was not too tired to talk to me even though it had been a long day for Him. He could have thought I already knew since I was a Bible scholar. But he took time to talk to me. He talked to people of all ages and backgrounds, from children to old people.

- 2. Witnessing is dialogue, not monologue.** Jesus didn't lecture me, he listened to my responses. He took my confusion and concerns seriously.
- 3. Patiently repeat, explain and illustrate.** Theology can be abstract and hard to understand. Illustrations, examples and stories help a lot. Jesus used physical birth as an analogy of spiritual birth with me. I didn't understand it right away, but before long the parallel sunk in. He also used the wind as a picture of the Holy Spirit and the serpent on a pole in the wilderness as a picture of Himself on the cross. Witnessing is like serving a meal. It takes more than good nutrition, it must be tastefully and artfully presented to make the eater desire to partake.
- 4. Don't get bogged down at any one point.** Don't get into an argument or meaningless theological discussion when witnessing. Jesus kept our conversation moving, but He kept it on point. When the woman at the well wanted to talk about which religion was right He gently brought the topic back to her need and His provision of salvation.
- 5. Use questions.** Jesus asked questions to find out what I knew and where I was at spiritually. They got me involved and thinking. He also used them to make important points.
- 6. Lead people to trust you and your experience.** Jesus wasn't afraid to call others to trust and believe in Him. I learned to share my own testimony with others. It was something they could understand and identify with, they couldn't debate the truth of it, it proves that what Jesus offers is practical and works, and it doesn't put them on the spot.
- 7. Warn about God's judgment on unbelievers.** Jesus clearly told me that those who didn't accept His free gift of salvation were under judgment and destined for hell. No one likes to talk about hell, but Jesus said that is to be part of our message (Mark 16:15-16).
- 8. Go to people, don't wait for them to come to you.** Jesus WENT to Samaria, where no 'good' Jew would ever go! He never told unbelievers to go to Christians, but Christians to go to unbelievers (Mark 16:15). He said we are all missionaries, and our mission field is the next person we meet who hasn't accepted Jesus as His Savior.
- 9. One to one is the best way to witness.** When Jesus got to the well near Sychar He sent His disciples into town for food so He could talk to the woman alone. One on one, personal, is still the best way to communicate anything. It was especially meaningful to the woman in Samaria for she was used to being ostracized and ignored by everyone, that's why she came to well in the hottest time of the day. She knew no one would be there and didn't want criticism for her life style.
- 10. Be real, human and vulnerable.** Jesus accepted her right away, asking her for a drink of water. It was a point of contact, a human need both shared. He opened Himself up to her, asking for a favor, before expecting her to open herself up and ask Him for anything.
- 11. Put people before prejudice and public opinion.** Jesus cared more about her as a person than He cared about prejudice and social customs. It was very improper for a Jew to talk to a Samaritan, for a man to initiate conversation with a woman, and especially for a rabbi to reach out to an immoral woman. Drinking from her vessel would make Him ceremonially 'unclean.'
- 12. Go to those in need.** Jesus reached out to her because of her need. He spent most of His time with 'sinners.' I was as needy as her, but I didn't realize it! Her obvious need made her more open to accept His gift. She knew her sin and emptiness, there was nothing to cover it. She had nothing to lose but her pain! It took me 2 1/2 years to take a stand for Jesus, she did it the same day!

13. We must call sin 'sin.' While it wasn't easy for me to admit my need, the woman at the well tried to cover over hers, too. I guess that's natural with everyone. When Jesus brought up her immoral lifestyle she tried to change the subject, but Jesus' point was made. He didn't keep focusing on her sin, but He didn't ignore it, either.

14. Avoid arguments about 'religions.' When she wanted to talk about which religion was right Jesus steered the conversation back to the need for a personal relationship with Him. NO religion can provide that! Religion is doing something to connect with God. That can't be done (Eph. 2:8-9).

15. Challenge the person to make a personal commitment to Jesus. I wasn't ready, but the woman was. When He told her HE was the Messiah she believed and accepted Him as her Savior. She gave her heart to Jesus then and there.

16. Remember that it is every believer's responsibility to witness. Immediately the woman went to her village and challenged the people there to come meet the Messiah for themselves. They did, and the result was the greatest response Jesus ever had to His ministry on earth. She didn't argue with them, she just told them what she had discovered. A witness isn't someone who argues God's case, that's a lawyer. We are called to be witnesses. A witness simply tells what he knows, what he has experienced. We are to be salt and light (Matthew 5). God does the rest.

17. Some sow while others reap. While many responded to Jesus during his short stay at that time, it wasn't until years later when Philip came that the full harvest came (Acts 8). Philip reaped what the woman and those who also accepted Jesus years earlier had been sowing.

Did you know that only about 5% of those who are Christians have ever introduced anyone else to Jesus? There's enough Bread of Life to supply the whole world, but there aren't enough volunteers to distribute it. What about you? You may not feel you can do a good job, but no matter how badly you feel you witness, it's still thousands of times better than not witnessing at all! As the slogan today says, "Just do it!"

12. WOMAN AT THE WELL

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Jesus care so much about this woman that He would go out of His way and talk to a Samaritan even though Jews hated Samaritans?

What has Jesus done that shows you He loves you?

Why did the woman come alone at the hottest time of the day?

How do you think she felt that the Messiah would seek her out and offer her salvation?

What are some lessons we can learn from Jesus about how to tell others about salvation?

Tell about a time you talked to someone about Jesus? What happened?

Who told you about Jesus? Do you remember when you accepted Jesus as Savior? Tell about what you remember.

Practice telling how to become a Christian by breaking into groups of two. One witness to the other, pretending the other person isn't a Christian but wants to know how to become one. Then switch roles and do the same thing.

12. WOMAN AT THE WELL

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Jesus care so much about this woman that He would go out of His way and talk to a Samaritan even though Jews hated Samaritans?

He loved her and knew she was looking for meaning and purpose in life. He knew she needed Him but had no way of about Him so He went to her.

What has Jesus done that shows you He loves you?

(answers will vary, most will say because of His dying on the cross. Try to get them to give other reasons as well, things He has done for them in their daily lives.)

Why did the woman come alone at the hottest time of the day?

Because she had 5 husbands and was living with someone she wasn't married to she was rejected. She came alone because she didn't like being rejected by the other women. Only Jesus could meet the needs she was trying to meet.

How do you think she felt that the Messiah would seek her out and offer her salvation?

(answers will vary but obviously very good)

What are some lessons we can learn from Jesus about how to tell others about salvation?

1. go to people, don't wait for them to come – Jesus went out of His way to see her
2. one to one is the best way to witness – disciples sent away so they could be alone
3. be real, human, vulnerable – Jesus asked for a drink, was polite and open
4. put people before prejudice & public opinion – Jews didn't talk to Samaritans but Jesus cared nothing about castes, riches, position – He loved everyone
5. go to those in need – Jesus spent most of His time with sinners
6. must call sin 'sin' – Jesus pointed out her sin to her but didn't push the point
7. avoid arguments about 'religions' – didn't talk about churches or religions but about salvation and her soul
8. challenge them to make personal commitment to Christ – Jesus offered her salvation
9. remember it is every believer's responsibility to witness, not to argue. We are to be witnesses, not lawyers.
10. some sow, others reap – Philip came to this area many years later and the woman had been telling the people about Jesus, he preached and many were born again

Tell about a time you talked to someone about Jesus? What happened?

(answers will vary)

Who told you about Jesus? Do you remember when you accepted Jesus as Savior? Tell about what you remember.

(answers will vary)

Practice telling how to become a Christian by breaking into groups of two. One witness to the other, pretending the other person isn't a Christian but wants to know how to become one. Then switch roles and do the same thing.

13. JESUS' DISCIPLES

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
13. JESUS' DISCIPLES	Discipleship	Mt 4:18-22; 9:9-13; 10:24-42; 16:24-28 Mk 1:16-20; 3:13-19 Lk 5:10-11; 6:12-16 John 1:19-51	Arrow on sign

By Matthew

Day after day I say in my booth by the road Via Maris. Business was good. I could anything I wanted, as long as I turned some of it over to Rome. It was an easy way to get rich fast. Of course I wasn't very popular, especially not with the Jews. They rejected me, saw me as a traitor. I wasn't even allowed in their synagogues, but who needs them! I was rich and secure. Still, I must admit that my money meant less and less to me as I got more and more of it. It just wasn't bringing the happiness and peace I thought it would.

Then I saw Him coming down the road. He regularly paid taxes to me. I had heard of His teachings and miracles, of His talks about forgiveness and the coming Kingdom of God. Whenever He came I always avoided eye contact with Him, for it made me feel guilty and dirty. Still, He was always nice to me. In fact, several times He talked to me about a better life, about giving up all this to follow Him. A few years earlier I would have laughed at the idea. He didn't have any money, not even a home -- He had nothing! How could being a penniless traveler be better than being rich and feared? Lately, though, I found myself thinking about Him quite often. I felt strangely drawn to Him, even wondering what it would be like to give it all up and follow Him. I never thought about it long, for I never thought He'd have me! Still, I envied those who could be with Him. I figured I could help His cause best by staying away from Him.

This time He stopped at my table and I was surprised. I knew He'd moved here, to Capernaum, from Nazareth (Mt 4:13-16). It had something to do with being rejected in His home town (Luke 4:16-30) -- boy, did I know what that was like! But why had He come to my booth? He didn't owe any taxes, what did He want?

"FOLLOW ME" He invited (Mt 9:9-13; Mk 2:13-17; Lk 5:27-32). I was stunned! He not only spoke to me, but He wanted me to travel with Him. He wanted me to identify myself with Him. He was even willing to identify Himself with me. All of a sudden it seemed like a great idea! Why not? I thought -- life is empty this way. This money thing isn't all I thought it would be. There was just something about Him that attracted me. I realized I had really made the decision inside long ago, I just never thought it would be possible! I closed up my books, shut the booth and left. I followed Him from then on. I sold the booth and business and returned as much dishonest gain as I could. I used the rest of my money to help support Jesus and His followers. People were shocked that I'd want Him, but I think they were even more shocked that He'd want me! It was the best move I've ever made!

One of the first hurdles I faced was getting along with my new fellow followers of Jesus. We had been enemies for years, and it took a bit of work on both sides to see each other as friends and comrades. The fishermen were the hardest, for they were the most outspoken in all areas.

CAPERNAUM, despite being a good agricultural area, was mainly a fishing town. Capernaum was right on the Sea of Galilee. The lake was 8 miles wide by 12 miles top to bottom. It was shaped like a pear. Jesus did most of His miracles and teaching on the banks of this lake. Jews loved fish much more than red meat, and were willing to pay dearly for it. Commercial fishing flourished. It was done by nets which had floats on one edge and weights on the other. A second boat, or a fisherman in the water, would pull the net together, trapping fish inside. It was hard, tiring, often frustrating work. When not fishing the men spent many long hours cleaning and

repairing their nets, for they were constantly tearing or decaying. Musht, biny and sardines were the main fish that were caught.

I remember one day, about a month before Jesus called me from my booth, that I was watching Peter, Andrew, James and John come in from a long night of fishing. They didn't catch anything. They had just cleaned the nets and were ready to go to bed when Jesus told them to go out into deep water and try again (Luke 5:1-10). Everyone knew it was the wrong time of day and wrong place to fish, plus the nets would need to be cleaned and dried all over again! I was surprised to see them obey, but even more surprised to see the great number of fish they caught! It really hit Peter hard, for that's when he realized that Jesus truly was God. Jesus' response to them all was, "Don't be afraid, from now on you will catch men!"

Soon after He repeated His call, "Come, follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." (Mt 4:18-22; Mk 1:16-20). Actually 8 of Jesus' 12 disciples were fishermen. Little did I know that Jesus would very soon come and call me to leave my work and follow Him, too. "Fishers of men." The phrase stuck with me and I thought of it as I began following Jesus. There obviously was a real similarity between fishing for fish and bringing others to Jesus.

For one thing, we need to **FISH actively**. We can't sit back and wait for the fish catch themselves! We are to be fishers of men, not keepers of the aquarium. We can't be fearful of rejection, as Nicodemus was. Also, fishermen must fish **offensively**. They must go to where the fish are. Sometimes it is inconvenient and costly, but it must be done. Fishing must be done **seriously**, too. It is not just a fun pastime for God's children. Fishermen in Galilee had to catch fish or starve. Fishing for men is more serious, for what happens to the fish that aren't caught? They end up in hell forever.

Because of this we must fish **determinedly**. The purpose of fishing is to catch fish! Fishermen weren't showing off equipment or working on their tan. They were determined to catch fish. In order to do this they must fish **tactfully**. Different fish are caught by different bait. Some are caught best in groups, others alone. It takes study and skill, experience and work to get good at it. Jesus 'fished' differently for the woman at the well than he did for Nicodemus. Thus fishermen must fish **continually**. They aren't going to catch any fish if they don't have their net or bait in the water. When not fishing, they are getting ready for the next time they fish: repairing and cleaning nets, etc. We, too, must be continually fishing or getting ready to fish. Time spent in prayer and Bible study is essential to successful fishing.

Most fishermen fish **lovingly** -- they enjoy what they do. That is to be our sacrificial motive for telling others about Jesus. RA Torrey, a great evangelist of years ago, once said: "I would rather win souls than be the greatest king or emperor on earth; I would rather win souls than be the greatest general that ever commanded an army; I would rather win souls than be the greatest poet or novelist, or literary man who ever walked the earth. My ONE ambition in life is to win as many as possible. Oh, it's the only thing worth doing -- to win souls." For this to happen we must fish **patiently**. Fishing is hard, difficult work that takes lots of patience. Perhaps that's why there are less fishermen today. All animals that are successful fishermen are patient. Finally fishermen on the Sea of Galilee had to fish **cooperatively**. They are more effective when they work together. Jesus sent out His disciples two by two.

"COME," He said, "and I will make you fishers of men." If we do the COMING then He will do the MAKING. We can't make ourselves fishers of men, but we can offer ourselves as available for Him to make fishermen of us.

Following this Jesus went out with His new disciples so they could learn to fish for men following His example. He taught, healed and delivered (Mt 4:23-25; Mk 1:21 - 2:12; Luke 4:31 - 5:26). Following this is when He came to me and asked me to follow Him and fish for men (Mt 9:9-13; Mk 2:13-17; Lk 5:27-32). I immediately started doing so. I invited all my friends to my house to meet Jesus for themselves (Mt. 9:14-17; Mk 2:18-22; Lk 5:33-39). I wanted them to find what I had found, and many of them did.

I spent the next 3 years with Jesus, and after He died I stayed in Judea for a dozen years, preaching and witnessing. Then I went to Ethiopia and Persia. Since I was well educated I was able to speak to kings about my Savior. I wrote the Gospel of Matthew, too. I had good response there, reaping what the wise men (Magi) had sown a generation before. I died in Egypt having my head split open with an ax. I was a tax collector, I was a disciple, but mainly I was a fisher of men. Are you?

By Matthew

A certain man wanted to sell his house for \$2,000, a poor man wanted to buy it but only had \$1,000. After much bargaining the owner agreed to sell with just one stipulation: he would retain ownership of one small nail protruding from just over the door. After a few years original owner wanted house back. He found carcass of a dead dog and hung it from the single nail he still owned. soon the house became unlivable and family had to move.

If we leave even one small peg in our life, Satan will hang all his rotten garbage on it and make us unfit for Christ's habitation.

THAT'S WHAT JESUS was trying to teach us when He called us to be disciples of His. "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matt 11:28-29). Most men looking for volunteers paint a rosy picture for their followers: benefits and blessings. Jesus warned us to count the cost, to make sure we knew what we were getting into. That's very honest of Him!

He made sure we understood that salvation was a simple matter: realizing that each one of us was guilty before God and that He, because He was holy and just, had to punish sin. Jesus came to die in our place to take that punishment so we could be forgiven and go to heaven. Discipleship is a different matter. It means taking another step with Jesus after salvation, that of submission to God's will and doing His work. Salvation concerns sins being forgiven so man can live with God in eternity. Discipleship is for those who would live their lives on this earth as Christ lived His. But it isn't easy! Jesus said we had to "take up our cross daily" to follow Him. That means dying to self and living for Him.

"In every Christian's heart there is a cross and a throne, and the Christian is on the throne till he puts himself on the cross; if he refuses the cross, he remains on the throne. Perhaps this is at the bottom of the backsliding and worldliness among gospel believers today. We want to be saved, but we insist that Christ do all the dying. No cross for us, no dethronement, no dying. We remain king within the little kingdom of ourself and wear our tinsel crown with all the pride of a Caesar; but we doom ourselves to shadows and weakness and spiritual sterility." (A. W. Tozer, 1897-1963)

German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was executed by the Nazis because of his testimony, made this statement: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." To follow Jesus no matter what the cost -- that's the way of the cross.

PAUL puts it this way in Romans 12:1-2 "Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Jesus gave up everything for us, He needs us to give up everything for Him. One day Mother Teresa heard vows from 11 new members of her growing order, the Society of the Missionaries of Charity. About 700 people crowded Mission Dolores for the profession of vows by sisters who have completed their novitiate. "Love, to be real, must cost," said the frail and stooped Mother Teresa, 75, whose big voice belies her stature, "It must hurt. It must empty us of self."

13. JESUS' DISCIPLES

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Matthew and what did he do for a living?

Why would Jesus want someone like Matthew to be a disciple?

Why did Matthew give up his job and money to follow Jesus?

What did Jesus mean when He called people to become “fishers of men”?

What are some of the similarities between fishing and bring people to Jesus?

What is a disciple?

What is the difference between being a Christian and a disciple?

Are you a disciple? If so, did you start living for Jesus at salvation or some time later? When?

Is it hard or easy to be a disciple? Why?

13. JESUS' DISCIPLES

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Matthew and what did he do for a living?

He was a tax collector, someone hated by the people because he collected taxes for Rome but overcharged and keep extra the money for himself.

Why would Jesus want someone like Matthew to be a disciple?

Jesus loves and wants everyone to follow Him, no matter what they have done. He knew Matthew was searching for something more in life and only Jesus could fill that need.

Why did Matthew give up his job and money to follow Jesus?

He knew that money didn't satisfy and only Jesus could give him the peace and meaning he so greatly needed.

What did Jesus mean when He called people to become "fishers of men"?

He wanted them to bring people into God's kingdom by telling them about Jesus.

What are some of the similarities between fishing and bring people to Jesus?

Fish actively – don't wait for the fish/people to come to you, go to them

Fish offensively – go to where the fish are

Fish seriously – what happens to those who don't come to Jesus?

Fish determinedly – main goal is to catch fish/win people for Jesus

Fish tactfully – different fish/people respond to different things, treat each one separately

Fish continually – fishermen stick to it, we are to always be looking for people to talk to

Fish lovingly – enjoy what you do, it's a great privilege and opportunity

Fish patiently – must be patient to catch fish or bring people to Jesus

Fish cooperatively – fishermen and Christians are to work together for God

What is a disciple?

Someone who is a Christian and lives for Jesus in their daily life.

What is the difference between being a Christian and a disciple?

All disciples are Christians but not all Christians are disciples. Becoming a Christian is the first step. We freely receive God's give of salvation by grace. It doesn't cost us anything, Jesus paid it all. That means the Holy Spirit dwells in us and we will go to heaven when we die. Then the issue is who we will live for each day: self or Jesus? Becoming a disciple is making a life-long commitment to live for Jesus and serve Him. That does cost us a lot. It doesn't earn or keep salvation

Are you a disciple? If so, did you start living for Jesus at salvation or some time later? When?

(answers will vary)

Is it hard or easy to be a disciple? Why?

Very hard for we are naturally self-centered and want others to serve us. To put others first and serve them and God is costly. We must forgive, love, spend time with God, and trust Him in all things. But that is the best way to live our lives!

THE 12 DISCIPLES

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

NAME	RELATION	HOME	OCCUPATION BEFORE JESUS	MINISTRY	DEATH
ANDREW	Son of Jonas & Joanna Brother of Peter	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); then ministered in Ephesus, Russia, Scythia Greece	Tied on an "X" cross in Scythia, preached 2 days until dead 11-30-69
NATHANAEL (Bartholomew)	Unknown	Cana	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); ministered with Philip in Asia Minor, Armenia	Flayed alive, beheaded, cast into sea by barbarian king Astyages
JAMES (son of Thunder)	Son of Zebedee**	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18)	Beheaded by Herod Antipas, 44 AD Acts 12:1-2
JAMES the Less	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Fisherman	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Palestine & Egypt	Crucified in Egypt
JOHN	Son of Zebedee**	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem (Acts 3; 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Wrote John, I, II, III Jn, Rev, Ephesus (with Mary), Patmos	Natural death (very old) - attempts to martyr him failed
JUDAS (Jude, Thaddaeus)	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Fisherman	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Assyria & Persia	Beaten to death in Persia/Syria with a large club
JUDAS (Iscaiot)	Unknown	Judea (only one not from Galilee)	Treasurer	None	Suicide
MATTHEW (Levi)	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Tax Collector very well educated	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Wrote Matthew, Ethiopia & Persia	Head split open with an ax in Egypt
PETER (Simon)	Son of Jonas & Joanna Brother of Andrew	Bethsaida Capernaum	Fisherman Follower of John	Jerusalem, leader of early church (Acts 2 - 11, 15); Wrote I, II Pt; Mark written about him, Asia Minor, Britain (?), Rome w/ wife	Crucified upside down in Rome by Nero after wife martyred
PHILIP	Unknown Greek name	Bethsaida	Unknown	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Ministered in Phrygia, Galatia, France (?), , Asia Minor	Hung against a pillar at Hieropolis (near Colossae)
SIMEON (Zealot)	Unknown	Galilee	Zealot under-ground freedom fighter	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Ministered various places	Crucified
THOMAS	Son of Cleopas *	Capernaum	Fisherman	Jerusalem (Acts 5:18-19; 8:1; 11:1,18); Parthia, Persia & India	Body run through with spear in East India

* Cleopas also called Alphaeus, probably Joseph's brother; Mary his wife was with Jesus throughout His ministry; children seem to have been Matthew & Thomas (twins?), James the Less and Judas Thaddaeus, therefore all were probably cousins of Jesus

** Zebedee's wife was Salome, the sister of Mary, children were James and John, they were cousins of Jesus

14. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
14. SERMON ON THE MOUNT	Be kind to others	Matthew 5:1 – 8:1 Luke 6:17-42	Mountain

By James (Brother of Jesus)

I once had a Gentile friend who raised pigs. Made good money doing it. His wife once took a fancy to a certain baby pig and made it a pet. She brought it into the house to raise, sat it at the table to eat with them, dressed it in baby clothing, even taught it tricks. It could follow simple commands and obeyed better than most children. It was truly amazing! Then one day when she was out for a walk with the pig they went by a garbage dump. Immediately the pig broke away and ran toward the pit. She called but it wouldn't listen. That pig just jumped right in the garbage and started wallowing around, having a great time. Despite all the outer changes, it's real nature was just hidden and quickly came out.

ME, TOO! You know, the same thing that happened to that pig also happened to me! I tried to clean up myself and act contrary to my nature. I obeyed all of our Jewish laws. I went to the synagogue services every week. I tried to treat people kindly and help those in need. I gave of my time and money to God's service. I was always careful in how I looked and acted. But I still had my old nature inside, just like that pig. When I saw something I wanted to have for myself, or could snub someone who had hurt me, or when my wife forgot something I needed or my kids really got on my nerves after a busy day, or if I had a chance to put down my boss after he criticized me or a rich, stuck-up merchant gave me too much change, then the old 'pig' inside threw me right into the sin pit. I just couldn't stop it!

I couldn't stop being jealous of my popular older brother, or being greedy for all my sister's husband had, or being prideful for not being as sinful as the Gentiles who lived across the street. I kept judging those who were different than me, ignoring those who kept needing things from me or holding it against those who had taken advantage of me. Those who knew me saw only the part I let them see. My family knew a little more of the real me, but no one knew how alive and strong the pig was in me. No one but me.

And it bothered me. I wasn't raised by hypocrites. My father and mother were as genuine as anyone I ever met. My older brother was even more true and pure. I guess that's what bothered me. It's like He could look into my heart. I could never fool him, even when I fooled our parents. But instead of listening to Him and taking His advice, I blamed Him for it all.

You know how you get angry at someone who points out a fault or failure? That's easier than facing it and admitting it in myself.. I started believing that if Jesus wasn't around I'd be OK.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT Funny, when He did leave I didn't feel any better – just worse. I tried to silence him. Now I'm glad I failed! The problem was me, not Him. He had the answers I needed all along. He gave them clearly in what you call the Sermon on the Mount. It's recorded in your Bible in Matthew 5-7). To us it was just typical of what He said. I heard Him the first time He delivered it. I was just there to check Him out, looking for excuses to not follow Him but secretly hoping He could somehow help me. I really wanted to live for God and I

knew I wasn't. I was a better hypocrite than most everyone I knew. Still, I knew that old 'pig' was alive inside!

Basically what He said in that sermon was that our attempts at being righteous totally fail in God's sight. We can only be righteous as we stop trying to be holy (or pretend to be holy) by our own efforts and then allow God to produce His righteousness in/through us by God Himself. He compared and contrasted self righteousness and God's righteousness. He said that my good works could not wipe away any of my sin – a real blow to us proud Jews.

INNER ATTITUDES, NOT JUST OUTER ACTIONS, BRING GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

(5:3-16) Jesus started by showing that God looks at our inner attitudes (5:3-12). He wants us to be humble, meek, hungry, merciful, pure and peace-loving. When we have these traits He said we will influence others around us like salt (5:13) and light (5:14-16).

FOLLOWING JESUS' WORDS, NOT LAWS, BRINGS RIGHTEOUSNESS (5:17 - 6:18)

Then Jesus showed how to have these proper inner attitudes. He said the law wasn't given to bring salvation (5:17-20). The law only dealt with externals, He was concerned with the issues of the heart. Hatred is as bad as murder (5:21-22). Lust is as bad as adultery (5:27-30). He gave several other examples as well. Changing the outside doesn't change the inside. Cleaning up a pig doesn't change his pig nature.

INNER ATTITUDES AND OUTER ACTIONS WILL LINE UP WHEN YOU HAVE GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS (6:19 - 7:29) We are to put God before things (6:19-34). We aren't to judge others for that is done on external things (7:1-6). Instead we are to seek God completely (7:7-11), sincerely (7:12), obediently (7:13-14), truthfully (7:15-20), totally (7:21-23) and wisely (7:24-27).

I knew He was saying that there isn't anything we can do to impress God, but that was such a new concept for me it was hard to grasp. All the other rabbis and leaders said being a good Jew was what got us into heaven. When I look back on it all I wonder how I could have been so deceived, but that's what pride does. Watch out that it doesn't blind you, too!

You can't impress God by attending church, giving money, joining a church, acting 'nice' to others, or any other good works (Ephesians 2:8-9). Reading your Bible, helping at church, being a godly wife or husband, treating your neighbors kindly, even telling others about Jesus – these are good things but don't impress God. The only thing that ever impressed God was what Jesus did on the cross. There's nothing we can add to that. Don't misunderstand, there is nothing wrong with doing the things I just mentioned. Just don't get the cart before the horse. Do them **BECAUSE** you have salvation, not to **GAIN** salvation. Do them because salvation is a free gift for us to receive, don't do them to contribute to your salvation.

Early one morning fire broke out in a house on a narrow street. The alarm was sounded by a policeman on duty. Before the fire engines could get to the scene, however, flames were leaping high into the air. Suddenly a young man appeared at an upper window in his pajamas. Firemen quickly placed a ladder against the burning building. But to the consternation of all, he refused to come down, shouting back that he had to get dressed first. The man had waited too long and was buried beneath the ruins. Many reject God's provision of salvation and safety in Christ because they want to get dressed up in the clothes of self-righteousness or religion. Their delay could cost them their souls. What are **YOU** trusting in for salvation – your good works or the blood of Jesus? The only way is by the blood of Jesus. I learned that the hard way, I hope you already know it!

14. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What is the only way we can be righteous/holy in God's sight?

What are some of the traits God wants us to have according to Matthew 5:3-12?

What does it mean to be 'salt' and 'light' (Matthew 5:13-16)?

Why is hatred as bad as murder (Matthew 5:21-22)?

Do you know the Lord's Prayer by heart (Matthew 6:9-13)? Pray it out loud and together.

Jesus says we aren't to worry (Matthew 6:25-34)? Why not?

What do you worry about most? Why shouldn't you worry about it?

Why is it wrong to judge others (Matthew 7:1-5)?

Do you pray in faith for the things and people God puts on your heart? Do you believe His promise to hear your prayers (Matthew 7:7-12)?

Give some examples of how the Golden Rule applies to your life today?

Which is your favorite passage in Matthew 5 – 7 and why?

14. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What is the only way we can be righteous/holy in God's sight?

We can only be righteous by accepting Jesus as Savior, not by anything we do.

What are some of the traits God wants us to have according to Matthew 5:3-12?

POOR IN SPIRIT: recognize our need, that we are spiritually poor without Jesus

MOURN: sincere sorrow for sin

MEEK: not asserting our rights but living for God's glory

HUNGER & THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS: appetite, desire to be more like Jesus

MERCIFUL: showing grace to others who don't deserve it

PURE IN HEART: not sinless but a heart devoted totally to God and only Him

PEACEMAKERS: seeking to reconcile people and situations

PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE: rejected because we stand for Jesus

What does it mean to be 'salt' and 'light' (Matthew 5:13-16)?

SALT was a preservative, it kept meal from spoiling. Our Christian influence keeps sin from spreading as fast as it would without us. LIGHT brings life, health, joy and healing. We are to bring that to the world. Light shows the way, we are to show Jesus is the way.

Why is hatred as bad as murder (Matthew 5:21-22)?

The inner heart attitude of hate and wanting something bad to happen to someone is behind both. It's our heart attitude that is sin. Our actions just show our heart.

Do you know the Lord's Prayer by heart (Matthew 6:9-13)? Pray it out loud and together.

Jesus says we aren't to worry (Matthew 6:25-34)? Why not?

If we worry we aren't trusting that He will take care of us. Worry is lack of faith.

What do you worry about most? Why shouldn't you worry about it?

(answers will vary) – God promises He will take care of all our needs in His time and way.

Why is it wrong to judge others (Matthew 7:1-5)?

We can evaluate actions by comparing them to what the Bible says, but we can't judge a person's motives for only God knows hearts and motives. If we want to receive mercy we need to show mercy.

Do you pray in faith for the things and people God puts on your heart? Do you believe His promise to hear your prayers (Matthew 7:7-12)?

(answers will vary)

Give some examples of how the Golden Rule applies to your life today?

(answers will vary)

Which is your favorite passage in Matthew 5 – 7 and why?

(answers will vary)

15. MIRACLES AT THE SEA

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
15. MIRACLES AT THE SEA	Miracles - Jesus cares about people	Mark 4:35 – 5:43 Luke 8:22-48	Arrow pointing to Sea waves

By Jeshua

A number of years ago a man who picked up a beautiful rock from a nearby stream bed and used it as his cabin doorstep. Years later an expert in rocks and minerals who was traveling in the area stopped at the cabin and noticed the doorstep, which he immediately recognized as a huge lump of gold. In fact, it proved to be one of the largest gold nuggets ever found. Like the man who failed to recognize gold when he held it in his hands, the disciples failed to recognize the true nature of the Lord -- even after more than three years with Him. They were without excuse for He did all He could to tell and show them.

LORD, LUNATIC OR LIAR I remember a couple days during September of 31 AD when this was particularly true. Work was slow and I wanted to get some first-hand information about this Man, so followed Him around for two days. The first day started with His family, led by His own brother James, trying to have Him put away for being insane. As strange as it sounds, I guess I can understand where they were coming from. I mean, He was clearly and continually claiming to be God! Now what do you do with claims like that? The religious rulers said He was a liar but it was easy to tell He firmly believed all He was saying. Therefore some, including His family, came to the conclusion He was crazy - a lunatic. The only other choice was to believe His amazing claims – that He truly was the Lord. Those still are the only options. He wasn't just a good man, a fine teacher, for no ordinary man over and over claims to be God!

Anyway, this rejection by His family brought up lots of questions about why, if He really was God, it seemed almost everyone was rejecting Him as their Messiah. I remember He told a series of parables sitting by the sea to explain this (Matthew 13). Basically what He said was that His kingdom would start small and slowly grow until one day it took over the whole world. Well, He was certainly right about the slow, small start part!

ACROSS THE SEA OF GALILEE That same evening – remember this is still that same day I was telling you about, Jesus boated across the lake to Gergara. It was like all this talk about a slow start and Satan's hindering and working against His Kingdom reminded Him of something He needed to do.

All of a sudden Jesus told us that we were going to the area of the Decapolis. Well, naturally we wondered why we'd go to that God-forsaken land. Jesus said it was to spread the message of the kingdom throughout that whole area. It seemed the job would take months at least – how long were we going to stay? "Just a few hours, half a day at most" Jesus said. We asked how that could be done and Jesus told us he had a man picked out there whom we'd meet. He'd spread the word. We figured he must be some guy: highly trained, skilled, well-educated, great contacts and so forth. "Actually," Jesus told us, "he hasn't any of that. He's just been hanging around the cemetery lately." The cemetery? What was he, a funeral director, a grave digger? What does he do at the cemetery? "Well, mainly he runs around naked, breaking chains, cutting himself, banging his head on stone markers and terrorizing anyone he meets." We had heard reports of such a man. Frankly, we were too stunned to reply. It just didn't make sense. We had no idea what He was talking about.

SATAN ATTACKS Unfortunately the only one to figure it out was Satan, that's why he tried so hard to keep it from happening. Since boating is the quickest way across, that's how Jesus chose to go. However a sudden terrible storm came that would have killed us had Jesus not intervened. Why had He led us into a storm? Why does He lead you into financial, relational, job, family or health storms? I guess it was to show how He can deliver when things are hopeless.

It was a real miracle – the first one I saw personally. Oh I had heard of many others, and talked to people who had been miraculously healed. But to see one, to be saved by one, was something I'll never forget!

WHAT IS A MIRACLE? A miracle is not a coincidence of natural happenings. It's not magic. It is overriding natural laws by a higher law. Jesus called them 'signs.' We realized they were done for a purpose – proof that Jesus was God. The focus was not to be the miracle itself but what it taught about Jesus. If He had power over physical ills, He could also heal spiritual ills. If He could deliver from demons, He could deliver from sin. If He could give physical sight He could give spiritual sight. If He could feed with physical bread, He could feed with spiritual manna. If He could bring the physically dead back to life, He could do the same with the spiritually dead. If He can stop a storm on an ocean, He can stop Satan's attacks against us. When we are helpless, He can deliver.

There was no single pattern: some asked to be healed, others didn't. Some had faith, others didn't even know who Jesus was. Whatever the illness, whatever the need - Jesus met it. He had total control over nature: calming the sea, cursing a fig tree, turning water to wine, catching many fish when there weren't any there a moment before – all these are done by Jesus with just a word. Miracles were a means to an end, not an end in themselves. That's why not every sick person in Palestine was healed.

Satan can do miracles, too. He can counterfeit God's power with shows of his own (Matthew 7:22-23). His power is limited by God, however. He can't stop Jesus' power. Jannes and Jambrees counterfeited and challenged Moses but lost to God's power.

Anyway, we safely pulled up on the beach, slept the night, and ate breakfast. Then came one of the greatest miracles I had ever seen. I'll tell you more about it in the next article. In short, Jesus cast demons from these crazy, naked, almost inhuman beings and made them whole again. He was the one to take the message to that whole area. We got right in the boat and went back across the sea, calm this trip, to Capernaum.

MORE MIRACLES When we got back word of our return had preceded us. Crowds were everywhere. Everyone wanted a touch, a miracle in their life. Jarius, the local synagogue ruler and a very fine man, had a daughter who was deathly sick. On the way to seeing her, Jesus was interrupted by a woman who had been constantly bleeding from a tumor in her uterus for 12 years. Upon touching Jesus she was immediately healed – another miracle! Jesus stopped and talked with her. The interruption made Him late to Jarius' home, and by the time He arrived she was already dead. What did He do? He held her hand and said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" Immediately she got up and was fine – the greatest miracle so far! I really had picked a couple of good days to spend with Jesus!

The day wasn't over, though. I watched Him heal 2 blind men and a man who was demonized, blind and dumb. In fact, many times when Jesus cast demons out, people were instantly healed of their illnesses and ailments. Jesus obviously had power over Satan.

Jesus still has that same power today. Look what He's done in your life – that is nothing short of a miracle! The greatest miracle of all is spending eternity in heaven with Him!

15. MIRACLES AT SEA

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What is a miracle?

Can Satan do miracles?

Why didn't Jesus prevent the storm so the disciples wouldn't be afraid?

What 'storms' is God allowing in your life right now? Why doesn't He remove them?

What should you do when you get afraid of something that is happening in your life?

How many miracles can you count in this event (storm on sea, demonized man, Jarius' daughter, etc.). Some of these are made up of several miracles together.

What can we learn from Jesus healing the demonized man?

How do you think Jarius felt when Jesus was detained and his daughter died because He didn't get there on time? How do you feel when it seems Jesus is taking too long to do something?

When do you get most impatient? What makes you most impatient?

What can you do to become more patient with God and others?

15. MIRACLES AT SEA

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What is a miracle?

A miracle is God overriding natural laws by a higher law.

Can Satan do miracles?

He can, but only with God's permission as we see in the book of Job. He can't stop God's power.

Why didn't Jesus prevent the storm so the disciples wouldn't be afraid?

Jesus lets His followers get in tough situations so they will learn to trust Him and see Him deliver them.

What 'storms' is God allowing in your life right now? Why doesn't He remove them?

(answers will vary) – He doesn't remove them because He is using them to increase our faith.

What should you do when you get afraid of something that is happening in your life?

Remember that Jesus is in control of it, has a good reason, and deeply loves you.

How many miracles can you count in this event (storm on sea, demonized man, Jairus' daughter, etc.). Some of these are made up of several miracles together.

Storm on sea stilled, boat didn't sink

Demonized man healed & restored, dressed, wants to follow Jesus, pigs killed

Jairus' daughter healed, Jairus' faith increases

Others healed: blind, dumb, demonized

What can we learn from Jesus healing the demonized man?

Jesus' power is greater than Satan's power. He can and will cast out demons when we ask in Jesus' name. He cares about everyone and wants everyone free.

How do you think Jairus felt when Jesus was detained and his daughter died because He didn't get there on time? How do you feel when it seems Jesus is taking too long to do something?

He must have been disappointed and impatient, like we often feel.

When do you get most impatient? What makes you most impatient?

(answers will vary)

What can you do to become more patient with God and others?

Realize God is in control of everything and His timing is different than ours. He is never early but He is never late. Trust that God does everything at the right time. Memorize some Bible verses about patience and quote them when you feel impatient. Good verses to memorize: Psalm 37:7-9; Romans 5:3-4; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 10:36; James 1:3-4

16. FEEDING PEOPLE

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
16. FEEDING PEOPLE	Jesus uses little children	5000 Mt 14:13-36; Mk 6:30-56; Lk 9:10-17 4000 Mt 15:32-38; Mk 8:1-9	Loaf of bread

By the boy who gave his lunch to Jesus

The days started like any other typical day in Capernaum. We woke up and started going about our daily business of working or shopping. I was learning how to repair nets for the fishing boats on the Sea of Galilee so I could one day be a fisherman. James, John, Peter and Andrew were out of town so only one boat would go out today. We were expecting them back soon, any day now. Jesus had sent them out by two's to teach and heal.

Jesus Himself was seated nearby, looking out over the water as if something was bothering Him. Later I was told He just found out that His cousin, good friend and partner in ministry, John the Baptizer, had just been killed by having his head cut off! Perhaps Jesus was mourning him and wondering if what happened to the herald would happen the one who followed.

It wasn't long until people discovered Jesus and started demanding he heal the sick they brought. Weren't they sensitive to His needs? Didn't they respect His privacy? No wonder He had to slip away at night to be alone to pray.

As the sun worked its way up the sky and I completed my task, my attention was caught but a large, loud group moving quickly to where Jesus was patiently teaching and healing. There was Peter in the front, with John, James and Andrew with them. I knew it was too late to go fishing since that usually was done in the cooler evening or early morning hours, so they probably wouldn't be coming for their boat. Instead I went over to where they were approaching Jesus.

They were all excited, everyone shouting to be heard over everyone all, all with great stories of the success they had enjoyed as they taught, healed and cast out demons in Jesus' name. The bedlam was so great Jesus couldn't hear them, so He motioned for them to get into the remaining fishing boat and push out. I didn't know if Jesus was going to teach from the boat again, but they kept on going. Obviously Jesus wanted time alone to listen to them and share their excitement while also sharing His ominous news about their mutual friend, John, and its implications for them.

The people who had gathered weren't to be put off so easily, though. Some started running along the shore to cut across to where they thought the boat might land so they could continue their demands for Jesus' attention. I followed along, grabbing up the lunch my mother had packed for my noon meal as I passed by the newly-mended nets.

The boat didn't put ashore but kept traveling, so we kept following. They would have to land somewhere, so we kept following. More and more people caught up to us and others from

the town we passed through as we follow the shoreline northeastward also joined in. Soon there was a large group making its way around the lake on foot.

Eventually we arrived at the spot where the boat was landing and swarmed around Jesus and the disciples. I knew Peter and James well, and it was obvious they and the others were quite put out at Jesus because they wanted all His attention just to themselves. Jesus, though, had compassion and patience for the people.

The day was already well advanced and it was past time for our noon meal. I had my lunch but soon realized no one else had brought food. There was no place to buy enough food for such a large crowd for a quick estimate revealed there were at least 5,000 men. Add to that children and women and we numbered over 20,000. It would cost a fortune to buy enough food for all of us, even if it had been available. I was hesitant to eat my lunch in front of everyone, knowing that wouldn't be polite. But I surely was getting hungry!

Jesus was sensitive to all our needs and realize we were getting quite hungry. He asked His disciples, who had just seen God do many miracles through them, to handle the situation but it seems they forgot their newly-learned lessons and didn't know how to feed us. Andrew had been talking to me and noticed my lunch so he told Jesus about it, thinking that at least Jesus would have something to eat even if the rest of us didn't. When he asked me for it I was hesitant to give it up, for mother know I was a growing boy and quite hungry and given my 5 small loaves of bread and 2 fish. Reluctantly I gave it up, knowing mother would be proud of my manners under the circumstances. After all, sharing with Jesus was a real privilege.

Now we had been watching Jesus do miracles all day, but this one was special because it benefited all of us and not just someone else. A miracle is really what it was, for when Jesus took my food, prayed for it, and broke it to eat it, instead of eating it He passed it to the disciples. Only He kept breaking and breaking and breaking and giving, giving, giving. Yet that same small loaf was still in His hands – it never got smaller! In fact, the food just multiplied. It increased so fast that there was enough for each of us to eat our fill and even have 12 full baskets left over.

I used to think that I was too young to do anything for God. After all, I was just a child. Then I started thinking of other children God had used. David was a young boy when he killed a lion, bear and Goliath. Samuel started serving God in the temple when he was about 4 years old. Josiah was 8 when he became king and let the people back to God. Then there was the Jewish servant girl who sent Naaman to Elisha to be healed. I remembered that Jesus had told the disciples to let children come to Him when they tried to keep us away. I even heard Him once say that adults needed to have faith as us children had. That made me feel good. I guess God can use a child. He often has in the past.

I was thrilled to think that Jesus did all that with my little lunch! It made me think, if He can use something small as my lunch, perhaps He could use someone as small as me. If I gave Him my life, would He use and multiply it, too, for His glory, like the fish? Somehow I think so. I'll find out, I guess, for I've given Him my heart to use for His honor and glory as well. Have you?

16. FEEDING PEOPLE

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did everyone want to see Jesus?

Do some people today just come to Jesus for what He can do for them? Do you?

Why does God like to use little things and little people?

Can Jesus use children and young people or just grown adults?

Name some children or young adults that Jesus used for His honor and glory.

In what ways has God used you or others you age whom you know to serve Him?

Has God ever done anything miraculous to help you, your family or anyone you know? Tell about what happened.

Jesus cared about their basic needs and met them. What basic needs of yours does He meet?

When is the last time you thanked Him for these things? Stop and pray now and thank Him.

Why did Jesus stoop what He was doing to meet the people's needs?

What lessons can we learn from Peter who was walking on the water while he kept his eyes on Jesus but then started sinking when he looked at the waves around him?

What lesson can we learn from Peter looking to Jesus for help when he started sinking?

16. FEEDING PEOPLE

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did everyone want to see Jesus?

Some wanted to learn from Him but most wanted to be healed or have Him do something for them.

Do some people today just come to Jesus for what He can do for them? Do you?

Yes, hopefully no to the second part.

Why does God like to use little things and little people?

Then it is obvious He gets the credit and glory for it!

Can Jesus use children and young people or just grown adults?

Yes!!!!

Name some children or young adults that Jesus used for His honor and glory.

Children include Samuel, David, Josiah (became king at 8 and led the people back to God) and others. Young adults include Joseph (Old Testament), Mary & Joseph (New Testament), Timothy, Mark, servant girl who sent Naaman to Elisha.

In what ways has God used you or others you age whom you know to serve Him?

(answers will vary)

Has God ever done anything miraculous to help you, your family or anyone you know? Tell about what happened.

(answers will vary)

Jesus cared about their basic needs and met them. What basic needs of yours does He meet?

(food, clothing, home, transportation, entertainment, friends, love, protection, etc.)

When is the last time you thanked Him for these things? Stop and pray now and thank Him.

Why did Jesus stoop what He was doing to meet the people's needs?

He had love and compassion for them.

What lessons can we learn from Peter who was walking on the water while he kept his eyes on Jesus but then started sinking when he looked at the waves around him?

We must keep our eyes on Jesus at all times and not look at the difficulties and circumstances around us.

What lesson can we learn from Peter looking to Jesus for help when he started sinking?

When we get our eyes off Jesus and start 'sinking' in life we need to look right back to Him for help.

17. JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
17. JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION	Jesus is God	Matthew 17:1-8 Mark 9:2-8 Luke 9:28-36	God pointing down to Jesus

By James (Brother of John)

Have you ever had a prayer answered so strong and clear you almost wanted to say "Enough already!"? I did. The prayer was about Jesus – if He was God or not. I think I always knew, but I wanted to be really sure. Know what I mean?

You know, hearing that your cousin is God is really something. Believing it takes lots of faith. Committing your life to live for Him and serve Him is, well, you want to make sure!

JESUS THE MAN Did Jesus really live? There's no doubt about that. History proves Him. Historians of His day wrote about Him. Was He really a man who was born, lived and died? No doubt. But was He also really God?

JESUS THE GOD I feel I can answer this as good as anyone. I knew Him His whole life. I was His cousin, a disciple, one of the inner 3 disciples. My mother and His mother, Mary, were sisters. I followed Him from the beginning, knowing He was the greatest Rabbi ever. It was in the summer of 32, though, that any doubt about His deity was totally removed. Jesus had been ministering for 3 years by then. I didn't know it at the time, but by that time next year He'd be dead.

Jesus had just been through a terrible day. He heard that John died and His life was in danger. The disciples just returned from a successful campaign and were all excited. People crowded around Him everywhere. He didn't handle that like any man I ever knew. When crowds followed Him around the lake He taught, healed and fed them. Then He had to help His disciples keep from drowning on the way back. Who can walk on water? Who can stop a storm with a word? Who can feed 30,000 people with a few small loaves and fish? Only God can do that!

JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD I watched Him closely as we traveled. People were healed by a word or a touch. He said He was the Bread of Life sent from God (John 6:46-51). Many times He claimed to be God (John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5; etc.). He performed miracles, accepted worship, and forgave sin (Mark 2:5). He clearly claimed to be equal with God (Matt. 28:19; John 5:17-18; 12:45; 13:20; 14:1, 9) and one with God (Matt 4:7; Luke 4:12; 8:39; John 10:30, 36-38; 17:11, 21-22; 20:28). We all knew He said He was from heaven (John 6:33, 35, 51) and was sent by God (John 4:34; 5:37; 7:16, 28-29; 8:16; 9:4; 11:42; 14:24; 16:28; 17:18, 23). Over and over He identified Himself as the Son of God (Matt 16:17; 22:42-45; Mark 12:35-37; 14:61-62; Luke 20:41; John 9:35-37; 22:69-70). You didn't have to be around Him very much before you understood His claims to have always existed (John 8:58; 17:5), have omniscience (Matt 11:21-22; Luke 10:13), omnipresence (Matt 18:20; 28:20) and omnipotence (Mark 14:61-63; Luke 22:69-70; John 2:19, 10:18; 11:25-27). The more time we watched Him the more clear it became that He was not just a man like the rest of us.

There is no doubt that **Jesus claimed to be God**. The whole tenor of His life points to that. He verbally claimed to be God many, many times (John 8:58; 10:30; 17:5; etc.). He accepted worship as if He were God. He claimed to be able to forgive sin (Mark 2:5). Now, what are we to make of someone who claims to be God? What would you say if your neighbor started claiming to be God? There are three options or possibilities about such a person. He is crazy, a **lunatic**, for he truly thinks he is God but is wrong. He knows he isn't God but tries to convince everyone he is anyway, thus he is a **liar**. Or he really is God and **Lord** of all! Lord, lunatic or liar are our options. Just a good man, a fine teacher, a moral example -- these are not options for one who claims to be God! If He is a lunatic or liar He doesn't qualify as a good, fine

person. If He is Lord He is overqualified and far more than just a good, fine person. Thus He is either God to be worshipped and obeyed or an impostor to be forgotten and ignored.

It was about this time that Peter had opportunity to put all of our feelings into words when Jesus asked him if we disciples were going to leave Him as so many other followers had. "Lord," Peter said. "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." It was clear enough. His actions backed up His words: power over nature, illness, even Satan and his forces. It was mainly the religious rulers who denied His deity, mainly because of their pride and jealousy. They looked for every excuse they could to discredit Him. One of their main reasons was because He did not keep all their manmade laws, like ritual hand washing before eating. Jesus said it was what was the inside, not the outside that mattered.

IF GOD BECAME MAN Jesus kept healing. He healed a demonized little girl of a Phoenician. In fact, He did all you would expect God to do. I had often thought about it, and I knew if God ever came to earth He would have an unusual entrance. What is more unusual than being born of a virgin? In addition, He had to be without sin. Jesus was. I knew Him my whole life, and lived with Him day and night for 3 years. If God became man, you would expect Him to do the supernatural (miracles), speak the greatest words ever spoken, and have a lasting and universal influence. Furthermore you would expect Him to satisfy the spiritual hunger in man and to exercise power over death. Jesus did all of these. As if to underline these truths He then healed a deaf mute, fed another group with 4,000 men in it, and then healed a blind man at Bethsaida. Then one day Jesus gave us a test.

RESURRECTION PROVES DEITY We were walking on a long, lonely road near Caesarea Philippi. Jesus asked us "Who do the people say I am?" After telling Him He asked us who we thought He was. Peter said it for all of us: "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God." This really pleased Jesus. He had been making it clear since we met Him. Then He started talking about His death and resurrection. That didn't mean He wasn't God, it really just proved He was. Who but God could come back from the grave?

TRANSFIGURATION PROVES DEITY

It wasn't long after that happened that we got to see Jesus in His Godly glory. No one could see that and doubt. Jesus spent lots of time traveling throughout Galilee (John 7:1). He found faith among Gentiles, healing the daughter of a woman who had more faith than He found among the Jews (Mt 15:21-28; Mk 7:24-30). He healed a deaf mute (Mk 15:29-31; Mk 7:31-37) and again fed a crowd, this one of 4,000 men (Mt 15:32-38; Mk 8:1-9). Still the people demanded proof He was the Messiah (Mt 15:39 - 16:4; Mk 8:9-12). That proof would be the sign of Jonah, alive after being dead for 3 days.

Jesus warned His followers of the subtle growth of the sin of unbelief, like leaven (Mt 16:5-12; Mk 8:13-21). Traveling on Jesus healed a blind man (Mk 8:22-26).

Upon reaching Mt Hermon Jesus stopped and talked to us, His disciples. He asked us if we knew Who He was. When we did, He was most encouraged at our faith (Mt 16:13-20; Mk 8:27-30; Lk 9:18-21). Then He warned us that, instead of setting up a throne, He would be crucified but would come back to life (Mt 16:21-23; Mk 8:31-33; Lk 9:22). He went on to teach us about discipleship (Mt 16:24-28; Mk 8:34-9:1 Lk 9:23-27) and the commitment it would take from us to follow Him in the coming difficult times.

He then went further up Mt Hermon with Peter, John and I where we saw Him transfigured and we saw His eternal glory (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36). We were on a mountain and He was transfigured. There He was in all His glory, talking with Moses and Elijah about His coming death and resurrection. Just think – we saw the Shekinah Glory and lived! God Himself spoke, saying Jesus was His Son. This led to a discussion about John fulfilling the prophecy of 'Elijah' coming before the Messiah (Mt 17:9-13; Mk 9:9-13). When we went back to the other disciples we found demons indwelling a boy and the disciples not able to drive them out. Jesus rebuked them and they left immediately (Mt 17:14-21; Mk 9:14-29; Lk 9:37-43). Again He told us about His coming death and resurrection (Mt 17:22-23; Mk 9:30-32; Lk 9:43-45) so we would be prepared and not lose faith when it happened.

FULFILLED PROPHECIES PROVE DEITY Seeing Moses and Elijah with Him brought to mind all the prophecies of the Prophet to come who would be like Moses, and one like Elijah who would precede Him. In fact, hundreds of prophecies about the Messiah were being fulfilled in Jesus. Matthew was keeping a list of them. It was said He would be born of the seed of a woman (Gen 3:15; Gal 4:4; Mt 1:20), of a virgin (Isa 7:14; Mt 1:18,24-25; Lk 1:26-35), and would be called the Son of God (Ps 2:7). He would be a descendant of Abraham (Gen 22:18), Isaac (Gen 21:12) and Jacob (Num 24:17), of the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10) and the family of Jesse (Isa 11:1,10; Jer 23:5). The probability of these coming true would be 1 in 10 with 16 zeroes. That means if each chance were a silver dollar there would be enough to lay them down side by side and cover the whole state of Texas two feet deep! Of all those silver dollars only one would be marked. The odds in parachuting into Texas blindfolded and picking up the marked one are the same as those prophecies of the Messiah just happening to come true. And there were hundreds of other prophecies of the Messiah which Jesus filled! What more proof would one want that He is God? If He didn't fulfill those prophecies then no one ever will for all the records to prove what tribe and family they come from were destroyed when Jerusalem fell in 70 AD.

WHAT ABOUT YOU? Do you believe He really is God? If so, that will change your life! Check out the facts. The more closely you look, the more obvious it becomes. Two infidels once sat on a railroad train, discussing the life of Christ. One of them said, "I think an interesting romance could be written about him." The other replied, "and you are just the man to write it. Tear down the prevailing sentiment about His divinity, and paint Him as a man - a man among men." The suggestion was acted upon and the romance written. The man who made the suggestion was Colonel Ingersoll, the noted atheist. The writer was General Lew Wallace, and the book was called "Ben Hur." In the process of constructing the life of Christ, Gen. Wallace found himself facing the greatest life ever lived on earth. The more he studied, the more he was convinced Christ was more than man. Until one day, he was forced to cry, 'Verily, this was the Son of God!'

17. JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

If someone asked you how you know Jesus is God, how would you answer them?

When are some of the times Jesus claimed to be God?

If Jesus is not God (Lord) what must He be?

How does being resurrected prove Jesus was God?

What was the 'transfiguration'; and what happened there?

Why did Jesus let His disciples see Him that way?

What would you have thought if you had been there?

Peter was talking when He should have been listening so God interrupted Peter (Mark 2:5-7). Do you spend more time talking to God or listening to Him? Which is more important?

What are some prophecies that Jesus fulfilled that shows He is God?

What difference does it make if Jesus is just a good man and not God?

Break up into small groups of 2 or 3 or as a group let one person be someone wondering how we can know Jesus is God and another person play the role of a Christian talking to them. This can help you get used to what to say to others.

When you close in prayer, spend time listening to God and not talking. What is He saying to you?

17. JESUS' TRANSFIGURATION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

If someone asked you how you know Jesus is God, how would you answer them?

Use the answers in today's lesson: Jesus claimed to be God, He did everything God would do were God to become man, the transfiguration and resurrection prove He is God and He fulfilled all the prophecies that were made for the Messiah.

When are some of the times Jesus claimed to be God?

(see lesson "Jesus Claimed to be God")

If Jesus is not God (Lord) what must He be?

Either a LIAR for He often said He was God or a LUNATIC (crazy) for thinking He was God when He wasn't. He couldn't be just a good teacher, though, for a good teacher can't be a liar or lunatic.

How does being resurrected prove Jesus was God?

No one has ever come back to life from dead. Only God could do that. Death, sin and Satan couldn't defeat or hold Him. He is greater than them.

What was the 'transfiguration'; and what happened there?

Jesus let His glory shine through His humanity. All the rest of His earthly life He hid His glory as God but here, with Elijah and Moses, His glory was seen. He was talking with them about His upcoming death and resurrection. He needed the fellowship and encouragement.

Why did Jesus let His disciples see Him that way?

He wanted them to be assured that He was God – give them more proof. Peter, James and John were His closest friends on earth and He wanted to encourage them, increase their faith, and share this special time with them.

What would you have thought if you had been there?

(answers will vary)

Peter was talking when He should have been listening so God interrupted Peter (Mark 2:5-7). Do you spend more time talking to God or listening to Him? Which is more important?

What God has to say to us is MUCH more important than what we have to say to God. He already knows what we say to Him but if we miss what He wants to say to us we miss something very important.

What are some prophecies that Jesus fulfilled that shows He is God?

(see lesson, "Fulfilled Prophecies Prove Deity")

What difference does it make if Jesus is just a good man and not God?

If Jesus isn't God we have no salvation, no one to pray to, no Holy Spirit inside us, the Bible isn't true, and we are eternally lost in our sins forever.

Break up into small groups of 2 or 3 or as a group let one person be someone wondering how we can know Jesus is God and another person play the role of a Christian talking to them. This can help you get used to what to say to others.

When you close in prayer, spend time listening to God and not talking. What is He saying to you?

18. PARABLES – GOOD SAMARITAN

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
18. PARABLES – Good Samaritan	Help others in need	Luke 10:25-37	Man on donkey

By an old woman who loved stories

Do you like stories? I love a good story! I have ever since I was a little girl many, many years ago. Perhaps that why I became a story-teller. I love to hear a good story, remember it, and pass it on to others. Especially meaningful is when a story is teaching a lesson, when it has a good moral point to make. You won't be surprised when I say that I heard all the best story tellers in my day. Recently I met one who is better than all the others, though. He is the best of the best. His stories are short, they grab your attention, are easy to identify with and remember, and teach important truths. Who am I talking about? The man from Nazareth – Jesus!

I've been following and listening to Jesus from just about the beginning. I wasn't attracted to Him because of His story-telling, for He didn't used to tell many stories. For the first 2 years of His ministry He went around doing miracles and trying to show to everyone that He was God. After giving everyone all the proof they needed, and after the religious rulers and majority of the people clearly rejected Him as Messiah, a change took place in His ministry. I don't know how many people noticed, but because of my age I watched from a distance and analyzed what He was doing. Therefore I noticed it right away when His emphasis shifted to the disciples and teaching them. It was as if He knew His time was limited and so He had to prepare them to carry on when He was gone.

When He first started using stories to illustrate and explain His teachings, His disciples were confused. He told them He was doing this for two reasons: First, these stories made it easier for His followers to clearly understand what He was teaching. It was like opening a curtain to let the light into a room. Second, they actually hid His truths from those who weren't followers of His. They didn't have the spiritual perception to understand and interpret them, so they weren't able to mock and make fun of His teachings.

Some story tellers get in a rut and their stories all start sounding alike, but not Jesus. He spoke about a variety of subjects and used nature, animals, food, work and various other daily customs we all knew and understood.

I kept a list of the ones I heard. He is my list:

1. The Two Houses Matt 7:24-27 (Luke 6:47-49)
2. The New Cloth and New Wineskins Matt 9:16-17
3. The Sower Matt 13:5-8 (Mark 4:3-8; Luke 8:5-8)
4. The Weeds Matt 13:24-30
5. The Mustard Seed Matt 13:31-32 (Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)
6. The Yeast Matt 13:33 (Luke 13:20-21)
7. The Hidden Treasure Matt 13:44
8. The Pearl of Great Price Matt 13:45-46
9. The Fishing Net Matt 13:47-50
10. The Unforgiving Servant Matt 18:23-35
11. The Workers in the Vineyard Matt 20:1-16

12. The Two Sons Matt 21:28-32
13. The Wicked Vinegrowers Matt 21:33-46 (Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19)
14. The Marriage of the King's Son Matt 22:1-14
15. The Two Servants Matt 24:45-51 (Luke 12:42-48)
16. The 10 Virgins Matt 25:1-13
17. The Talents Matt 25:14-30
18. The Seed Growing Secretly Mark 4:26-29
19. The Doorkeeper Mark 13:34-37
20. The Rude Children Luke 7:31-35
21. The Two Debtors Luke 7:41-43
22. The Good Samaritan Luke 10:25-37
23. The Friend at Midnight Luke 11:5-8
24. The Rich Fool Luke 12:16-21
25. The Barren Fig Tree Luke 13:6-9
26. The Great Supper Luke 14:15-24
27. The Unfinished Tower and the King's Rash War Luke 14:28-33
28. The Lost Sheep Matt 18:12-14 (Luke 15:4-7)
29. The Lost Coin Luke 15:8-10
30. The Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32
31. The Shrewd Manager Luke 16:1-9
32. The Servant's Reward Luke 17:7-10
33. The Unjust Judge Luke 18:1-8
34. The Pharisee and the Taxgatherer Luke 18:9-14
35. The Pounds Luke 19:1-27

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I guess out of all of them my favorite is the one called the Good Samaritan. It is the story of a Jew traveling on a very desolate and dangerous stretch of land. Often robbers would attack those who traveled the road and steal their possessions. Jesus used that as the basis for this story. He tells about a man who was robbed and beaten. He would soon die if he didn't receive help. A Levite and a Priest each passed by the man but, despite being religious leaders in Israel, ignored him and passed on the other side of the road. Then a hated and despised Samaritan, someone the Jews considered inferior to themselves and deserving of hell, passed by. He didn't repay insult for insult, though, for he took care of the man at sacrifice of his own time, effort and money. He did what the others didn't do.

I'll never forget Jesus telling this story. He has been asked who our 'neighbor' was and Jesus used this short story, this parable, to show that we are all neighbors and we must all treat each other with kindness and consideration. We are all to be that way and help wherever we can. Not only did this story communicate the truth Jesus was making, it also served to point out in a very effective way the lack of concern for others that most of the religious rulers had.

You know, whenever I see someone in need I remember that story. When I am about to make an excuse for not helping someone, I remember the Samaritan in the story who helped the man in need. When I am in need I am very grateful to anyone who will help me. When I am in the position of being able to help someone else, I always want to do what I can to help, just like the good Samaritan. Are you like him, or are you more like the Levite or priest?

18. PARABLES – GOOD SAMARITAN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Do you like stories? What is your favorite story?

Why did Jesus use stories (parables) to teach?

Name as many parables as you can.

Which are your favorites and why?

In the parable of the good Samaritan, why do you think the Priest and Levite passed by the man without helping?

Can you remember a time you didn't help someone when you could have done so?

Does Jesus want you to help those who others think aren't as important as you?

Why do you think the Samaritan helped the man even though Jews hated them?

Have you ever helped someone who didn't like you? Tell about the time.

How does the parable of the good Samaritan teach us what it means to be a 'neighbor'?

How do you think the injured man felt when the Samaritan helped him?

How do you feel when others help you? What do you do to show them how you feel?

Name some ways in which God has helped you?

What can you do to show Him how you feel?

18. PARABLES – GOOD SAMARITAN

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Do you like stories? What is your favorite story?

(answers will vary)

Why did Jesus use stories (parables) to teach?

It helped His followers better understand what He was talking about. It also hid Jesus' special truths from those who weren't disciples and would have made fun of them.

Name as many parables as you can.

(see list with lesson)

Which are your favorites and why?

(answers will vary)

In the parable of the good Samaritan, why do you think the Priest and Levite passed by the man without helping?

They were self-centered and didn't want to bother with someone they didn't think was as important as them.

Can you remember a time you didn't help someone when you could have done so?

(answers will vary)

Does Jesus want you to help those who others think aren't as important as you?

Yes, he certainly does!

Why do you think the Samaritan helped the man even though Jews hated them?

He had love for people, even if the people didn't love him back.

Have you ever helped someone who didn't like you? Tell about the time.

(answers will vary)

How does the parable of the good Samaritan teach us what it means to be a 'neighbor'?

It shows us the importance of showing love to everyone and helping others no matter who they are or what they have done to us.

How do you think the injured man felt when the Samaritan helped him?

Very grateful and thankful.

How do you feel when others help you? What do you do to show them how you feel?

Very grateful. You can tell them thanks, do something nice for them, send a letter, etc.

Name some ways in which God has helped you?

(answers will vary – everything we have comes from Him)

What can you do to show Him how you feel?

Thank Him, love Him, worship & praise Him, obey Him, tell others about Him, etc.

19. MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
19. MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS	Listen to Jesus	Luke 10:38-42 John 11:1-44 John 12:1-11	Perfume jar

By Lazarus

A while back I was listening to a rabbi talk to a group of his students. To make a point he used this illustration. Then he pulled out a one-gallon, wide-mouthed jar and set it on a table in front of him. Then he produced about a dozen fist-sized rocks and carefully placed them, one at a time, into the jar. When the jar was filled to the top and no more rocks would fit inside, he asked, "Is this jar full?" Everyone in the class said, "Yes." Then he said, "Really?" He reached under the table and pulled out a bucket of gravel. Then he dumped some gravel in and shook the jar causing pieces of gravel to work themselves down into the spaces between the big rocks. Then he smiled and asked the group once more, "Is the jar full?" By this time the class was onto him. "Probably not," one of them answered. "Good!" he replied. And he reached under the table and brought out a bucket of sand. He started dumping the sand in and it went into all the spaces left between the rocks and the gravel. Once more he asked the question, "Is this jar full?" "No!" the class shouted. Once again he said, "Good!" Then he grabbed a pitcher of water and began to pour it in until the jar was filled to the brim. Then he looked up at the class and asked, "What is the point of this illustration?" One eager beaver raised his hand and said, "The point is, no matter how full your schedule is, if you try really hard, you can always fit some more things into it!" "No," the Rabbi replied, "that's not the point. The truth this illustration teaches us is: If you don't put the big rocks in first, you'll never get them in at all." Then he went on to talk about the BIG ROCKS of life, the important things to each of us. Each one has different BIG ROCKS in life: relationship with God and family, friends, health, home and church.

That's what I want to tell you about. My name is Lazarus. I was from Bethany, near Jerusalem. Mary and Martha were my sisters. They were widows, and actually took care of me because I had been sickly my whole life. We all were followers of Jesus. That was our first priority in life. God blessed us with enough money, a fine house, and an influential role in our community. Still, He came first. We had to make sure we didn't let other responsibilities, obligations and opportunities crowd out what was most important to us – the spiritual side of our natures. There is a great temptation in life to let the urgent crowd out the important.

Because of my health I couldn't follow Jesus and travel with Him. Mary or Martha turn turns traveling with the women who followed Him. The other stayed home to take care of me. Then Jesus left Galilee and spent much time in Judea and surrounding areas. It was like He wanted to make sure everyone had an opportunity to hear Him before it was too late. It seemed everyone was turning against Him, even His own family. Then He came to our home (Luke 10:38-42).

Did you ever get unexpected company? Your husband brings home his boss and a dozen friends without hardly any notice. It's easy to sympathize with Martha. But what if the wife wanted to have them over and understood there wouldn't be much notice. What if she had been reassured they didn't want anything fancy, just a jar of peanut butter, another of jelly, and a loaf of bread. "Well make our own lunch. We just want to spend some time with YOU." Then if the wife felt she had to make a major feast with all the trimmings, well, it's her choice.

Remember, our home was the closest thing to a real home that Jesus had. We replaced His brothers and sisters. He spent much time with us. Our home was always open to Him. So

when He came this time Mary, who had been helping Martha all morning and felt they had more than enough food ready, wanted to spend the time with Jesus. Well, if you knew Martha, you'd know she loved Jesus as much as Mary did, but she had this perfectionist streak, this drive to keep doing more and more. She couldn't say "No" to important things so she could say "Yes" to more important things. That was Martha.

Unfortunately she got so bothered by Mary's departure that she interrupted the discussion to imply Jesus didn't care about her because He didn't send Mary back into the kitchen. It was an embarrassing moment. Mary felt awful – she wasn't trying to hurt Martha. Kind Martha was obviously out of line. Jesus gently corrected Martha, telling her not to be so worried and upset. He didn't want to take sides, but He said that she shouldn't be telling Mary what to do. Mary didn't try to force Martha to adopt her priorities, and Martha shouldn't be trying to force hers on Mary. After all, feeding one's heart came before feeding one's stomach! We all learned something that day, even Martha. Spiritual needs must come before physical. Relationships with people come before chores. That's the only way to really live a 'successful' life.

I heard a story about a Roman traveling in a fancy wagon who stopped to do business one evening. While doing business some local boys, to play a trick on him, switched his wheels. Those particular wagons had little wheels in front to turn easier and big ones in back for stability. Axles arranged high or low for each. They put little wheels in back & big in front! After business went to the local inn for the night. Next morning when got up went outside to look at the hill he climbed in the dark last night -- never saw a hill like it! But couldn't find any hill - all flat to where did business! Inn keeper saw him looking around and asked him what doing, when told said they better check the wagon. Did and saw trick! Inn keeper said Then the preacher said: "You know, there's a lesson to be learned in this. Whenever in life we get the big wheels where the little ones ought to be and the little ones where the big ones ought to be, life is a hard pull." Jesus told us *"Seek first the kingdom of God & His righteousness, & all these things will be added to you as well"*

CHECK YOUR PRIORITIES Are you climbing "hills" God never meant for you to climb? Are your big wheels and your little wheels in the right places? Don't be like Martha. Who really is the Lord of your life?

What can we do? First of all, let's make sure that we keep our own priorities straight. Let's admit that we cannot do it all. There are others whom God has placed in the Body who are better qualified to do some of the things we have taken on. They are waiting for someone to say to them, "We need you." Let them do what God has gifted them to do.

Second, we need to learn how to say "no," at least every once in a while. Sometimes we have to say "no" to something so that we can more adequately say "yes" to something much more meaningful. JESUS often said no, didn't let URGENT crowd our IMPORTANT.

Third, we need to remember that God comes first, then our families. They should never get the "leftovers" of our time and energy. We should make a determination in our hearts to be true to what God has called us to do, and not allow other things to crowd out our own times alone with God. It is in the secret places that we best can maintain some sense of balance and priority. Spend some extended time in quiet, reflective, uninterrupted solitude, just listening to whatever God chooses to tell you.

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." Psalm 42:1-2 "Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added to you as well."

By Lazarus

Have you ever died and come back to life? I'll tell you, there's nothing like it! I love to hear stories about the 'other side.' Some of them you can't trust, but the ones in the bible are the most dependable ones. Have you heard them. There is the boy God brought back to life through Elijah (I Kings 17:21-22). There is the son of the Shunammite mother in the time of Elisha (II Kings 4:33-36). Then there was the man who came back to life when he was buried in Elijah's cave (II Kings 13). God worked through Peter to bring Dorcas back to life (Acts 9:40) and through Paul to for Eutychus (Acts 20:9-12). Jesus Himself raised a son of a Nain widow (Luke 7:14-15), Jarius' daughter (Luke 8) and Lazarus -- that's me!

Actually I was one of two Lazarus' in the Bible. Jesus used both of our deaths as a testimony to Himself.

LAZARUS & THE RICH MAN (Luke 16:19-31). The other Lazarus was a poor, sickly beggar in a true story Jesus told He was crippled, dumped by a road where he was at the mercy of people to throw their scraps where he could reach them. Of course, he had to fight off wolf-like wild dogs for the food. Well, he died but, being a believer, his spirit went to heaven while his body went to the always-burning garbage dump, Gehenna.

For a believer death means being immediately in God's presence in heaven (Luke 23:43). It isn't loss, it's gain! Two little birds had a nest in the bushes in the back part of the garden. Julia found the nest. It had four speckled eggs in it. One day, after she had been away some time, she ran into the garden to take a peep at the speckled eggs. Instead of the beautiful eggs, there were only broken, empty shells. "Oh!" she said, picking out the pieces, "the beautiful eggs are all spoiled and broken!" "No, Julia," said her brother; "they are not spoiled: the best part of them has taken wings, and flown away." So it is in death: the body left behind is only an empty shell; while its soul, the better part, has taken wings, and flown away.

On the other hand, the rich man outside whose mansion Lazarus had been dumped, also died. He went to hell because he didn't have faith in God, just in himself. His body went into a fine tomb, but His soul to hell. What contrast! In this life Lazarus had torment, but in eternity treasure. For the rich man it was the opposite. Who was better off? Remember that everyone will one day die. No one escapes death. It is final, there is no chance for salvation after death.

LAZARUS, MARY & MARTHA (John 11:1-44) That brings me to my story. God used my death for His glory, too – but in a different way. He brought me back to life! I wasn't the focus of the story, though. He just chose me for His glory – what a privilege that was!

I was always sickly, my whole life. In mid-February, 33 AD, though, I was so sick everyone thought I'd die. Mary and Martha sent to Jesus to come heal me. We'd seen Him heal so many others. But He didn't come. He sent the messenger back saying that my sickness wouldn't end in death. However by the time the messenger got back I had died! That just added to everyone's grief. Where was He? Why didn't He come? How could He be so wrong?

Eventually He did show up, after I was in the grave 4 days. They tell me He never did offer a word of explanation about why He hadn't arrived earlier. He talked with Martha, a theological discussion to stretch her faith. He comforted Mary, an emotional time of crying with her.

Then Jesus went to the tomb. He asked them to move the stone. Martha, thinking He just wanted to view my body one final time, reminded Him that I had been dead four days – the stench from decay would be awful. Jesus persisted. No one knew what He was going to do. You know, Jesus never preached a funeral sermon. Every funeral He attended He ended by bringing the dead person back to life. That's what He did with me, too!

"Lazarus, come out!" He called. If He wouldn't have said "Lazarus," everyone who was buried there would have come back to life!

Funny, I knew I had been in heaven and had to leave, but the memory was so fleeting, so quickly gone, that I didn't have time to complain. I would have really resented being back on earth if I had remembered what the previous 4 days were like. I guess that's God's mercy. I did have a vague memory of great peace, love and joy.

What happened to me, and the others who came back to life, is called resuscitation, not resurrection. I had the same body, which got older and eventually died of old age. I did not have a new, eternal body like the other Lazarus received when he went to heaven. I got mine when I died for good many years later. One thing was different with this body, though – I wasn't sick any more. For the first time in my life I was healthy, really healthy. I stayed that way, too.

You see, I was able to conquer death because Jesus was greater than death. He proved that on the cross, a few weeks later. What death did to Jesus is nothing compared to what Jesus did to death (I Cor. 15:51-57). When death stung Jesus Christ, it stung itself to death (Hosea 13:14; Isa 25:8). At first it seemed like death conquered Him on the cross, but the resurrection proved otherwise.

An event more in your time helps explain what happened. It was June 18, 1815, the Battle of Waterloo. The French under the command of Napoleon were fighting the Allies (British, Dutch, and Germans) under the command of Wellington. The people of England depended on a system of signals to find out how the battle was going. One of these signal stations was on the tower of Winchester Cathedral. Late in the day it flashed the signal: "W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N- - - D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D- -." Just at that moment one of those sudden English fog-clouds made it impossible to read the message. The news of defeat quickly spread throughout the city. The whole countryside was sad and gloomy when they heard the news that their country had lost the war. Suddenly the fog lifted, and the remainder of the message could be read. The message had four words, not two. The complete message was: "W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N- - -D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D- - T-H-E- - -E-N-E-M-Y!" It took only a few minutes for the good news to spread. Sorrow was turned into joy, defeat was turned into victory! So it was when Jesus died but then came back to life. *Rev 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever & ever! And I hold the keys of death & Hades*

I was never afraid of death after that. In fact, I kind of looked forward to it. One day I was sitting by a main road in Jerusalem. A Roman chariot came charging down the street and right past me, the shadow passing over me. I thought how different it was being run over by a shadow than by the chariot. I thought about Jesus' promises of victory over death, & the 23rd Psalm about death being a shadow. Only the shadow of death can touch us. *Ps 23:4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.* Do you have that assurance? If you put your faith in Jesus you can!

The raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44) was so obviously a supernatural miracle that none could deny it or explain it away. It was so close to Jerusalem that many people there knew Lazarus (evidently a well-to-do and influential man) and came to talk to him about what had happened to Him. When the religious rulers checked it out they couldn't find any way to explain it away. They decided Jesus and Lazarus both would have to die to stop this strange movement that was gaining so much support. They were jealous. While most people didn't accept Jesus as Messiah and Savior, the majority did take His side in His conflict with the proud and controlling religious rulers. Having set in motion the events that would soon end in His death, Jesus then withdrew to Ephraim where it was safer (John 11:45-54) for it still wasn't time to die for sin.

19. MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who were Mary, Martha and Lazarus?

In Luke 10:38-42 Martha gets upset. Why?

What is more important to you, being busy doing things or spending time with Jesus?

Do you have trouble keeping the most important things first in life? What can you do to change?

Why did God let Lazarus die (John 11:1-44)?

Why didn't Jesus go to help Lazarus right away, why did He wait?

Can you give an example of when it seemed Jesus didn't help you right away when you asked? Why might He have waited?

What if Jesus wouldn't have been able to bring Lazarus to life? What would that mean to you?

Are you afraid of death? Why as a Christian, don't we have to fear death any more?

When Mary anointed Jesus for burial in John 12:1-11, she was showing she understood He was going to die but Judas was upset. Why?

Why did Jesus defend here?

Can you think of a time in life when others didn't understand what you were doing or why and criticized you, but you knew God understood and appreciated what you did?

19. MARY, MARTHA & LAZARUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who were Mary, Martha and Lazarus?

They were brother and sisters who lived together. The women were probably widows and it seems Lazarus was sickly. They were well-to-do people in Bethany. Jesus stayed with them when He visited Jerusalem.

In Luke 10:38-42 Martha gets upset. Why?

She was busy making a meal for Jesus and the disciples while Mary thought it was more important to sit and learn from Jesus.

What is more important to you, being busy doing things or spending time with Jesus?

(answers will vary)

Do you have trouble keeping the most important things first in life? What can you do to change?

(answers will vary)

Why did God let Lazarus die (John 11:1-44)?

To show His power and strength by bringing him back to life.

Why didn't Jesus go to help Lazarus right away, why did He wait?

To test and strengthen their faith, and to have everyone know Lazarus was really dead so He would be glorified all the more when He brought Lazarus back to life. He could have prevented his death but it showed His glory more by bringing him back to life.

Can you give an example of when it seemed Jesus didn't help you right away when you asked?

Why might He have waited?

(answers will vary)

What if Jesus wouldn't have been able to bring Lazarus to life? What would that mean to you?

If Jesus wasn't greater than death He would have stayed dead and He wouldn't have provided salvation. Plus He wouldn't be able to bring us back to life after death, either.

Are you afraid of death? Why as a Christian, don't we have to fear death any more?

We don't have to fear death because Jesus conquered it and, although our bodies die, the real 'us' lives forever. Death is a 'shadow' because its power has been broken (Psalm 23:4).

When Mary anointed Jesus for burial in John 12:1-11, she was showing she understood He was going to die but Judas was upset. Why?

He was greedy and wanted the money given to the disciples. Since he took care of the money he would steal some of it for himself.

Why did Jesus defend her?

He knew her motives were pure and out of love for Him. Even though others didn't understand what she was doing or why, He knew and defended her.

Can you think of a time in life when others didn't understand what you were doing or why and criticized you, but you knew God understood and appreciated what you did?

(answers will vary)

20. ZACCHAEUS & BARTIMAEUS

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
20. BARTIMAEUS & ZACCHAEUS	Mercy	Matthew 20:29-34 Mark 10:46-52 Luke 18:31 – 19:10	Tree, man in

By James “The Less”

Hello! My name is James, son of Alphaeus. My mother was Mary’s sister and Matthew (sometimes called Levi) was my brother. That made us cousins of Jesus and His brother James. I’m called “the less” to tell me apart from the other James, John’s brother and son of Zebedee. I was younger and shorter than him, so “the less” pretty well summed me up. There was nothing little or less in Jesus’ love for me and mine in return for Him, however! His mercy to me was awesome!

For 3 years I’ve been following Him, having started to believe in Him at the family wedding in Cana when He turned the water to wine. That was His first public miracle. Little did I know I’d be with Him at His last public miracle as well. It happened on our way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Passover as we always did. Only in hindsight was I able to realize that this was Jesus’ last trip to Jerusalem. In fact, as I think of it now, it was like He was going there to turn Himself in to die for our sins. He was to commit the ultimate act of mercy for us – to provide the free gift of salvation by paying for our sins on the cross. Before that happened, though, He had 3 more people to show mercy to.

As we walked down the road approaching Jericho, while still outside the city, we heard some men shouting to us from the side of the road. This wasn’t uncommon, and Jesus went to see what they wanted, as he always did. This could make our progress maddeningly slow, especially when we were in a hurry, but Jesus never passed up an opportunity to show mercy to someone in need.

One of the men calling to us was named ‘Bartimaeus.’ Now in Hebrew ‘bar’ means ‘son of.’ Thus this man was ‘Son of Timaeus.’ I never did catch the other man’s name.

Anyway, they were calling Jesus “Son of David” despite others telling them to be quiet and leave Jesus alone. Obviously they thought He was the Messiah. What they knew or how they found out about Him remains a mystery to me, but obviously it was God’s plan for them to be there at that time on that day. They wanted Jesus to show them mercy – do something good for them instead of the consequences for sin which we all deserve.

Jesus did something stranger, something I hardly ever remember Him doing. He asked them, “What do you want?” It had to be obvious what blind men would want! Perhaps Jesus just wanted them to put their request into words. It’s the same in prayer. Often we have not because we ask not. God is willing to show mercy, but He wants us to ask.

Their answer didn’t surprise anyone: they said they wanted to see. Jesus felt compassion for them and, in His mercy, healed them. Immediately they could see! It was

almost amusing to see them jumping around, running here and there while looking at things they had never seen before.

As we continued on our way they traveled with us, wanting to be near Jesus and telling everyone what had happened. Eventually they cut down a side street and headed for home so they could share their good news with their family – and so they could see their loved ones for the first time ever!

By this time we were walking through Jericho. More and more people were following us and the sides of the road were getting fuller and fuller as well. Many were talking about what had just happened with Bartimaeus and his friend. The air was full of anticipation. What would Jesus do next? As was so often the case, they were quite surprised by His next actions, as were we all.

Jesus suddenly went to the side of the road and stood under a sycamore tree and looked up into the tree. What was happening now? Then He called into the tree, “Zacchaeus! Come down! I want to go to your house for dinner!” We were shocked and amazed. Who was this Zaachaeus and how did Jesus know his name? Even more, why would He want to go to this man’s house?

When the man scrambled down out of the tree it was obvious he was short. Please understand, I have nothing against short people, being short myself. He must have gone up into the tree so he could see Jesus because he couldn’t see above the heads of the taller people in front of him. But upon seeing him we also recognized the unmistakable signs of a tax collector! Later we found out he was the head tax collector for that whole district. Everyone knew tax collectors were hated and despised because they were traitors to Israel and worked for the Romans. They were rejected by society because they were greedy and could charge as much as they wanted for tax, only turning a portion of it over to Rome. Thus they were very rich.

Why would Jesus want to be identified with this short, hated, rich traitor? Just when the people here were starting to respond to Jesus He goes and does something like this! I wasn’t surprised, though, for this seemed to be a pattern of His. Often when He showed mercy to someone in need others didn’t understand and just condemned Him for even associating with such needy people. It didn’t seem Jesus cared what people thought. He clearly cared much more for showing mercy to someone in need. I guess that’s why I loved Him so much – and why He loved me as well!

Being the recipient of this mercy brought out mercy in Zacchaeus’ heart as well. He promised to give half of his possessions to the poor and pay back four times as much if he had cheated anyone. He showed mercy because he had been shown mercy. I could understand that. It happened to me as well!

Later, in looking back on this time, I couldn’t help but marveling at how quick Jesus was to show mercy to these men even though He was going to a merciless and painful death. I continue to thank Him for His mercy to me! And the more I experience His mercy the more I want to show mercy to others. Even if they don’t show me mercy, I still desire to show mercy. I guess that’s part of becoming more and more like Jesus. You know what – I like it! I’m glad to be that way! I’ll never be able to show more mercy than I receive, and it seems the more I do give the more I get in return! Do you need mercy? Try showing mercy to others and see what happens to you!

20. ZACCHAEUS & BARTIMAEUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)?

He was a blind beggar who met Jesus on the road into Jercho.

What did he want Jesus to do for him?

He wanted Jesus to give him back his sight.

Why did Jesus ask Him what he wanted, didn't Jesus know a blind man would want to see?

Jesus wanted him to ask, to put his request into words so he would know Jesus healed him in answer to his prayer. Jesus says we don't have because we don't ask (James 4:2; John 16:24; I John 5:14)

What needs or desires do you have that you haven't been bringing to God in prayer?

(answers will vary)

Did Jesus do it? Why did He do it?

Yes. He did it because He loved Bartimaeus and had compassion for him.

The Psalmist says God will give us the desire of our heart (Psalm 37:4), like He did with Bartimaeus. What deep desires of yours had God already given you?

(answers will vary)

What is the main desire of our heart right now? Pray and ask God to give it to you if it is His will. Then patiently wait for Him to answer.

(answers will vary)

Who was Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)?

A tax collector who lived in Jereicho. He wasn't very tall.

Why wasn't He popular?

Tax collectors worked for the hated Romans and cheated the Jews out of money.

Why did Jesus care about him if other people didn't?

Jesus cares about all of us no matter what we have done. He loves everyone.

What should you do when you whenever you feel no one really cares about you but Jesus?

Talk to Him and thank Him for loving you no matter what. Realize others do love you.

What change came about in Zacchaeus' life that showed He was a follower of Jesus?

He gave half his possessions to the poor if he had cheated anyone he gave them back four times the amount he had taken.

What change in your life shows you are a follower of Jesus?

(answers will vary)

Even though He was going to die for our sins, Jesus was concerned about the needs of those around Him. Who has God put into your life that you can help?

(answers will vary)

20. ZACCHAEUS & BARTIMAEUS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)?

What did he want Jesus to do for him?

Why did Jesus ask Him what he wanted, didn't Jesus know a blind man would want to see?

What needs or desires do you have that you haven't been bringing to God in prayer?

Did Jesus do it? Why did He do it?

The Psalmist says God will give us the desire of our heart, like He did with Bartimaeus. What deep desires of yours had God already given you?

What is the main desire of our heart right now? Pray and ask God to give it to you if it is His will. Then patiently wait for Him to answer.

Who was Zacchaeus?

Why wasn't He popular?

Why did Jesus care about him if other people didn't?

What should you do when you ever feel no one really cares about you but Jesus?

What change came about in Zacchaeus' life that showed He was a follower of Jesus?

What change in your life shows you are a follower of Jesus?

Even though He was going to die for our sins, Jesus was concerned about the needs of those around Him. Who has God put into your life that you can help?

21. TEARFUL ENTRY

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
21. TEARFUL ENTRY	Jesus is King	Matthew 21:1-17 Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:29-44 John 12:12-19	Tear drop

By Joses

Every once in awhile a decision has to be made which affects the whole course of history: Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, Moses' decision to leave Egypt for Israel or Columbus' decision to search for a new world. Two thousand years ago the nation Israel found itself at just such a turning point decision. It was the biggest turning point in history since Eden, so important it is recorded in all four gospels (Jesus' birth is only recorded in two). The date was Monday, March 30, 33 AD.

THE BACKGROUND Jesus had been preaching for almost 4 years, but the majority of the people, and especially the religious rulers, had rejected His claims to be God come to earth as the Messiah. Now it was time for the Passover, when the town grew from 100,000 to one to 2 million people. Jesus came to Bethany, over the Mt of Olives from Jerusalem, on **Friday**, March 27. On **Saturday** Mary anointed Jesus feet for burial. Judas opposed the action as wasteful, but Jesus defended her, saying she was doing the right thing.

On **Sunday** many Jews went from Jerusalem to Bethany to see Lazarus. Many believed because of his testimony. The religious rulers planned to kill him as well as Jesus.

THE CHALLENGE Monday morning Jesus sent two disciples to get an unriden donkey (Matthew 21:1-7). Every other day he walked into town, but this day He was making a statement. He was coming to town as the Prince of Peace and people would be forced to respond one way or the other. He is going to put them on the spot. He could have come on a span of beautiful horses, or carried by angels, but he came the way a new king would enter Jerusalem. Before He had always told His followers to not tell anyone who He was, now He is publicly proclaiming His kingship. It is the day of commitment, one way or the others.

Of course, Jesus knew how the vote would go. Daniel 9:24-27 prophesied that on this very day the Messiah would be "cut off." This was fulfilled to the exact day, as God had told Daniel.

Jesus' intention was obvious to everyone present, for Peter started leading the procession and everyone picked up on it (Mark 11:7-10). The people put their coats down for Him, as they would have put costly rugs before a king entering Jerusalem. They waved branches and palms, symbols of victory. It was the belief that the Messiah would come to town on a donkey, from the Mt of Olives, with palm branches being waved. This is what Jesus did. People thought the enemy He was coming to conquer was Rome, but it was really sin and death.

Excitement grew among the emotional out-of-town Jews who came looking for a thrill, a break from the boredom. True believers in Jesus as Messiah soon picked up the emotion, and everyone started shouting "Hosanna" ("save us now") and "Hallelujah" ("Praise the Lord"). They were quoting Psalm 118:25-26.

Meanwhile when word spread to Jerusalem about what was happening, many residents and visitors to Jerusalem went out to check things out (John 12:12-19). The religious rulers trailed along to keep their eye on things (Luke 19:39-44). Nothing escaped the notice of their spy system. They told Jesus to silence His disciples, tell them they were out of line. Jesus instead said they were right in what they said, and it had to be proclaimed that day, if not by the people then the very rocks would cry out!

THE CHANGE The strangest thing happened, though, when Jesus reached the crest of the Mt of Olives and looked down on Jerusalem. With all the excitement and praising going on around Him He started crying. It wasn't just a quiet sob, it was a loud, long, uncontrolled heart-break of a cry. Why? Jesus

knew the nation as a whole was rejecting Him. He foresaw the terrible destruction that would soon come upon Jerusalem as a result of this. And it broke His heart. The 'Triumphal Entry' really was a TEARFUL entry. He had been anointed for burial by Mary, and here He was, going to His death in Jerusalem. By showing up He was, in effect, voluntarily turning Himself in to die for the sins of the world.

Naturally this quickly quenched the emotional display of the ones with Him. They were confused, most slipped away so they wouldn't be caught with Jesus and get into trouble with the religious rulers.

Just like that it was over! It seemed it had hardly started and it was finished – and what a strange end. It was like there was some unspoken agreement among everyone to act like nothing had happened. Just get back to business and forget this whole thing. Pretend Someone didn't just proclaim Himself Messiah-King after three years of teaching and miracles.

THE CHARGE Large crowds were gathered in the temple when Jesus entered, for that was the common meeting place for those in town. Things were really humming the week before Passover. Everyone was curious about Jesus coming to town, for they had heard about His display on the Mt of Olives. Also they were away of the religious rulers' threat to arrest Jesus if He came to town again. The last time in town they had tried to stone Him and Jesus only survived because of a miraculous escape. While glad to see Him because of the break in the boring daily routine, they weren't in any way ready to accept Him as Messiah. "Who is this?" they asked – who does He think He is? "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth" others answered. He's just a man, not the Messiah-King. The people had been forced to decide one way or another, and they rejected.

Ironically, at this very time, a few feet away, the priests were selecting and setting aside the Passover lamb which was doomed to die for the nation at 3 PM on Friday, April 3, 33 AD (the very same time Jesus died). Just as the lamb was doomed for death from this day on, set aside to die for the sins of the people, so was the Lamb of God set apart and doomed to die for the sins of the world.

Only one group supported and praised Him in the temple – the boys choir sang "Hosanna to the son of David." This made the religious rulers furious, but because of public opinion they weren't able to arrest Jesus. He went back to Bethany that night, over the Mt of Olives. It was like when the Shekinah glory of God left the Temple for the Mt of Olives in Ezekiel's day. The die was cast. The nation as a whole had decided, and their answer was a clear 'no.' Individuals could be saved, but the clock was ticking down for the nation.

THE REST OF THE WEEK the next day, **Tuesday**, Jesus cursed a fig tree on the way into town. Like the nation Israel, it was a hypocrite. In town Jesus cleansed the temple, then foretold His death and resurrection. **Wednesday** morning was filled with verbal challenges from the religious rulers and Jesus admiring the widow who gave her last ½ penny. He then gave His disciples the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24-25) and spent the afternoon teaching in the temple. The religious rulers planned Jesus' arrest and made arrangements with Judas to provide a time and place to arrest Jesus when He wasn't among the crowds.

Thursday Jesus walked through town and the temple, using His last free hours on earth to reach out to any thirsty, open soul. In the afternoon the preparations for the Passover began. Those from Galilee celebrated Thursday evening while the other Jews celebrated on Friday. It was the beginning of the end. The people had decided, and they would suffer the consequences of their decision. So will we. What have you decided about Jesus?

21. TEARFUL ENTRY

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Jesus come into town on a donkey that special day?

How did the people respond?

What did the religious rules say to Jesus?

What did Jesus say to them?

If Jesus knew that He would be rejected by the nation, why did He even bother to offer Himself as King?

Why did Jesus cry as He saw the city?

What things today make Him sad?

Why did things change when Jesus entered the city?

Who were the only ones who praised Jesus in the temple?

What was the significance of what happened this day?

What will happen next time Jesus comes as King?

Where does Jesus want to be King today?

Have you made Him King of your life?

What does it mean to make Jesus King of your life?

21. TEARFUL ENTRY

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did Jesus come into town on a donkey that special day?

It was the belief the Messiah would come down the Mount of Olives on a donkey with palm branches.

How did the people respond?

Some came and recognized Him as Messiah.

What did the religious rules say to Jesus?

They asked Jesus to tell the people to be quiet.

What did Jesus say to them?

Jesus said that if the people didn't praise Him the rocks would cry out! He was showing that He was their Messiah King and He deserved praise and worship.

If Jesus knew that He would be rejected by the nation, why did He even bother to offer Himself as King?

He wanted to be fair and give them a chance. That way they would know they had a chance but rejected Him.

Why did Jesus cry as He saw the city?

He knew the misery and suffering that would soon come because they rejected Him.

What things today make Him sad enough to cry?

Sin, evil, people being hurt and taken advantage of, judgment on those who reject Him.

Why did things change when Jesus entered the city?

The people who came with Jesus were afraid of the religious rulers so they didn't want to be seen with Jesus. The others didn't believe He was the Messiah.

Who were the only ones who praised Jesus in the temple?

The children! The boys chorus praised Him but they are the only ones who did so.

What was the significance of what happened this day?

Jesus offered the Kingdom to Israel. They rejected it because they rejected Him as King.

What will happen next time Jesus comes as King?

He will come as a lion, not a lamb, and everyone will bow and worship Him (Rev. 19).

Where does Jesus want to be King today?

He wants to be king in our hearts today.

Have you made Him King of your life?

(answers will vary – hopefully all will say yes)

What does it mean to make Jesus King of your life?

He rules my life, I am His servant and live to do His will.

22. JESUS' LAST SUPPER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
22. JESUS' LAST MEAL	Jesus knows He will die for us	Matthew 26:17-30 Mark 14:12-26 Luke 22:7-38 John 13:1 – 14:31	Cup

Passover is the oldest continually observed religious custom, with the exception of the Jewish Sabbath. It continues today as Passover among the Jews and the Lord's Supper among Christians. Understanding its roots and significance is extremely important to understand Jesus' final meal on earth. Let's look at what happened in the upper room that night of Thursday, Nisan 13, 33 AD.

There were actually two celebrations of the Passover that were allowed by the priests. Those from Galilee celebrated the Passover Thursday evening while the others celebrated Friday evening. This was because of the difference in reckoning days in a solar compared to a lunar calendar, one starting at sunset and the other being like our calendar today. This was allowed because of the large number of people celebrating in Jerusalem. It made it so rooms could be used twice and so the priests had more time to kill and distribute the ¼ million lambs needed each year. Jerusalem's population swelled from 100,000 to as many as 2 ½ million for Passover.

PREPARATION Earlier in the day Jesus had sent Peter and John into the city to make preparations for their Last Supper with Jesus. The house used had to be totally clean, which meant no food with leaven was allowed to remain anywhere in the house. A special set of pans and dishes was used for Passover to make sure no leaven was stuck in the cracks anywhere. A search would be made for any leaven crumbs anywhere. They would be gathered and burned as a picture of sin being removed (I Cor 5:7). Before the search the father would pray "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments and have told us to remove the leaven." And then after the search "Whatever leaven remains in my possession which I cannot see, behold, it is null and accounted as the dust of the earth." This reminds us that we are to not have any sin (any 'leaven') in our lives when we partake of the Lord's Supper, as Paul so sternly told the Corinthians (I Corinthians 11:28).

Firstborn men fasted this whole day, as a reminder of his redemption in Egypt when the Egyptian first-born died because they hadn't put the Passover lamb's blood over the door.

MIDDLE MATZO BROKEN (Yachutz x j MATZAH = hxm) The next activity centered on the matzo. Matzo is bread without leaven in it. Leaven is a microscopic bacteria which is placed in 'yeast.' When exposed to water and warmth the bacteria rapidly grows. It causes a fermentation which produces a gas. This process will continue until the dough is sour and ruined unless the bacteria is killed by baking. Thus leaven is a picture of sin (I Cor 5:7). It starts small, hidden, unseen, but unless it is killed it will grow and destroy everything.

Therefore the matzo became a picture of Jesus Himself – without any sin. It was round, without beginning or end. It was pierced in the shape of a cross. This helped dissipate the heat in the baking process, but also speaks of Jesus. The same word is used of Jesus being pierced for our sins (Zech 12:10; Isa 53:5).

On the Sabbath the Jews would eat 2 matzo's, double the normal portion,. For this was a special day. On Passover they would eat 3. Three in the Bible stands for God - the Trinity. The

Jews today take these 3 matzo and make what is called a 'unity' with them. No one is sure when or why this practice began, but it is a beautiful picture of Jesus.

The three matzo are placed on a pile, with a napkin between each and on the top and bottom. These stand for God the father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The middle matzo (picturing God the Son) is removed from the other two, as when God left heaven and came to earth as Jesus (the Incarnation). Then this middle matzo is broken in two, a picture of Christ's body, pierced and broken for our sin. The first half is put back between the other two matzo picturing Jesus' spirit going immediately to heaven at death. The other half is wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden in a dark place until the third cup. A child (or the youngest person) at the table takes this and hides it until later. This pictures Jesus' body wrapped in linen and buried until the third day. The rest of the significance of this will be explained when we get to that place. Isn't this a beautiful picture of Jesus? We don't know if Jesus did this or the practice started later, but what a wonderful way it is of teaching about Jesus.

STORY OF THE EXODUS (Maggid 'Ma-GEED' d̥ gm) The story of the Exodus is told, often in response to the four questions asked about why this night is different.

I don't know how much detail Jesus went into here, or what else He taught, but certainly the centrality of the lamb must be brought out. The very first name/title attributed to Jesus when He first presented Himself for public ministry was 'Lamb.' "Behold the **Lamb of God**, Who takes away the sins of the world" John the Baptizer had said. Philip (Acts 8:32-35), Paul (I Cor 57) and Peter (I Peter 1:19) also referred to Jesus as the Passover lamb.

This would have had great significance to his listeners, since sheep were an important part of their daily lives. They were valuable animals, used for food (meat, milk, cheese) and material (wool, skins). They were used for sacrifice, too.

After the first sin in Eden, God (God the Son, always the Person of the Trinity Who appears to man) **shed innocent blood to cover sin**. From then on Adam, Able, Noah, Job, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and all God's people did this. It was God's way of teaching them that innocent blood must be shed to cover sin. When Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac, God provided a ram substitute (Genesis 22), showing that innocent animal's blood is a substitute for the blood of the one who sinned. This is even more clearly taught in the story of the Passover lamb (Exodus 12:1-13).

First, the **lamb was chosen** on the 10th of Nisan. Sheep are gentle, innocent, meek, dependent, defenseless animals. This pictures how Jesus was when taken to die for our sins. The lamb had to be unblemished, in perfect condition, speaking of Jesus' sinlessness. It had to be a male in the prime of life (one year), also peaking of Jesus. It was set aside 4 days, Nisan 10 to 14, to make sure it was sinless. Jesus ministered publicly almost 4 years, showing all He was sinless and perfect.

Then the **lamb was killed** on Nisan 14, It didn't do them any good alive. It had to die. Jesus' perfect life doesn't do anything to get us salvation, it only condemns us by showing us that a perfect life could be lived. The substitute for sin must die to pay for sin. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins." The owner would place his hands on the sheep, signifying transfer of the sin of the man to the animal. Because it was not guilty of sin, it had to die. "The souls that sins must die." It was to be killed on Nisan 14, 3 PM – the exact day and time that Jesus died upon the cross!

After being killed, the **blood was applied** to the sides and tops of the door post. It was the blood that caused the angel of death to 'Pass Over' the house. It wasn't the good works of those inside, nor their jewels, their gold, their skills or talents. It was only the blood, Man's good works are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6), like dung heap rubbish (Phil 3:8). Only the blood saves. The blood was applied where all could see, it was a public testimony. The lamb was killed on

the doorstep, where the blood was collected. Then it was applied to the top and sides of the door. Connect these and you have a picture of a cross, with the blood where Jesus died: crown of thorns on head, nails through wrists and feet. It was this blood that protected against deserved judgment. After being applied the people would enter 'through the blood' and stay inside all night. Any who applied the blood were safe, Jew or Egyptian, any who did not suffered the death of all firstborn males and cattle. The Jews were as deserving of death as the Egyptians, even more so because they were much more accountable. All this is a picture of how we are safe because of Jesus' blood (Eph 1:7; I John 1:7; Heb 9:12; Rev 1:5; Rom 5:8-9).

The blood of these animals didn't remove sin, it just covered it until Jesus' blood came along to wash it away. The animals blood was like putting a throw rug over a stain in a rug until the right rug cleaner (the blood of Jesus) can be found to take the stain out.

Finally, after being killed and the blood applied, the **lamb was eaten**. It wasn't killed to be looked at, but to personally identify with. It provided the nourishment and sustenance they would need for the journey which was before them. We need to feed on Jesus too, eat his flesh and drink His blood as He commands (John 6:53-57) to be strengthened and nourished for our spiritual journey. The Jews had to do that the same night, they couldn't wait. The lamb had to be roasted, not boiled in water – it had to not only die but face the fires of hell, as Jesus did for us.

Then for the next 7 days the Jews were to eat nothing but **unleavened bread** (Exodus 13). God was telling them that the first lesson they had to learn after salvation (Passover lamb) was the importance of avoiding sin, of living holy lives for Him.

Why is this night different from all others? Because it teaches about the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world – Jesus the Messiah.

MEAL IS EATEN (Shulchan Orech 'sho-CANE o-RECH' שולחן ערוך / שולחן) Jews today eat a full course gourmet meal; appetizer, soup, chicken/turkey/kid/lamb, etc. If lamb, it is partly boiled and partly roasted so it doesn't resemble the sacrificed lamb as they can no longer sacrifice. What they are thus eating, in effect, is the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for since AD 70 it stopped being the Passover. Today they use an egg (roasted) which they cut and dip in salt water to lament the fact they have no place to offer sacrifices for sin. Thus what the Jews today observe is a Seder, not the Passover. There can be no real Passover without a sacrificial lamb, and God stopped the sacrificial system when the temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

Mealtime is a good time for conversation, and Jesus used this time to comfort His disciples. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." ...

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" ... Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever -- the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.. ... All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.... These things I have spoken to you, that you may have peace in me. In the world you shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.!" John 14:1-6, 15-18, 25-27, 16:33

AFIKOMEN EATEN (Tzaphun 'Tsa-FOON' / וּפֶאָס - name of the ceremony) ('ah-fee-KO-men') This is the final food of the Passover meal, so this will be the last taste left in the mouth (very significant to the Jews). The hidden (buried) Afikomen (1/2 of the middle of the 3 matzos) is found and ransomed (redeemed) - (price paid to whoever finds it, like Jesus ransomed us with His blood. The youngest person at the table, who hid it, is paid to find it and bring it back. This 'redeeming,' 'buying back,' is the word used to buy back ones slave if they ran away. It pictures man running away from His Creator into sin, being bought back by the price paid by Jesus on the cross.

Finding and unwrapping this afikomen pictures Jesus, the true Bread of Life and Manna of God, coming back to light/life on the third day (here the third cup). Jesus Himself made this analogy. With this Jesus instituted the bread of the Lord's Supper: "This is my body."

Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat: **This is my body.**" (Mt 26:26) He voluntarily "took it," No one forced Him. "Jesus made Himself of no reputation and took on the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man." (Phil 2:7). He said "this is my body." It represents His body, it doesn't become His literal body, that was obvious to those with Him in the upper room that night.

Then He "blessed it." He sanctified it, set it apart for a specific purpose, as He Himself was set apart for the purpose of redemption since He was born.

Then He "broke it" – He did it Himself, it wasn't done by the Romans or the Jews or anyone else. "No man takes my life from Me, but I lay it down of Myself." (Jn 10:18) He Himself was the ultimate provision for man, the fulfillment of all the animal substitutes like the Ram for Isaac (Genesis 22). Abraham didn't have to kill his son, God stopped his arm, because, on that same mountain, God killed His own son. There was no more possibility of a replacement, Jesus was the replacement – for each one of us.

After breaking it Jesus "gave it" to each one who would receive it. "He gave his Life a ransom for many." (Mt 20:28) It was a free, unconditional gift. All they had to do was not reject it, just receive what Jesus offered. They put their hand out and He filled it. The same is true of salvation. Just put your heart out and let Him fill it. Have you received this free gift of Salvation He so generously wants to give to you?

CUP # 3 - REDEMPTION (Boraych יִרְבֵּ) The cup is filled again. This is the cup of redemption. Pouring a picture of Jesus' blood poured out, shed for us. Number 3 stands for deity. This is where Jesus instituted the cup of the Lord's Supper for He said "This is My blood." This act ended the Old Testament, and the rule of the law. This act started the New Testament, and the rule of grace. Up to now the Passover stood for physical deliverance from Egypt, from now on it was replaced by the Lord's Supper which stands for spiritual deliverance from sin.

"Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. **This is My blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

First He "took it" voluntarily. Imagine what went through Jesus' heart/mind as freely picked this up.... Last time He dealt with this same cup He asked God to take it from Him. He will ask once again in Gethsemane "O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." On the cross He'll say "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" He could have rejected it, poured it out or turned from it, for it represented all of our sins – but He didn't.

Then He said "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." The juice was the blood of the grape, a picture of blood. It was crushed from the grape by an olive press, which in Greek is "Gethsemane." Jesus next stop that night

would be in a place called Gethsemane because it was used as a place to crush the juice from grapes and olives. What happened figuratively there would literally happen to Him as the pressure began. It caused blood to come out with His sweat, so great was the pressure. "The Lord was pleased to CRUSH Him, to put Him to GRIEF." (Isa 53:10) "...bruised...crushed...poured out" (Isaiah 53) "The life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev 17:11) "without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. (Heb 9:22)

He then did a strange thing, He "gave thanks" for this! How could He give thanks for that which represented his death, for God's wrath poured out on Him? For one thing, this was God's will, done for God's glory, and He was committed to that (John 4:34; 12:27-28). Then, too, He looked ahead to the future joy He would receive after the cross (Heb 12:2; Psalm 16:9-10) instead of focusing in on the present price to be paid (a good principle for us to follow as well). Mainly, though, He did it for us. "For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." (Mt 26:28)

It was this shed blood that paid for the new "covenant" which He was making, one based on grace instead of law. The issue at stake was eternal salvation. The terms were that God would provide all that was necessary for eternal life with God, all man had to do was accept it. there were no conditions, it was unconditional and can never be rescinded or made null. The length of effectiveness of this covenant is forever.

Blood was the price paid to make the covenant good, the price paid. Blood is a sign of life. Physically blood cleanses the body as it flows through it, and spiritually it cleanses us of sin, too.

Next Jesus "gave it to them" free and unconditionally, for them to just receive it.

He told them to "drink all of it." They were to drink deeply, fully, totally. It would quench their spiritual thirst and meet all their needs and desires. It sustains spiritually, just as fluids sustain the body physically. It refreshes, as blood does when we are weak. It renews, we need a constant flow of Jesus as well as our own physical blood. It cleanses, physically flushing our system and removing impurities. It revives and brings strength. There is no substitute for blood - ours or Jesus'.

The disciple's response to all of this was that they drank it." They personally accepted what He offered them so freely. It pictured their salvation – freely accepting His work for them. What a meaningful, moving time that was for them. From now on the Passover would be different. Instead of referring to the number one Old Testament event, their physical deliverance from Egypt, now it would refer to the number one Bible event, our spiritual deliverance from sin and Satan. Truly this was a profound moment.

22. JESUS' LAST SUPPER

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What was the Passover and why was it celebrated?

What the the blood of the lamb stand for?

What did the people do to prepare for Jesus' last supper/Passover?

Why weren't they allowed to eat leaven during this time?

What was pictured by the matzo being broken?

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). What does this say about other religions that also claim show the way to God?

Jesus told the disciples they would have difficulties in the world but He would give them peace despite the problems. Tell about a time when you had God's peace despite difficulties you faced.

Jesus 'gave thanks' before He broke the bread or drank the juice. How could He give thanks for that which was a picture of the terrible death He was going to die?

What can we learn from this example?

What does it mean to you when you partake of the Lord's Supper? What do you think about?

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QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

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What was the Passover and why was it celebrated?

The Passover celebrated the Jews deliverance from Egypt in the time of Moses.

What the the blood of the lamb stand for?

A lamb was killed and its blood put on the doorposts. The people under the blood were safe while the other first-borns died. It pictures Jesus' blood who saves us. When the people lived in tents they didn't have door frames so they used grape juice to picture the blood of the lamb and that's what we use for the Lord' Supper today.

What did the people do to prepare for Jesus' last supper/Passover?

The house was totally cleaned, special dishes were used, no leaven was allowed in the house. The firstborn men fasted until the evening meal.

Why weren't they allowed to eat leaven during this time?

Leaven (yeast) is a bacteria that grows and gives off a gas. Actually it decays the cells. Thus it is a picture of sin for it grows from small and destroys. Without leaven bread is very flat. The Jews didn't have time to let the leaven raise for they were in a hurry to leave. Now it stands for Jesus' sinless body just like the juice stands for Jesus' blood.

What was pictured by the matzo being broken?

It pictured Jesus' body being broken for our sin.

Jesus said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). What does this say about other religions that also claim show the way to God?

Jesus is the only way. All others are counterfeits that mislead (Acts 4:12).

Jesus told the disciples they would have difficulties in the world but He would give them peace despite the problems. Tell about a time when you had God's peace despite difficulties you faced.

(answers will vary)

Jesus 'gave thanks' before He broke the bread or drank the juice. How could He give thanks for that which was a picture of the terrible death He was going to die?

He wasn't thankful for the pain that was coming, but was thankful for the privilege of doing God's will and providing for our salvation. He looked forward to the glory He would have after salvation was accomplished.

What can we learn from this example?

When we go through hard times we must remember we are doing God's will and He will use it for His glory and our growth. Also we must remember how wonderful things will be in heaven when there is no more suffering. Now is our time to serve Him here.

What does it mean to you when you partake of the Lord's Supper? What do you think about?

(answers will vary)

23. ARREST & TRIALS

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
23. ARREST & TRIALS	When unfair things happen	Matthew 26:47 – 27:26 Mark 14:43 – 15:15 Luke 22:47 – 23:25 John 18:2 – 19:16	Praying hands

By Bartholomew

When Jesus forced Judas' hand at the Passover meal and told him He knew he was going to betray Him it threw the religious leader's plans way off. They wanted to wait until AFTER the Passover to act against Jesus for then all the out of town visitors would be gone. However when they discovered they had lost their only inside man, and they had already paid for his services, their hate pushed them to act instead of waiting.

Realizing He wasn't in the Upper Room, Judas led the mob to Gethsemane where Jesus had been spending the nights lately. It was as if Jesus purposely went there to be discovered. My name is Bartholomew, a disciple of Jesus. I was with them that night and I'd like to tell you about it. I'll never forget it, neither should you!

THE WALK TO GETHSEMANE When our Passover was over, Jesus said something strange about the "evil prince of this world approaching" (John 14:30). We didn't understand it at the time, but later it all fit together.

As we left and walked through the streets of town we sang Passover Psalms (113-118). Presently Jesus started teaching the disciples about our need of Him as the vine (John 15-16). He talked about difficult times that would be coming but said the Holy Spirit would be with us. We asked questions and He answered them.

Then we were about to cross the Kidron, normally dry but a bubbling creek in the spring. Jesus paused and watched the water. It did look different, somehow darker. Then we remembered. The slaughter of the ¼ million Passover lambs had begun in the temple and the blood drained through a channel cut in the rock to the Kidron. Seeing the innocent blood of those lambs really hit Jesus hard. I remembered John the Baptizer pointing Him out as the 'lamb of God" and He Himself saying He was the Good Shepherd who lay down His life for the sheep.

Jesus must have been thinking the same thing, for He soon started praying as we walked (John 17). He prayed for Himself, that He would do God's will. He prayed that we disciples would be faithful, and He prayed for disciples in future ages to be safe and protected. It was a serious, moving time.

GETHSEMANE By the time we arrived at Gethsemane, however, we were all very tired. It had been a long day. Those of us who were first-born had fasted, then we had a big meal in a stuffy room, now we were relaxed and very tired. Gethsemane was a good place to sleep. It was a place where olives and grapes were crushed between large stones in the fall, extracting the juice from them. The rest of the year it was a rich man's retreat from the heat of Jerusalem. The owner of this particular plot had given Jesus the key so He could use it at will. He had been sleeping in the cave the last several nights instead of going back to Bethany. It gave Him privacy and more time to pray.

THE LONELY BATTLE It soon became evident, though, that Jesus wasn't going to be doing any sleeping that night. He didn't want us to sleep, either, but to pray so we wouldn't fall into temptation. Even in such trying times for Himself, His love for us caused Him to think of us and our needs first.

We watched Him go apart and pray, and it was obvious He was in agony. He was overwhelmed with grief, swept with unrest. Obviously a great battle was going on. He fell to the ground and cried a loud, long and deeply (Heb 5:7). He lay face down, then got up and staggered a bit, only to fall down in

prayer again. I felt like I was intruding on His privacy by watching, but couldn't tear my eyes away. "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as You will" He kept crying over and over.

Angels appeared. Some drove back the demons who were tormenting Him, others comforted and ministered to Him. Then they were gone and the battle resumed, but He seemed to have more strength to battle. It was a cold night but He was profusely sweating. The sweat was darker than water. I realized there was blood mixed with it! He was under so much pressure that the tiny capillaries in His skin were breaking. I looked at the olive press nearby – it was the same thing. The anticipation of bearing our sins was starting to crush the life blood out of Him.

Do you understand what the struggle was all about? Jesus was perfect, He had never experienced sin, guilt or separation from God, things we live with every day. He naturally drew back from identification with our sins, but He did it out of love for us. That was the only reason I could think of for Him going through with this – for me.

JUDAS ARRIVES I couldn't stay awake any longer but fell asleep. Before I knew it He was shaking me awake. Surely it wasn't morning already? It was still dark, but the sounds and lights from a large group of men coming from Jerusalem were visible in the distance. They were headed this way. What was happening? Jesus just stayed and watched them come. My first impulse was to flee, and I'm sure that thought crossed His mind, too, but He didn't do it.

It seemed strange to have so many religious rulers and soldiers coming with Judas. It was also unusual for him to give Jesus such a familiar, long kiss. What happened to his respect for our Master? Jesus seemed to know things weren't right, but still reached out to Judas in love instead of rejecting him.

Obviously the kiss was a signal of some sort, but Jesus took control before the rest of the mob reached Him. "Who do you want?" "Jesus of Nazareth," they said. No charges were read, no warrant presented. When Jesus readily admitted "I Am He" everyone stepped backwards, fell to the ground, and was pinned there. Even Satan-indwelt Judas was stuck to his back. Just the force of His eternal name Yahweh, which was embedded in the "I Am" He spoke, had more power than they could resist. He was showing them Who He really was so they wouldn't make a mistake that would have eternal consequences for them. He released the power and they stood up. When He asked them again who they wanted it was as if they hadn't experienced this awesome power. How could they not learn anything from it?

By saying they just wanted Him, Jesus was covering for us, so we wouldn't be arrested as well. He knew we couldn't have withstood the test. His love for us again put our needs before His own. I wonder how many other times He had done that, too, but I hadn't noticed.

Peter rushed past with a table knife from the Passover, trying to attack the Romans and set Jesus free. Later we realized this was Satan's way of starting a riot so we would all be killed right away. Then He couldn't have gone to cross and paid for our sins before dying! Or at least Jesus could have slipped away during the confusion and been safe, but again He wouldn't have paid for our sins on the cross on Passover day. Jesus saw through it, though, and quieted the whole disturbance. He even healed the man's ear where Peter had attacked him. He told us if He wanted to escape He'd could call hundreds of thousands of angels.

DISCIPLES FLEE All this was too much. We turned and fled back into the trees. I completely forgot my promise never to desert Him. I looked back for one last glimpse before ducking behind a tree. They had thrown Jesus to the ground and were tying His hands and feet with ropes and chains.

Tears fell as I fled. Why did this happen? Why did He allow it? Couldn't He have escaped? Of course He could! In the first place, He could have not come to the one place Judas would look. He could have walked away while we slept. He could have left His enemies pinned to the ground, or even slipped away in Peter's riot. He could have called angels to deliver Him. Why didn't He?

The only reason is that He loved us. He loved me. He loved you. He did it for our sakes. It wasn't the nails that held Him to the cross, it was His love for us. What a great, unconditional, wonderful love that is! If He loved us that much before we became children of His, how much must He love us now?

Do you experience His love for you? Do you allow Him to show you that love? Are you aware of the many things He does for you because He loves you? Do you respond to that love by loving Him back? Do you love Him more than anything or anyone else? Even family? Even self? His love is available to all who come to Him for it.

By Peter

My story is similar to that of a seed (John 12:23-24). Before planting it is hard and unproductive. When it is buried in the ground a process begins that leads to eventual fruit. Darkness and dampness cause the harness to begin to soften. I, too, had to go through trials and difficulties to soften. I was hard and unproductive for I was in control of my own life. I had to die to myself to be useful to Jesus. It took pain and suffering to do it.

After time is spent in darkness and dampness, a seek begins to enlarge. It gets beyond its own limits. Then a chemical change takes place. Starch changes into sugar. I had to bet beyond my own limits, too. That which was coarse and unappealing (starch) had to be changed to sugar in me, too.

As a seed enlarges it eventually breaks open. God broke me out of my mold and habits. That's when growth starts. First a root grows. This anchors the seed and provides stability and a source of nourishment. It wasn't until I died to myself that I could put my roots in Jesus and His Word.

Up to now everything that happens to a seed happens underground, out of sight, inside. Then it becomes evident to all. A little shoot appears. There is evidence of life. Eventually it grows and fruit is produced (Galatians 5:22-23). When you read about me in the book of Acts you'll find a new, a different person. God had to break me before He could use me. I always depended on myself to do what needed doing. God had to break me to teach me to depend on Him, knowing that only then would I be useful.

THE PROBLEM At the Last Supper I told Jesus He was wrong, that I would NOT deny Him. I knew I wouldn't. I thought I could do whatever I wanted but that wasn't true. I was acting in my own strength, and that always got me into trouble. When I attacked the crowd in Gethsemane to set Jesus free I was acting in my own strength again. Actually, I found out later, I was playing right into Satan's hands for such an uprising would have gotten Jesus killed then and there. We would have been killed, too, and Jesus wouldn't have purchased our salvation on the cross!

When Jesus reprimanded and corrected me, I saw I had failed him. As was my way, I ran away from my mistakes. I completely forgot my promise to not desert him and fled into the trees with the other disciples. I ran and hid with John. Later I found out what happened and pieced together what we heard.

THE TRIAL 1 Jesus was roughly tied and dragged across the Kidron, red with blood from the Passover lambs which were being slaughtered in the Temple. In through the sheep gate He went, to His own slaughtering. First He was taken to Annas where he was to be tried, found guilty, and executed. However the only 'witness' they had, Judas, had deserted them. The trial was a mockery of justice. It was illegal to charge a criminal at night or on the eve of a festival. Prior notice had to be given of a trial, and there was no quorum of judges.

The high priest was to be the accused's defender, not accuser. It wasn't a trial, just a murder plot! They questioned Jesus, looking for a trap to destroy Him. When He politely refused they struck Him in the face with a stick.

Denial 1 Meanwhile I was outside. I couldn't stay away. I drug John along to find out what was going on, but I was doing it all on my own strength – no prayer or anything. That's why, when the girl who let people in, thought I was one of Jesus' disciples, I denied without even thinking. You see, it caught me off guard. I wasn't expecting it then, there. I realized as soon as I said the words, though, that all my heroic promises were gone. My confidence in my self was shaken. I was just an arrogant coward!

Later, when I looked back, I could see that it wasn't really that event that caused my sin. My problem had started long before. That was just the culmination of it. It really started at the meal when, in my pride and self-confidence, wouldn't let Jesus wash my feet and insisted He was wrong about my coming denial. Then in Gethsemane, instead of taking His advice and praying, I slept. The attack on Malchus should have alerted me to the fact that I was not depending on His strength, but just doing what I thought was right in my own power. Then, I never should have been hanging around the courtyard with Jesus' enemies. That denial shook me, but didn't break me.

TRIAL 2 Meanwhile, Jesus was taken to another part of the same home where Caiaphas held another court session. Caiaphas was Annas' son-in-law, the figure-head High priest, whom Annas controlled. He was a sly manipulator and self-centered opportunist. Some of the chief priests and teachers of the law were there, but no witnesses. How could they get Rome's approval for execution if there were no witnesses, and no real charges. False witnesses were paid to come forward and tell whatever they could, but even then no two could be found to agree about anything. Witnesses were needed to prove any charge as well as to throw the first stone. Finally they remembered when He said, "I am able to destroy this temple and in three days will build another." He was referring to His body but they twisted it to mean a threat to destroy their temple. When Jesus didn't deny He was God their had their pretense: They condemned Him to death for claiming to be God.

He was physically abused. They spit in His face, slapped Him, smashed His face with their fists and blindfolded Him before hitting Him. Then they mockingly challenged Him to 'prophesy who hit you.'

Denial 2 I could hear the uproar start where I was in the courtyard. People at the windows watched and yelled. I was at the fire warming my hands with the same ones I had attacked in Gethsemane. The servant girl, who was now off duty at the gate, walked by and angrily accused me of being with Jesus. I don't think she was bothered that I was a disciple, but that I had called her a liar. Again I denied her accusations. It was obvious everyone believed her and not me. Eventually the conversation turned to other things, though, and I felt relieved. Then it happened.

Denial 3 The group nearby kept talking louder and louder, looking and pointing at me. they were loud enough for everyone to hear. They recognized me as a Galilean by my dress and accent (I just couldn't keep my mouth shut!). I could tell the servant girl was there, egging them on. And then I saw a relative of Malchus there, and knew he recognized me! Cold sweat broke out on my skin, despite the chill of the night. Have you ever noticed how your sins come back to haunt you? I cursed and swore to convince them I wasn't a follower of Jesus.

But then I hear a rooster crow, and I remembered. Just as the scales fell off my eyes and an awful awareness of what I had done arose in me heart, I noticed some movement out of the corner of my eye. Someone was being led through the courtyard to another room. His face was black and blue and covered with spit. Hiss eyes were swollen shut and blood dripped from His face and scalp. He looked awful! Then I recognized Him, something about the way He carried Himself when He walked. I knew Him. It was Jesus. He glanced over at me and time stood still. Our eyes locked for an instant, and I read deep pain there. I knew it wasn't from the physical beating but from my words. Those closest to you can hurt you more by their rejection than any stranger can ever hurt your body!

The reality of it all hit home like a ton of bricks! What I'd bragged, what I'd done – I could see it all clearly for the first time. Me – the bragger and failure. Immediately He was shoved on, and those by the fire left to follow to the new trial site. I ran out the gate weeping.

I wept profusely, loud, long and bitterly that night. Long after I was out of tears I kept crying. I couldn't stop. I had failed at my strong point. The guilt and failure of it all was too real. Instead of protecting Him I hurt Him. He was right! I was broken.

TRAIL 3 Later I found out that the third religious trial, by the Sanhedrin, was just to rubber stamp the decision that had already been made. Details were taken care of to present their weak case to Pilate.

During all this time I roamed the streets. I looked awful and felt worse! Always before I could blame someone else, let Jesus bail me out, and convince myself I would do better next time. None of that happened this time. I hit bottom. I was broken. If I couldn't depend on myself, who could I depend on? Then it hit me! That was exactly what He was trying to teach me. I had to stop depending on myself and depend totally and only on Him!

A couple days later I heard He was alive, and He sought me out and reassured me that He still loved me. Can you believe that? Despite my failure He still loved me! Who can understand that kind of love? Not me! That whole experience was the worst thing that ever happened to me. But you know what, it was also the best. Has it happened to you? Has your self will been broken so you totally depend on and live in His strength? Like a wild horse, you won't serve your master until you are broken.

By Pilate

Those Jews had to be the worst people on the face of the earth to rule! They were arrogant, self-righteous, stubborn, manipulative, sneaky and deceitful. They would take but not give. Hey wouldn't face you man to man like us Romans. We hated them as much as they hated us, maybe even more!

We took away their freedoms and privileges, taxed them heavily, and didn't allow them to execute anyone without permission. That's why they got me involved in their miserable murder plot! Oh how I hate them! It was the worst thing I ever did! It was the biggest mistake of my life and changed everything, on this earth and for all eternity! I am Pilate. This is my story.

TRIAL 4 I was a successful career soldier who was rewarded by being made governor of Judea. However I was better at leading soldiers into battle than in politics and governing others.

The day I was talking about started like any other day, but it didn't stay that way long. I'll never forget it. It was Friday, April 3, 33 AD. The 6 AM night report from the duty officer spoke of an arrest in Gethsemane. Then I was informed of the arrival of the religious leaders and a mob of people. They had a bloody, beaten-up man with them. Why would they come to me on this, the day of their Passover, when they knew being in my presence would make them unclean and unable to partake? It must be very important to them. When they wouldn't come in, I made my first mistake by going out to talk to them. From then on they had the upper hand. That first compromise set the pattern for the whole day. One little compromise leads to awful results!

You must remember that my past conflicts with the Jews didn't turn out too well. Twice I had riots on my hands, and each time they tattled to Rome about my treatment of them. Rome told me to keep things quiet or I was out! That mean that if they complained again Rome would replace me. Truly that gave them leverage to get their own way, and they knew it and used it!

Anyway, back to this man they brought in. Imagine the audacity of them – they didn't have any real charges against Him! They just wanted me to sign a blank check so they could do whatever they wished! I gave approval for a Jewish trial – but it turns out they had already had their trial! What they wanted was approval for execution.

They came up with some charges about Him being anti-government and anti-taxes – but they were all guilty of that themselves. Then they said He claimed to be a king, which made Him a threat to Caesar. I couldn't believe that. He seemed incapable of harm, but the charges were too serious to ignore if there was some truth to them.

I should have ended it all right there but I didn't. My pride kept me from giving in to them, but my fear kept me from turning them away. When I asked the prisoner if He was a king, He said He was! Knowing I had to investigate further I brought Him inside. He said He was a king, but not any threat to Rome. He had some other kind of Kingdom He was king of. What a confusing mess! I'd much rather be leading troops into battle than doing this!

When I told the Jews I found no reason to have Him executed I should have turned my back on it all. Instead I listened to their yelling and threats. Looking for a way out without I decided to turn the matter over to Herod, since I heard them say He was from Galilee. I know that was wrong and Herod had no authority, but perhaps it could get me off the hook.

TRAIL 5 At first Herod was fearful He was John come back to life to torment him for having him beheaded, but when he realized that wasn't the case he and his soldiers mocked and abused the prisoner and sent him back to me. Herod found no guilt of any crime in him.

TRIAL 6 I was really disappointed when I was informed Herod had returned Him to me. Herod was so impressed by my offer, though, that the rift between us was mended. I didn't care.

While He was going I had conferred with my intelligence officers and found out the man's name was Jeshua (Jesus). He supposedly did miracles and claimed to be God's Messiah. The people had rejected Him on Lamb Selection Day when He rode into town on a donkey with some waving palm branches and acclaiming Him Messiah and God.

Don't misunderstand me, I'm was no religious person, but like all Romans I was very superstitious and I wasn't going to mess with any 'god.' So I asked the religious rulers to just let Him go since Herod didn't find any guilt in Him, either. I wasn't surprised when they wouldn't.

By this time I was getting frustrated and impatient. The rulers were obviously in a big hurry to get this done and I wasn't moving fast enough. They had paid a large number of people to gather and pressure me. That's when I realized another compromise I might make.

I tried to have them take Him for the prisoner that was released on this day. I thought I was giving them no choice when I offered Barabbas as the other choice. He was an insurrectionist, a murderer, public enemy number 1 and hated by everyone. At first it seemed my plan was working, but when I was interrupted to read a note from my wife, warning me to not harm this prisoner, the religious rulers turned the crowd their way. I was forced to release Barabbas.

When, in frustration, I asked them what they wanted me to do with Jesus, they yelled "Crucify Him!" They had lost their minds with a lust for blood and death. Instead of just wanting me to allow them to stone Him, now they were pushing for me to do their dirty work for them! My pride kept me from giving them what they wanted, but my fear kept me from doing what was right.

Then I thought of still another compromise. If the crowd wouldn't listen to reason, maybe I could appeal to their sympathy. I had the prisoner hung from the ceiling and whipped. I mean this was an awful whipping! It was called the 'half death' because one was more dead than alive, and often wished they were dead. Thirty nine lashes were made on His back with leather tipped with bone and steel. The skin was stripped off and the raw tendons and nerve endings exposed to the air. Immediately the victim went into shock from the loss of body fluids. Salt was rubbed into the back to revive the victim, and a robe plastered to it to stop the bleeding.

My soldiers then took Him into another room, tore that robe off (which started the bleeding again) and put a purple robe on Him in mockery. They made a crown of thorns and beat it into His scalp with sticks. Then they gave Him an old scepter and pretended to worship Him. They spit on Him, beat Him, and had a contest to see who could hit Him hardest and knock Him furthest. They pulled out handfuls of hair and beard. I couldn't believe what had gotten into them. It was like some evil, demonic forces was driving them. They were like wild animals, going way beyond what I gave permission for.

When He came before the crowd again I was sure they would feel He had been punished enough. He could barely stand and had to be dragged out. The same maniacal wildness was in them that was in my soldiers. What was going on? All I could do was wash my hands of the whole thing, reminding them that this was all their fault and not my doing.

I saved my neck that day, but lost my soul. Three years later I was removed and forced to take my own life to preserve honor. When I stood before God I knew that He was indeed the King of the universe. Everyone on the other side of the grave knew. If only I had believed earlier...

23. ARREST & TRIALS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did the religious rulers decide to arrest Jesus during the Passover instead of waiting until later when the visitors had left Jerusalem?

What was Jesus having a struggle as He prayed in Gethsemane?

If Jesus was God, why did He let them arrest Him, why not get away?

Why did the disciples run away instead of staying with Jesus?

Do you get afraid? What should you do when afraid?

How does Jesus' arrest and crucifixion show His love for us?

What did Peter brag he would do no matter what?

Instead, what did he do and why?

Why didn't the religious rulers give Jesus a fair, legal trial?

Why didn't Pilate release Jesus if he knew Jesus was innocent?

Why didn't Jesus defend Himself during His trials?

How does it make you feel to think of what Jesus went through for your sins?

23. ARREST & TRIALS

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Why did the religious rulers decide to arrest Jesus during the Passover instead of waiting until later when the visitors had left Jerusalem?

Because they lost Judas as a spy. He was the only one who would know where they could find Jesus and now that Jesus knew what Judas is doing, Judas is no longer available to spy. Plus he was to be their star witness. They had already paid him so had to act now or now be able to have his help. God forced them to act now by doing this.

What was Jesus having a struggle as He prayed in Gethsemane?

He knew bearing the sins of the whole world would be terrible and He naturally drew back from contamination with sin and its consequences. He went through with it for us though.

If Jesus was God, why did He let them arrest Him, why not get away?

He was committed to God's plan to pay for our sins on the cross and this was God's will.

Why did the disciples run away instead of staying with Jesus?

They were afraid so they ran and hid.

Do you get afraid? What should you do when afraid?

Everyone gets afraid. When we do we must remember God is greater than our fear and He promises He is always with us. Memorize and quote Bible verses about God being greater than our fear (Proverbs 3:25; Isaiah 14:3; Psalm 34:4; Joshua 1:9; 10:8; 23:9-11; Leviticus 26:8; Exodus 14:13; I Samuel 17:45-47; II Samuel 22:33-35,40-41)

How does Jesus' arrest and crucifixion show His love for us?

The only reason He did it is because of His love for us. It wasn't the Romans or even the nails that help Him to the cross. It was His great sacrificial love for us!

What did Peter brag he would do no matter what?

Stay faithful to Jesus despite what happened and what the other disciples did.

Instead, what did he do and why?

He got afraid and lied. He denied even knowing Jesus. He was afraid what people would say to him. He should have been faithful and trusted Jesus.

Why didn't the religious rulers give Jesus a fair, legal trial?

They just wanted an excuse to kill Him because they were jealous.

Why didn't Pilate release Jesus if he knew Jesus was innocent?

He was afraid the Jews would complain to Rome and he'd lose his life and job.

Why didn't Jesus defend Himself during His trials?

He knew their minds were made up and wouldn't change. He knew it was God's will for Him to die and He was submitting to that. If He said He was God they would have mocked Him and He didn't want God's truth made fun of.

How does it make you feel to think of what Jesus went through for your sins?

(answers will vary)

24. CRUCIFIXION

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
24. CRUCIFIXION	Jesus died for our sins	Matthew 27:31-66 Mark 15:20-47 Luke 23:26-56 John 19:16-42	Cross

By Barabbas

Hello! My name is Barabbas. Really it is Bar-Abba. Bar means son of and Abba means father. I was “son of the father” because my father was a well known rabbi. My first name was very common – Jesus, the same as Joshua in the Old Testament.

Thus I was Jesus Bar-abba (Jesus, son of the father) and I was fighting for the physical deliverance of Israel. My life crossed paths with another Jesus, Bar-Joseph, Who was working for the spiritual deliverance of Israel. What a way our paths crossed!

BACKGROUND I was an insurrectionist. I was a leader in the underground. We wanted rebellion against Rome and would murder soldiers whenever we could. Today you would call us terrorists. We called ourselves Zealots.

I was full of hate and bitterness for anyone and everyone. If anyone wasn't for us he was our enemy. That included this other Jesus. I first heard of Him from Simon the Zealot, who left us to be one of His disciples. When he tried to tell me about this better way of love and peace I spit on him and walked away. I was too disgusted to talk.

I never met that Jesus in person. He was in the same prison I was in but in a different place. There were no prison terms then. Prison was just a temporary holding place until trial, then one was flogged, executed or released. It was April 13, 33 AD and I was awaiting execution. I had been arrested and found guilty and was to die that morning. It was to be a public, horrible death as an example to others.

RELEASE From the Maccabean times it was the custom to release a prisoner at Passover, symbolizing the release of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. Rome carried on this practice. Evidently Pilate used this as a way to have the other Jesus released. I could hear the crowds from my cell, but not Pilate. I heard the crowds start chanting “Barabbas,” then after a pause “Crucify! Crucify! Crucify!” I assumed I was doom. A cold chill shook me as the reality of crucifixion settled over me. I was as hard and cold as anyone, but I was still human! When soldiers then burst through my cell door and dragged me out I assumed that was it. When they opened a side door and threw me out into the street I couldn't believe it! I quickly scampered away, but not too far. My two buddies were still there, about to be killed this day. I felt like I was deserting them, although I wasn't about to go back inside. I was very curious about why I was released. Was it the prisoner exchange? If so, who was taking my place?

When I saw it was this other Jesus I didn't care. I hated Him. he was weak. He could have turned the crowds into an army and fought the Romans but didn't. I had no respect for cowardice like that. Still, something started changing inside me. For the first time since I was a child I felt pity, sorrow for another human being. I guess it's cause I could identify with Him. He was taking my place on my cross.

TO GOLGOTHA Then I saw Him for the first time, carrying my cross toward Golgotha. It was the whole cross, 200 pounds. A awful curse from God went with it (Deut. 21:23). Of course they made Him and my two friends go the long way, weaving up and down streets, before exiting the city. This was so more could see them. Their crimes were written on boards which

were carried in front, then nailed to their cross. Funny, all He said was that He was the “King of the Jews.”

Going outside the city pictured exclusion, rejection by God. That's where the ‘scapegoat’ was sent. I wondered how someone who claimed to be God would handle that. Before He got there, though, it all was too much for Him physically, Simon of Cyrene was pressed into service.

EXECUTION Golgotha was an awful place! It meant ‘skull,’ and that's what the place looked like. It had the smell and feel of death everywhere. Some mercy was shown, though, by offering a narcotic (gall or myrrh). Surprisingly Jesus rejected it. That made me curious.

I watch as He was stripped naked and thrown backward on to the wood. I involuntarily flinched myself as His raw, bloody back hit the rough wood. I turned away as His arms were spread and nailed, and then His feet. That was my cross. That should have been me.....

The cross was lifted and dropped into its hole with a jarring thud. There He was. His arms and knees were flexed a bit so He could pull Himself up to allow air into His lungs. Perhaps I'd better quote what a medical doctor in your day says about crucifixion:

“The cross is placed on the ground and the exhausted man is quickly thrown backwards with his shoulders against the wood. The legionnaire feels for the depression at the front of the wrist. He drives a heavy, square wrought-iron nail through the wrist deep into the wood. Quickly he moves to the other side and repeats the action, being careful not to pull the arms too tightly, but to allow some flex and movement. The cross is then lifted into place. The left foot is pressed backward against the right foot, and with both feet extended, toes down, a nail is driven through the arch of each, leaving the knees flexed. The victim is now crucified. As he slowly sags down with more weight on the nails in the wrists, excruciating fiery pain shoots along the fingers and up the arms to explode in the brain-the nails in the wrists are putting pressure on the median nerves. As he pushes himself upward to avoid this stretching torment, he places the full weight on the nail through his feet. Again he feels the searing agony of the nail tearing through the nerves between the bones of his feet. As the arms fatigue, cramps sweep through his muscles, knotting them deep relentless, throbbing pain. With these cramps comes the inability to push himself upward to breathe. Air can be drawn into the lungs but not exhaled. He fights to raise himself in order to get even one small breath. Finally, carbon dioxide builds up in the lungs and in the blood stream, and the cramps partially subsided. Spasmodically, he is able to push himself upward to exhale and bring in life-giving oxygen. Hours of limitless pain, cycles of twisting, joint-rentng cramps, intermittent partial asphyxiation, searing pain as tissue is torn from his lacerated back as he moves up and down against rough timber. Then another agony begins: a deep, crushing pain deep in the chest as the pericardium slowly fills with cerium and begins to compress the heart. It is now almost over-the loss of tissue fluids has reached a critical level -- the compressed heart is struggling to pump heavy, thick, sluggish blood into the tissues -- the tortured lungs are making frantic effort to gasp in small gulps of air. He can feel the chill of death creeping through his tissues... Finally, he can allow his body to die...”

That's why He didn't talk much, and what He did was for others: forgiveness for those doing the crucifixion and for one of my friends there with Him and assistance for His mother.

THE END COMES Then it got dark, like midnight. Even I could feel an evil chill in the air. Even though I didn't believe in them, I couldn't help thinking that Satan and his demons were everywhere, attacking Him as He hung there in my place. He cried out, really yelled, that God had deserted Him. I found out later that during that time He was literally taking my place in hell. Then, after 3 hours of dark torture, He seemed to have peace. He said His work was done and it looked like He voluntarily died. Then the sun shone again, but a earthquake hit at that very moment. What a time! I mean, it really touched me. He took my place, know what I mean?

24. CRUCIFIXION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Barabbas?

Why was Barabbas, a guilty, man set free?

Why was Jesus, an innocent man, condemned?

What was crucifixion like that made it so painful and awful.

What made Jesus' death worse than others by crucifixion?

What did Jesus mean when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?"

Why did it become dark everywhere?

What do you think Jesus thought about while He was dying on the cross?

How does it make you feel to realize Jesus actually thought about you, in love, on the cross?

If Jesus did all that for you, is there anything He asks of you that is too much?

What can you do for Him?

24. CRUCIFIXION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Who was Barabbas?

The leader of the criminals crucified with Jesus. He was released instead of Jesus.

Why was Barabbas, a guilty, man set free?

It was the custom to release a prisoner at Passover and Pilate thought the crowd would never release Barabbas, a hated criminal, instead of popular Jesus. But the religious rulers had bribed the people in the crowd and they called for Barabbas to be released.

Why was Jesus, an innocent man, condemned?

The Jews were jealous of His popularity and Pilate was afraid to do the right thing. It was all part of God's plan for Jesus to die for our sins.

What was crucifixion like that made it so painful and awful.

Nails were in the great nerve-centers of the wrists and ankles. The back which had been whipped raw rubbed against the rough wooden cross. There was exposure to the hot sun and no water. The person couldn't breathe very well and eventually, after several days, died of lack of oxygen.

What made Jesus' death worse than others by crucifixion?

God placed on Jesus during those hours all our sins. Then He punished Jesus with the punishment we would have deserved and received by spending all eternity in hell. Jesus had to be a man to take our place. He had to be sinless or He would have had to die for His own sins.

What did Jesus mean when He said, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken me?"

God the Father and God the Holy Spirit turned their backs on Jesus because He became guilty of our sins and God cannot have anything to do with sin. He had never felt the guilt of sin or the awfulness of being separated from God before.

Why did it become dark everywhere?

That showed that darkness and evil seemed to be winning. Satan and his demons were doing everything they could to destroy Jesus. God is light, but Jesus was dying. It also gave Jesus some privacy from everyone watching as He went through His agony. It must have been more lonely in the dark, though.

What do you think Jesus thought about while He was dying on the cross?

He thought about each one of us, by name, as He suffered and paid for every sin we would ever commit. He thought of us with love, that's why He didn't come down from the cross.

How does it make you feel to realize Jesus actually thought about you, in love, on the cross?

(answers will vary)

If Jesus did all that for you, is there anything He asks of you that is too much?

No

What can you do for Him?

Love Him. All we can give Him is our heart, and that's what He wants most from us. That's why He died for us, so we can be close to Him. We show our love by obeying Him, praising Him, thanking Him and telling others about Him.

25. RESURRECTION

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
25. RESURRECTION	Jesus & our eternal life	Matthew 28:1-10 Mark 16:1-14 Luke 24:1-49 John 20:1-20	Open grave

By Thomas

Have you ever seen a crucifixion? No, I guess you haven't. You aren't missing anything. I mean, it's AWFUL! The pressure and toll it takes on a body is inhuman, and if a person has been flogged previous to it, it's hard to recognize it as a human body. I wasn't around to see Jesus' body, but I heard about it later. None of us disciples, who bragged so grandly about never deserting Him, were there. It ended up being two members of our arch-enemies group, the Sanhedrin, who took His body for burial. It's good they did, or He'd have been thrown into the garbage pit and incinerated.

DAY 1 We count our days by parts of days, and the first day Jesus was in the tomb was Friday. He was put in a little after 3 PM and there until the day ended at sunset, which is when Saturday, the Sabbath, the second day began. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea got permission to get the body, used their own funds for spices, and donated a tomb. Praise God!

DAY 2 The Sabbath went from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. We all stayed hidden, gradually gathering back in the upper room but locking the doors out of fear. No work or travel was allowed on the Sabbath. We never ever gave a thought to His prophesied resurrection. It seems the religious rulers did, though, for they even make preparations to prevent it. They sealed the tomb and stationed a Roman guard there to protect it.

DAY 3 Before dawn some of the women started out to get to the tomb at first light so they could properly dress His body with spices. It was the only way left to show Him our love and devotion. Sometime that night, though, angels came and moved the stone to show that the tomb had been vacated. They also chased the soldiers away, making it all safe for the women. They weren't aware of the guards, nor did they have a plan for moving the stone, which took many strong men to move.

At the tomb they noticed the stone was gone, and so was the body! Confused, they thought His body was stolen. First He is killed, now they don't even have His body!

Meanwhile, at the temple at this same sunrise, the High Priest was waving a barley sheaf in front of the torn veil which had been pinned back in place. Firstfruits was being celebrated, a promise of more to come. Only later did we realize how beautifully this spoke of Jesus' resurrection and all of ours to follow.

The women missed all this, only grieving the loss of the body. Eyes downcast, they didn't notice the 2 angels inside and 1 outside the tomb. They were startled when the angels spoke, reminding them He had said He would come back to life and He had! Their emotions were so strong that their rational thinking was impaired, so the women didn't grasp what the angels were saying. Grief overcame faith. They returned to the upper room and told that the body was stolen.

FIRST APPEARANCE John and Peter ran to the tomb. Being younger, John got there first and stood at the door, staring in. Peter rushed by and entered, confused and grieved. John then entered and saw the linens that had wrapped Jesus. The head piece was neatly folded and set

in place, the other still formed like an empty cocoon. John didn't remember Jesus' words, but the evidence made him think perhaps Jesus was alive. He didn't say anything, though. The then started back to the upper room with their news.

Meanwhile Mary Magdalene, the leader of the women, who had been wonderfully saved and delivered by Jesus, had left following Peter and John, but at a slower pace. Somehow they missed each other coming and going, probably taking different routes. When Mary got to the tomb she was emotionally drained from 3 days of grief and crying. Seeing the angels, she assumed they were gardeners and wanted to know where they had put the body.

Then someone said, "Mary," and she recognized the voice. Immediately falling on her knees she hugged Him. Jesus told her to go tell the others that He was alive.

After she left some other women came and they, too say Jesus. However the disciples wouldn't believe the woman no matter what they said.

APPEARANCE TO OTHERS Somewhere in this time Jesus appeared in private to Peter to make things right between them. In the afternoon Mary (mother of James the Less and a cousin of Mary) and her husband Cleopas (brother of Joseph) were walking back home to Emmaus. They were confused and hurt, and it had been a long, tiring walk.

A stranger joined them and they started talking about what had happened. They invited Him to eat with them, and that's when He revealed who He was. Immediately He disappeared.

Well, they had to rush back to Jerusalem, to the upper room, to give this good news to everyone there. He appeared there, just materializing despite the doors being locked. He ate with them and told them how His resurrection had been prophesied throughout the whole Old Testament. It was a glorious time, or so I was told.

APPEARANCE TO THOMAS As you may have heard, I was not present when all this happened. I was away from the others, hiding in fear. To be perfectly honest, I was really feeling sorry for myself over this all. I was having a good pity-party!. Oh I had heard the supposed accounts of the resurrection, but wouldn't believe them. I didn't want to get my hopes up again. I wouldn't believe the others even after they all claimed to have seen Him. I mean it's not that I thought they were all lying or making it up or something, it's just that I wasn't ready to let go of my pity and depression, so I hung onto it. It took a week for me to climb out of that pit and be where I should have been in the first place, with God's people. You know, you miss a blessing when you aren't with God's people when they gather, for His is there in there midst.

A week later, also on a Sunday, Jesus appeared to all the disciples and followers again, and this time I was present. He told me I could come touch and feel Him if I needed more proof, but I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that it was Jesus! I fell on my knees before Him, saying, "My Lord and My God." He said I was blessed for seeing and believing, but those later who would believe without even seeing were even more blessed. I guess that mean you who are reading this.

THE STORY GOES ON That wasn't the last time we saw Him. Actually we saw Him about a dozen times over the next 40 days. Sometimes He appeared to individuals, other times to several people at the same time. Once He even appeared to a group of over 500 people. Mainly we saw Him back home, in Galilee. He never did appear to any of His enemies, the religious rulers. Many of them came to accept Him as their Savior and Lord, and then some saw Him. But those who didn't people never did see Him. I guess He figured they had enough proof what with the solders who were guarding the tomb telling them about the resurrection and all. They obviously knew it was true or they wouldn't have paid them over a million dollars.

25. RESURRECTION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Jesus' body was put in a tomb, but when did His soul and spirit go to heaven?

Where do we go when we die?

Who do you know who is already in heaven with Jesus?

How do you think they feel about being in heaven with Jesus?

Who saw Jesus alive first? Why?

At first the disciples didn't believe that Jesus was alive, but then they believed. How do you think they felt when they realized He had conquered death and was alive again!

How many days did Jesus appear to people before He ascended?

How many times during those days did He show Himself to His followers?

Why did He appear to so many people for such a long time?

What was special about Jesus' appearance to Thomas?

What difference would it have made if Jesus hadn't come back to life?

Jesus' resurrection body looked like His earthly body but it was perfect, sinless, never got tired or sick and will last forever. You will have a resurrection body like this as well. What do you think you will like best about it?

25. RESURRECTION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

Jesus' body was put in a tomb, but when did His soul and spirit go to heaven?

Immediately at death. He told the thief who believed in that that "today you will be with Me in paradise."

Where do we go when we die?

Our bodies go into the grave but our soul and spirit, the 'real' us, immediately go to heaven to be with Jesus. He gives us a temporary body to use until our old bodies are resurrected and changed.

Who do you know who is already in heaven with Jesus?

(answers will vary)

How do you think they feel about being in heaven with Jesus?

Great!!!

Who saw Jesus alive first? Why?

Mary Magdalene. She was always faithful to Jesus and was at the cross and waiting at the tomb. Jesus rewarded her for her faithfulness.

At first the disciples didn't believe that Jesus was alive, but then they believed. How do you think they felt when they realized He had conquered death and was alive again!

(answers will vary)

How many days did Jesus appear to people before He ascended?

40

How many times during those days did He show Himself to His followers?

12

Why did He appear to so many people for such a long time?

To make sure everyone knew and believed He was alive.

What was special about Jesus' appearance to Thomas?

Even though Thomas was doubtful Jesus went out of His way to show Thomas He was alive and He loved and cared for Him. He doesn't get angry when we struggle but loves us and helps our faith to grow.

What difference would it have made if Jesus hadn't come back to life?

We'd have no salvation, Jesus wouldn't be God and wouldn't be in heaven helping us, the Holy Spirit wouldn't have come to indwell us, the Bible wouldn't be true, we would have no church, no forgiveness, no hope – nothing!

Jesus' resurrection body looked like His earthly body but it was perfect, sinless, never got tired or sick and will last forever. You will have a resurrection body like this as well. What do you think you will like best about it?

(answers will vary)

26. ASCENSION

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

EVENT	TOPIC/MI	SCRIPTURE	PICTURE
26. ASCENSION	We will go to heaven one day	Mark 16:19-20 Luke 24:50-53 Acts 1:3-14	Clouds

By Judas Thaddaeus

I was one of Jesus' disciples. My name is Judas Thaddaeus, but after the other Judas betrayed Jesus I sort of dropped that name and just went by Thaddaeus. Wouldn't you have done the same? Judas, after the tribe of Judah, was a fine name until Judas Iscariot forever put a black cloud over it. It's very sobering to realize I could have done the same thing the other Judas had done if it weren't for God's grace in my life. What a difference that decision of Judas' made. He will spend all eternity separated from God while I will spend eternity in God's presence in heaven. How do I know I'll be with Jesus? An angel told me! If that sounds strange to you I can assure you it seemed strange to me as well – but then there were lots of strange things happening in those days!

Jesus, the Messiah, had been cruelly crucified by the Romans. Stranger yet, He came back to life on the third day! For forty days He walked with us and appeared to us. Yet we knew that couldn't last. The way it all ended was equally strange.

We had all gathered in Jerusalem one last time and walked out of the city to Bethany on the Mount of Olives. We had been there many times and memories, both good and bad, flooded our minds as we walked. We knew this was the spot where God's Shekinah Glory (His literal Presence) ascended into heaven when He left the temple during Ezekiel's time. We also knew that Jesus said He would one day come to earth again, and this would be the very spot where His foot would touch ground! We knew He would soon be leaving, but how would we manage without Him? We needed Him so very much. We couldn't carry on without Him. On our own, we realized, we were nothing! How would we ever manage?

As had so often happened over the years, Jesus answered our question before we even asked it. It was uncanny how He could read our thoughts – but then He was God, wasn't He? He quickly reminded us that the Holy Spirit, Whom He had often talked about (especially at the last supper the night before He was crucified) would indwell us and do what He done for us – and do even more! He told us to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit to come. Then the Spirit would show us what to do next. With His presence in us we would be able to manage nicely.

As He was saying these things, He started ascending into heaven. He just started going up and instantly we all knew that this was good-bye. This wasn't like the other times when He temporarily left. This was the end of one chapter and the beginning of another.

Again our questions were anticipated and answered – this time by 2 angels who said that Jesus would certainly return, and it would be in exactly this same way as He went. Later, when the Holy Spirit did come and indwell us, He helped us remember these things and put them together as Jesus had said He would.

We remembered other words He spoke to us that time we ate together for the last time in the Upper Room. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." (John 14:1-4) Knowing He was going to prepare a place for us to come be with Him gave us a lot of comfort. It was further assurance I will spend eternity with Him! Knowing that will come can really help me face whatever the future may have for me!

A few years later Paul added more details to this doctrine. He said that the next event on God's prophetic program is the Rapture – the trumpet will sound, Jesus will appear in the sky, and every person from the cross to the present who has accepted Jesus as Savior will be taken to heaven. If they have already died their bodies will be taken to heaven to join their soul/spirit which went there immediately at death. Jesus told the thief on the cross beside Him, "TODAY you will be with me in paradise." His body stayed on the cross where his legs were broken but He was in heaven with Jesus!

Read Paul's exact words about this: "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words." (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

Paul also explained to the Corinthians that we will have a new body, one not limited like this earthly body is. It will be like Jesus' resurrection body. "But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body." (1 Corinthians 15:35-44)

So while we lost Jesus' presence at the ascension, we gained much more than we lost. Instead of living among us, He then lived in us by the Holy Spirit. And it wasn't just the 11 of us that had this benefit – every believer from that time on has the same great privilege. I see now that Jesus had to go to heaven to assume headship over the church (Heb 10:12,13; Eph 4:8,10; Ps 68:1) as well as sending the Holy Spirit (John 16:7,14; Acts 2:33; John 14:16-19). Now that He is in heaven He is our mediator and defender, He intercedes for us at the right hand of God (Rom 8:34; Heb 6:20). So we have His inside us now and when we die we will go to be with Him forever! That's a good deal no matter how you look at it!

26. ASCENSION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What does it mean when we say Jesus 'ascended' to heaven?

Why did Jesus want to have His disciples watch Him ascend into heaven?

Where was the place from which Jesus ascended into heaven?

Why were the disciples told to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come? Why not get right to work?

What things are you able to do because God's Spirit is inside you that you wouldn't be able to do without Him?

Who was present to tell the disciples that Jesus would be back in the same way He left?

What is it called when Jesus comes back for all the Christians who are alive, but doesn't touch foot to the earth?

What is Jesus doing in heaven now?

Do you ever get afraid of dying?

Why shouldn't we be afraid?

26. ASCENSION

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

By Jerry Schmoyer, jerry@schmoyer.net

What does it mean when we say Jesus 'ascended' to heaven?

It means He 'went up' into heaven which the disciples watched.

Why did Jesus want to have His disciples watch Him ascend into heaven?

So they would know for sure that He was gone for good and that would never doubt where He was or Who He was. They didn't. Their faith was so strong they were willing to die for Him.

Where was the place from which Jesus ascended into heaven?

The Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, the same place His foot will touch earth when He returns to the earth.

Why were the disciples told to wait in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to come? Why not get right to work?

We can't do anything without God's power in us and that power comes when His Holy Spirit indwells us. God tells us that at the moment you accept Jesus as Savior the Holy Spirit comes and lives in you forever.

What things are you able to do because God's Spirit is inside you that you wouldn't be able to do without Him?

Have real love, joy, peace, patience and self-control. Be able to forgive others. Courage to tell others about Him. Understanding as you read the Bible. Power and strength to live like Jesus.

Who was present to tell the disciples that Jesus would be back in the same way He left?

2 angels

What is it called when Jesus comes back for all the Christians who are alive, but doesn't touch foot to the earth?

The rapture. The trumpet will sound, the bodies of dead believers will be resurrected and living believers will be changed into eternal bodies and taken immediately to heaven (I Thessalonians 4:13-18).

What is Jesus doing in heaven now?

He prays for us. He defends us to God when Satan accuses of sin, saying that He paid for all our sins so Satan can't have us. He guides and directs us. He leads the Church, which is called His Body. He gives us spiritual gifts.

Do you ever get afraid of dying?

(answers will vary)

Why shouldn't we be afraid?

Jesus defeated and conquered death. He comes gets us when we die and take us to heaven to be with Him forever. Nothing could be better than that!

