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BB42

MATTHEW, PART 2

This quarter we will complete our study of the book of Matthew, beginning with chapter 15 to the end of the book.

As you study these lessons, remember that our textbook is the Bible. If you read all the Scripture passages in "Preparation for Next Week's Lesson", you will complete the book of Matthew. Study with your Bible open and your heart open to God's instruction. Each lesson has a section called "For Further Study" for those who wish to study in more detail. There is a brief outline for teachers, but we encourage teachers to study well all Scriptures and all sections.

The writers for this quarter are all young adults who are members of Kampala Baptist Church and have various responsibilities in the church and in their jobs. All are involved in ministry with others. They are: Dominic Mutabazi, Lessons 1, 9 and 10; Monica Kapiriri, Lessons 2, 5 and 6; Moses Kajubi, Lessons 3 and 13; Godfrey Kyedza, Lessons 4, 8, 11 and 12; Paul Bakibinga, Lesson 7. We appreciate the hard work they put into these lessons.

We pray that you will learn much as you study the life and teachings of our Lord through his Word.

Mrs. Sharon Pumpelly

Editor, Bible Book Study

| LESSON | TITLES | SCRIPTURES |
|--------|---------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | REAL VALUES | MATTHEW 15:1 to 16:12 |
| 2 | JESUS' IDENTITY AS SON OF GOD | MATTHEW 16:13 to 17:27 |
| 3 | TEACHINGS ABOUT PERSONAL VALUES | MATTHEW 18:1 to 19:26 |
| 4 | RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF REWARD | MATTHEW 19:27 to 20:34 |
| 5 | THE TRIUMPHANT KING | MATTHEW 21:1-22 |
| 6 | JESUS CONFRONTS HIS ENEMIES | MATTHEW 21:23 to 23:39 |
| 7 | JESUS' SECOND COMING | MATTHEW 24:1 to 25:13 |
| 8 | THE FINAL JUDGMENT | MATTHEW 25:14-46 |
| 9 | THE LAST SUPPER | MATTHEW 26:1-30 |
| 10 | AGONY AND ARREST | MATTHEW 26:31-56 |
| 11 | THE TRIAL | MATTHEW 26:57 to 27:31 |
| 12 | THE CRUCIFIXION | MATTHEW 27:32-61 |
| 13 | HE IS ALIVE! | MATTHEW 27:62 to 28:20 |

LESSON 1

REAL VALUES

VERSES: Matthew 15:1 to 16:12

VERSES TO STUDY: Matthew 15:1-6, 10-11, 18-19, 22-39

MEMORY VERSE: "But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander" (Matthew 15:18-19).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God is more concerned about people than institutions and about inner qualities than keeping laws.

David was a strong Catholic when he was saved. He attended church regularly and the parish priest knew him personally. When he got saved he met stiff opposition from fellow Catholics. They prevented him from witnessing to others about Jesus. He was told there was no such thing as being saved here on earth. The parish priest began to dissociate himself from David. He soon realized that he needed to find fellowship elsewhere. What David faced was not new. Jesus faced stiff opposition from the Jewish leaders.

REFUTING JEWISH TRADITION: MATTHEW 15:1-6

People are usually quick to criticize Christians when they act in a manner they regard unchristian. Jesus faced the same thing. His disciples apparently did not properly wash their hands before eating. The Pharisees' question was an indirect accusation. Since Jesus' disciples broke the law then he must be responsible. He did not try to defend his disciples but refuted the Pharisees. He quoted Scriptures (Exodus 20:12; 21:17; Isaiah 29:13) which clearly revealed the Pharisees followed man-made rules and regulations.

Many of these rules contradicted the Word of God and yet the Pharisees demanded strict obedience to them. Sometimes Christians today are guilty of imposing rules concerning dress and conduct on fellow Christians. Those who violate them are sometimes shunned by those who obey.

In dealing with his critics, Jesus often answered a question with a question. They asked why his disciples had transgressed the traditions of the elders. And he asked them why they, not their disciples, had transgressed the commandment of God for their own tradition.

Jesus quoted Leviticus 20:9 and Exodus 21:15 to condemn the way some children related to their parents. The commandment of God required that children care for their parents. But the children had found a way out of it and the Pharisees condoned it using their Jewish tradition. Jesus exposed it as the utter greed it was.

CLEAN AND UNCLEAR: MATTHEW 15:10-11, 18-19

After confounding the Pharisees Jesus went on to explain the Scriptures. He clearly indicated that it is not the food you eat or how you eat it that causes one to sin. But it is from your heart that you disobey God. The mouth is simply an expression of the attitude of the heart. People may see us as upright, but inwardly we know we are full of weakness. We need to ask God to search our hearts and cleanse us from within.

Jesus called the people and said, "Hear and understand." Jesus used this expression for emphasis. The issue of defilement was important. It had divided the people. The verb translated "defiles" (verse 11) means to make common. To the Pharisees, eating with unwashed hands made persons like Gentiles, Samaritans and irreligious Jews who had unclean occupations. This was racial prejudice. Throughout our world today we find several examples of persons or governments justifying prejudiced views through religion.

Jesus made it clear our tongues reveal the true character that we have within our hearts.

HEALING THE CANAANITE'S DAUGHTER: MATTHEW 15:21-28

The Israelites looked upon the Canaanites as aliens and outcasts. They shunned them publicly. The Canaanite woman heard about Jesus and knew he could heal her daughter. She persisted through the throngs of people who must have resisted her moving forward. She persisted even when Jesus told her he was not obliged to help her. When Jesus saw her faith he healed her daughter.

Do we persevere in prayer? Our faith becomes evident as we approach God in prayer.

You might be puzzled by Jesus' seemingly harsh reply to the woman. But he must have used it to teach his disciples a lesson on racial prejudice for they had asked him not to help her. If Jesus had been adamant about his statement the daughter would not have been healed. But Jesus honored her faith. Faith, not race, draws one to God.

JESUS MEETS THE NEEDS OF THE MULTITUDE: MATTHEW 15:29-39 Jesus did not only teach people. He also met their physical needs. People came to him with ignorance, and he taught them. Others were afflicted with all kinds of diseases and sicknesses. Some actually brought their friends and loved ones to Jesus for healing. Jesus healed them. People wondered and glorified the God of Israel when they saw these miraculous healings. When we do good to others do they glorify God or praise us?

Thousands had gathered, and they grew tired and hungry. Jesus had compassion on them. He involved his disciples in the problem they faced. They gave him all they found, seven loaves and some fish. He took them, gave thanks and the disciples gave them to the crowd. They all ate to satisfaction with seven baskets full of leftovers. Do you believe Christ can use whatever you give him to fulfil what he asks you to do?

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. Why did the Pharisees oppose Jesus?
2. What makes one unclean?
3. What lessons can we learn from the Canaanite woman?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 16:13-20

Tuesday: Matthew 16:21-23

Wednesday: Matthew 16:24-28

Thursday: Matthew 17:1-8

Friday: Matthew 17:9-13
Saturday: Matthew 17:14-27

Lesson 1
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Pharisees were a Jewish sect who were zealous for religion and acted under the guidance of the Scribes. Their fundamental principal was obedience to the law. They abhorred anything less than complete obedience and took measures to eradicate all forms of disobedience. Their zeal and attitude became merely external and mechanical. They laid emphasis on good works clearly relating it to God's approval of one's righteousness. Sometimes they violently opposed those who acted and taught in a contrary manner. Jesus constantly met their opposition.

The law which the Pharisees observed was passed on from generation to generation by elders and preserved by the Scribes. In the Old Testament there are numerous laws regarding purification. (Exodus 30:18; Leviticus 14:8; Numbers 8:6) The act of washing symbolized one's innocence. Jewish leaders overemphasized this outward act of washing and overshadowed the condition of the heart in obedience. They idolized their innocence. They clearly had little love for God. People seemed to obey the Jewish leaders rather than God. The Pharisees quickly punished any disobedience to these rituals, sometimes demanding death by public stoning. Hebrews 9:6-14 reveals to us the hypocrisy and futility of the Jewish laws.

Jesus clearly told the Pharisees in Matthew 15:3 that the law was their own tradition. It had no place with what Moses passed on from God. He said their tradition contradicted God's Word. He tried to explain to them that the issue was not in the outward manner of life. But it is the heart condition about which God was concerned. Jesus called the Pharisees hypocrites. They claimed to obey God when in actual sense they only gratified their own desires. Jesus enumerated some sins of the Pharisees showing that these violated the Ten Commandments.

As Christians we should take heed lest we act like the Pharisees. (Hebrews 4:1-2)

Lesson 1
TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to summarize how Jesus' teaching and actions reflect the central truth and to identify one person to whom they will minister during the week.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask: "When you became a Christian (saved) did you get a lot of opposition from others?" After a few responses then ask: "What about in our own fellowships, have you been inhibited by some legalistic rules imposed upon Christians? How have you responded to them?"

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. Refuting Jewish Tradition: Matthew 15:1-6. Ask question 1. Relate their own response to legalism today to Jesus' response to the Pharisees. Explain the 'tradition of the elders.' Explain the roles of the Pharisees and Scribes.

2. Clean and Unclean: Matthew 15:10-11, 18-19. Ask question 2. Lead members to search their own hearts and ask them to pray silently using Psalms 139:23-24.

3. Healing the Canaanite's Daughter: Matthew 15:21-28. Ask question 3. Discuss prayer, emphasizing perseverance. Ask members to share any testimony that reflects perseverance in prayer.

4. Meeting the Needs of the Multitudes: Matthew 15:29-39. Reiterate the fact that Jesus did not only teach but also met the physical needs of the people. Lead them to enumerate the physical needs he met. (verses 30-31) Let them note that the people glorified the God of Israel after receiving an answer to their needs. Do we remember to do that when we receive answers to our prayers? Who gets the glory when we meet others' needs?

APPLY THE LESSON: Lead members to search their own hearts and ask God to forgive them. Tell them that as God's children we should minister to the needy around us. Ask them to identify one person and make practical efforts to meet this person's needs. Ask them to share about their plans with one other person and to pray for one another.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus' disciples began to eat without washing hands according to the requirements of the law.

2. What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and reveals a character that defiles a man.

3. The Canaanite woman persisted in prayer and revealed that her faith in God was greater than any racial barriers.

LESSON 2

JESUS' IDENTITY AS SON OF GOD

VERSES: MATTHEW 16:13 to 17:27

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 16:14-18, 21, 24-27; 17:1-5.

MEMORY VERSE: "Simon Peter replied, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matthew 16:16).

CENTRAL TRUTH: The events of Jesus' life reveal that he is the Son of God and calls all people to respond to his authority.

A story is told of a pope who disguised himself and for some time led an ordinary life. As an ordinary man, no one ever thought of him as pope. As pope, very few people recognized him as the ordinary man.

For centuries the Jews waited for the Messiah to come. But when he finally came as one of them, they did not recognize him as Messiah. Today Jesus lives in glory and many do not believe God ever came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. As you study this lesson look for ways Jesus revealed his identity to his disciples.

OPINIONS OF JESUS: MATTHEW 16:14-16

Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was. While others did not confess him as either Messiah or God's unique son, Jesus recognized the importance of his disciples' making such a confession. These men would bear witness to him, and their confidence in his identity would affect their witness later on.

Jesus wanted his disciples to make their confession personally. This confession would give them the power as individuals to carry out the responsibility Jesus wanted to entrust in them. When we realize that Jesus is the Son of God and make that confession he immediately entrusts us with the responsibility of sharing that revelation with others. When we make that confession we desire to share it with others. Have you confessed that Jesus is the Son of God, and does your life and conversation with others reflect that truth?

CONFESSION OF FAITH: MATTHEW 16:17-18

Christ blessed Peter's confession. What is the 'rock'? Is Peter the rock, the foundation of the Church? Jesus did call Peter the rock. How did Peter become the rock? Peter became the rock by faith. He did not do this by his own ability and knowledge, which is limited by the flesh. He became a man of faith through the power of God. His confession is the central faith of the Church.

The Bible consistently teaches us that the Church is built on Christ alone who is the chief cornerstone. Christ then uses weak men like Peter, the other disciples and us as building stones in his temple when we confess that he is the Son of the living God. When we trust in his power, he turns our weakness into his strength with which to build his Church.

Christ builds his Church on the faith of his followers in him. This unity of faith among believers is so powerful that all the powers of death and hell cannot overthrow it because it comes from Christ himself.

COST AND REWARD: MATTHEW 16:21, 24-27

Jesus knew the price he would pay as the obedient Son of God. Many people think following Christ makes life easy and profitable. But Jesus placed demands on his disciples and on us.

If one desires to follow the path of Christ, he must: 1) "Deny self," making a radical reorientation from a self-centered life to a Christ-centered life; 2) "Take up his cross," willingly following Christ in total obedience. In Jerusalem all crosses meant crucifixion and carrying one's own cross meant death. Yet the reward for giving your life to Christ is to save it for eternity; 3) "Follow me." A disciple of Christ must follow in his footsteps. In order to understand how to follow Christ, one must know him through prayer, meditation and Bible study. What are other ways you can learn about Christ?

Are there worldly goals and desires that you need to give up in order to follow Christ? Nothing we can gain on earth compares with what we will gain throughout eternity by following Christ.

THE TRANSFIGURATION: MATTHEW 17:1-5

The transfiguration is a brilliant account of the visitation of God to Jesus prior to his death. Every aspect of it portrays divine glory. Much reflects the glorious appearance of God to Moses on Mount Sinai. God's voice affirmed Christ's choice of obedience to death. The transfiguration confirms for us that God came into our world through Jesus Christ who is indeed Lord.

The transfiguration gave the disciples a clearer concept of who Jesus was. They saw his glory and believed. Although the transfiguration strengthened Jesus for the ordeal he faced, it also helped the disciples understand. It gave them hope in life beyond death by giving them a preview of the glory that awaited them.

Have you experienced Jesus' deity in your life? God commands that we "listen to him." We must listen and obey. Seeing Jesus' glory, confessing him as Son of the living God but not obeying him negates his role as Lord of your life. The transfiguration calls us to see, confess and obey.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. Why was Jesus concerned about the disciples' confession of him?
2. What is the "rock" on which Jesus is building his church?
3. Why does following Jesus require denying self?
4. In view of this study, what does it mean for you as an individual to acknowledge Jesus as Lord?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 18:1-9

Tuesday: Matthew 18:10-22

Wednesday: Matthew 18:23-35

Thursday: Matthew 19:1-9

Friday: Matthew 19:10-15

Saturday: Matthew 19:16-25

Lesson 2
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Jesus wanted to know before he set out for Jerusalem and the cross if anyone had even dimly grasped who and what he was. People categorized him with the great former prophets, but this was not adequate. Elijah was expected to return before the days of the Lord. (Malachi 4:5) Some thought Jesus was the expected Elijah.

Jeremiah also had a curious place in the expectation of the people of Israel. He was also expected to come before the Messiah. So for the Jews to identify Jesus with one of these would mean he was no ordinary prophet. Yet in actual fact it identified him as less than he truly was.

Now the coast of Caesarea Philippi was located near the site of the ancient city of Dan. The city was protected on the north by a massive sheer rock cliff. Jesus could probably see the tremendous rock cliff when he said "...and on this rock I will build my church..." (Matthew 16:18). Jesus said to Peter, "... You are Peter (small rock), and on this rock (massive rock formation), I will build my church." In Greek Peter is petros, and a massive rock formation, petra. One is singular and the other is plural. This shows that the foundation is not the petros but the petra. Consequently the church consists of people like Peter, whose faith makes them a rock of the foundation which is laid by Jesus Christ, the chief cornerstone.

Peter's confession of Jesus as Son of the living God went far beyond the Jewish expectation of a Messiah. The word, Messiah, meant the anointed one of God. Old Testament kings (1 Samuel 9:16; 16:13), prophets (1 Kings 19:16) and priests (Exodus 30:30) were anointed. Although Jesus fulfilled all the above three roles, (Hebrews 1:1-9) the kingly role was foremost in the Jewish concept.

The phrase, Son of the living God, was beyond popular views; the Jews never expected the messiah to be God's anointed Son.

Matthew 17:2 says, "And he was transfigured before them...." The word, transfigured, means a change of form. The description of it suggests two things:

1. The brightness of his transformation came from within. His deity shone through his humanity.
2. The brightness of his moral purity and righteousness.

Lesson 2
TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to describe how Jesus revealed his deity as Son of God to his disciples and to share how Jesus has revealed himself to them.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask members to share ways Christ has revealed himself to them. Ask: "In what ways has he shown his nature to you." Possible ways are as: Deliverer, Provider, Saviour, Defender, Healer, Refuge, etc. Point out to the students that many of us have experienced several of the listed attributes of Christ but have not reached the fullness of revelation where like Thomas we say, "...My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28).

Say: "As we discuss today's lesson look for what Jesus claims are and what response these claims require from you."

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. Opinions of Jesus: Matthew 16:14-16. Explain why Jesus was identified with the old prophets. Ask question 1.
2. Confession of Faith: Matthew 16:17-18. Explain the 'rock' (For Further Study). Ask question 2.
3. Cost and Reward: Matthew 16:21, 24-27. Ask members to name the demands Jesus places on his followers and an example of how they apply today. Ask question 3.
4. The Transfiguration: Matthew 17:1-5. Explain the transfiguration and what the result was for Jesus and the disciples.

APPLY THE LESSON: Point out that many of the ways we view Jesus are based on what he can do for us. He provides, protects, comforts, heals, etc. Ask members to consider their response to question 4. Say: "When we acknowledge Jesus as Lord we submit to him and worship him. Not only do we enjoy what he does for us, but we obediently and joyfully accept service to him."

Find out if anyone wants to share and be prayed for in the group.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

- 1) The foundation of faith is each individual's confession of Jesus as Lord. The disciples would carry this message and their faith throughout the world.
- 2) Christ, the chief cornerstone, builds his Church with people like Peter who confess and respond to Jesus as the Son of God.
- 3) A self centered person can never have God at the center of his life. This makes it impossible for him to carry his cross and follow after Jesus.

LESSON 3

TEACHINGS ABOUT PERSONAL VALUES

VERSES: MATTHEW 18:1 to 19:26

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 18:1-4, 7-9, 15-17, 21-22; 19:8-12, 23-26

MEMORY VERSE: "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother" (Matthew 18:15).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus taught that maintaining kingdom values involves humility, forgiveness, commitment to marriage, and a proper view of possessions.

Martha experienced new birth in Jesus and began to learn much from the Bible. She soon discovered that changing her attitudes and ambitions was not easy. She realized that she could no longer look down upon others. She had to give up her intense anger when others borrowed her things and did not return them when she needed them. She decided to help an orphan with school fees. She also gave up her friendship with two men.

As you study this lesson open your heart to the teachings and lifestyle of Jesus and the impact they can have on your life. Does he call you to any radical changes? Read and find out!

HUMILITY IN THE KINGDOM: MATTHEW 18:1-4

Man desires greatness. The disciples questioned Jesus concerning greatness in the kingdom he proclaimed. Jesus placed a child in their midst. Greatness in his kingdom came as they humbled themselves and became like that little child. A child is trusting, dependent, loving, lowly, forgiving and teachable. As we desire greatness for God we need to consistently follow the path of humility paved by Jesus.

AVOIDING SIN AT ALL COSTS: MATTHEW 18:7-9

Sadly, the world and people of the world tempt us to sin against God. Jesus taught that temptation will surely come. Temptation also comes through our own bodies with the desires of the flesh. Jesus demonstrated the seriousness we should take with sin. It is better to be physically maimed and have life than enter hell physically whole. We need to eliminate sin from our lives no matter the cost. Would you give up your job or leave campus if that was the only way you could avoid falling into sin?

We should consider habits which are sinful, friends who hinder our beliefs, our conversations and hobbies which have a spiritual cost. What areas of your life need change?

HANDLING OFFENSES: 18:15-17, 21-22

Jesus taught how we should handle any offense against us by a brother. We first go to him alone. If he refuses to listen we go with another person, and then finally we bring the matter before the whole church. The church can deal with people's offenses and give them opportunity for repentance and restoration.

We must be willing to forgive the repentant. In response to Peter's question on 'how many times,' Jesus teaches unlimited forgiveness.

We must confront sin and offense within the body of Christ. The church may need to discipline the unrepentant by breaking fellowship with that person. As we look at Jesus' example and teaching on forgiveness we must conduct all confrontation by his standard of love.

DIVORCE, MARRIAGE AND SINGLENES: 19:8-12

Moses gave allowance for divorce because of the hardness of the human heart. Jesus emphasized God's original intent for marriage. Jesus always taught God's highest standard and only made exception in the case of unchastity. At that time a man could put away his wife without question.

God also gives the option of remaining single. Some persons may choose to remain single for the sake of the kingdom. Others are content single because God gave them that gift. The single life is not for all but for those who have been called or who have the gift of singleness. Even in our African culture we should consider singleness as an option. Jesus was single and fulfilled God's mission for his life and our salvation. In the Christian community we need to give others the freedom to choose singleness without condemning them or always pressuring them into marriage. God views each person as a whole, not as only a half until he/she finds a marriage partner.

Those who plan to marry need to seriously consider their plans before God. God intends for marriage to last forever without the thought of divorce as an alternative. Couples should strive hard to honor their marriage vows and work toward reconciliation in all problems.

THE DIFFICULTY OF RICHES: MATTHEW 19:23-26

After his encounter with the rich young man, Jesus taught how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom. The camel can go through the eye of a needle more easily than a rich man can enter the kingdom. Most people believe God's favor and other advantages are for the rich. How can God's blessings hinder salvation? Wealth deceives one with the proud belief that he can meet all his needs with his power and influence.

Only God's grace can save such a person. Salvation is only possible through the power of God. Have you ever shared the gospel with a very rich person? What was their response? Are material desires a hindrance to the gospel in your life?

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. How does a child reflect humility?
2. If you take seriously Jesus' teaching about eliminating sin, what must you do?
3. What is Jesus' teaching on forgiveness?
4. What is God's standard for marriage? What other options does he give?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 19:27-30

Tuesday: Matthew 20:1-5

Wednesday: Matthew 20:6-16
Thursday: Matthew 20:17-21
Friday: Matthew 20:22-28
Saturday: Matthew 20:29-34

Lesson 3 FOR FURTHER STUDY

Jesus' walk with God gave him the ability to see the depth and direction of any topic discussed. He dealt severely with avoiding sin at all costs. Self-denial and discipline are important for us in dealing with sin. First Corinthians 9:24-27 compares discipline in games to bodily discipline for the sake of the kingdom. Romans 8:18 encourages us to continue in our struggle against sin. Our present difficulty with sin does not compare with eternal future glory.

The idea of taking along two or three people to correct another is rooted in the Old Testament. (Deuteronomy 19:15) In 2 Corinthians 13:1 Paul urges that all charges be made with two or three witnesses within church discipline.

After Jesus teaches on unlimited forgiveness, he tells a parable of the unforgiving servant. As ones who have been forgiven an unpayable debt, we can only do what is expected of us - forgive the petty offenses we experience from others. Granting forgiveness should become a lifestyle for us who have received God's forgiveness.

On divorce, Jesus' response begins with the high view of marriage and what God's plan was in the beginning. (Genesis 1:27; 2:24) When God joins a man and woman together he intends for it to be forever. It is against this background that divorce is addressed. First Corinthians 7 gives the possibility of releasing a new believer from marriage if the unbelieving spouse refuses to continue in a marriage with a new believer. But the fact that marriage is before and by God forever should be at the forefront in our thinking.

Paul is an example of a single person who had freedom to spread the gospel to the Gentiles and to plant churches. He advocated a single lifestyle. (1 Corinthians 7:7, 32-35, 38)

Jesus dealt with the subtle comfort that riches can bring and the disobedience which can be hidden within. On the surface, the rich young man seemed very devoted, (Matthew 19:18-20) but God can see the heart. Riches are certainly a blessing from God. One needs God-given wisdom to handle material blessings so they do not become a hindrance to faith. Certainly the more we have, the greater our responsibility toward others. Luke 16:19-30 gives the account of the rich man and Lazarus. The conversion of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:8-10) demonstrates the grace of God transforming a rich man.

Lesson 3 TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To identify Jesus' teachings on personal values and to evaluate one personal problem in light of these values.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask class members to name personal goals and ambitions or those common to young adults. Say: "The lesson today will give us an opportunity to see if these are consistent with things which are important in the kingdom of God."

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. Humility in the Kingdom: Matthew 18:1-4. Ask question 1. Does greatness still look attractive? Explain. Discuss whether one can know that he is humble. Humility is a characteristic which if you think you have it, you don't.

2. Avoiding Sin at all Costs: Matthew 18:7-9. What could be the cost of entering the kingdom?

3. Handling Offenses: Matthew 18:15-17, 21-22. Ask if 18:15a is commonly done, and if not why? Ask question 3. What does this say about our willingness to forgive?

4. Divorce, Marriage, and Singleness: Matthew 19:8-12. Ask question 4. Ask: "What can we do to give each other encouragement in this area and freedom to choose between marriage and a single lifestyle?"

5. The Difficulty of Riches: Matthew 19:23-26. Explain verse 23. Ask: "Do you think it is true that the rich find it difficult to enter the kingdom? Why?"

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask: "What would it mean for us to be like little children?" Ask members to quietly make a mental comparison of their values and lifestyle to this lesson. Ask them to picture as vividly as possible a personal problem they are facing and its details. Ask: "What should you do to obey the teachings of Jesus in this problem?" If anyone wishes to share a problem, provide time for sharing. Perhaps others may give suggestions from the lesson. Have a time of prayer for these problems, spoken and unspoken.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

1. A child is dependent, trusting, lowly, teachable and loving.

2. We should remove ourselves from situations that tempt us and discipline our bodies not to sin.

3. We should offer unlimited forgiveness to our brothers or sisters who wrong us.

4. Jesus begins with God's original plan for marriage, a union that lasts until death.

LESSON 4

RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF REWARD

VERSES: MATTHEW 19:27 to 20:34

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 19:29; 20:17-28

MEMORY VERSE: "It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26-28).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus taught that true greatness is based on service to others.

Who are some of the great people you know? Why do you consider them great? Have you ever read in the newspapers or a storybook about a hero or someone great? What did you like about this person or character? Would you consider imitating any of these people you have listed? All of us would like for others to consider us great. Most of the ways we try to acquire greatness are opposed to God's way to greatness. As you study this lesson find God's way to greatness and God's reward for those who follow his way.

PROMISE OF REWARD: MATTHEW 19:29

Most people desire temporary and limited rewards. The reward Jesus offers is eternal and without limit. In answer to Peter's question (Matthew 19:27) Jesus promised a reward a hundred times more for everything left behind for his name's sake in addition to entering the kingdom of God.

Jesus gave a list that includes houses, land, father, mother, brothers, sisters, that many of his followers left behind to follow him. Jesus demands supreme love for him among his followers.

Is there any close relationship or property that God would require you to renounce for his name's sake? Are you like the rich young ruler who refused to give up or are you like the disciples who left everything for Christ?

JESUS PREDICTS HIS DEATH: MATTHEW 20:17-19

This is the third time Jesus mentioned his imminent death. Jesus foretold the suffering that was to come to him in different ways:

(a) The suffering of betrayal (disloyalty) as one of his own delivered him to his accusers.

(b) The suffering of injustice. They would condemn him, an innocent man, to death.

(c) The suffering of humiliation through mockery.

(d) The suffering of physical pain as he was scourged.

(e) The suffering of death, for the cross awaited him. He was to conquer death through the resurrection.

A MOTHER'S REQUEST: MATTHEW 20:20-21

The mother of James and John made a request for honor in spite of the calamity that was to befall Jesus. Even though Jesus had taught a parable about workers in a vineyard, James and John sought honor. Their request annoyed the other ten. They all understood greatness like the rest of the world around them who wanted to be served rather than serving. To them greatness came from identifying with the great.

What about you? Is your ambition directed toward self-interests or the interests of others?

A SPECIAL BAPTISM: MATTHEW 20:22-23

Jesus doubted if James and John knew what they had really requested. He asked them if they were able to undergo this special baptism that he was to face. He explained to them who was in charge of the seating arrangement. The Father was to grant the seats for those for whom they were prepared.

You may be sincere in affirming that you will follow Christ whatever the cost. You are able to make an effective commitment with proper information. You must seek to know Scripture and then obey it sincerely. Many people have fallen away when hardships come their way. They were not prepared for such hard times.

Do you know the cost of discipleship? Is your obedience sincere?

WRONG AND RIGHT WAYS TO GREATNESS: MATTHEW 20:24-28

Jesus reminded his disciples about the behavior of earthly kings. They raise their favorites to positions of honor and give them authority over others. The world, or Gentiles, measure greatness in terms of fame, possessions and the authority one exercises over others. Jesus taught a complete reversal of this idea. The road to greatness in his kingdom is paved with a servant attitude, considering oneself as a slave for others. Jesus himself served rather than being served. Jesus illustrated this point in his life. One day he washed the disciples' feet and charged, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15). The task of washing feet belonged to the least among the servants or slaves! Humility and not 'honor' is the right way to greatness.

What changes do you need to make for this passage to apply in your life?

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. If you were to make a list of things that many people find difficult to forsake for Christ, (a) How similar would it be to the one Christ made? (b) How different would it be to the one Christ made?
2. In what ways have you benefited from Jesus' suffering and death?
3. Share an incident when you gave an answer to a question without thinking through the consequences. What lesson did you learn from this experience?
4. Now that you know the wrong and right ways to greatness, which way are you going to take?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 21:1-3
Tuesday: Matthew 21:4-7
Wednesday: Matthew 21:8-11
Thursday: Matthew 21:12-13
Friday: Matthew 21:14-17
Saturday: Matthew 21:18-22

Lesson 4 FOR FURTHER STUDY

The basic meaning of baptism is to dip or immerse. The Jews had a kind of baptism which signified someone had renounced other gods to become a Jew and follow after Jehovah. John the Baptist offered a baptism of repentance. He was also preparing the way for the Christ. The Christian baptism signifies identifying with Christ - his burial and resurrection. It is a believer's baptism meaning that only those who believe the gospel message are baptized by immersion.

The kind of baptism cited in the passage is a special one. It was a baptism of suffering and trial. The disciples did not know the nature of their request or what it involved. They requested for a cup of sorrows, calamities, afflictions. Jesus' affirmation that the disciples were to drink the cup was fulfilled. James was slain by the sword. (Acts 12:2) Although John lived to old age, he underwent trials and a lot of suffering.

The mother of Zebedee's children was probably Salome, the sister of Jesus' mother. Compare Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25. If so, both John and James were cousins of Jesus. Perhaps that provides a natural reason for the request of honoring them.

There is another possibility. The two could still have been thinking of a temporal kingdom. To sit on the left or right of royalty was a gift of confidence and highest honor accorded to friends. So if they thought of such an earthly kingdom, they wished to be distinguished with Christ in his reign of pomp and glory.

Jesus declared that rewards would be given according to the whole purpose of his Father. Suffering and death alone for his sake in themselves were not a guarantee of being accorded with such honor.

Jesus took his disciples away from large crowds when he had something to communicate which was only meant for the disciples.

The word, ransom, means a price paid to redeem captives in a war. The Bible says that all are sinners, (Romans 3:23) captive to sin. The price that was paid to free all men from this bondage was the death of Christ on the cross. So his life was the ransom for many. That was the greatest service he rendered mankind, and it was done in the humility of a servant. (Philippians 2:6-9)

Lesson 4 TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: For members to explain Jesus' teaching on true greatness and to identify ways they can fulfil this teaching in service to others.

TEACHING AID: Paper and pencil for each member.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask someone to review the Memory Verse. Ask a person to pray that as the class studies the lesson people will be sensitive to the leading of the Spirit in areas of their lives where serving is difficult.

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. Promise of Reward: Matthew 19:29. Give the context of this verse in the passage. Ask: "What was your motivation for following Christ?" Answers should be written on the papers provided. Ask members to divide into groups of three and discuss question 1 in the Student's Lesson. Ask them to pick a leader to present the two lists (a) and (b) with reasons before the whole group later on.

2. Jesus Predicts His Death: Matthew 20:17-19. Ask question 2 in Student's Lesson. Make a comment on this using Matthew 20:28 and For Further Study.

3. A Mother's Request: Matthew 20:20-21. Ask members to share their dreams of success. Bring out the fact that the request reveals; (a) self-interest, (b) ambition, (c) belief in Christ's triumph.

4. A Special Baptism: Matthew 20:22-23. Ask: What is baptism? Give information in For Further Study. Ask: "How many kinds of baptism do you know?" (water, Spirit, death) Bring out the fact that the cup spoken of in this passage was the baptism of death and suffering.

5. Wrong and Right Ways to Greatness: Matthew 20:24-28. Ask: "What are some ways people try to achieve greatness?" Ask: "What makes the difference between gaining greatness by serving others and gaining greatness by being served?"

Ask question 4.

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask members to return to their groups of three. Ask leaders to share each group's list. Ask: "If you are going to apply Jesus' teaching about greatness to your life what difficulties would you face?" Ask each member to make a commitment of an act of service to do that week and to share it with the others in their group. Ask them to pray for one another and to check on one another if possible during the week.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS IN STUDENT'S LESSON:

Answers to all questions are personal and will vary.

LESSON 5

THE TRIUMPHANT KING

VERSES: MATTHEW 21:1-22

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 12:1-16

MEMORY VERSE: "And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!'" (Matthew 21:9).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus' royal entry into Jerusalem and his cleansing of the temple declare him as Messiah.

In guerrilla warfare, the guerrillas live in hiding or disguise themselves as civilians until the war gets hotter. Then they come out as who they really are and directly confront their opponents.

Following the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus rejected the crowd's effort to make him king. (John 6:15) After Peter confessed him as the Son of God, Jesus instructed his disciples not to tell anyone his identity. (Matthew 16:16, 20) But as the time of his death drew near, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem became an acted parable of his kingship.

FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY: MATTHEW 21:1-7

Jesus was carrying out plans made by God in his royal entry into Jerusalem. In this dramatic act, Jesus asserted his messiahship as Israel's promised King of peace. The picture behind the drama comes from Zechariah 9:9. In fulfilling every detail of that passage, Jesus asked for an ass and a colt for his entry into Jerusalem.

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem reveals three things to us. First, he acted in courage, yet with meekness. He was entering a hostile city in a way that deliberately set every eye upon him, but he entered humbly and not as a powerful revolutionary. Second, it shows his claim as God's Messiah, the anointed one. Third, it shows his appeal. He was the King of peace, appealing to the rule of man's heart rather than an earthly throne.

Jesus' entry made it clear that he came in the way of peace without showing any desire for a forceful entry. Jesus comes to us in the same way. He desires that we open our hearts for a peaceful entry because he does not force his way into a person's life.

God had a plan for Jesus' life that required obedience without wavering. As Jesus walked in the plan God had for him, he fulfilled the prophecies made long ago.

THE RESPONSE OF THE MULTITUDE: MATTHEW 21:8-11

Jesus entered Jerusalem at a time when Jews came from all over the world to Jerusalem. Most of Jerusalem probably lived the day with 'business as usual'. Some of the crowd received him as their King. They spread their cloaks and branches in front of him and greeted him as a blessed one. (Psalms 118:26) The cry, "Hosanna," means "Save now!" For some, it had become a traditional greeting although it is a cry for help from a distressed people. We may wonder if any of

the people realized how distressed they were in their sin and the hope Jesus could bring to them. Some may have realized the identity of Jesus as their branches and cloaks became as a carpet for a king. (2 Kings 9:13)

However, when asked who Jesus was, their answer shows they only acknowledged him as a prophet. They identified Jesus with a half-truth, but they could not understand the fullness of his identity. Today many people hold half-truths about Jesus, i.e. he is a great teacher and a good man. Half-truths allow us to keep control of our own lives, still depending on ourselves. When we acknowledge Jesus as Saviour and King, we submit to him.

THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE: MATTHEW 21:12-13

The temple had become the worst kind of commercial monopoly and home for vested interests. There was every danger of shameless exploitation of the poor. It had also become a place of nationalism. Exploitation took place in the Gentile courts with the Gentiles as its object. The priests were to share the message of God in this area; instead they used it for their own gain.

Jesus' anger rose as he looked upon this scene. His anger was directed toward the exploiters and others who made it difficult for many to worship God. Jesus reflects to us the nature of God. God becomes indignant over the abuse of his house and his people. Injustice and a lack of concern for the spiritual well-being of others anger him. As Christians who walk by his Spirit, we should be angered by such things in our society today.

Some people say cleansing the temple was Jesus' supreme claim to his being the messiah. He dramatically asserted his authority over the temple thus exercising God's authority as his own.

THE RESPONSE OF THE CHIEF PRIESTS AND SCRIBES: MATTHEW 21:14-16

However much the crowds hailed Jesus, the authorities hated him and swore to eliminate him. Jesus' actions challenged the authorities to fulfil their evil desires.

If Jesus had claimed to be a prophet, it's most likely that he would not have died. But Jesus demands full recognition of himself. Men must acknowledge him asking or not receive him at all.

The authorities wanted Jesus to denounce the words of the children. Instead he spoke to them from Scripture confirming the truth of their words. The authorities wanted to maintain their religious stronghold. Does Jesus ever threatened anything that you have set up as a stronghold?

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. What reveals the identity of Jesus in this passage?
2. Why was Jesus angry in the temple?
3. What areas of your life or community would arouse God's anger?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 21:23-46

Tuesday: Matthew 22:1-14

Wednesday: Matthew 22:15-33

Thursday: Matthew 22:34-46
Friday: Matthew 23:1-22
Saturday: Matthew 23:23-39

Lesson 5 FOR FURTHER STUDY

During Passover time in Jerusalem the surrounding neighborhood was crowded with pilgrims. Jews from every corner of the world made their way to the greatest of their national festivals. So Jesus' appeal was not to a few inhabitants of Jerusalem but to all the Jews.

Jesus came as King but not as a political king according to popular expectations. Otherwise he undoubtedly would have ridden a magnificent horse. Yet the fact that he rode a donkey indicated both his royalty and meekness.

Jesus rode on a colt which no one else had ridden. According to Old Testament practice, only an animal that had not been used as a beast of burden was appropriate for sacred purposes. (Numbers 19:2; 1 Samuel 6:7) Riding the colt into Jerusalem demonstrated Jesus' peaceful intention and his kingship as God's chosen Messiah.

The crowd hailed him "Hosanna!" Although the term originally had more than a political connotation, later the plea for salvation or deliverance seemed to apply primarily to freedom from political enemies. In their situation, the desire naturally would have been freedom from the Romans.

Both the title "Son of David" and the phrase "he that cometh" have messianic implications. God had promised to leave a descendant of David on the throne of Judah. But because the kings that followed were not like David (a man after God's own heart), God gave them up to their enemies. The Jews held on to the promise that another anointed one of God would come to reign in righteousness and justice. (Psalms 45:6-7) Jesus did not deny the implications of what was said. (Matthew 21:16)

Jesus cast out all the commercial dealers from the temple. Actually, the temple personnel had taken over the outer court, the court of the Gentiles, and used it for commercial purposes. They made a personal profit by charging fees for exchanging money.

After Jesus had cleansed the temple, he healed the blind and lame and the children praised him. The guilty ones received Christ's wrath. Once the temple was cleansed, it was used for worthy purposes, meeting the needs of people and giving praise to God.

Lesson 5 TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to explain how Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and the cleansing of the temple declare him as Messiah and to describe an appropriate response to the Messiah.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask members to imagine they are viewing the scenes of a drama. The characters are as follows:

1. Jesus, determined, eyes set toward Jerusalem.

2. Jesus' disciples, hoping he would restore the kingdom at last.
3. The crowd, commoners, hoping for freedom from the Romans.
4. Children, giving praise from a sincere heart, not expecting anything for themselves.
5. The Jewish authorities, bitter, hating every detail of the drama.

Ask members to imagine themselves in one of these roles as you study the lesson together.

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. The Fulfillment of Prophecy: Matthew 21:1-7. Discuss how the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 was fulfilled that day and its meaning for the Jews.
2. The Response of the Multitude: Matthew 21:8-11. Explain the composition of the multitude. Discuss verse 8 in conjunction with 2 Kings 9:13.
3. Cleansing the Temple: Matthew 21:12-13. Point out: 1) What the outer courts were for; 2) Who was involved in the trade; 3) What this meant for the Gentile worshippers and pilgrims. Ask question 2 and 3.
4. The Response of the Chief Priests and Scribes: Matthew 21:14-16. When Jesus quoted Isaiah 56:7 he was exercising God's authority.

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask question 1. Encourage many responses. Ask: "What role do you think you would have had in this drama? What response is appropriate to Jesus from this passage?" Have a time of reflection on what it means to accept Jesus as he is, God and King. Have two or three members pray in view of their answer to question 3.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

- 1) Jesus fulfilled prophecy by riding on an ass and a colt; he cleansed the temple; he did not refute the children's claims; he healed many.
- 2) Jesus was angry because God's house was used for personal gain, for nationalism, for oppression of Gentiles, and not as a means to extend his grace.
- 3) Your personal answer

LESSON 6

JESUS CONFRONTS HIS ENEMIES

VERSES: MATTHEW 21:23 to 23:39

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 21:33-43; 23:13, 23, 25-28, 37

MEMORY VERSE: "Jesus said to them, 'Have you never read in the scriptures: "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes"?' (Matthew 21:42).

CENTRAL TRUTH: God rejects those who reject Jesus, his Son.

A farmer had two sons. "Son," he said to the first son, "Go to the fields and work today." The son replied, "I don't want to work today." But later he felt remorse for his answer and went and worked hard in the fields.

The farmer asked his second son to go and work. The second son said, "Yes, Father," but he knew he didn't want to work so he didn't go to the field.

Jesus told this parable to the chief priests and elders who opposed him. Then he asked, "Which of the two did the will of his father?..." (Matthew 21:31). Their answer was, "The first." Jesus used this parable to condemn them for their unbelief and to praise the sinners who repented and believed. Examine the message Jesus gave them in the next parable.

REJECTION OF THE SERVANTS: Matthew 21:33-36

Jesus told the parable of the vineyard to indicate official Judaism's rebellion against God's authority. The vineyard is the nation of Israel and its owner is God. The tenants are the religious leaders of Israel whom God had given charge for the welfare of the nation.

The vineyard reveals to us the graciousness God wants to give our lives. He also gives us freedom, including the freedom to refuse him.

The servants came to the vineyard. The tenants' response to the servants grieved God. For Israel these servants were the prophets.

Do we reject the Word of God in our lives and reject those whom he has sent to bring it to us?

REJECTION OF THE SON: Matthew 21:37-39

When the son came, the tenants killed him in hope of possessing the vineyard for themselves. The son is none other than Jesus himself. Jesus knew they would kill him, but he went willingly to his death. We see the deliberateness of human sin. The tenants deliberately killed the servants and the son. Many of us are guilty of doing things we know are wrong. That is sin.

When someone hears the message of salvation and rejects it, it is the same sin as killing the son.

THE OWNER'S REACTION: Matthew 21:40-41

In verse 41, not knowing the parable referred to them and their ancestors the Jewish leaders pronounced their own judgement. This would be the natural

reaction of any owner. In the story we see the patience of God. He sent messenger after messenger. He did not revenge immediately when his messengers were ill-treated and abused.

We also see God's judgement. God may judge us by removing from us the task which he meant for us to do. A man sinks to his lowest level when he has become useless to God.

God's desire for his vineyard appears in verse 41. He desires fruit from his vineyard. God graciously grants us entrance into his kingdom, but he desires that we faithfully fulfil his desire for that kingdom. We Christians may be the other tenants that he hopes will bring him good fruit. Let us faithfully do so.

THE HEAD OF THE CORNER: Matthew 21:42-43

Jesus quoted Psalms 118:22. Originally the psalmist referred to Israel as the rejected and despised nation. Now their leaders rejected and despised him, having no real knowledge of him.

The cornerstone is the foundation stone on which everything is built. Christ is the cornerstone which holds everything together. One day we may look at the rubble of our lives and realize that we missed building on the cornerstone. To refuse Jesus' control in our lives is to build on sand. On what are you building your life?

WOES TO THE UNFAITHFUL LEADERS: Matthew 23:13, 23, 25-28, 37 Scholars refer to Matthew 23:13-23 as the seven woes. They were addressed to the scribes and Pharisees who concentrated on the outward expression of the law, but their hearts lacked obedience and devotion to God. Jesus called them blind guides who refused to submit to God's spiritual reign and hindered others from doing so.

Jesus accused them of locking up the kingdom from others by making the law difficult and exclusive. Do we exclude others from Christ by making salvation too difficult?

Jesus expressed disdain for religious leaders emphasizing tiny matters while overlooking justice and mercy and faith. Our world despairs for Christians who will share Christ's message of justice, mercy and faith. Are we stuck on insignificant matters or do we provide for the greater way?

The last thing men and women seem to learn in matters of religion is a sense of eternal values. The tragedy is that so often the magnification of matters of no importance wreck the peace.

In verse 37 Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and her rejection of his love and desire to bring her into his kingdom.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. What does God expect from his vineyard?
2. Can you point at things in your own life that you know are not pleasing to God?
3. Are you trying God's patience by harboring secret sin? Or persisting in some known sin?

4. List some of the issues you know that have brought about divisions or misunderstandings in your church or among friends.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 24:1-14

Tuesday: Matthew 4:15-28

Wednesday: Matthew 24:29-35

Thursday: Matthew 24:36-44

Friday: Matthew 24:45-51

Saturday: Matthew 25:1-13

Lesson 6

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The grapevine was the symbol for Israel as a nation. (Isaiah 5:7) Jesus deliberately used a parable with which the Jews could identify.

In the parable we see that God has given man a privilege and a responsibility. He trusted men with his vineyard. God pays men compliments of entrusting them with work. Every task we receive is given to us by God.

God also provides the means to perform the task. The vineyard was equipped with everything. He also gave man freedom to do the task. God is no tyrannical taskmaster. He is like a wise commander who allocates a task and then trusts a man to do it. But man is answerable for the way he carries out the task God gives him. (Matthew 23:33-36)

In the time of Jesus, Palestine was a troubled place with little luxury. They were familiar with absentee landlords. The tenants then stayed on the land and paid rent to the owner periodically.

The country was experiencing economic unrest, the working people were discontented and rebellious so killing the son was quite possible. Jesus deliberately placed the son above the servants. Jesus is greater than the prophets.

All the Old Testament pictures of a stone are summed up in Jesus Christ. See Isaiah 28:16; Daniel 2:34, 44-45. Jesus is that rock on which those who reject him stumble and crash if they do not repent. To refuse him is to batter one's head against walls of the law of God. To deny him is to crush out life.

In later verses he repeatedly called the Jewish leaders hypocrites which means "actor" or "pretender". They strained to obscure the details of the law like tithing kitchen spices which grew in very small amounts but missed out on the basics of justice, mercy and faithfulness. They kept the trifles of the law and forgot the things which really mattered.

Jesus likened the Jewish leaders to a white-washed tomb. For a Jew to touch a dead body was unclean. (Numbers 19:16) To come in contact with a tomb automatically defiled a man. So Jews white-washed the graves near the roadside so pilgrims for the Passover might not unknowingly touch them. The glittering white graves almost looked lovely. The Jewish leaders looked righteous on the outside, but inside they were dead to spiritual things.

Lesson 6

TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to identify ways the Jewish leaders rejected God's Son and to examine their lives for evidences of rejection of Jesus' lordship.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask: "In what ways is the gospel opposed today?" Allow time for several responses. Say: "We will look at how the religious leaders rejected Jesus. As we do, examine your own life for any evidences of rejecting Jesus as Lord."

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. Rejection of the Servants: Matthew 21:33-36. Explain these verses and read Isaiah 5:7.

2. Rejection of the Son: Matthew 21:37-39. Discuss from the parable how Jesus foreknew his destiny. Point out that people are still rejecting Jesus by not submitting to his lordship. Explain what it means to submit to Jesus' lordship.

3. The Owners' Reaction: Matthew 21:40-41. From the lesson and For Further Study discuss God's patience and judgement on sinful man. Ask question 1. Have students share experiences of how they overcame an area of disobedience or else how they are struggling through the same.

4. The Head of the Corner: Matthew 21:42-43. Read Isaiah 28:16, Daniel 2:34, 44-45 and Psalms 118:22. Explain Jesus' claim to be that rock. Discuss how men today can stumble and even get crushed by the rock (Jesus).

5. Woes to the Unfaithful Leaders: Matthew 23:13, 23, 25-28, 37. Discuss why Jesus called the Jewish leaders hypocrites. Explain (from For Further Study) why Jesus likened the Jewish leaders to white-washed tombs. Ask members to illustrate from today's Christians how men can be like the Jewish leaders.

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask students to consider their response to questions 2 and 3. Challenge each one to write down how they can make a total commitment to submit to God in that area of their lives. Close in prayer.

ANSWER TO THE QUESTION:

1. God expects those in charge of the vineyard to produce good fruit for his kingdom.

2 and 3. Personal answers.

4. To this question answers will vary, but most of them will be non-basics. The basics are that Jesus lived, died, rose again and lives eternally. He will come again to judge and we need to trust in him for our salvation.

LESSON 7

JESUS' SECOND COMING

VERSES: MATTHEW 24:1-25:13

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 24:3-14, 29-31, 35-36, 42

MEMORY VERSE: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (Matthew 24:35-36).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christ's followers must always be ready for his second coming, because no one knows the day or hour it will be.

Imagine someone told you that you would take your first jump from a aeroplane using a parachute in forty-eight hours' time. What would you do? I imagine you would find out everything you could about a parachute jump - what to carry, what not to carry, etc. And apart from that you would have an obligation to strictly obey those instructions.

Sometimes the idea or thought of Christ's return is like that parachute jump. Christ's return is imminent and we ought to prepare for it. What did Jesus tell his followers about the second coming? What can we do to prepare ourselves for it?

THE DISCIPLES' QUESTION: Matthew 24:3

When the disciples left the temple with Jesus they came to point out the beauty, pomp and glory of the temple to him. Jesus had told them in no uncertain terms that the temple would be destroyed. The disciples, curious to know when this would happen, privately asked him. They also questioned Jesus about the signs of Christ's return and the close of the age.

We are often curious about future events, especially the second coming of Christ. Throughout history people have tried to name the day and hour. Several have ceased to work and only waited for that moment. How do you view the second coming of Christ?

SIGNS OF CHRIST'S RETURN: Matthew 24:4-12

Jesus' answer did not stop at the time of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem but went further into the future. He spoke of details concerning his second coming at the end of time. Christ did not give an answer regarding the exact time as asked in verse 3, but he answered the second question regarding the signs. This was not done to satisfy their curiosity but to warn them. Christ sought a commitment from them rather than speculation about the end. Christ foretold the coming of deceivers and false prophets. He said that many people would come claiming the name of Christ and that many others would follow them, leaving their devotion to the true Messiah.

Secondly Christ foretold that there would be wars and rumors of wars, but he tells the disciples to put their trust in God. "...See that you are not alarmed..." (verse 6) because these things will happen anyway. Then worse things will happen, like nations warring with one another and famines and earthquakes in various places.

He also foretold the persecution of his own people that would lead many people to fall away. He said this would happen through seducing by false prophets and the increase in persecution. And when the wickedness multiplies most men's love will grow cold. It is worthwhile noting that it is "most" not "all" because there will be people who will maintain their integrity, love and zeal.

When we look at the world today we see so many things happening. It becomes a temptation to believe we can predict the end, but Jesus explained more about that further in this passage.

A WITNESS TO ALL: Matthew 24:13-14

It is a great comfort to know that despite the difficult circumstances some will endure to the end and by their perseverance obtain eternal salvation. Christ foretold that the gospel would be preached in all the world. God desires that all people have the opportunity to hear the gospel and to choose eternal life.

CHRIST'S RETURN: Matthew 24:29-31

Christ foretold his second coming. An amazing change will take place in the heavenly bodies, and the powers of heaven will be shaken and made new. The entire world will take notice of it. Then the sign of the Son of man will appear, and all the tribes of the earth will mourn. Christ will come on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. What a contrast to his first coming which was in weakness! We will see the power and authority God has given him as the judge of all mankind. The angels who attend him will gather his elect, his faithful followers. When Jesus comes as the judge, do you know that you will stand with him in eternity?

BE READY: Matthew 24:35-36, 42 Christ assured the disciples that the events he foretold would surely come to pass but his words will not pass away. His Word is more lasting than heaven and earth. We cannot predict the time of the return of Christ because no one knows except God the Father. Jesus wanted his disciples and us to be aware of what will happen so we will always be alert and ready. This means more than only believing that the Lord will surely come back. It includes a desire for his return and to keep the thought of his coming alive in our minds. "Watching" includes the idea of wakefulness. We need to live our lives in Christ as people who are awake and ready at any moment for the return of our Lord. If Jesus came back at any moment would he find in you a ready and faithful servant?

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. Why did the disciples ask Jesus the question?
2. Make a list of the signs of Christ's return.
3. How can we be ready for Christ's return?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 25:14-18

Tuesday: Matthew 25:19-25

Wednesday: Matthew 25:26-30

Thursday: Matthew 25:31-36

Friday: Matthew 25:37-40

Saturday: Matthew 25:41-46

Lesson 7
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Christ's teachings were often practical as opposed to prophetic. In this lesson Jesus deals more with events of the end of the age, but concludes with a practical application. Christ spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jewish temple and the nation Israel. These events took place about forty years later in A.D. 70. The temple was a very important place in Jewish culture. The temple Jesus spoke of here was the third Jewish temple to stand on Mount Moriah in Jerusalem. The magnificence of the complex of buildings which constituted the temple amazed the disciples. The buildings were of white marble, decorated with gold, precious stones and rich tapestries. The temple was one of the wonders of the world.

The destruction of the temple represents the judgement of the Jews and their rejection of Jesus. However Christ looked further than the destruction of the temple to events concerning his second coming at the end of time. Whereas the destruction of the temple brought judgement on the Jews, Christ's second coming brings in the Last Judgement.

Jesus emphasized the importance of love in these verses. Although the nations will hate the followers of Christ, the greatest problem will come from within the community. Those who fall away will be in direct conflict with faithful believers. This was foretold in Daniel 11:41. The false prophets will appear and lead men into lawlessness. This lawlessness is not just a disregard of the Mosaic law, but disobedience of Christ's command that we love one another. This false doctrine will teach that practicing religion does not include an attitude of love. Many people will follow these false teachers. Those who will find salvation are those who cling to Christ's command of love, thus proclaiming his message to all nations. Love is the standard by which Christ will judge all people in the second coming.

Christ told his disciples to watch and be ready, meaning that it is the duty and interest of all disciples of Christ to be awake. Contrast this with being in a sinful state and therefore being asleep as seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:6.

The words of Christ, his teaching and the message of the gospel hold great power. We would be wise to take them seriously.

Lesson 7
TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to summarize Jesus' teaching about his second coming and to discuss how his second coming should affect their lives.

TEACHING AID: Collect various newspaper clippings or quotes from the news on radio that are in line with the prophecies Christ made e.g. earthquakes, famine, war, disease, wickedness, false messiahs.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask members to read out small portions of the newspaper clippings. Ask: "What do you think is happening to the world today? As we discuss this lesson, look for signs of Christ's return and think of ways you can be ready."

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. The Disciples' Question: Matthew 24:3. Ask students what example they can learn from the disciples in this verse. Ask question 1.
2. Signs of Christ's Return: Matthew 24:4-12. Ask students to name the signs of Christ's return and to discuss if these signs are witnessed today.
3. A Witness to All: Matthew 24:13-14. Discuss briefly the meaning of endurance in relation to verse 13. Discuss how the gospel can be spread in difficult times.
4. Christ's Return: Matthew 24:29-31. Read Matthew 24:25-27. Discuss the implications of 1) refusal to be misled; 2) attention to personal readiness for Christ's return; 3) endurance of persecution; 4) preaching of the gospel; 5) Christ's triumphal return in contrast to his humble birth.
5. Be Ready: Matthew 24:35-36, 42. Ask the students to give ways they can be ready for Christ's return. Explain the meaning of the idea "to watch" in the light of Matthew 24:37-39, 43-44.

APPLY THE LESSON: Emphasize Matthew 24:35 that Christ's words are more sure and lasting than heaven or earth, and therefore these things will come to pass if not already so. Why is it so difficult to "watch" today and be ready? Ask members to consider personally if they are ready for Christ's return today. Close in prayer.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus' response in Matthew 24:2 aroused the feeling in the disciples that something tremendous was about to happen.
2. 1) False Christs; 2) Many people deceived; 3) Wars, rumors of wars; 4) Famine; 5) Earth-quakes; 6) Sufferings; 7) Persecution; 8) Increase in wickedness; 9) Men's love growing cold; 10) The spread of the gospel throughout the world.
3. We should daily live in a way that if Christ came we would not be ashamed.

LESSON 8

THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

VERSES: MATTHEW 25:14-46

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 25:31-46

MEMORY VERSE: "And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'" (Matthew 25:40).

CENTRAL TRUTH: When Jesus comes again everyone will face a final judgment based on a genuine love for Christ expressed in action to others.

There was a rich man who decided one day to dine out in a nice hotel some distance from the city. However he found out he didn't have money on him after the meal. He received lots of insults and mistreatment from the headwaiter. Then he phoned his public relations officer. The officer arrived, paid the bill and told the rich man in the hearing of the headwaiter, "By the way, did you know that this is one of the hotels you own?" The waiter was embarrassed that he could not take back his insults.

Like this story, many people are nice and helpful to those with an established and well-known identity. In our passage, we find two kinds of people. Neither were aware of the identity of the one needing attention and service. But each responded with different attitudes and actions. As you study the passage contrast the attitudes and responses of the two groups. Think about your own attitudes and responses. THE SON OF MAN IN HIS GLORY: Matthew 25:31-33

In Matthew 24 Jesus told of his second coming. When he comes again, the Son of Man will come in his own proper honor. Angels will surround him when he sits on his glorious throne. All nations will stand before him, and he will separate them like sheep and goats in judgement. The sheep will be on his right and the goats on his left. The sheep represent those given to righteousness and the goats represent wickedness. How do you think God judges righteousness and wickedness?

THE INHERITANCE: Matthew 25:34

Those on the right hand will be blessed of the king's father. From the beginning of the world a kingdom was prepared for them to inherit. Blessed of the father means they are objects of God's blessing. The inheritance of the kingdom was not merited or earned! God gave it to them as a gift, a gift to those who truly become his children.

BASIS FOR THE INHERITANCE: Matthew 25:35-40

The righteous ones met the needs of the least of these. The sheep's response in the form of a question shows they acted out of kindness and compassion as a way of life without thought of the rank or status of the one receiving their love. What is your motivation for service? Are you kind and compassionate because you expect a reward? Do you have a genuine love for others?

THE CURSE: Matthew 25:41

Those on the left-hand were (a) to depart from Christ; (b) cursed; (c) to be thrown into the eternal fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels.

"Cursed" means devoted to destruction. Eternal fire means punishment of extreme suffering.

BASIS FOR THE CURSE: Matthew 25:42-45

Unlike the sheep, these people were heartless and cold toward the least of these. They exhibited a lack of Christian attitudes and character. Notice that they called Jesus, "Lord"! (Matthew 25:44)

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). Jesus will reject such people. In fact he called them evil doers. (Matthew 7:23) It is not enough to call Christ "Lord."

Perhaps these people would have treated Jesus with compassion. But they missed the whole message of his gospel. He clearly taught his followers that a genuine love for him shows itself in action to others. Christ's love expresses itself to everyone. If we say we love some but not others, than we do not love anyone with the love of Christ because his love is not selective.

THE FINAL DESTINY: Matthew 25:46

The righteous will go away into eternal life and the wicked will go into eternal punishment. The word, eternal, means without end. Here lies evidence for God's mercy as well as his justice. He is loving but that love does not override his justice. Do you know anybody who thinks that God is so good that he can't send people to hell? What would your answer be to such people?

Are you sure of your final destiny? So often we Christians judge others and treat them as outcasts. An example is the AIDS epidemic. Many Christians judge and shun those with AIDS as if they can never have a relationship with God. But people with AIDS are among the least of these. Will God judge them or will he judge us by how we treat them? What answer would you expect from this passage?

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. What is the significance of right hand, left hand?
2. What does "kingdom" mean?
3. Who are the least of these?
4. Does this passage suggest a salvation by works?
5. Who are the least of these in your community?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 26:1-5

Tuesday: Matthew 26:6-9

Wednesday: Matthew 26:10-16

Thursday: Matthew 26:17-19

Friday: Matthew 26:20-25

Saturday: Matthew 26:26-30

Lesson 8
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Matthew 25:14-46 contains two parables. The first one deals with talents. Three servants were given talents according to their varied abilities. When their master was going to a far country, he invested in them trust and responsibility for his goods. The first servant was given five talents, the next, two and the last, one. The first two were responsible and faithful. They both invested the money and doubled the amounts they were given. For this they earned praise and more responsibility.

The third servant feared the master. He was reluctant to invest the money and for that he was rebuked. Although he knew how tough the master was, he acted contrary to his knowledge. (Matthew 25:24, 25)

The parable teaches us to be faithful and utilize whatever abilities and resources God has given us. Punishment awaits us if we don't. Praise and honor await us if we do.

The second parable centers on the final judgement when Christ comes to judge the whole world.

Matthew uses the word, kingdom, to mean realm, reign, rule or royalty. "Naked" does not mean a person in a state of undress but anyone who was very poorly clothed. A stranger might also have been a traveller. In eastern countries where there were few or no public houses, it was a great virtue of hospitality to welcome a stranger. Jesus identifies himself with humanity. In this study, he passes as one as "the least of these."

The righteous were people who kindly received others and cared for them. It is usually easy to help the famous, the rich, the notables. It becomes much more difficult to deal with those who are considered insignificant and of low social levels. To help such would mean identifying with them. Many even shun the thought of helping such people. The king expects us to receive everyone without exception, especially "the least of these."

In the days of Isaiah, there were people who went through religious forms and symbols without moving on to the reality which these forms and symbols typified. Theirs was an empty and manipulative religion. (Isaiah 58:2-7) The righteous only performed religious acts calculated to be good or to gain God's pleasure.

Lesson 8
TEACHERS' GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to examine the basis for the final judgement and evaluate how this basis should affect their attitude and actions to others.

TEACHING AID: Paper and pencils for two groups.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Divide the class into two groups. Ask one group to define and write characteristics of wickedness by the standards of their Christian community. Ask the other group to do the same with righteousness. Ask each group to share. Say: "Let's discover the standard by which Christ will judge the righteous and the wicked."

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. The Son of Man in His Glory: Matthew 25:31-33. Give a brief summary. Ask question 1.
2. The Inheritance: Matthew 25:34. Ask question 2. Explain what it means when one says the inheritance is not merited or earned.
3. Basis for the Inheritance: Matthew 25:35-40. Ask question 3. Explain various key words in For Further Study. Ask question 4. Using James 2:14-26, explain how saving faith can be demonstrated.
4. The Curse: Matthew 25:41.
5. Basis for the Curse: Matthew 25:42-45. Stress the limitations of religious forms and actions without Christ's character and attitude (For Further Study).
6. Final Destiny: Matthew 25:46. Ask: "How can someone make their destiny certain?" (a) For hell, one just has to reject the gospel message through disobedience; (b) For heaven, one accepts the gospel message and obeys the Lord Jesus. This includes his command to love and care for others.

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask: "What are truths you have learned from this passage? What response did Christ desire of his hearers? What response does Christ desire in our community today?" Ask question 5. Ask members to visualize some act of obedience to this passage and to commit themselves now to a lifestyle of love and concern.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

- 1) The right hand was a place of honor and the left hand a place of rejection.
- 2) The kingdom is where the rule (reign) of God is found.
- 3) The least of these are the obscurest, poorest, most despised, afflicted, suffering and least recognized people.
- 4) Salvation is not by works, but the Bible clearly teaches that true faith finds an expression in care for others.

LESSON 9

THE LAST SUPPER

VERSES: MATTHEW 26:1-30

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 26:2, 14-19, 21-30

MEMORY VERSE: "...for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Christ instituted the Lord's Supper to remind us of his sacrificial death for us.

Whenever someone is about to leave the group he/she has been in, a farewell party is usually given. In schools they often have picnics whereas universities and other organizations have farewell parties. It reveals the friendliness and closeness that grew among them. These ceremonies reemphasize their commitment to each other despite imminent separation.

During the Last Supper, Jesus had more than a farewell party. His departure from his disciples would weaken their faith. The cross faced him. He must have wanted a very intimate and private fellowship with them before these events.

THE PASSOVER: Matthew 26:2

Two days before the Passover Jesus told his disciples that he would be crucified. Jesus always told the disciples what was to happen so they would not be taken unaware and to strengthen their faith in him.

According to Bible scholars the Jews ate the feast of the Passover on our Thursday evening (beginning of Jewish Friday). So Jesus must have given the warning on Tuesday of that week. Priests killed the Passover lambs on our Wednesday evening. The Passover feast was a celebration for all Jews.

Jesus spoke several times about his death and resurrection. (Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22; John 3:14; 14:28; Matthew 17:22-23; 20:18-19) When Jesus started his ministry as recorded in Luke 4:28-30 people tried to kill him, but it was not the will of the Father that he die at that time. At God's appointed time Jesus was ready to die. One of the disciples tried to defend him, but Jesus prevented him and willingly offered himself.

THE BETRAYER: Matthew 26:14-16

The chief priests and the elders of the people plotted in the palace of the high priest to secretly arrest and kill Jesus. Judas Iscariot offered to help them in return for payment. They agreed and paid him thirty pieces of silver. This is equivalent to the fine levied on an Israelite whose ox had accidentally killed a slave. Since that law was made the value had decreased by ninety per cent. What a low price and what evidence of Judas' greed!

The Jewish leaders knew Jesus was popular with the people. He met their spiritual and physical needs. Everywhere he went crowds followed and listened to him. Any harm that befell him would disappoint the people. Whoever appeared to inflict it would be condemned, and the Jewish leaders did not want to tarnish their superior image. During the Passover people gathered and were more united as they celebrated the feast. Provoking them to revolt at this time was more

dangerous than at other times. The Roman authorities would blame the Jewish leaders for inciting Jewish unrest and would even punish them for doing so. Therefore they plotted to arrest and possibly kill Jesus secretly.

Judas' offer to betray Jesus must have come as a great relief to them. Judas was a disciple and knew the habits of Jesus. Why Judas betrayed Jesus is not easy to ascertain. We are reminded of our need to hold fast to the grace of God so we can continue to stand and walk as children of God.

PREPARING A PLACE: Matthew 26:17-19

On the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples asked Jesus where he wished to celebrate the Passover. He clearly revealed that he had already planned it. He sent them to someone who would give them all the facilities they required.

In the same manner Jesus carefully prepared the place for the Last Supper, we should carefully prepare ourselves before we partake of the Lord's Supper in remembrance of him.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BETRAYAL: Matthew 26:21-25

As they were eating, Jesus announced that one of them would betray him. They were shocked and dismayed. Each wondered if he were the one. Then Judas asked whether he was the one. Jesus confirmed it, but the other disciples did not appear to hear Jesus' response. Jesus however pronounced woe to the betrayer, saying it would have been better if that man had not been born.

THE LAST SUPPER: Matthew 26:26-30

As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples. He offered it to them as a symbol of his body. Then he took a cup, gave thanks and gave it to them as a symbol of his blood in the covenant. The disciples shared in what Jesus was about to undertake. Jesus offered his body on the cross and offered his blood for the remission of sins.

Covenants were sealed with blood. Jesus would offer his own blood to usher in the new covenant. His body was the vessel, and it had to be broken. In his last meal with his disciples, Jesus revealed the meaning of his death. As we observe the Lord's Supper, we remember his sacrifice to redeem us from sin and death.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. What did Jesus say would happen to him during Passover?
2. Explain the role of Judas in the events of the Passover.
3. To what did Jesus compare the bread and drink during the Last Supper?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 26:31-35

Tuesday: Matthew 26:36-39

Wednesday: Matthew 26:40-43

Thursday: Matthew 26:44-46

Friday: Matthew 26:47-51

Saturday: Matthew 26:52-56

Lesson 9

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Passover was the annual feast that commemorated the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage in Moses' day. It marked the beginning of the religious year. At the meal, the Jews gave thanks, then ate the passover lamb. They also ate bitter herbs to remind them of their harsh life in Egypt. A son would ask the father to explain the meaning of the Passover feast. The father would explain the historic and spiritual significance of the meal. Every Jew was expected to celebrate this feast.

Jesus is likened to the Passover lamb in 1 Corinthians 5:7 and 1 Peter 1:19. Before the Passover feast Jesus told them of his imminent crucifixion. During the feast he led them to partake of bread and wine as his body and his blood. According to God's timing, Scripture reveals a parallel. The Jews were celebrating their deliverance, yet God was about to consummate a new and lasting redemption for them. The Passover had to be instituted each year, but Jesus was going to offer himself once and for all. Hebrews 8:1-7; 9:11-15 and 10:1-4 tell us Jesus came to offer an eternal redemption. We do not have to offer annual sacrifices to atone for our sins. We do have to have faith in his shed blood by which our sins are forgiven.

Why did Jesus choose Judas as one of his disciples? Did Judas have to betray Jesus to fulfil the Scriptures? There may not be a conclusive answer. However one thing is certain. God gave man a free will. Judas misused his free will. God's foreknowledge of events does not mean that he violates the free will of man. Jesus never stopped expressing love to Judas, giving him every opportunity to change his mind. Would Jesus have been arrested and killed if Judas changed his mind? Yes, because the Jewish leaders were determined to do so. Judas simply offered help.

During the trial of Jesus, crowds shouted for the crucifixion of Jesus. The Jewish leaders had spread enough propaganda and false accusations to justify his arrest and crucifixion. Judas was completely responsible for his deed. Jesus would have been crucified even if Judas had repented before the arrest. He could have repented after the arrest. He felt sorrow, but he lacked repentance and restoration.

Lesson 9

TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to examine the meaning of the Lord's Supper and to examine how closely their participation in the Lord's Supper reflects its true meaning.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask members to share ways people say farewell to someone. They may share from experiences they have had. Explain the Passover so as to denote the occasion for the Last Supper. (See For Further Study.)

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. The Passover: Matthew 26:2. Ask question 1. Note the fact that Jesus foretold his suffering, death and resurrection to his disciples. Ask: "Why did Jesus do this?"
2. The Betrayer: Matthew 26:14-16. Discuss why Judas betrayed Jesus. Ask: "In what ways can we betray Jesus?"

3. Preparing a Place: Matthew 26:17-19. Point out Jesus' foreknowledge of the place and desire for privacy. Stress that importance for Christians to have an appropriate place to meet God in prayer, fellowship and the Lord's Supper.

4. Announcement of Betrayal: Matthew 26:21-25. Ask members what their response would be if Jesus confronted them with such a statement. Refer to discussion of Judas in For Further Study.

5. The Last Supper: Matthew 26:26-30. Ask question 3. Ask: "What did Jesus mean by his body and his blood? Why do we partake of the Lord's Supper? Why do some people participate in the Lord's Supper and others do not?"

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask: "Have you ever felt you could not be forgiven?" Point out Christ's continuing love to the betrayer and his deep love for all the disciples. Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. Ask: "In what ways does one eat or drink of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?" Have a time of silent prayer for members to ask God to forgive them where they have partaken of the Lord's Supper without due regard and preparation.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

1. Jesus said he would be crucified.

2. Judas participated in the Passover meal with the other disciples, but Jesus knew his plan to betray him, which he later carried out.

3. The bread referred to his body and the drink to his blood.

LESSON 10

AGONY AND ARREST

VERSES: MATTHEW 26:31-56

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 26:31-35, 37-50

MEMORY VERSE: "And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt'" (Matthew 26:39).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus taught his believers by his example that intense prayer enables God's children to be obedient even to death.

Have you ever faced crucial examinations at the end of your educational career? Have you ever been separated physically from a loved one for a long period of time? Has a friend ever betrayed you by revealing your secrets through rumors? If you can answer yes to any of these then you may get a glimpse of what Jesus must have felt as he approached his last days on earth. As a human being he must have suffered much emotionally.

DENIAL WILL COME: Matthew 26:31-35

Jesus warned the disciples of their imminent fall away. He said they would abandon him. He tried to comfort them saying he would be raised and lead them to Galilee. Peter, as usual, spoke out and asserted his loyalty. Then Jesus told him that he would deny him three times before the cock crowed the next morning.

Peter pledged his life, and the other disciples did also. They had been with Jesus for nearly three years and they had learned to trust and depend on him. But out of his own lips their Master pronounced their lack of endurance. No wonder they hastened to make pledges. Do we often rush to make pledges and commitments purely on emotions and without weighing the consequences?

PARTNERS IN SORROW: Matthew 26:37-38

Jesus went with his disciples to Gethsemane because he wanted to pray. He told them to wait for him. He took with him Peter, John and James. He shared with them his emotional condition. He was burdened and full of sorrow for what he was about to undertake. He asked the three disciples to watch with him.

Jesus was about to leave his disciples. They would be sifted by the evil one, and this distressed their Master. In John 17 he prayed for them emphatically. Also he was soon to face the climax of his mission. The bodily suffering he would undertake was far greater than what he had suffered throughout his ministry years. He must have felt emotionally overwhelmed. He needed physical comfort and spiritual comfort.

Do you have close friends in whom you confide and with whom you pray? We must faithfully share together and pray for one another.

THY WILL BE DONE: Matthew 26:39

Jesus fell on his face in a posture of earnest prayer. He addressed his Father. He asked, like any human being, that he be exempted from the task ahead of him. However, he willingly laid aside his own desires to do the Father's will.

At the beginning of his ministry Jesus overcame temptation by the devil by quoting and affirming Scripture. Now he was faced with a tough decision. To avoid the cross was an option he could take. He overcame this temptation through intense prayer. He surrendered his will to God's will. Intense, persistent prayer enables us to remain obedient to God's will.

THE FLESH IS WEAK: Matthew 26:40-41

Jesus came and found the disciples asleep. They could not pray with him for even an hour. He admonished them saying they should pray lest they fall into temptation. He said the spirit was willing but the flesh was weak. Prayer would have strengthened them.

Perhaps the disciples were not sensitive enough to realize the urgency of the need to intercede. Perhaps they were not sensitive to the Spirit to receive help in their weakness. Whatever the case, Jesus' presence and constant reminder should have prompted them to be alert to pray with him.

Let us take heed to Jesus' warning and pray continually without excuse.

THE CONTINUING STRUGGLE: Matthew 26:42-46

Jesus went and prayed twice. Each time he addressed the Father and said if there was no other way it could be done then he was willing to do what God wanted. The salvation of mankind was at stake. Dying on the cross was the only way. Jesus knew it and accepted the agonies that accompanied death on the cross.

After praying the second time, he came and found the disciples asleep again. He did not wake them nor did he rebuke them. He simply left them and continued in his prayer. He came after the third prayer and simply woke them and noted their inclination to sleep rather than to pray. Jesus demonstrated forgiveness rather than condemnation for their weakness. He knew that one day they would be very strong people.

THE BETRAYAL: Matthew 26:47-50

Jesus told the disciples to be ready for the hour of betrayal and arrest was at hand. Judas and a crowd came into view with swords and clubs. Judas identified Jesus with a kiss, and a hypocritical greeting "Hail, Master!" Jesus called Judas "Friend," and then they arrested him. Jesus had prepared himself for the time ahead through hours of fervent prayer.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. What did Jesus warn Peter about?
2. Whom did Jesus call to accompany him to pray? Why?
3. What did Jesus tell the Father in prayer at Gethsemane?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 26:57-63

Tuesday: Matthew 26:64-68

Wednesday: Matthew 26:69-75

Thursday: Matthew 27:1-10

Friday: Matthew 27:11-23

Saturday: Matthew 27:24-31

Lesson 10
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Gethsemane means "oil press" and referred to the process of extracting oil from olives. The garden must have been for public use because Jesus did not seem to get permission to use it, which he often did. (John 18:2) Jesus told the other disciples to sit while he went to pray. He acknowledged their inadequacies but called on those who were close to him to not only accompany him but to watch and pray with him. Peter, James and John were also with him at the transfiguration and when he healed Jairus' daughter. (Matthew 17:1-4 and Luke 8:51) He must have sought their companionship and comfort.

Jesus' prayer emphasized three aspects. His human side desired to avoid the cross and all the agonies it brought. His heart's desire was to obey God's will whatever the cost. His ultimate decision was to do God's will since the salvation of mankind was at stake. God so loved us that he sent Jesus to redeem us from eternal death.

Judas Iscariot identified Jesus with utter hypocrisy. He greeted him with feigned affection and kissed him. At the Last Supper Jesus had not revealed Judas' intentions to others nor did he accuse him now. He called him a friend. This is agape love at work, reaching out to someone clearly in sin. The statements Jesus made to Judas, only to his hearing, are meant to expose and convict him so he could repent of his deeds. But he did not.

The Jewish leaders did not want to arrest Jesus in public. They knew he had a lot of support among the people. Judas played in their hands. He offered to take them to a place where they would arrest Jesus without any opposition.

Apart from the prophets, the rest of the people addressed God as God and Creator. But Jesus constantly addressed him as "Father." He acknowledged who he was to his disciples and the people gathered. If we know we are born again and have received the spirit of sonship then we need to call him "Father." If we do then our confidence and faith in him to fulfil his promises will grow. Jesus left us an example. In his humanity, he prayed to God intensely when faced with an immense task. He travailed till he got confidence in the answer. See also 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Acts 12:5; and Deuteronomy 9:18.

Lesson 10
TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to describe the agony and victory Jesus experienced in Gethsemane and to commit themselves to obedience in one specific task which God is calling them to accomplish.

TEACHING AID: Before class, ask two or three members to prepare a short testimony of a time they faced temptation or a struggle to obey and prayer gave them victory.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask the members with testimonies to share. Ask: "What is the greatest struggle you can imagine?" Describe to the members the emotions Jesus must have faced at this time.

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. Denial Will Come: Matthew 26:31-35. Ask question 1. Lead them into discussion of the effects of denial and premature pledges.

2. Partners in Sorrow: Matthew 26:37-38. Ask question 2. Relate the role of these three disciples from For Further Study. Challenge them to form share groups where they can encourage, support and pray for one another.

3. Thy Will Be Done: Matthew 26:39. Ask question 3. Discuss the words Jesus used in prayer. Ask: "Have you ever been faced with indecision in your prayer?" Let them share testimonies of how they agonized in prayer.

4. The Flesh Is Weak: Matthew 26:40-41. Ask why Christians do not often persevere in prayer. What can they do about this?

5. The Continuing Struggle: Matthew 26:42-46. Explain the struggle Jesus was going through at Gethsemane. Ask: "Have you ever felt a call on your life by God? What was your reaction?"

6. The Betrayal: Matthew 26:47-50. Judas betrayed Jesus, but Jesus continued to love him. Discuss what Christ's response to Judas teaches us.

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask for any prayer requests related to the content of this lesson. Lead a time of prayer, asking God to forgive any form of betrayal, and to ask for God's help to do God's will in their lives. Challenge them to commit themselves to more frequent and fervent prayer in the coming week.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

1. Jesus told Peter that he would deny him three times before the cock crowed.

2. Peter, John and James accompanied him to pray.

3. "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done."

LESSON 11

THE TRIAL

VERSES: MATTHEW 26:57 to 27:31

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 26:57, 63-66; 27:1-2, 11-14, 20-25

MEMORY VERSE: "But Jesus was silent. And the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God'" (Matthew 26:63).

CENTRAL TRUTH: In the face of evil and rejection, a righteous man's defense must rest totally on his confidence in and obedience to the supreme power, authority and purposes of God.

Gideon grew up with his father and step-mother. He lived with a half-brother born of a different wife. There was a typical African home of stepmothers and the like. One day, the stepmother discovered that the meat leftover after lunch had been eaten. To Gideon's surprise, the brother pinned the shame on him even though his brother knew Gideon was innocent. Gideon tried in vain to defend himself. That night Gideon was caned and denied supper. He was bitter and sought revenge. Perhaps you can identify with this story. In the trial of Jesus he faced false accusations that would lead to unjust punishment. Let's examine how he reacted.

ON TRIAL BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST: Matthew 26:57, 63-66

The Pharisees set up a trial before the high priest. They brought many witnesses or accusers because the law demanded that at least two witnesses come forward with the same charge. At last two witnesses came forward who could agree. Jesus was silent until he was put under oath. The words, "I adjure you by the living God," called on God to witness the truth of what was said. Silence in this case would mean denial of the messiahship. So Jesus answered. When he called himself the Christ, the Son of God, he made himself equal to God the Father. (John 10:31-36)

The chief priests, scribes and elders made Jesus guilty of a crime punishable by stoning to death. Jesus kept silent until silence would mean compromise to his Father-Son relationship. The tearing of a robe by the high priest was a sign of grief and judgment. They desired only to condemn Jesus to death.

We often rely on our ability with words to defend ourselves. Jesus only used words as they were necessary. His reactions came in obedience to the Father. That is the goal we should strive for in our speech and our defense of ourselves.

THE PLOT OF THE COUNCIL: Matthew 27:1-2

Why did the chief priests and elders of the council meet? There are two main reasons.

Formal sentencing did not occur until a day after someone was pronounced guilty. The meeting was possibly to find a way to violate this law. The Jewish leaders feared the reactions of the people. They wanted to hurriedly condemn Jesus before the Sabbath and before a revolt could be formed. The punishment for blasphemy was death by stoning. Stoning was illegal under the Roman rule, so

they possibly met to find a way to bring Jesus before the Roman ruler who could sentence him to death.

Is there evidence today of abusing the justice system for wrong motives? In what ways can believers avoid this in their own lives?

JESUS BEFORE PILATE: Matthew 27:11-14

Again Jesus answered just the one question that addressed the issue, ignoring non-issues. The chief priests and elders threw a lot of accusations at Jesus. He made no answer.

Many times people tried to frame Jesus. He used such occasions to teach through parables and stories, and to throw back challenges to those who opposed him.

But this time was different. It was no longer the time for teaching. It was the final show down. Only the issue at hand required a reply.

When faced with a difficult situation do you look for scapegoats? Do you major on non-issues?

RESPONSIBILITY FOR INNOCENT BLOOD: Matthew 27:20-25

The chief priests and elders used their great influence over the people to misdirect them to demand that Jesus be crucified. They did not even bother to name a charge. They only demanded the cross. They became so caught up in the situation that they willingly took the guilt of the death of Jesus on themselves and their children.

Pilate washed his hands denying responsibility for the killing of innocent blood. Deuteronomy 21:6-9 suggests that whoever did this did not know the guilty party to a crime. In this case Pilate was convinced that Jesus was innocent!

Pilate tried several ways to get out of crucifying Jesus and the responsibility for his position. He offered the choice of release between a known criminal and Jesus, but the crowd chose to free the criminal. He asked the crowd what he would do with Jesus. Surely, if he was convinced Jesus was guilty then this question was uncalled for. In desperation and cowardice, he washed his hands, declaring Christ innocent.

The crowd forsook obedience to God, and Pilate forsook obedience to justice. He knew that Jesus was innocent, but he bowed to pressure and abdicated his role of judge. He condemned Christ to death. Do you find yourself under the influence of a crowd and not having courage to follow God's way? We need to know God and follow him, especially reflecting his character of truth and justice.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. Somebody has said that people are sentenced for what they have done yet Jesus was sentenced for who he was. Discuss.
2. In what ways do you find yourself influenced by the church instead of God?
3. Was Pilate less responsible for Christ's death than the crowd? Why or why not?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 27:27-31
Tuesday: Matthew 27:32-38
Wednesday: Matthew 27:39-44
Thursday: Matthew 27:45-50
Friday: Matthew 27:51-56
Saturday: Matthew 27:57-61

Lesson 11 FOR FURTHER STUDY

Those present at the trial were the high priest, scribes, elders and chief priests. In fact, verse 59 says "...the whole council sought false testimony trial.

According to Jewish law, during the trial of a blasphemer, a witness would speak out plainly what he has heard. After he gave his testimony, the judges would stand up and rend their garments which would never be sewn up again.

The high priest placed Christ on oath under the living God. "Living" is the opposite of idols who are without life. (Isaiah 46:5-9) Blasphemy was attributing to oneself what belongs to God. The high priest, as president of the council, demanded the council's judgement.

This passage reveals much about Pilate's weakness in the decision making process as a leader: 1) By asking the question "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" he gave the power of judgement to people. This decision belonged to him! 2) He gave in to the Jews for personal reasons. Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing; (27:24) 3) He lost control of the situation because a riot was forming. As a leader he wasn't impartial as he was supposed to be because he looked for gain. He left the outcome of someone's life to the decision of incompetent people (an unruly crowd) and hence lost the control he was supposed to enforce.

The trial was a mistrial for several reasons: 1) Jewish law forbade a trial for life at night; 2) According to Pharisaic law, in a case involving the death penalty no hearing was allowed before a major feast like the Passover; 3) The law required a day between conviction and sentencing to allow for any clearances that might arise.

The Jewish leaders meant to eliminate opposition to their established order. God, in his sovereignty, allowed this to happen for good for those who would later believe in him.

Judas tried to return the money but couldn't. He threw down the tainted money. It couldn't enter the temple treasury so it was used to buy a field in which to bury Gentiles. God even used this as a way to provide for the Gentiles.

Lesson 11 TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to examine Jesus' response in the face of evil and to identify situations in which they face evil and how they should respond. BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask one member to read the story in the introduction. Ask for two volunteers who may have related stories to share. After sharing, say: "As we study this lesson, look for ways in which Christ responded to evil and how he would want us to respond in unjust situations."

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. On Trial Before the High Priest: Matthew 26:57, 63-66. Ask question 1.
2. The Plot of the Council: Matthew 27:1-2. Ask: "Why did the council meet at night?" Explain the obstacles they faced and what they hoped to accomplish. Point out that many people think they are defending God when they are only defending themselves. Relate this to the action of the Sanhedrin.
3. Jesus Before Pilate: Matthew 27:11-14.
4. Responsibility for Innocent Blood: Matthew 27:20-25. Ask question 2. Ask: "How did Pilate show a lack of courage and leadership." Ask question 4.

APPLY THE LESSON: Ask: "Who are the people who condemned Christ?" These were the religious people of the day. They defended their religion to the point of lying and killing for it! Do you think God is unable to defend himself? Are you so religious that you can sin for your religion? No one stood beside Jesus. But God was unfolding his perfect plan through it all. That is why Jesus could remain silent. Do you depend on others in times of adversity or on God?

Christ did not indulge himself in non-issues. He only spoke out to what mattered. Do you fear silence? Do you leave God to speak out for you, or do you depend on your words? Try spending a day without defending yourself. Is it easy?

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

- 1) Jesus was no criminal. He died because he truthfully claimed to be the Son of God.
- 2) Various answers: It is easy to follow church leaders without thinking because we respect them. Daily fellowship with God and his Word will give individuals wisdom.
- 3) Pilate and the crowd were guilty for the death of Jesus. The crowd claimed responsibility; Pilate was guilty by his lack of responsibility.

LESSON 12

THE CRUCIFIXION

VERSES: MATTHEW 27:32-61

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 27:33-37, 39-43, 46, 50-51, 54, 57-60

MEMORY VERSE: "When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe, and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:54).

CENTRAL TRUTH: In his crucifixion Jesus willingly suffered rejection, abuse, and death to provide redemption.

Public executions have been common in Africa, especially in countries governed by the military. The victims are usually insurgents, robbers and common criminals. Often international organizations protest these executions. Usually after a few years, nobody is bothered about them.

A significant public execution occurred two thousand years ago. Unlike our contemporary executions, this death and burial are remembered. What made this execution so significant?

THE CRUCIFIXION: Matthew 27:33-37

The crucifixion of Jesus took place at Golgotha, a hill shaped like a skull. Jesus was offered wine which he tasted but would not drink for he accepted the pain of death. Those who crucified him divided up his garments by casting lots. The reason for his crucifixion was hung over his head. It read, "This is Jesus, King of the Jews." This represented the Roman charge. Nothing was said of his blasphemy. Christ did not have an easy way in providing redemption for you. Do you hope for easy Christianity? Do you carry your cross daily and follow him?

THE ABUSE FROM THE CROWD: Matthew 27:39-43

Passers-by derided Jesus. Chief priests, scribes and elders mocked him. The abuse was a mixture of truth and error. They challenged him to save himself and thus prove to be the Son of God! There was even a trap. If he came down from the cross, they would believe in him! The crowd had assumed God would reject him as well. Indeed Jesus trusted in God but obeyed even to death on the cross.

Some believe that experience should explain truth. If this miracle or that would happen maybe men will come to Christ. That is deceit. Truth should explain experience. The truth is that Jesus is Son of God. We don't need miracles or spectacular healings and action to know the truth. Do you always look for the extraordinary in your Christian walk? Do you test God by trying to manipulate him into answering your prayer?

THE CRY OF JESUS: Matthew 27:46

At about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" We see the humanity of Christ, even in his crucifixion. There are people who argue that Christ led the kind of vigorous life he did because he was God! He was God, but as man he would get tired, go hungry or feel sorrow for dead loved ones. He was truly human. He became a human being not only to die for one's sins but he also participated in our sorrows. (Isaiah 53:3)

Do you think there is any pain you experience that Christ does not understand? Jesus feels with you. He is accustomed to suffering.

THE DEATH OF JESUS: Matthew 27:50-51,54

Jesus died when he gave up his spirit. A lot of power was displayed. The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks were split, there was an earthquake. Those who saw what happened remarked that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Jesus in his death conquered the power of sin in our lives. He was the perfect lamb of sacrifice. What people need to do now is call upon him for salvation. Today, man needs no mediators because the curtain was torn in two. Man can go into the very presence of God.

What does the death of Christ mean for you? Are you an intercessor? Do you wait for others to pray for you? There are those who are only satisfied with calling Jesus a hero, like the centurion, and nothing more. Who is Jesus to you?

THE BURIAL OF JESUS: Matthew 27:57-60

Jesus was buried in the evening. Joseph of Arimathea, a secret disciple of Jesus, asked for Jesus' body. In doing so, he boldly revealed his allegiance. The body was wrapped in clean linen, a rabbinical custom. He was laid in a new tomb carved out of rock. A great stone was used as a door. Joseph was prominent and wealthy. Some people think that Christianity is for the insignificant, the lowly, the poor. In this passage we see that Christianity embraces all people of all levels of education, wealth and prominence in society. Some people think Jesus never died! But the fact that Pilate ordered his body given away meant that he had ascertained that Jesus was dead. His dead body was wrapped up and buried.

Everything happened as Jesus had foretold. The disciples failed to remember his promise of resurrection. They all deserted him in fear because their leader was dead!

We need to trust the promises of God even when the present circumstances are discouraging. God's promises are always true. Jesus would return from the grave.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. Why has the cross become a significant symbol of Christianity?
2. Why do you think Jesus ignored the repeated challenges to save himself, a thing we know he could have done?
3. Do you think if Jesus had saved himself that particular time these people would believe in him? Give biblical evidence for your answer.
4. What are the benefits of Christ's death?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: Matthew 27:62-66

Tuesday: Matthew 28:1-4

Wednesday: Matthew 28:5-10

Thursday: Matthew 28:11-15

Friday: Matthew 28:16-20

Saturday: Matthew 28:1-20

Lesson 12
FOR FURTHER STUDY

Jesus had undergone scourging and mocking throughout most of the night and was physically tired. He was supposed to carry his cross. It was customary for condemned men to carry the crossbeam since the upright beam was already waiting at the scene of crucifixion. Simon was forced to help the exhausted Jesus. The charge naming the reason for the crucifixion was hung around the neck of the victim or carried by an officer in front of the procession. Then it was hung on the cross.

Certain ladies, as an act of mercy, drugged wine for those crucified. This was to deaden the pain. The outer cloak was more valuable than the other garments. It is probable that this was the one they cast lots over. Customarily the garments became the property of the executioners. A centurion was an officer over a hundred soldiers.

Jesus cried and yielded up his spirit as a voluntary action. There were two curtains in the temple, one before the holy place and the second covered the holy of holies. Only the high priest went into the holy of holies to offer sacrifices for the sins of the nation once a year. It was probably the second curtain which was torn into two. With the death of Jesus, free access to God became available to all men.

In the background passage (Matthew 27:55, 56), we are told that many women were present. Apparently the men who followed Christ were absent. Women were considered low in public position. In this particular incident, they were considered as no threat to the crucifiers. In his death, Christ gave women position in society.

Jesus of Arimathea asked for the body of Jesus. Joseph was rich and Mark 15:43 indicates he was a respected member of the Council, possibly the Sanhedrin. Being influential and wealthy may have given Joseph access to Pilate with little risk. Delivering a body to a responsible friend other than a relative was permissible, under Roman rule, if a proper request was made by such a person.

Jesus was placed in a new tomb probably carved out of a cave. The "great stone" acting as a door for the tomb would have been flat and circular for it to be rolled across the tomb.

Crucifixion was a form of capital punishment by the Romans, never prescribed for Roman citizens. Robbery, seditious acts and revolts were usually the crimes in Palestine punished this way.

Lesson 12
TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to explain the events around Jesus' death and to interpret the meaning of the crucifixion for life today.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask: "Whose death has affected you and in what ways?" Let people give answers. Family members are affected most immediately. Some friends and neighbors will feel the effects of a death. A prominent man's death, like a minister or president, affects a wider scope of people! Today we study the death of one man that affects all walks of life worldwide.

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. The Crucifixion: Matthew 27:33-37. Discuss the events that led to this moment. Ask question 1.
2. Abuse from the Crowd: Matthew 27:39-43. Ask question 2. Lead a discussion on the basis of Matthew 4:3-6. Ask question 3.
3. The Cry of Jesus: Matthew 27:46. Ask members to share verses in the gospels that show that Jesus was indeed human.
4. The Death of Jesus: Matthew 27:50-51, 54. Ask question 3. After people have identified the benefits, ask: "How can people enjoy these?"

APPLY THE LESSON: Read Isaiah 53. Ask: "In what ways have you experienced the benefits that we should have from Christ's suffering revealed in this passage?" Ask: "How can you encourage the rest of the world to reap these benefits?" Encourage members to make a commitment to living the benefits of the crucifixion and helping others to do so. Pray together.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

1. The cross reminds us of the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins and that he died to rise again.
2. He was committed to die in obedience to God.
3. Maybe some would have made a decision for him (See John 20:31.), but throughout the gospels many people witnessed Christ's miracles. Only a few believed in him by just seeing these miracles. Miracles do not guarantee belief.
4. The benefits of Christ's death include redemption of mankind from the bondage of sin, open communion with God, eternal life and a new worth for women and Gentiles.

LESSON 13

HE IS ALIVE!

VERSES: MATTHEW 27:62 to 28:20

VERSES TO STUDY: MATTHEW 27:63-66; 28:2-10, 16-20

MEMORY VERSE: "He is not here; for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. Lo, I have told you" (Matthew 28:6-7).

CENTRAL TRUTH: Jesus rose from the grave to conquer death and to give his followers a mission and a hope.

"Jesus is alive!" The dreaded darkness of grief had ended. The teachings of Jesus which had seemed so unclear suddenly became clear. The resurrection of Jesus gave Jesus' followers a future and a hope. The power of the resurrection was not for that time only. The power of the resurrection lives on today and into eternity.

"Jesus is alive!" That statement has vast implications for the Christian faith and all people. It distinguishes Christianity from all other faiths because all other founders or teachers or prophets are in their graves, but with Jesus we have an empty grave. As you read this lesson look for the implications of the resurrection for your life.

THE GUARDED TOMB: Matthew 27:63-66

The day following Jesus' death the chief priests went to Pilate and made a request. They remembered that Jesus had said that he would be killed and rise up after three days. They still refused to believe in him and would take all precautions to see that, finally dead, he would remain in the tomb. They asked Pilate for an order to secure the tomb, to prevent the disciples from stealing his body. They could see that if the resurrection took place as he really said then many would acknowledge his claims. They did not believe his resurrection was possible, but they believed his disciples would create a lie by taking away the body.

Pilate gave soldiers to the religious leaders and told them to secure the tomb the best they knew how. They went and sealed the tomb, leaving the Roman soldiers to guard it.

THE OPEN TOMB: Matthew 28:2-4 There was a violent earthquake because an angel of God came from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb. He then sat on it, demonstrating the power of God to remove any obstacles. The tomb could no longer hold Jesus because he was no longer dead.

The appearance of the angel was like lightning, clothes white as snow. The appearance of angels whenever mentioned is always accompanied by unexplained splendor, which in this case struck great fear in the guards. They shook and became as dead men.

HE HAS RISEN: Matthew 28:5-20

When the women came early in the morning to anoint the body of Jesus, they found the angel at the tomb. These women were very close to Jesus and their devotion had not wavered. They did not expect to find an angel reassuring them with the news of the risen Lord and even showing them the place where he lay.

The angel reiterated the words of their Lord. Jesus has risen from the dead. They were to go quickly and tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee as he had said. Imagine the awe and joy that ran through their beings as they departed quickly with the wonderful news.

As they were going with this burning news they met the risen Lord. They immediately fell down at his feet and worshipped him. Jesus reassured and instructed them to go to the disciples with the message and meet him in Galilee. So Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James were the first to see the empty tomb and the risen Lord.

A MISSION AND A PROMISE: Matthew 28:16-20

The disciples went to Galilee to the place directed to them by Jesus, obeying his instructions. There was division within them to accept the fact of his resurrection, some acknowledged his authority and worshipped him. But some, even after seeing him, still doubted. Seeing Jesus does not always guarantee that people will worship him as Lord.

For those who believe in Jesus as the resurrected Lord, the task has only begun. Belief marks the beginning, not the end. Jesus gave his disciples a commandment now known as The Great Commission. He based his commands on the authority he had in heaven and on earth. He instructed his disciples to 1) make disciples of all nations; 2) baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; 3) teach them obedience to all his teaching.

The task was big, to all nations, all mankind, but he who sent them had conquered the grave and death. He sent them in his power and authority and with the promise of his continual presence to the end of time.

These promises hold true for us; they are for all time. Often we do none or part of the task Christ has commanded us to do and then we wonder why we do not experience joy in our salvation. If we do not obey and rely on his power, we will never know the depths of his presence. We need to diligently obey, not only sharing the message, but sharing the fullness of his teaching.

QUESTIONS TO ANSWER:

1. Why did the religious leaders seal and put a guard at the tomb?
2. In your own words what was Jesus' commission to the disciples?
3. What assurance did they have to accomplish the task?

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON: Read:

Monday: 2 Samuel 1:1-10

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 1:11-16

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 1:17-27

Thursday: 2 Samuel 2:1-11

Friday: 2 Samuel 2:12-23

Saturday: 2 Samuel 2:24-32

Lesson 13
FOR FURTHER STUDY

The resurrection has been attacked and refuted right from the time that it happened. When the Jewish leaders heard the news they made the guards fabricate a story. The guards were actually at great risk. The result of sleeping on the job was punishment by death. Many would realize the folly of their story. Jesus appeared alive to many who saw him, talked with him and touched him. In John's gospel chapter 21, he even ate with them to really show that it was a bodily resurrection and not a spiritual one as some have suggested.

We see not only a resurrected body but also all his deity and authority restored - the very God himself. He issued the commission in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Note three names which are one and the same, the concept of three in one and one in three. It teaches us:

1. The divinity of Christ, for no mere man can insert his name between those of the Father and the Holy Spirit;
2. The unity of the Godhead, for one 'name' or divine nature belongs to the three;
3. The trinity of persons, for since the former two are distinct personalities so also is the third.

There is an argument against infant baptism drawn from this passage. Infants cannot be 'taught' and therefore should not be baptized. If they were baptized, then possibly this could mean that the apostles would make disciples of all nations by baptizing them. This would be quite familiar to Jewish hearers who commonly had infant disciples or proselytes.

In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul devotes chapter 15 to the discussion and proof of the resurrection. He states that denial of the resurrection of Christ logically involves the complete overthrow of the whole Christian faith. The resurrection alone gives an adequate motive for running the risk of death in Christian work and for abstaining from a life of self-indulgence. One of the great proofs of the resurrection is the result of it in the lives of Jesus' disciples. Few people would suffer torture and death for a known lie. At least one of them would make it known that it was a lie just to save himself. But the men who saw the risen Lord faced persecution and death because they knew the truth and the power of this fact: Jesus is indeed alive!

Lesson 13
TEACHER'S GUIDE

AIM: To lead members to discuss the power and hope of the resurrection and to name one way they can respond to the command of the resurrected Christ in the next week.

BEGIN THE LESSON: Ask: "How do you feel when someone you love dies? What feelings does a grave arouse in you?" Many people experience their deepest grief when the body of someone they love enters the grave. It emphasizes the finality and separation of death. That is the mood that faces us at the beginning of this lesson. But that mood was soon to change.

STUDY THE BIBLE:

1. The Guarded Tomb: Matthew 27:63-66. Ask question 1. Point out from For Further Study the risk to the guards for not guarding properly.

2. The Open Tomb: Matthew 28:2-4. Ask: "How did God intervene in the resurrection? How does this event distinguish Christianity from all other religions?"

3. He Has Risen: Matthew 28:5-10. Ask: "What was the reaction of the different groups of people? What would have been your reaction?"

4. A Mission and a Promise: Matthew 28:16-20. Ask question 2. What does it mean in each of our lives today? Let each explain.

APPLY THE LESSON: How does the resurrection of Christ affect your life? What does it mean to those who believe in him? Point out that the resurrection demands a response. The positive response must be one of complete obedience to all his commands. Let each one in the group think of one specific way of obedience to the great commission this coming week. Close in prayer.

ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS:

1. They guarded the tomb to prevent the disciples from stealing the body and lying about the resurrection.

2. Individual responses including making disciples, baptizing them, teaching them and the promise of his presence.

3. The presence of God would be with them always.