

DAILY *manna*



GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

Daily devotions for reading through the Bible

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

Blessed New Year!

Welcome to the third two-year cycle of *Daily Manna*. By God's grace, the *Daily Manna* has been kept going for the last four years. We have gone through an overview of the whole Bible in the first two years and an overview of the Old Testament in the last two years. God willing, over the next two years, we will go through the New Testament. So, as the years go by, we will be delving deeper and deeper into the Word of God.

For those who are new, we welcome you aboard. By following the daily scripture readings assigned in the *Daily Manna*, you will cover the whole Bible in two years. So, please do not just read the exhortation; it is far more important that you read the Bible. It is our prayer that reading through the Bible with the accompaniment of the *Daily Manna* will help you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A note to new Daily Manna readers

In this book, you will find a reading plan that will guide you through reading the Bible in two years. You will also find a simple exposition based on the reading of the day. From the day's Bible passages, *Daily Manna* highlights biblical principles which may be applied in the Christian's daily living. We pray that the *Daily Manna* readings will make your reading through the Bible a more meaningful experience. Over the next two years, our focus will be on the New Testament with the aim of giving you a more in-depth study of the NT books.

A step-by-step approach

1. Read the day's Bible chapters assigned in *Daily Manna*.
2. Review the Bible chapters to get an overview of what you have just read.
3. Read the accompanying devotions in *Daily Manna* and reflect on the lessons learnt.
4. Pray and ask God to help you apply His Word to your life.

Yours in Christ,
Pastor Isaac Ong
Calvary B-P Church

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 1

LESSON

Rich heritage

VERSE 25

*And knew her not till she
had brought forth her
firstborn son: and he called
his name Jesus.*

The first chapter of Matthew is not dull reading as some may think. God records the genealogy of Jesus for Christians because it is important to know our spiritual roots. Matthew records the genealogy from the side of Joseph.

There are three general sections in Jewish history. The first is from the time of Abraham to David (the greatest king of Israel), the second is from Solomon to the Babylonian exile and the third is from that time to Jesus, our Saviour and that of all mankind.

Also noteworthy is that four women are included in the account. They are Tamar (an adulteress), Ruth (a Moabitess and not a Jewess), Rahab (a harlot) and Bathsheba (the wife of Uriah, who was wrongfully taken by David). Nobody is perfect. What is important is that we know this and come to God in repentance. God can use any repentant soul for His glory.

Matthew states very clearly that Mary is a virgin. It is very important for us to know that Jesus is to be born as a man and yet sinless. Jesus cannot be conceived in the normal human way. He is special in that His birth has to be through a virgin. It has been prophesied in the Old Testament [Isaiah 7:14]. Joseph is not the biological father of Jesus, only the human legal father. Scripture makes special mention that Jesus is the firstborn of Mary.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS I
MATTHEW I

THOUGHT

Therefore the LORD Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. – Isaiah 7:14

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 2

LESSON

God in charge

VERSE 11

And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

God fulfils every word that He says and is never frustrated by those opposing His plan by whatever means. God is Almighty.

Herod, a human king, felt threatened when he heard of the birth of Jesus. He feared that Jesus would take over his kingship. His finite human mind had limited Jesus to that level! Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is certainly not going to vie with a little king like Herod, whom the world has already forgotten. Herod summoned wise men to lead him to Jesus “so that he can worship him”. This was a lie. Herod wanted to kill Jesus when He was still a baby.

The wise men followed a bright shining star, which led them to where Jesus lay—in a manger. They brought three gifts (gold, frankincense and myrrh) and for this reason we often assume that there were only three wise men who visited Jesus. In actual fact, the Scripture is silent on the actual number of visitors that night.

God is perfect and so are all His plans. God never does anything without a plan. He plans for man’s salvation because He loves us although each and every one of us is a sinner. Yet, the only way to save us is to have a sinless Person die for all as a sacrifice. Since all of us are sinners, no one is fit to be this Chosen One. For this reason, Jesus had to die for us. He is sinless because He is God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 2
MATTHEW 2

THOUGHT

I, even I, am the LORD; and beside Me there is no saviour. – Isaiah 43:11

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 3

LESSON

Repent and be saved

VERSE 2

*And saying, Repent ye: for
the kingdom of heaven is at
hand.*

Matthew introduces John the Baptist, who had been chosen to fulfil the prophecy by Malachi, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me [Malachi 3:1a]. John himself made it very clear that he was a messenger for Jesus. He called for people to repent.

Two groups of Jewish leaders were present on that day—the Pharisees and the Sadducees, the two main religious sects during the time of Jesus. They came to John for baptism either out of curiosity or as a public display of piety. John called them vipers because they had not repented. For this reason, John reiterated the need for repentance.

Baptism follows the repentance of sin and the belief that Jesus is our Lord and Saviour. However, Jesus is God and thus He need not repent because He is sinless. Probably due to an awareness of his own unworthiness, John was at first hesitant to baptise Jesus. However, our Lord insisted so that He might “fulfil all righteousness” [v. 15]—God the Son obeying and fulfilling the will of God the Father.

Jesus was thus baptised, which marked the beginning of His public ministry. From then on, whatever our Lord Jesus did in His public ministry, His suffering, His death on the Cross and His resurrection, are in accordance to God’s salvation plan. Jesus willingly died for our sins to redeem us, and He rose again, giving us the assurance that anyone who believes in Him will have eternal life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 3
MATTHEW 3

THOUGHT

The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. – Psalm 34:18

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 4:1–16

LESSON

The living Word

VERSE 4

*But he answered and said,
It is written, Man shall not
live by bread alone, but by
every word that proceedeth
out of the mouth of God.*

Jesus is a man, like any of us, with feelings of physical pain, hunger and other emotions. After 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, the devil was given permission to tempt Jesus. The first test of temptation was a physical test of the flesh. It is easy to tempt a hungry man with food. However, Jesus rebuked the devil, saying that man should not live by bread alone but by every word of God. The only guarantee for eternal life is from the Word of God (Jesus Himself).

The second temptation was a spiritual test. The devil tried to provoke Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple to prove that He is God, as angels would protect Him. Obviously, angels would be at Jesus' command but there was no need to show off.

The final temptation was a test of the will. Satan promised Jesus that He could have the whole world if He would only worship the devil. Man would have lusted for this rich position. But Jesus quoted from Scripture to refute the devil, at the same time reminding us, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve" [v. 10b].

Adam and Eve were tempted in the Garden of Eden but failed the test. Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, yet He passed. We must remember that Jesus is also God—He cannot sin. Every time Jesus was tempted, He quoted from Scripture. The Word of God has the answers to all our issues. Do not be ignorant of what is recorded for us in the Bible.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 4
MATTHEW 4:1–16

THOUGHT

For as by one man's (Adam) disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (Jesus) shall many be made righteous. – Romans 5:19

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 4:17–25

LESSON

Follow Jesus

VERSE 19

*And he saith unto them,
Follow me, and I will make
you fishers of men.*

Jesus moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, which was located near the Sea of Galilee. From here, Matthew introduces the preaching of Jesus. The people sat in darkness but they saw the great light. This great light is Jesus Christ. The message is clear and simple, yet forceful: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” [v. 17].

This message has not changed and has to be preached throughout the ages. Jesus did not look for workers and followers in the palace nor in the school of higher learning. He went to the seaside and found His disciples, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John. In obedience, they followed Jesus, Who promised them that they would henceforth become fishers of men. Any willing follower would be made a fisher of men.

The qualification is not from an academic chase but from the heart. Jesus is not looking for perfect but obedient men. There is no perfect man. However, we should strive to be the obedient man submitting to the will of God and to be prepared to do His work for His glory.

Jesus preached the gospel of salvation and He also healed those who were sick. Jesus is the Great Physician. That said, those who are healed of physical sicknesses eventually will still die, whereas those who are healed spiritually will never die. To be cured of our spiritual sickness, we only have to trust Jesus as our Saviour. This message has not changed. We still preach this same Gospel today.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 5
MATTHEW 4:17–25

THOUGHT

**... but as for me and my house, we will serve the
LORD. – Joshua 24:15**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 5:1–19***LESSON****Looking beyond the surface of our lives****VERSE 8**

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Purity is important when it comes to the cleanliness of the water we drink and the food we eat. However, purity seems less important in the area of morality and lifestyle. Jesus spoke of purity of the heart—a deep cleansing from all that is unholy in our lives. It is a total transformation; it is the kind of cleansing to “create in me a clean heart”. A pure individual is one fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.

In Matthew 23:25, we read that Jesus wants the inside of the cup to be as clean as the outside. In the same way, Jesus wants us to be as clean on the inside as we appear to be on the outside. We maintain our purity by incorporating in our lives an attitude of purity, which is an internal attitude, not an external action.

If our level of Christianity only rises to the level of doing the visible things as a believer, we will always do what looks good, criticise others who do not, and silence those who show us our shallowness. What is in the inside will make it to the outside! Do not whine about your spiritual life if you do not put time into your spiritual walk. God looks at our hearts. Hearts uncommitted to God will never see Him as He should be seen.

God wants us to be the church He has envisioned when Jesus died for us—a worshipping, loving, giving, testifying, praying body of believers who guard our hearts against all evil and live with the singular desire of glorifying God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 6
MATTHEW 5:1–19

THOUGHT

Only the pure in heart is really able to encounter God.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 5:20–48

LESSON

Going the second mile

VERSE 41

*And whosoever shall
compel thee to go a mile, go
with him twain.*

Just about a decade before the birth of Jesus, the Roman Senate passed a law that read, “In any conquered province within the Roman Empire, soldiers may compel able-bodied men to bear their burden one mile, but no more.” A Roman mile was 1.3 kilometres. Can you imagine how the Jews felt when Jesus said, “Go the second mile”? In essence, Jesus was saying that they needed to do more than the legalists, who did no more than what was required of them.

The first mile is that which is required of us. It is the mile that is mandated for us. The call to go the second mile is not a popular one. In every life there are unwelcome circumstances that will force themselves upon Christians. There will be cases of injustice, there will be hurt along the way, and there will be tasks that have to be taken merely out of necessity and not of choice. Are you willing to take the extra step?

Thus, the question is, “How is your effort?” If you were to grade yourself on your area of service for God, how would you measure up? Are you doing your best in every area that you are involved in? We live in a world where many do not even make it to the first mile marker.

Remember, you will never go the extra mile if you cannot make the first mile in your relationship with God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 7
MATTHEW 5:20–48

THOUGHT

The second-mile commitment is the next level of the relationship.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 6: 1–15

LESSON

**Worrying about
tomorrow's problems
today**

VERSE 11

*Give us this day our daily
bread.*

To ask God to “give us” suggests our absolute dependence on God for everything. God made us with needs so that we would look to Him for our daily provision. Praying for “our daily bread” expresses our faith in God answering our prayers and meeting our needs. It is not that we are praying to overcome God’s reluctance, for that would be seeking to bend His will to conform to ours. It is rather the building upon God’s willingness to give.

God desires our daily dependence on Him. When God provided manna in the wilderness for the Israelites, they were commanded to gather only enough food for each day. If they gathered more than they needed, it would turn bad overnight. God wanted them to realise that they must always trust Him to provide for their needs every day.

It is just as true that yesterday’s strength is absolutely useless for fighting today’s battles. Sometimes, we Christians rely on our experiences with God in the past. Of course, past experiences can be helpful but we need a fresh renewal of strength from God in our lives every day. God never gives us a reservoir of grace in our lives—we should expect to turn to Him every day for the grace sufficient to meet the challenges of that day.

When we worry about tomorrow, we are telling God that we are not certain of His provision for tomorrow’s bread.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 8
MATTHEW 6:1–15

THOUGHT

God will give you grace to be extraordinary in the ordinary circumstances of today.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 6:16–34

LESSON

Letting God be first

VERSE 33

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Many of God's most important words to us are often echoed in things we have heard or seen before. But we do not pay attention because familiarity breeds contempt—or at least complacency. When we hear something often enough, we tend to think we have got it all figured out and do not need to hear it anymore. Yet the Bible always gives us reminders.

Another reason for our negligence is that we are often too busy and distracted. Today's verse can help us with this problem. Before you put effort and energy into anything else, strive after and seek earnestly the will of God. Let Him rule and reign. Let Him be in charge of your heart, mind and attitude, as well as everything that concerns your life.

Is God your priority? Do you find time for God? How long has it been since you last sat down and had a long heart-to-heart conversation with Him? How long has it been since you last came to Him without asking Him for anything but just wanting to know more about Him? How long has it been since you last picked up His holy Word and read it thoughtfully, allowing it to sink deep into your heart and your mind?

Like David, have you hidden His Word in your heart so that you might not sin against Him? How long has it been since you last gave a testimony of just how much He means to you and how thankful you are for the things He has done for you?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

THOUGHT

The responsibility of putting God first in your life lies with you. Pray for the Holy Spirit to help and guide you.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 7: 1–20

LESSON

**The path to God's
Kingdom**

VERSE 13

*Enter ye in at the strait
gate: for wide is the gate,
and broad is the way, that
leadeth to destruction, and
many there be which go in
thereat.*

Take a moment to think about how many different decisions you make each day. Every day, we face choices. Some of the choices that we make on a daily basis have very little impact on our lives. Other choices, however, can significantly change the course of our lives.

We also have a set of choices that deals with our daily conduct. However, the most important choice you make in your life is whether you are going to follow Jesus and give your life to Him. In fact, all the other important decisions in life hinge on this particular choice.

There comes a point in our lives where we find ourselves at a crossroad. As we stand at the crossroad, we are confronted by two gates: the narrow and the wide gates, which lead us to two paths, the narrow and the broad. In other words, we see two road signs, one pointing to Jesus and eternal life and the other pointing towards a path of destruction. Which way will you go? Your choice determines your eternal destiny.

The wide path is the one that many will choose. It is the path that most will encourage you to walk down. As you look down the two different paths, are you going to be swayed by what everyone else is doing? Many people will not choose the narrow path because it is not easy. Are you going to let the majority take you with them? Or have you already chosen the broad way? If you do nothing to check yourself, you are probably on it already.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**GENESIS 11
MATTHEW 7:1–20**

THOUGHT

Your eternal destiny hangs upon your choice between two options.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 7:21–29

LESSON

**Withstanding the storms
of temptation**

VERSE 24

*Therefore whosoever
heareth these sayings of
mine, and doeth them, I
will liken him unto a wise
man, which built his house
upon a rock.*

All of us, regardless of our spirituality (or the lack of it), face storms in our lives. Perhaps you are braving through one right now. Maybe it is a storm of sickness or depression, or it could be a financial situation or some sort of strain in a relationship. Storms can take many different forms but most of them share a common trait. They tend to inhibit or even stop your progress towards the plan that God has for your life.

Trouble comes because we live in a world filled with tribulations. “Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” [Job 5:7]. However, if you are a doer of the Word, you will not be blown away when a storm comes. As a follower of Christ, you can be assured that these storms will not be able to destroy you. In fact, with true faith, you would be able to even smile when facing an impending storm.

Is there a storm in your life? The key to weathering the storms of life unaffected is to hear and do the Word of God. Conversely, to listen with no plan to act, to read with no interest to respond, is to miss the whole point of Christ’s teaching. Divine Truth is given not to satisfy idle curiosity but to change lives.

God’s Word equips us for today and prepares us for eternity.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 12
MATTHEW 7:21–29

THOUGHT

If you have faith and the Word, you cannot fail.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 8:1–13

LESSON

The “I will’s” of Christ

VERSE 7

And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.

The account given here is a fit sequel to the Sermon on the Mount. Having gone up to the mountain for one purpose, the ostracised leprous man now comes down for another. This man, so loathsome and vile, and in a state of living death, had come to seek Christ’s grace to heal him.

The Centurion in the next few verses, on the other hand, approached Christ on behalf of his servant who was grievously tormented, bedridden and sick of the palsy. How fearful both diseases are! If leprosy is awful outwardly, so is palsy within. One sufferer prayed for himself; another prayed for someone else. And both were met with an “I will” of Christ.

Let us mark the majestic brevity of this “I will” of Christ. Thank God that this is not a complicated matter—the willingness of Jesus is not entangled with conditions. It is just the outpouring of Himself, flowing forth freely as the water fountain. Mark the condescension of the blessed Lord! He took up the very point of the suppliants’ doubt and need, and applied Himself to strengthening the weak and encouraging the strong. He has shown how His whole heart, and inclination, sympathy and desire can meet the need of those who appeal to Him.

Now we know the heart and mind of Christ is towards a needy soul. He is saying “I will” to poor sinners even now at the right hand of God. He has another “I will” for you, if you seek Him for it.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 13
MATTHEW 8:1–13

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank You for this “I will” concerning those for whom we lovingly intercede.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 8:14–34***LESSON****The “sleep” of Christ****VERSE 25**

And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.

We have before us in this passage the narrative on the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, who was sick with fever. This is followed by the account of the multitudes that came to Jesus in the evening for deliverance from demonic slavery and healing of all manner of diseases. A scribe’s hastiness to follow Christ was met by His forbidding reply and Christ’s call to a disciple to follow Him was met with hesitancy. The awakened Christ in a boat calmed the storm.

Our Lord, Who took upon Him our nature, had also subjected Himself to natural tiredness and bodily infirmities. Rocked in a cradle of the deep on a boat, He slept peacefully. It was a sleep of exhaustion after a hard day’s work. It was a sign of His true humanity. Winds howled and waters dashed over Him but He slept on. The disciples caused Him more disquiet than the storm. They awoke Him with their cries, “Lord, save us: we perish.” He slept to show the weakness of humanity but he awoke to manifest the power of indwelling divinity. He spoke and there was a great calm.

That sleep of Christ may carry a symbolic meaning for us. Though Christ is present, the storm comes and He is sleeping through it. He delays His help so that He may try our faith and quicken our prayers. He sleeps, but never oversleeps and it is never too late with Him.

Our Lord can carry Himself as one asleep to the end so that He may be awakened by our prayers.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 14
MATTHEW 8:14–34

THOUGHT

I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the LORD, keep not silence, And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. – Isaiah 62:6–7

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 9:1–17

LESSON

Which is easier?

VERSE 5

*For whether is easier, to say,
Thy sins be forgiven thee; or
to say, Arise, and walk?*

In this passage, Christ returned to His own city, Capernaum, and healed a paralytic. He called Matthew and the latter held a banquet, inviting Him and His disciples. Christ then taught him a good lesson about mercy.

Upon returning to Capernaum, a paralytic was brought by his friends to Christ to be healed. Our Lord saw their strong faith in believing that He could and would heal him. He answered their faith with a cheering word, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.” Perhaps the youth’s sin had some connection with his sickness and hence his double distress. Our Lord removed it with a word of forgiveness to the comfort of the young man. The on-looking scribes charged the Lord with blasphemy within themselves, considering Him as only a man; only God can forgive sins.

Jesus responded to their evil thoughts by a question [v. 5], which to them was unanswerable. Surely the two things are impossible with men. Which is easier for Christ to perform? The first seemed easier because no apparent result is expected to follow. However, if we are to compare the two miracles carefully, the pardon of sin is the greater work of the two. Its accomplishment requires the whole apparatus of incarnation, crucifixion, burial and resurrection. Nevertheless, our Lord wrought both miracles, and thus confirmed His claim of power by a visible sign which none could answer.

He Who can pardon my soul can heal my body; for that would seem to be the easier of the two deeds of mercy.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 15
MATTHEW 9:1–17

PRAYER

Lord, heal my spirit and cure my flesh! Yea, Thou wilt do this work most effectually by raising my body incorruptible as Thine own. – Spurgeon

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 9:18–38

LESSON

The touch of faith

VERSE 21

*For she said within herself,
If I may but touch his
garment, I shall be whole.*

There are four miracles recorded in this passage: Christ's raising of the dead daughter of Jarius, His healing of the afflicted woman suffering from an issue of blood, His opening of the eyes of two blind men and His cure of a dumb man possessed with a demon.

Behold! We have a notable circumstance, an incident on the road, a wonder by the way. A woman, suffering from an issue of blood for 12 years and who had found no cure in physicians, followed after Christ with the throng. Her secret intention was to touch the very hem of His garment, for she was fully persuaded that, peculiar as was her case, she would find in Him an appropriate and certain cure. With timid courage, she pushed into the crowd. Great fear kept her from facing Him but great faith led her to believe that a touch of His robe behind Him would cure her. It was her idea to make a dash for it and steal a cure.

Mark 5 and Luke 8 record all the details of this eventful occasion. She was made whole. The Saviour saw her. His voice cheered her with joyful tones of acceptance. He did not chide the blunder of her ignorance but commended the bravery of her faith and consoled her trembling heart.

“Oh, that we had such confidence in Jesus as to be sure that if we come into contact with Him, even by the least promise, and the smallest faith, He can and will save us!” – Spurgeon.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 16
MATTHEW 9:18–38

THOUGHT

My soul, when thou art in urgent need, be brave to come nigh unto thy Lord; for if a touch of His garment will heal, what virtue must lie in His own self! – Spurgeon

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 10:1–15

LESSON

Preaching the Gospel

VERSE 7

*And as ye go, preach,
saying, The kingdom of
heaven is at hand.*

In this section, we see Jesus appointing and sending out His 12 apostles. He gave them specific instructions relative to the objects of their ministry. First, they were to go only to the house of Israel. This fulfilled the historical order of salvation that God had established with Israel—a plan to bring blessings to the world. Second, they were to proclaim the message that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. He gave them the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy and drive out demons.

The apostles were to provide their ministry to others without charge. They should not be unduly concerned for their own needs but expect God to meet those needs through the inspired hospitality of others. Those who received these apostles could expect to be blessed but those who refused them should be treated as Gentile cities, of which they were told to depart from, shaking off the dust from their feet [v. 14].

Similarly, Christians today are commissioned to bring the gospel of salvation to the lost. We do not require the special powers that the apostles had because we have in our hands something even more valuable: the complete Word of God, the Bible.

And we are to go where God's Holy Spirit leads to spread the Good News. These could be missionary outreaches in distant lands but could also well be to people around us, such as our relatives, friends, neighbours and colleagues.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 17
MATTHEW 10:1–15

THOUGHT

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. – Romans 1:16

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 10:16–42

LESSON

Fear not

VERSE 22

*And ye shall be hated of all
men for my name's sake:
but he that endureth to the
end shall be saved.*

Before Jesus sent His disciples out to preach the Gospel of salvation, He gave them warnings as well as instructions. He warned them to expect opposition from the world at large and even their own family members. They would be like sheep among wolves. The disciples would be hated and thus they should be prepared to suffer persecution and even physical abuse.

These warnings are also relevant to present-day Christians. In many societies, including those that were once predominantly Christian, even churches have become hostile towards biblical Christianity. These warnings will become even more relevant during the end-time Great Tribulation period foretold by the Lord in Matthew 24 and described in the Book of Revelation.

Likewise, Jesus' instructions to His disciples are valuable to us. No matter how difficult our circumstances are, we can always turn opposition into opportunity for witnessing. In times like these, we are to speak openly and boldly. The Holy Spirit will teach us what to say. There is no need to fear our enemies but, rather, we should fear God only. The Almighty and Sovereign God is concerned about all the details of our lives and cares for us. He will bring everything to light in due time. He will honour those who confess Him before men and He will make us a blessing to others. We must persevere all the way to the end.

Each believer must therefore make his own decision to follow Christ, love Him above all else and take up his cross daily.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 18
MATTHEW 10:16–42

THOUGHT

**The fear of God is the fear that cancels fear. –
Warren Wiersbe**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 11:1–19*

LESSON

The model preacher

VERSE 11

*Verily I say unto you,
Among them that are
born of women there
hath not risen a greater
than John the Baptist:
notwithstanding he that
is least in the kingdom of
heaven is greater than he.*

In the preceding chapter, Jesus told His disciples to go out and preach the Gospel openly and boldly, even though they would be like sheep among wolves. In this section, He cited John the Baptist as an example of what a true preacher should be like, calling him the greatest of all human preachers. And what was it about John’s preaching that made him such a “model” preacher?

For one thing, his message was simple and direct. “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” He was fearless. He was not a “popular preacher” who pandered to the crowd. Nor was he a reed in the wind who vacillated with every change. On the contrary, he reprimanded the Pharisees and Sadducees, calling them a generation of vipers and challenging them to bring forth fruits meet for repentance [Matthew 3:7–8]. He even denounced the adulterous marriage of Herod Antipas and Herodias [Luke 3:19–20], which later resulted in his own imprisonment and subsequent execution.

As our world rushes towards the “days of Noah”, where sins and iniquities abound, what we need are more preachers like John the Baptist. But many churches are moving in the opposite direction. More and more preachers are adopting a “customer-oriented” approach, using contemporary music, humour, laser lights and even magic shows to attract the crowds, catering to their “itching ears” with sermons that steer away from, let alone rebuke, sins.

In contrast to John’s humble lifestyle, many of today’s preachers live like superstars, claiming that it is Jesus’ desire for His servants to be blessed materially.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 19
MATTHEW 11:1–19

PRAYER

Lord, please send us preachers who preach only Thy pure Word, who are not afraid to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all compassion and longsuffering.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 11:20–30

LESSON

Weeping and gnashing of teeth

VERSE 20

Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a line our Lord frequently uses to describe the profound regret in hell that those who repeatedly reject the Gospel so lovingly presented to them will feel. The same fate would befall the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum. It was in these cities that Jesus performed most of His miracles. How tragic it was that they should treat lightly their opportunities to see and hear the Son of God. The Gentile cities of Tyre and Sidon, as well as the godless cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, would have repented had they seen the miracles that Jesus and His disciples performed.

Equally tragic, if not more so, is the fact that many people in our present age will experience that same profound regret for all eternity. We have so many opportunities today to hear the Gospel, such as at gospel rallies, books, tapes, CDs, the Internet and tracts. The list is endless. Likewise abound are opportunities to read God's Word. In this digital age, one can literally access the Bible any time and anywhere, through the various media. It is even delivered to our hands via the mobile phone. Sadly, not only do people reject these opportunities, but many even mock the Bible.

Many of these people are our friends and loved ones. It is sad how much we need to plead for them before the throne of grace.

Continue to pray that God will send His Holy Spirit to humble their hearts and remove their spiritual blindness.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 20
MATTHEW 11:20-30

PRAYER

**Saviour, Saviour,
Hear my humble cry!
While on others Thou art calling,
Do not pass me by.**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:1–13***LESSON****When the Sabbath can be broken****VERSE 7***But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.*

Jesus' disciples were walking through a field. As they walked, they picked the heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands to remove the chaff and ate the kernels. Requiring almost no effort, this could hardly be construed as work. But the Pharisees viewed the disciples' actions as "reaping" and "threshing", which were among the categories of work forbidden on a Sabbath.

Jesus pointed out that King David and his hungry followers, when they were fleeing King Saul's armies, were given bread that was normally eaten only by priests, yet they were guiltless in God's sight. He also pointed out that even the priests serving in the temple of God laboured on the Sabbath by conducting worship services and performing sacrifices, but God held them blameless.

In both examples, the spirit and intent of the law were not broken, and were specifically allowed by God for the greater good. Jesus emphasised that God's law allowed for mercy and the Pharisees were completely wrong in elevating their harsh, humanly devised regulations above everything else, including mercy.

As Christians, we are to remember that the Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath, and that it is commendable to do good deeds on the Sabbath. We are not saved for keeping the Sabbath. Neither are we condemned for breaking the Sabbath. We are, however, Christians who have been redeemed from sin and created to bring praise to God by Christ's work on the Cross. Our honouring of the Sabbath honours God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 21
MATTHEW 12:1–13

THOUGHT

To do justice and judgement is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. –Proverbs 21:3

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 12:14–37

LESSON

Idle word

VERSE 36

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement.

Jesus healed a man who was possessed by an evil spirit and all the people were amazed. When the Pharisees saw it, they responded by accusing Jesus of performing the miracle by the power of Satan. It was an idle charge thrown in the heat of controversy. The Lord pointed out that their words gave evidence of the evil in their hearts and warned that they would be accountable for every idle word spoken in the day of judgement.

Many things are opened by mistake but none so frequently as the mouth. The warning by Jesus is about making statements without thinking them through—especially idle words.

What is so serious about idle words? Idle words disclose our true nature. What is uppermost in the heart is bound to spew forth in words. A murmuring tongue indicates a complaining heart, a critical tongue reveals a judgemental heart, a filthy tongue flows from a dirty heart, and the list goes on.

Some of the most dangerous things in life are small, like germs and viruses. The tongue is a little member yet it can wreak great damage [James 3:5]. Idle words that spring from the tongue can break homes, divide families, send innocent men to prison, crush hearts, split churches and send some to an early grave. While idle words already uttered cannot be taken back, the sin can be confessed, repented of and forgiven. Let us be more watchful of what we want to say in the future.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 22
MATTHEW 12:14-37

THOUGHT

In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: but he that refraineth his lips is wise. – Proverbs 10:19

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 12:38–50***LESSON****Who are my mother,
brother and sister?****VERSE 50***For whosoever shall do the
will of my Father which is
in heaven, the same is my
brother, and sister, and
mother.*

While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him. Jesus had several brothers and sisters but John tells us that at this point, none of them believed in Him [John 7:5]. Jesus used His family to teach about relationship to His disciples. Pointing to His disciples, He said, “Behold my mother and my brethren!” [v. 49]

His disciples were the nearest and most ‘related’ to Him; they were family. As dear and tender as the ties that bound Him to His mother, brothers and sisters, those that bound Him to His disciples were even more tender and sacred. But who are these disciples? Jesus identifies them as “whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven”. Luke put what Jesus said even more simply: “My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it” [Luke 8:21].

Jesus told us that if we love Him, we should keep His commandments. For those who are trying to be His disciples without obeying His commandments, James the brother of Jesus leaves these words: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” [James 1:22].

That said, Jesus certainly does not teach that our earthly families are of no value. “Honour your father and mother” was but one of the commandments of God He perfectly kept.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 23
MATTHEW 12:38-50

THOUGHT

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. – John 1:12–13

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 13:1–23

LESSON

Parable of the sower

VERSE 18

*Hear ye therefore the
parable of the sower.*

The parable of the sower is one of only two parables in the Bible that is fully explained by Jesus. It illustrates how the Kingdom of Heaven begins, with the planting of a seed in the hearts of people. The seed is God's Word. We can draw five lessons from this parable alone.

First, we have the responsibility to proclaim the message of the Kingdom—the Gospel—to the world. It is the Word of God that will produce results. Second, not everyone will receive the Gospel by faith. However, that is not our concern. Our business is to continue to proclaim the Good News. Third, the evidence of those who receive it by faith and act on it is that their lives will be changed and they will bear fruits of righteousness. The evidence of saving faith is a growing spiritual life.

Fourth, a spiritual life does not come about instantly. It progresses over time. Those who believe, like the disciples, do not understand everything instantaneously. Instead, the Spirit of God, using the Word of God, illumines their understanding daily.

Finally, it is our task to know and understand the message well so that we can present it as clearly and meaningfully as possible. That said, we should also be reminded that the extent in which the Good News is received is not directly related to our effectiveness in witnessing. Only God alone can give the increase.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 24
MATTHEW 13:1–23

THOUGHT

**So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by
the Word of God. – Romans 10:17**

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 13:24–43

LESSON

Mustard seed and leaven

VERSE 34

*All these things spake Jesus
unto the multitude in
parables; and without a
parable spake he not unto
them.*

Three parables are presented in this passage and all three of them illustrate how the Kingdom of Heaven will develop. The parable of the tares, the longest of the three, was later explained in detail by Jesus. The remaining two, the parable of the mustard seed and that of the leaven, are comparatively much shorter in length.

The parable of the mustard seed seeks to illustrate this doctrine. Seemingly small and insignificant to start with, a mustard seed will also grow into a fruitful and useful plant. The birds that make their nests in the branches may be taken to represent false influence or movements that have placed themselves under the umbrella of Christianity for worldly gain and power. If we take the leaven in the parable of the leaven to represent evil, we can then see how it illustrates the extent to which false influences could infiltrate the Church.

Taken together, we can see that the parables demonstrate a similarity in thought—that the progress of the Gospel will not go unchallenged. As the Church grows, Satan also does what he can to impede its growth or even destroy it.

There is a constant need for vigilance, lest our churches and preaching should be neutralised by compromising with the creeping pollution of ideas and philosophies antagonistic to the absolute authority of Christ and holy Scripture.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 25
MATTHEW 13:24–43

THOUGHT

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. – Acts 20:29

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 13:44–58***LESSON****The supreme treasure****VERSE 44**

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.

Presented here are two parables that liken the Kingdom of Heaven to treasures found and purchased. The first, the parable of the hidden treasure, talks about a man who stumbles across such a treasure. The second, the parable of the pearl, tells us about one who diligently seeks something he knew and found it. In both cases, the men sell all they have to purchase the newfound treasure.

Though both parables have the same ending, they begin differently. This may be thus used to illustrate the different manner in which we come to know our Lord. There are people who go to church for reasons other than seeking salvation, but then eventually got saved. These are people who are not looking for the treasure, yet have stumbled upon it. From God's point of view, this chanced stumbling is never accidental.

On the other hand, there are also those who want to know the path to salvation and actually make a conscious effort to search for it. They may have tried various faiths, attended many churches and asked a lot of questions, and in the process, they finally found the treasure.

The parable uses these two similar cases to illustrate but one main point: the Kingdom of Heaven, once tasted, is something one would want to possess, even to the point of giving up all which one has. To do so may require the giving up of ambitions, or sacrificing our comforts. Yet, our salvation and our faith in God are, however, more valuable than all of our possessions combined.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 26
MATTHEW 13:44-58

THOUGHT

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ. – Philippians 3:8

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 14:1–12

LESSON

**Big mistakes from
inconsequential matters**

VERSE 6

*But when Herod's birthday
was kept, the daughter of
Herodias danced before
them, and pleased Herod.*

Herod Antipas was the son of Herod the Great, who built the temple in Jerusalem. Herod Antipas was prominently mentioned in the Gospels because he ruled during the time of the ministries of John the Baptist and our Lord Jesus. But Herod Antipas was remembered chiefly for his incestuous marriage with Herodias, his sister-in-law. This unholy union was condemned by John the Baptist.

The opportunity for revenge against John the Baptist presented itself on Herod's birthday. Salome, Herodias' daughter from her first husband, performed a sensual dance for Herod. The king was totally mesmerised by the dance that he promised to offer the girl anything. After consulting with her mother, Salome asked for John to be beheaded. Although Herod had a high regard for John, he chose to keep his promise made in front of his fellow diners.

It seemed strange that something as frivolous as a simple dance could capture a king's mind and will into offering the dancer up to half his kingdom. However, that is the seductive nature of sin. It does not take a great deal to be led astray.

There is no Christian so strong that he cannot fall into sin. In fact, Paul warns, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" [1 Corinthians 10:12]. "Abstain from all appearance of evil" [1 Thessalonians 5:22]. "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" [2 Timothy 2:22] As God's people, we must refrain from activities, ideas, sights and sounds that would lead us to sin.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 27
MATTHEW 14:1–12

THOUGHT

**It is better to walk away from sin than to be
locked for good in sin.**

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 14:13–36

LESSON

**Moving mountains with
faith**

VERSE 31

*And immediately Jesus
stretched forth his hand,
and caught him, and said
unto him, O thou of little
faith, wherefore didst thou
doubt?*

The second half of the chapter records two miracles: the feeding of the five thousand and our Lord Jesus walking on water. In the first miracle, Jesus gave thanks, broke five loaves of bread and two pieces of fish, and multiplied them to feed all the people present until they were full. The actual figure waiting to be fed, including women and children, could have exceeded five thousand.

In the second miracle, Jesus appeared to His disciples who were on board a boat one morning. The weather was tempestuous but Jesus walked on the water. Peter saw our Lord Jesus and he, too, came out of the boat, walking on the water towards our Lord. Before he could reach our Lord Jesus, Peter saw the huge waves, lost faith and started to sink, until Jesus saved him.

It was not recorded that Peter and the other apostles doubted Jesus when he was feeding the multitude. But in Peter's case, the huge threatening waves had a direct impact on him, and he was evidently very afraid. Here, the success or failure of Jesus would have had a direct impact on Peter himself.

Likewise, it is easier for Christians to exercise faith, at least outwardly, in matters that do not have a direct impact on us. However, when our lives are directly impacted, as in Peter's case, we tend to lose faith and panic. As God's people, we must learn to trust the Lord with all our hearts and have faith in all circumstances.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 28
MATTHEW 14:13-36

REFLECTION

How much faith do I put in the Lord?

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 15:1–20***LESSON****Rejecting blind faith****VERSE 9***But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

An issue arose when the Pharisees commented that Jesus' disciples did not wash their hands before eating. The washing of hands, in this case, was not for reasons of physical hygiene. It was part of a religious practice instituted by the Pharisees who feared spiritual contamination as a result of their normal interaction with non-Jews. Our Lord Jesus reproved them by saying that the Pharisees had come up with traditions that went against the Word of God [v. 3].

By this, He implied that they should have no cause for pointing out other people's shortcomings when they themselves have replaced God's Law with their own. Jesus reproved them and even called them "hypocrites." When His disciples mentioned that the Pharisees were offended by Jesus' saying, He dismissed this by hinting that these people were excluded from God's Kingdom.

There are churches today that hold their man-made traditions to be par with the clear teachings from the Word of God. They impose rules on matters of personal convictions and curtailed the liberty that Christ has given to His people. When the early church debated over the issue of circumcision for Gentile converts, the Apostles made this decision: "For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" [Acts 15:28; Revelation 2:24].

"No greater burden." Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition between sinful men and a holy God. Hallelujah! There is no need for any greater burden.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 29
MATTHEW 15:1–20

QUESTION

Christians must be careful never to substitute the external acts of piety for genuine spirituality.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 15:21–39***LESSON****Having faith counts****VERSE 28**

Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

As Jesus was making His way to Tyre and Sidon, a woman of Canaan begged Him to heal her daughter who was demon-possessed. At first, our Lord Jesus did not answer her, telling her that He was “not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” [v. 24] and that “it is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs” [v. 26]. In an act of humility and faith, the woman reasoned that even the dogs would eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table [v. 27].

Perhaps it was desperation that drove this woman to our Lord Jesus. And it could be superstition that she first used the Messianic title—Son of David—to address Him, a title that she, being a non-Jew, had no right to use.

In the end, however, it was her humility and faith that won. She placed herself at our Lord’s disposal. She did not take offence at our Lord’s allusion to the way that the Jews regarded the Gentiles. Instead, she used the allusion to her advantage. It would be a mistake to think that our Lord had mercy on her because she outwitted Him. On the contrary, He had mercy on her because of her humble faith.

When we are down and out, it would be a blessing to be as humble as this Canaanite woman coming to Christ and plead our case not on our merits but on the grounds of our Lord’s compassion.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 30
MATTHEW 15:21–39

REMEMBER

I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. – John 12:46

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 16

LESSON

Show me a sign, God!

VERSE 1

The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.

In an attempt to force Jesus to identify Himself, the Pharisees and the Sadducees came to Jesus and asked Him to show them a sign from heaven [v. 1]. The real intent of this request was to tempt Him to perform a miracle and hoping that it would fail, thereby giving them an opportunity to denounce our Lord Jesus as a charlatan.

Our Lord Jesus in turn denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees as “a wicked and adulterous generation” [v. 4]. They were a wicked generation because their intent was evil. Instead of coming in faith, they came in doubt. They were adulterous because God was never in their hearts all the time when they were spiritual leaders of the Jews. They worshipped God with their lips but their hearts were far from Him.

The only sign that our Lord Jesus promised them was the sign of Judas, an allusion to His own death and resurrection. The resurrection would prove to be the undoing of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The former plotted our Lord’s death in total dismissal of Jesus being the Messiah. The latter did not even believe in the resurrection. It is an ironic twist that our Lord Jesus “left them, and departed” [v. 4]. He left them to their own unbelief.

In our Christian walk, we may have asked God for a sign, and perhaps with the same unbelief as the Pharisees and Sadducees. Rather than asking for signs, Christians should resort to the holy Scripture. Seek God’s will in His Word.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 31
MATTHEW 16

OBSERVANCE

Trust the Lord, obey His commandments and He will guide you through.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 17:1–13***LESSON****The Transfiguration****VERSE 2**

*And was transfigured
before them: and his face
did shine as the sun, and
his raiment was white as
the light.*

In the Transfiguration, the three privileged Apostles, Peter, James and John, were allowed a glimpse of the glorified Christ. They also saw Moses the law-giver and Elijah the great prophet appearing to pay homage to Christ, for He was the end of the law, and the grand subject of the predictions of the prophets.

Verse 2 says that Christ was transfigured. The description does not mean a change in substance, only a change in appearance. His face shone as the sun and His raiment was white as light. The transfiguration is an eyewitness account.

The event left an indelible mark in the Apostle Peter's mind. And he would later relate his experience, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount" [2 Peter 1:16–18].

The transfiguration also gripped Peter's heart. The glory of Christ in the Transfiguration was witnessed only by a select few. The glory of Christ revealed in His Word, which is also a light that shines in a dark place, will be witnessed by the whole world. Look to Christ and His glory not in the Transfiguration, but in the more sure word of prophecy.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 32
MATTHEW 17: 1–13

THOUGHT

Prophecy assures us that Christ's sufferings, now past, will be followed by Christ's glory, still future.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 17:14–27

LESSON

Our Lord's example

VERSE 27

Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.

The Apostle Peter was asked by the collectors of the temple tax whether Jesus had paid tax. This tax (tribute), consisting of the double drachma, was not paid to the Roman government but to the Jewish collectors for use in the temple service. It was permitted in the Law of Moses [Exodus 11–16] that every male among the Jews was to pay half a shekel yearly to support the temple. The tax amount was very modest.

The collectors probably felt more comfortable to approach Peter rather than Jesus because they stood in such awe of Christ, Who had performed mighty miracles and had spoken with great authority. From the reply of Peter (Jesus paid His tax), it was evident that our Lord paid all His dues, like what all the people in His time did.

Our Lord made use of this incident to illustrate the difference between an earthly king, who would demand those living in his kingdom to pay taxes, and the Kingdom of God, where believers and followers of Christ are considered part of the family and are yet truly free [v. 26], not having to pay taxes in God's kingdom.

As the Son of God, Christ owes no one anything. However, Christ waived His privilege, and paid this tribute, when He walked the earth. Besides, if He should refuse this payment, it would only increase the people's prejudice against Him and His doctrine. Therefore, Christ graciously paid His taxes.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 33
MATTHEW 17:14-27

THOUGHT

Christian prudence and humility teach us, in many cases, to recede from our right, rather than give offence by insisting upon it.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 18:1–20

LESSON

Being great

VERSE 4

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is very clear about how a person can enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Sinners are to be totally dependent upon God, just like a young child depending on his parents to survive in this world. Our Lord is telling sinners that the removal of pride and the utter dependence on the finished work of Christ on the Cross is the way to salvation. It is also the way to achieve “greatness” in the eyes of God. Mark puts it this way, “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all” [Mark 9:35]. Luke also points out, “He that is least among you all, the same shall be great” [Luke 9:48].

It is the positive childlike qualities that are referred to here. This is different from being childish. Generally speaking, children are not ambitious and proud; they are ready to be taught and instructed. They live trusting in their parents’ providence and accept whatever that comes along. They are not malicious and vindictive [1 Corinthians 14:20].

In contrast, the methods the world recommends to achieve greatness involves one being self-assertive. We are told to win favours from the rich and powerful to promote ourselves, and to “fix” the competition by whatever means in order to get to the top.

The Bible advises us that it is better to be poor and humble than to be rich and proud [Proverbs 16:19]. The rich and proud will be destroyed by God [Proverbs 15:25].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 34
MATTHEW 18:1–20

THOUGHT

A truly humble man claims no personal merit in the sight of God, nor proudly despises his brethren, or aims at being superior to them. Instead, He reckons it enough that he is one of the members of Christ.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 18:21–35

LESSON

Christian forgiveness

VERSE 35

So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

The essence of the Christian religion is very much related to the concept of forgiveness. Christians readily admit that, of our own works and merits, we are not good enough for heaven. There is a great tendency to indulge in evil thoughts and do evil things. For these reasons, we put our trust in the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who died on the Cross to take away the sins of the world. We make peace with God through this very act of ours. And God's promise is that He will forgive our sins for the sake of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ [Acts 13:38].

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us that forgiveness is the mainstay of Christianity, "And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." He reinforces this important teaching with a parable [Matthew 18:22–35].

It is a common saying among the Jews to forgive not more than three times, which Peter charitably extends it to seven [v. 21]. But our Lord's command is that we should always forgive [v. 22] because vengeance is of the Lord. Revenge is natural to man, that is, man is naturally a vindictive being. Consequently, nothing is more difficult for him than forgiving injuries.

Two biblical examples [Luke 23:34, Acts 7:60] show us that we should forgive even though the person who injured us does not ask to be forgiven.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 35–36
MATTHEW 18:21–35

THOUGHT

Even modern science tells us that if we hold grudges against others, we suffer health problems.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 19

LESSON

Jesus' exemplary ministry

VERSE 2

And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.

Our Lord's mission is clearly spelt out by Himself, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord" [Luke 4:18–19].

We read of this in the Gospels. A huge crowd had followed him out of Galilee, and more were flocking to Him when they heard of His coming again to them. It was the custom of Jesus to preach the Word of God and teach what was profitable to them—especially that which was good for their souls. He also healed many of their illnesses. The subjects that Jesus taught are the fundamental principles of society. One is the relationship of husband and wife in a marriage and the other is the teaching of very young children in the matters of Christianity.

A nation consists of a collection of families. Thus, a good marriage relationship and correct upbringing of a child is fundamental to establishing strong families. During Jesus' time, men treated their wives like properties. They divorced their wives for frivolous reasons [v. 8]. This is against God's will. Jesus, however, reasoned from first principles, and concluded that the only valid reason for divorce was adultery [v. 4–6, 8–9].

Before the chapter ends, we read that the disciples, who considered little children as unimportant, were corrected by Jesus, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven" [v. 14].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 37
MATTHEW 19

THOUGHT

The crowd that followed Him did so for a variety of reasons; some sought to be instructed; some asked to be healed. Worse still, some wanted to be entertained whereas some attempted to trap Him. What are your reasons for following Christ?

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 20: 1–16

LESSON

**God's goodness and
glorious grace**

VERSE 16

*So the last shall be first,
and the first last: for many
be called, but few chosen.*

Peter said to Jesus, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” [Matthew 19:27]. Jesus replied that those who followed Him, regardless of their status, would be rewarded for their faith and commitment [Matthew 19:16–30].

Peter’s question concerning rewards drew forth an unusual parable. A vineyard owner had hired workers early in the morning and they had agreed to a full day’s wage and had set to do the work. He continued to hire more workers at various intervals throughout the day with the understanding that he would give them what was right. In the evening, he gave them all the same wages—the last as much as the first. The workers who worked the whole day complained. Such complaining, the Lord revealed, was akin to an attack on the goodness and generosity of God Himself. Jesus concluded the parable with a statement reminiscent of Matthew 19:30, “But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.” Not many of those who are called will come, but those who come will be chosen.

Christians who have professed Christ and started serving Him years before others are proud of their knowledge and service. But what are the greatest of all our good works compared to the amazing grace of God?

Have you accepted God’s gift of salvation? It is never too late. Consider the thief on the cross who put his faith in Jesus Christ before he died [Luke 23:39–43]. Trust in Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour and receive His gift of everlasting life.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

THOUGHT

Christ has done so much for us. Have we given our best to Him?

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 20:17–34

LESSON

Humility and greatness

VERSE 26

But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;

Greatness is found not in dominion over people but in the service for others. The great are those who minister. The greatest are those who are bond-slaves for righteousness' sake. Two thousand years ago, Jesus not only taught this truth to His disciples but He also lived it out.

Jesus Christ did not force people to follow and obey Him. His leadership on earth was one of humility and unselfish service for others. Jesus is such a delightful servant that God first introduced Him to the whole world as His beloved Son, in whom He was well pleased [Matthew 3:17].

By the world's standard, a great man should strive for property, wealth and worldly fame. However, among the children of God, the greatest is one who chooses to promote the spiritual interest of his fellow creatures. When Jesus walked on earth, He washed His disciples' feet. True greatness lies not in receiving but in giving, and in treating others the way Jesus has treated us—not in being served but in serving others. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" [v. 28]. Christ's death is an atonement for all our sins. If Jesus does not have a servant's heart, He could not be the suffering servant of Calvary.

Happy is that man who is truly humble, who strives to do good in his lifetime and who walks in the steps of Jesus, resting all his hopes on the ransom paid for him by the blood of Christ.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 39
MATTHEW 20:17-34

THOUGHT

Service that cares for the interests of others is the basis for true greatness.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 21:1–22***LESSON****A man of striking contrast****VERSE 9**

And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.

It was a Sunday. Many Jews came from Judea and Galilee for the Passover. Jesus rode into Jerusalem sitting on a borrowed ass. He entered as a triumphant King. The triumphal entry of the Lord was the fulfilment of Zechariah's prophecy [Zechariah 9:9]. He came in peace, bringing salvation.

A great multitude of people welcomed and honoured Him. They cast their garments and spread palm branches on the road. The multitude received Him as King and Messiah. The masses adored Him. They called Him "Son of David", which was the title of the Messiah. Throngs of people shouted and cried out, "Hosanna in the Highest."

Yet, alas, so soon was the enthusiastic "Hosanna" to give way to the tragic "Crucify! Crucify Him!" What went wrong that week? Let us look at what Jesus did. He drove merchants and money-changers from the temple [v. 12]. He taught that repentant tax collectors and harlots could enter the Kingdom of Heaven before the religious [v. 31–32]. He told the people to pay their taxes [Matthew 22:21] and He pronounced a series of "woes" to the scribes and Pharisees, who were wicked and hypocritical religious leaders [Matthew 23:13–31].

On Sunday, they worshipped Him, but on Friday, they did not want Him around anymore. Jesus, Who is the sovereign Lord of the universe, became a perfect man to provide for our redemption. He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords. He deserves our praise.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 40
MATTHEW 21:1–22

THOUGHT

The nail-pierced hands of Jesus Christ reveal the love-filled heart of God.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 21:23–46***LESSON****What it takes to enter
God's kingdom****VERSE 29***He answered and said, I
will not: but afterward he
repented, and went.*

The first of the three parables we read in this section was probably spoken on Tuesday of the Passion Week. The words “what think ye” [v. 28a] ties this parable to the Jewish authorities who had just confronted Jesus and tried to discredit Him. God’s value of faith and obedience can be seen through the parables of Jesus. The Lord wanted to convey a critical message to us, a message that would determine our eternal destiny.

Jesus spoke about two sons who were asked to work in a vineyard. They had to go on that particular day while they had a chance to help their father. “Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart” [Psalm 95:7–8]. In response, the first son said, “I will not.” But afterward he repented, and went [v. 29]. He had turned from his self-chosen life of rebellion and worldliness to his father’s vineyard to work.

The second son said, “I go, sir: and went not” [v. 30]. He went about his own life, living and working for himself. He never did his father’s work. Then the Lord asked His listeners which of the two sons did the father’s will. Even His enemies were obliged to reply, “The first.” The chief priests and Pharisees perceived that the parable was about them—they needed to repent and turn to Christ.

Our Lord’s illustration underscores a key spiritual principle that even the Pharisees understood—to follow Christ is to obey and do what he says. Mere confession, without corresponding action, is not enough.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 41
MATTHEW 21:23–46

THOUGHT**Obedience is faith in action.**

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 22:1–22

LESSON

The Gospel invitation

VERSE 21

*They say unto him,
Caesar's. Then saith he
unto them, Render therefore
unto Caesar the things
which are Caesar's; and
unto God the things that
are God's.*

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a marriage made by a king for his son [v. 1–14]. The Father has arranged a marriage feast for His Son, Jesus. The king had prepared a royal feast in honour of his son's wedding. It would be a feast filled with majestic honour and held in the grandest hall. The king has prepared all things [v. 4].

But the response to the king's invitation was less than enthusiastic. Those invited rejected the king's invitation. "They made light of it" [v. 5]. It was more than just simply politely brushing off the invitation. It was contempt. Some were more interested in acquiring wealth and getting ahead in the world. Careless, indifferent and rebellious, they even persecuted and murdered the King's messengers.

This is the picture of how sinners respond to the Gospel invitation. God had done His part to save us. He sent His only begotten Son. The Son had died on the Cross as payment for our sins. The Gospel has been sent forth by many preachers. The loving King repeatedly sends his servants to invite all to come and enjoy the Gospel feast [v. 3, 4, 9], but to no avail.

How often do we go out to bid our friends to come to Christ? Many have heard but few have received the saving grace of our Lord Jesus. However, the encouragement is that there is no shortage of people who need the Gospel. Just as the king sent his servants into the highways and byways, so we are to go and gather as many as we can!

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 42
MATTHEW 22:1–22

PRAYER

Lord, may more people be added into Thy kingdom.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 22:23–46

LESSON

What think ye of the law?

VERSE 44

*The Lord said unto my
Lord, Sit thou on my right
hand, till I make thine
enemies thy footstool?*

The adversaries of Jesus tried to find fault in Jesus. The Pharisees and Herodians came first, but they left unsuccessful. Now was the turn for the Sadducees. Through the question posed by the Sadducees [v. 24–28], it is not hard for us to realise that many of us have erred like them, too, choosing to believe what we would like to believe, and thus tailormaking God into a being as we like Him to be.

A lot of us do not know Scripture, do not read the Bible, and are thus ignorant of the attributes of God and His sound doctrine. Not knowing the greatness of God, most believers live a mediocre Christian life without experiencing God’s mighty power.

The Pharisees’ lawyer asked our Lord Jesus, “Which is the great commandment in the law?” Our Lord’s answer reminds us that there are two important things we must do daily. First, love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. Second, love your neighbour as yourself. “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” [v. 40]. The Ten Commandments is distilled into two laws of love. Love is the essence of the Christian faith. First, love for God, from which flows out love for men.

It is impossible to love God without loving man [1 John 4:20], but such a profession of love for God would be a travesty. It is possible to love man [Matthew 7:11; Luke 6:32–33] without loving God, but love for man only would be a tragedy.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 43
MATTHEW 22:23–46

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, I submit myself to You, for You are the King of kings and Lord of lords.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 23:1–12

LESSON

You as a church leader?

VERSE 12

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Have you ever been stumbled by the seemingly ungodly behaviour of certain church leaders? Many of us take the non-exemplary behaviour of church leadership as an easy excuse for not obeying God’s Word or not attending the Lord’s Day worship simply due to the bad examples in some church leaders. This is not right. If we adopt this attitude, we are no different from the hypocritical leaders and teachers during Jesus’ time.

In this passage, Jesus teaches us to distinguish between the Word of God and false teachers. “All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” [v. 3].

This is a public scathing denunciation against false religion and hypocritical leadership. Our Lord Jesus has outlined for us the gist of religious hypocrisy. They have made themselves an idol for others to follow; they seek their own glory while pretending to give glory to God. In church, they covet pre-eminence [v. 2], they impose man-made laws on members while they themselves do not follow [v. 4], they make themselves appear holier than others [v. 5], and they love high positions [v. 6].

Our Lord Jesus prohibits us to be proud—we are to humble ourselves. Only Jesus is our Master and Lord. Do not seek your own glory and make a mockery of your service for God. Heed God’s warning: the proud shall be abased; and conversely, the humble shall be exalted.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 44
MATTHEW 23:1–12

PRAYER

Lord, let me be mindful of Your words. Help me to observe and do what is right.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 23:13–39***LESSON****What think ye of being misled?****VERSE 26**

*Thou blind Pharisee,
 cleanse first that which is
 within the cup and platter,
 that the outside of them
 may be clean also.*

People in Old Testament times looked upon the scribes and Pharisees as the experts in Scripture and esteemed them as religious leaders. But sadly, these leaders had knowingly and intentionally misled and misguided them. As a result, the destiny of their followers was nothing but misery and hopelessness. Our Lord Jesus, in his last public discourse, severely denounced the conduct of these hypocritical scribes and Pharisees and warned of the woes they were going to face. In their religious pretence, hypocritical conduct and deceitful teachings, they had committed many sins.

They kept others from believing in Christ. They preyed on the helpless to enrich themselves. They misled new converts into following their ways. They taught that wrongs could be undone by giving in return. They omitted the importance of a godly life, misleading followers to observe small, unimportant issues. They whitewashed themselves externally yet lived in darkness and wickedness. They appeared holy yet were full of hypocrisy and iniquity, and they appeared to mourn for their ancestors' misdeeds while continuing to prosecute and oppress God's servants and messengers.

Our Lord Jesus described these hypocritical scribes and leaders as fools and blind guides, serpents and vipers. They would not escape the damnation of hell. Let this serve as warnings to us. It is easy for Christians to fall into a similar state if we confuse external piety for true godliness. There is no room for complacency.

Christians must constantly examine ourselves in our spiritual walk with God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
 IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 45
MATTHEW 23:13–39

PRAYER

Lord, please forgive my hypocrisy and sinful conduct; help me to be truthful to You and to the Church.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 24:1–31

LESSON

**What think ye of yourself
at the end times?**

VERSE 30

*And then shall appear the
sign of the Son of man in
heaven: and then shall
all the tribes of the earth
mourn, and they shall see
the Son of man coming in
the clouds of heaven with
power and great glory.*

When our Lord Jesus told His disciples that the Temple would be destroyed, the disciples asked him three very important questions: When shall these things be? What shall be the sign of His coming? What shall be the sign of the end of the world? Our Lord Jesus foretold many signs. We should not only be concerned about external signs, which are in the hands of God, but we should also deal with internal signs—our spiritual lives, which are within our control.

In the end times, there will be many false prophets and false messiahs performing great signs and wonders. There will be a great spiritual movement and many will be deceived to join them.

There will be wars and rumours of wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes. Is your family at war, causing you no peace of mind? There will be apostasies, betrayals and treacheries against one another. Will you be tempted to betray your faith in times of suffering and persecution? Sins will abound and love will get cold. Are you committing more sins and getting cold in your service for God? There will also be a great spreading of the Gospel. Are you joining the evangelistic endeavours?

As the last days come, there will be unprecedented tribulations. The world will be darkened. Our Lord Jesus in His second coming will come as a shining light, with power and glory. Cleave close to Him. “But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved” [v. 13].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 46
MATTHEW 24:1–31

PRAYER

**Lord, I thank You, for I am Your elect, and You
will not forsake me.**

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 24:32–51***LESSON****Life at the end times****VERSE 42**

*Watch therefore: for ye
know not what hour your
Lord doth come.*

Watching” includes looking forward to preparing for and living a life in earnest expectation for the return of our Lord Jesus. In this postmodern world, many doubt the second coming of Christ. But our Lord Jesus has assured us, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” [v. 35]. God’s Word is true and His return is sure. Those who heard him had witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, as prophesied by Him [v. 34]. Our Lord Jesus wants us to learn from these signs—foretold by Him earlier. His return is sure and near.

During Noah’s time, the people saw Noah and his family building the Ark, yet they “knew not” [v. 39]. They chose to ignore the signs and continued to indulge in eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage—seemingly “normal activities”; the people were not doing anything sinful or illegal. But these activities distracted them and, as a result, caused them to neglect God’s Word, having false security in their temporal material blessings instead. The floods came and they perished.

Be watchful and do not allow the Church to be attacked by Satan. We must teach faithfully and nourish our members with God’s Word. The last section [v. 43–51] also carries a message for church leaders: “Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh” [v. 44].

Faithful servants will be rewarded but wicked professing servants will be severely punished.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

GENESIS 47**MATTHEW 24:32–51****PRAYER**

Lord, I do not want to live according to the world’s standard. Help me to be watchful and always look forward to Your return.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 25:1–13

LESSON

**Preparing for the coming
Kingdom of Heaven**

VERSE 12

*But he answered and said,
Verily I say unto you, I
know you not.*

Our Lord Jesus began this parable by comparing the events of the coming Kingdom of Heaven to the happy events of a Jewish marriage, in which the bridegroom goes to bring his bride to their new home, which customarily takes place at night. As the bride does not know which hour the bridegroom would arrive, his approach would be preceded by a shout. The bride would then go out with her bridesmaids with lamps in their hands, and go with him to the couple's new home, where a wedding party would already be waiting for the happy couple.

In the parable, there were 10 bridesmaids waiting for the groom, but five of them were not prepared, as they did not prepare oil for their lamps. As a result, when the groom arrived, they were not prepared for the trip back to the groom's house. They had to go buy the oil and, consequently, missed the bridegroom when he came. When they at last reached the groom's house, they were denied entrance. The Master of the house said to them: "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Let us heed the warning in this parable and be prepared while we wait for the coming of our Lord. Be not deceived, as He will surely come, just as the bridegroom will surely come for his beloved bride.

How should we prepare ourselves? By doing the needful thing—whatever God has commanded us to do. Being half-prepared is as good as being unprepared.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 48
MATTHEW 25:1–13

PRAYER

Lord, help me to be fully prepared every day for Your coming. Show me the work that Thou has set for me and give me the wisdom and strength to complete them.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 25:14–30

LESSON

An unprofitable servant

VERSE 30

And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In this parable, a man was preparing to go on a journey. In his absence, he entrusted his wealth to his servants. The expectation was that they should be profitable with the money given to them. As each servant had different abilities, they were entrusted with different amounts of money.

Upon his return, each servant gave an account of what he had done with the money. Two of the servants did well, and doubled the money they were given. However, the third servant did nothing, having hidden his share in the earth. The money was not put to good use. The unprofitable servant was punished and cast out of the man's household.

In similar manner, Christ expects us to make good use of the gifts and abilities that He has given to us. The first step to being profitable is to recognise the gifts that we have received. Some of us can speak well, others can write well, and yet others are skilful with their hands. Whatever your gift, be assured that God has given them to you for a purpose, which is to glorify Him and further the cause of the Gospel.

Let us then take heed to be profitable by exercising the gifts that we have been entrusted. If you can speak well, are you going out to evangelise in the neighbourhood? If you can sing well, are you in the choir? Purpose in your heart to apply your gifts for God, and He will give you the increase.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 49
MATTHEW 25:14–30

MEDITATION

For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. – 2 Corinthians 5:10

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 25:31–46

LESSON

**Eternal life or eternal
punishment**

VERSE 46

*And these shall go
away into everlasting
punishment: but the
righteous into life eternal.*

In the last section of this chapter, our Lord gave more details of the events that will take place when He returns in glory. He will return as King to judge all nations. This has been God's plan from the beginning, even before the foundation of the world. Those that belong to Him (the sheep) will pass into eternal life in the heavenly kingdom while those who do not belong to Him (the goats) will be cast into eternal punishment.

How will the Lord separate the sheep from the goats? Those who have tasted of the goodness and mercies of our Lord would also desire to be like Him. Like Jesus when He was on this earth ministering to the needy and sick, those of us who love God and have put our trust in Him should also do likewise: "For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men" [Romans 14:18]. This is the mark of a truly regenerated person.

Conversely, if one does not know God, it is impossible for that person to please Him, regardless of the amount of good works he does. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" [Hebrews 11:6].

Let us, therefore, look around us and see if there is anything that God has placed in our paths to do, and let us do it, as unto the Lord.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
GENESIS 50
MATTHEW 25:31–46

PRAYER

Dear Lord, help me and teach me to be more and more like You every day.

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 26:1–25

LESSON

Who is on the Lord's side?

VERSE 24

The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

Jesus began making preparations for the final Passover that He would have with His disciples, telling them that on that day, He would be betrayed and crucified.

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the all-knowing God. He would have already known of the plans that the Jewish leaders had against Him. When Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster box of ointment, which she promptly poured onto Jesus. The disciples were indignant and thought it a waste of the precious ointment, which could have been sold and the money put to good use. However, Jesus corrected them and said that the woman had done it to prepare Him for His burial. Judas Iscariot then left to betray Him for thirty pieces of silver. Again, Jesus demonstrated His divine nature by telling His disciples during the Passover feast that one of them had already betrayed Him.

These verses illustrate two different kinds of followers of Christ. We see in the woman someone who was willing to sacrifice all that she had for Jesus. This act earned her a place of mention in the Bible. On the other hand, Judas also earned a place in the Bible—as the one who betrayed Jesus, an example of a follower who was not really on God's side.

What kind of follower are you? Do you devote your best to Jesus, or are you following Jesus for selfish gains?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS I
MATTHEW 26:1–25

THOUGHT

Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. – Matthew 16:24

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 26:26–46

LESSON

Looking to God in prayer

VERSE 44

And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.

During the last Passover meal, Jesus broke bread with His Apostles and gave them wine to drink, signifying to them the sacrifice that He would have to make on the Cross, where His body would be broken, and His precious blood shed for the remission of the sins of all mankind. After that, He took them to the Mount of Olives, where He prophesied about His death and resurrection. He told His Apostles that they would abandon Him. Hearing this, Peter and the rest of the Apostles declared their loyalty to Him, even unto death.

When they reached Gethsemane, Jesus took Peter, James and John away, while the rest of the Apostles waited. He left the three of them to watch while He went a little further to pray. When He returned from praying, Jesus found the three disciples asleep and rebuked them. Then, He went back again to pray. After the second time of prayer, Jesus came back and found the Apostles asleep again. But this time, He did not wake them up, but went back again to pray a third time. Finally, Jesus returned and woke them, telling them that the time was approaching when He was to be betrayed.

Jesus prayed to God the Father when He was faced with the prospect of having to sacrifice Himself on the Cross. He found strength in prayer and communion with God. Likewise, we should also be prayerful at all times, because God delights in the prayer of His children [Proverbs 15:8].

May we find strength, comfort and joy in communicating with Him daily.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 2

MATTHEW 26:26–46

MEDITATION

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.
– James 5:16

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 26:47–75

LESSON

Repentance

VERSE 75

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.

While Jesus was speaking to His Apostles after His prayer at Gethsemane, Judas came with a band of men to capture Jesus. Judas told them that Jesus would be the person that he would kiss when they meet. When Judas' men took Jesus, one of the disciples smote the ear of one of the men. Jesus told him to put away his sword, and reminded His disciples that all these had to happen in order for Scripture to be fulfilled regarding His sacrificial death on the Cross.

All His followers had forsaken Him, and Jesus was led away to the high priest's palace, where He was falsely accused of blaspheming God. The high priest pronounced Jesus guilty and proceeded to spit on Him and beat Him. Peter, who had followed Jesus from afar, witnessed all these. When he was identified as a follower of Jesus on three occasions, Peter denied all three accusations. Peter realised his error when the cock crowed immediately after his third denial, reminding him of Jesus' predictions of his denials. He went away and wept sorrowfully.

Much had been said about Peter's denial of Jesus. However, do not miss the fact that all the rest of the disciples also forsook Him, despite their initial promise [v. 35]. Peter's realisation of his error is a model of repentance that we should take note.

True repentance brings with it sorrow for the sin committed, allowing room for restitution to come after.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 3
MATTHEW 26:47-75

THOUGHT

Repentance is a grace of God's Spirit whereby a sinner is inwardly humbled and visibly reformed.
– Thomas Watson

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 27:1–10***LESSON****He who betrayed Jesus****VERSE 5**

And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Of the 12 Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, the most urbanised one was Judas Iscariot. He was the son of Simon [John 6:71]. The additional reference of “Iscariot” is used to distinguish him from another disciple of the same name [Luke 6:16].

“Iscariot” refers to Judas’ hometown Kerieth, a small city in southern Judah. That makes Judas Iscariot the only disciple who was not from Galilee. Judas Iscariot also seemed to have shown himself to be “most adept” in money matters and he was the one who “had the bag” [John 13:29] in the apostolic band. He was also a thief [John 12:6].

The treachery of Judas was well known. He betrayed our Lord Jesus with a kiss for thirty pieces of silver. By his betrayal, Judas sold his own soul. The Bible says, “Satan entered into him” [John 13:27]. In using a kiss, Judas concealed his treason under the cloak of affection. The tragedy, however, is that Judas kissed the Door of heaven [John 10:9] and went to hell. Judas was so overwhelmed by his own guilt—a guilt that could not be assuaged by his return of the blood money—that he went out and hanged himself.

The Apostle Paul distinguishes between “godly sorrow [that] worketh repentance to salvation ... [and] the sorrow of the world worketh death” [2 Corinthians 7:10]. Such was the sorrow of Judas, a worldly sorrow borne out of the fact he was always a “son of perdition” [John 17:12], never a son of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 4
MATTHEW 27:1–10

THOUGHT

The allurements of sin give no comfort. True relief comes from true repentance.

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 27:11–32***LESSON****Barabbas or Jesus?****VERSE 17**

Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

Our Lord Jesus was brought before Pontus Pilate to face the charge of sedition. The Jews accused Him of “perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King” [Luke 23:2]. Though He knew that the accusations against Jesus were false, Pilate tried to placate the mob by offering them a choice, Barabbas or Jesus?

Barabbas simply means “son of Abba”. He was “a notable prisoner” [v. 16], a robber [John 18:40] and a murderous rebel [Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19]. We can say that Jesus of Nazareth and Barabbas were direct opposites. Our Lord Jesus would not break a bruised reed or quench a smoking flax [Matthew 12:20]. Barabbas, on the other hand, would not hesitate to use violence to achieve his ends. The difference between Jesus and Barabbas was night and day, and Pilate had expected the mob to choose Jesus. After all, it was just days before that they honoured Him as the Son of David [Matthew 21:9]. But Pilate underestimated the hatred of the people, who clamoured, “Let him be crucified” [v. 22].

Barabbas’ release from prison and unto life directly exemplifies the effects of substitutionary atonement. In saving us from our sins, our Lord Jesus’ atonement on our behalf is not to be discounted as incidental. Christ was made sin for Barabbas, the just for the unjust. Christ was made sin for us too. He died so that we might live.

The mob on that day was given a choice, Barabbas or Jesus. They chose Barabbas. Whom do you choose?

**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 5
MATTHEW 27:11–32**

THOUGHT

... I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live. – Deuteronomy 30:19

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 27:33–56

LESSON

Forsaken by God!

VERSE 46

*And about the ninth hour
Jesus cried with a loud
voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama
sabachthani? That is to say,
My God, my God, why hast
thou forsaken me?*

The last hours of our Lord Jesus was marked by His struggles in Gethsemane, His sentence at Gabbatha and, finally, His sacrifice at Golgotha. All these took place within a matter of a few hours. He was crucified at the third hour [Mark 15:25]. At the sixth hour, which was noon, the sky darkened [Mark 15:33]. At the ninth hour, Jesus was forsaken by God and died [v. 46]. Our Lord Jesus was on the cross for six hours—six hours that accomplished God’s redemption plan; six hours that changed the history of mankind; and six hours that nullified the effects of the Fall forever.

Consider the Man behind the cry. He was no ordinary man and these were not ordinary circumstances. It was not just the cry of a man suffering from physical pain. It was the cry of the Son of God Who bore the sins of all mankind in His own body.

Perish the thought that our Lord Jesus, because of His deity, was spared the full weight of God’s wrath. On the contrary, the perfect union of Father and Son made this separation unbearable for our Lord Jesus.

The Cross was an instrument of death. Our Lord’s anguish on the Cross was real. His sufferings were terrible. But “for the joy that was set before Him, [He] endured the cross, despising the shame” [Hebrews 12:2]. He went to the Cross knowing that sinners would be saved. In that sense, we see the beauty of the Cross. From the Cross, our Saviour’s love for sinners—the magnitude of which is incomprehensible—is displayed.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 6
MATTHEW 27:33–56

THOUGHT

How can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me? Answer: Amazing love!

BIBLE LESSON*Matthew 27:57–66***LESSON****Ensuring the inevitable****VERSE 65**

Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can.

The burial of our Lord Jesus was hurried because of the impending Sabbath. His body was placed in a borrowed tomb before the Sabbath observances started. The burial and the sealing of the tomb made His death official.

However, it was not enough for the priests and Pharisees. The next day, they ignored their own scruples of Sabbath observances and sought an audience with Pilate. They came to Pilate because they knew about Jesus' predictions that He would rise again on the third day. They were concerned that His disciples would steal His body and later claimed that Jesus had risen from the dead. They wanted "the sepulchre be made sure" [v. 64a]. Pilate acceded to their request to set a guard over the tomb. He said, "Make it as sure as ye can" [v. 65b]. The priests' request and Pilate's command were that all steps should be taken to ensure Jesus stayed in the tomb.

Matthew said that they sealed the stone and set a guard over the tomb. His account showed that it was impossible for a weakened Jesus to roll away the stone and walk out of the tomb, as some critics had suggested. It was just as impossible for His disciples to steal the body.

The irony is that in taking steps so that "the sepulchre be made sure", the reality of the resurrection became indisputable. In their attempts to ensure that Jesus stayed dead, the priests and Pharisees lent themselves as infallible proof that He is alive forevermore. No tomb in the world can hold the Son of God. Christ has triumphed over sin and death.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 7**MATTHEW 27:57–66****THOUGHT****Because I live, ye shall live also – John 14:19b**

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 28:1–10

LESSON

Come ... see ... go ... tell

VERSE 6

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.

The stone was rolled from the tomb not so that Jesus could walk out but that the women could go in to see that it was empty. To prove that Christ had indeed risen, the angel said to the women, “Come, see the place where the Lord lay” [v. 6b]. This was an invitation to see first hand, with the connotation of seeing and experiencing. There was nothing to see. And there was nothing to experience but an empty tomb. Never in the history of mankind was victory affirmed by emptiness.

The reason the tomb was empty: “He is risen!” Three words that spell hope for every repentant sinner. The resurrection is the heart of the Christian faith. It has been said that it is impossible to have a living faith with a dead Saviour. Paul wrote, “If Christ be not risen, then ... your faith is ... vain” [1 Corinthians 15:14].

The Christian’s hope is that our Lord Jesus is risen. The priests and Pharisees had conspired to kill Him. They had gone to great lengths to ensure that He stayed dead but, as in the lyrics of Robert Lowry’s hymn, “Up from the grave He arose ... He arose a Victor from the dark domain ... He arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!”

Entering the tomb and experiencing its emptiness is the responsibility of going and telling [v. 7]. The women were to make known the glorious message that our Lord Jesus had risen. Do you know the risen Saviour? Are you going and telling what He has done for you?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 8
MATTHEW 28:1–10

THOUGHT

The Lord is risen indeed! Then hell has lost his prey; with Him is risen the ransomed seed to reign in endless day. – Thomas Kelly

BIBLE LESSON

Matthew 28:11–20

LESSON

Go ... teach ... baptise

VERSE 19

*Go ye therefore, and teach
all nations, baptising them
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son, and of the
Holy Ghost.*

It is important to note that the Great Commission is the result of our Lord’s resurrection and exaltation. Because He has been given all power, “therefore” He commands the disciples to “go”. Our Lord Jesus had sent them forth before, but their field then was confined to the Jews [Matthew 10:5–6].

In the Great Commission, the field was enlarged to include “all nations” [v. 19; Acts 1:8]. To go implies a pro-active evangelistic fervour. It is not to wait for sinners to come to church but for Christians to go to them with the Gospel.

The purpose of our going is to “teach” [v. 19], which is more than just to transmit facts. To “teach” is to “disciple” [Matthew 27:57]. Discipleship engages the mind in God’s Word, and it also engages the heart and will to live for God’s glory. Thus evangelism is more than just bringing the Gospel to a sinner and get him converted. It is to teach them the Word of God and to train them in the faith that they will continue to be disciples for the rest of their lives. When our Lord calls, He also equips. The Commission begins with our Lord’s declaration that He had all power, and it ends with His promise that He would be with them at all times “even unto the end of the world” [v. 20].

The Great Commission is one of those verses that has been memorised often but seldom practised. Will you go and make disciples for Christ?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 9
MATTHEW 28:11–20

THOUGHT

Consider the all-encompassing truths of the Great Commission: All power [you will have no lack] ... all nations [the world is your mission field] ... all things [the whole counsel of God’s Word] ... always [the promise of God’s presence].

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 1:1–13***LESSON****Declaring the Gospel of Christ****VERSE 3**

The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

John Mark begins his writing with the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in view. It is, after all, His Gospel and so it must concern Him. This Good News comprises the life, ministry, death, resurrection and glorification of the Son of God. Doubtlessly, Jesus Christ is the Subject and Author of the Gospel.

God has long planned for and promised the coming of the Son of God through His prophets in the Old Testament. John the Baptist was seen to be the last voice prior to the appearance of the Messiah. He was the forerunner announcing the coming of the King. In ancient times, most roads were uneven and dusty. People would heed the announcement of the runner, and make preparation by cleaning and levelling the roads for the coming king.

What a privilege and honour it was for John to be involved in announcing the arrival of the long-expected Deliverer! His concerns then were not for luxuries and conveniences, but to bring forth the message entrusted to him by God clearly to His people. He was keenly aware that he was but a servant, so much so that he said he was not worthy to unloose His shoes.

We need to have a servant's heart like that of John the Baptist, humbly serving the Lord. We, too, have been called upon to be God's messengers to a lost and dying world. The only one who can bring deliverance and salvation is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God [2 Corinthians 4:4–5].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 10
MARK 1:1–13

PRAYER

Lord, make me Thy willing and humble servant, to be a mouthpiece for Thee. Amen!

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 1:14–45***LESSON****Becoming fishers of men****VERSE 17**

*And Jesus said unto them,
Come ye after me, and I
will make you to become
fishers of men.*

Men and demons would try to silence the witnesses of God even as John the Baptist was behind bars. But there came One Who was greater than John, preaching repentance with greater impact on the people. There is no stopping of the works of God. How foolish it is of puny men who seek to fight against God and His Truth!

Moreover, many more messengers rise up to cry out the Gospel—the message of salvation. God’s Word will not be bound forever. These messengers who were called to proclaim the Kingdom of God were ordinary men. But they willingly and readily gave themselves to the service of the King. God turned them into extraordinary individuals who “turned the world upside down”.

We are reminded by the words of the Apostle Paul: “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” [1 Corinthians 1:27–29].

Let us never forget that, in our ministries, Christ is the Master and the Potter. He can change vessels once fitted for destruction to become vessels of honour. The beauty of the pottery points to the genius of the Maker. Thus, He alone deserves to have the glory and honour [John 3:30].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 11
MARK 1:14–45

THOUGHT

If the Lord Jesus would call us to follow Him today, how would we respond to Him? Obey immediately or procrastinate?

1 MARCH

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 2:1–17

LESSON

**Finding time for the
needy**

VERSE 17

When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

It is never easy to handle success or popularity. One will naturally have a sense of importance and superiority. However, it oftentimes ends in a pit of humiliation. Although our Saviour is busy and much sought after, He still finds time for even one precious soul. The sickly man in this lesson was brought in by his friends and they were met with the Lord's warm welcome. Seeing his faith, our Lord tended to his spiritual and physical needs immediately. He never turned a blind eye to a needy person by sending him away empty-handed, unblessed or untouched.

This act of kindness of Christ was met with the stare of uncanny eyes of criticism and unbelief. Not only were the religious leaders unwilling to show love to their fellow man, they were ready to condemn the Lord. They were more concerned with their "doctrines" than the alleviation of the sufferings of another human being.

On top of that, the most difficult—though simple—truth for them to swallow was Jesus' ability to forgive, for little did they understand that He is the Christ sent by God and He had the power to forgive men of their sins. The Lord demonstrated His right to do what only He could do to those who had come to Him in repentance.

Let us come before Him each day as we are—without our veil of self-righteousness but confessing our spiritual bankruptcy. If we do so, it is certain that He will receive us graciously and show us mercy [Hosea 14:2].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 12
MARK 2:1–17

THOUGHT

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. – 1 John 1:9

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 2:18–28

LESSON

The Lord of the Sabbath

VERSE 27

*And he said unto them,
The Sabbath was made for
man, and not man for the
Sabbath.*

When a man is quick to justify his own actions, he is resistant to the suggestions of others. John's disciples and the Pharisees were ready to enforce religious acts such as fasting on Jesus' disciples. However, He saw no need for His disciples to follow suit. In fact, there was nothing in the Law to demand one to fast.

They had erred in that they tried to mix "new wine into old bottles." This is an expression to mean that one cannot mingle things that are essentially different. Jesus has come to do something new and not to reform the old system of the Mosaic laws [Matthew 5:17].

God in His kindness has instituted a day of rest for man's well-being in the Garden of Eden. He first created the world and prepared all things therein to serve man's bodily and physical needs. This was even before man began to work and toil in the garden. God knows what we are made of and understands the stresses and anxieties that we have to face each day. Therefore, there is a need for man to rest from all his labours. More importantly, the purpose of the Christian Sabbath is for man to seek after the source of all good in God and to find rest in Him.

Jesus' claim that He is the Lord of the Sabbath is coupled with doing good deeds. We should be actively participating on the Lord's Day with Christian charity, and we will certainly be commended by God [Hebrews 6:12].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 13
MARK 2:18–28

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, as we set apart each day to seek Thee, may we find perfect peace and rest in Thee.

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 3:1–12

LESSON

**Doing good to others
everyday and not evil**

VERSE 4

*And he saith unto them, Is
it lawful to do good on the
sabbath days, or to do evil?
to save life, or to kill? But
they held their peace.*

What do you hope to see in the Church, God’s house of worship? Probably God’s people who gather in humble worship of God and in praise of God for Who He is and what He has done for us. However, in actuality, while we can find sincere and humble Christians, we can also see those who are malicious and proud in God’s house.

Such was the case when Jesus was ministering in a synagogue, where people were gathered to worship God and to hear the Word of God. In an assembly like this, there is bound to be people with very special needs. We are instructed to “rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits” [Romans 12:15–16]. Sadly, these attributes are lacking in so many a congregation.

Our Lord laid before the audience a principle that is so obvious it has to be observed by every child of God—that it is “lawful to do good on the Sabbath day” and not “to do evil”; to save and not to kill. There is no question about what we are to do and why.

No Christian should ever hesitate to do good work every day when there is an opportunity to do so. Any work of mercy done in the name of the Lord must always be done without scruples. We would be most like our Saviour if we follow the good example that He has set before us [Acts 10:38].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 14
MARK 3:1–12

THOUGHT

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? – Micah 6:8

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 3:13–35***LESSON****Doing the will of God
throughout our lives****VERSE 35***For whosoever shall do the
will of God, the same is my
brother, and my sister, and
mother.*

It is not surprising to see the Lord Jesus' hectic schedule from the moment He started His public ministry. The Gospel writer was careful to note His "busyness" in His Father's business. Evidently, it is clear that He was going about doing the will of His heavenly Father.

The description of the Lord's ministry is indicated in Luke 4:18–19: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord." A great multitude has benefited tremendously from His tireless work.

As the workload increases and there are more people to meet, there is a dire need for labourers. The Lord handpicked 12 men to share in His ministry. He trained them personally. In their preparation for their ministry, they must begin to stay close to Him and maintain a special fellowship with their Saviour. They would have to learn of Him, imitate His life and drink deeply of His Word. Only then would they be ready to preach what they have seen and heard from Him [1 John 1:3].

When God's work gains pace, the devil will also raise his ugly head. This can be in the form of troubles that impede the progress of any Gospel ministry. These hindrances may come from the world without or the family within. It is important that the worker remains focused on the work he is doing for God and not be swayed by them [Acts 20:24].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 15
MARK 3:13–35

THOUGHT

**... How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I
must be about My Father's business? – Luke 2:49**

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 4: 1–20***LESSON****What kind of soil are you?****VERSE 14***The sower soweth the word.*

Jesus likens the Word of God to a seed. Not every seed grows into a plant and bears fruit. The focus is on the kinds of soil that receive the seed, that is, the kinds of people who receive the Word of God.

A person on the wayside hears the Word of God but pays little attention to the warnings of the Word. He sits on the unploughed field, which is hard to reach. He does not apply the Word in his life; he leads a hardened life. A person standing on rocky ground receives the Word, gets excited over it and professes his belief in God. However, he fails to count the cost of following Christ. He does not commit himself to learning more about Him. He is a superficial believer who will fall away if trials come.

A person who stands among the thorns receives the Word and honestly tries to live a Christian life. But the thorns of worldliness continue to grow around him. He lives a double life—trying to live for Christ yet indulging in worldly pleasures at the same time. Finally, the thorns choke his life out.

A person standing on good soil hears the Word and keeps it in his heart. He lives a life worthy of the Lord and bears fruit in every good work, thus fulfilling the purpose of the seed. This parable tells us that when the Word of God is received as it should be, something happens. Fruits are produced.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 16
MARK 4:1–20

THOUGHT

The “types of soil” analogy applies to people who hear the Gospel for the first time as well as those who have sat at the pews for many years.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 4:21–41***LESSON****Take heed what ye hear****VERSE 24**

*And he said unto them,
Take heed what ye hear:
with what measure ye mete,
it shall be measured to you:
and unto you that hear
shall more be given.*

Our Lord Jesus asks us to take heed of what we hear. As we respond to His Word, He will respond to us accordingly, “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you: and unto you that hear shall more be given”. To those who hear but reject God’s Word, they will soon lose the ability to understand it. To those who hear and accept God’s Word, they will receive even more spiritual understanding.

“Take heed what ye hear.” Consider carefully and pay attention to what you hear. Jesus is talking about the responsibility of the hearer. He is responsible for what he hears as well as how he interprets what he hears. He is accountable for what fills his heart and mind. If a man fills his mind with trash, he is responsible for the trash. If he fills his mind with the truth, he is responsible for the truth.

Jesus says the measure to which a person gives himself to know the truth determines his reward. The measure refers to the amount of energy and effort, the degree of commitment and the depth of thought. The reward is that the person who gives himself to know the Truth shall be given a deeper understanding of it. Conversely, he who does not shall lose all of it.

However, hearing the Truth does us no good unless we put it into action. If we do not exercise the gift of faith God has given us, we shall lose it. Gifts and grace multiply by being exercised.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 17
MARK 4:21–41

THOUGHT**Burying the truth is a betrayal of trust.**

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 5: 1–20***LESSON****Conditions of a wretched man****VERSE 8**

*For he said unto him,
Come out of the man, thou
unclean spirit.*

Mark describes in great detail the terrible conditions of the demon-possessed man. He was “a man with an unclean spirit”. He represents men who are not spiritual and who have no God. He “had his dwelling among the tombs” [v. 3]. He represented men who loved darkness because of their evil deeds.

“No man could bind him ... neither could any man tame him” [v. 3–4]. The man was uncontrollable, unrestrained and untamed. He represented the depravity and helplessness of men to save themselves. “He was in the mountains” [v. 5]. The man was cut off from society. He did not live among the living but the dead. He represented the living dead. Men without Christ are “dead in sins” and cut off from the Kingdom of God. He “cried and cut himself with stones”. The man was tormented and self-destructive. He was a threat to himself and to others. He represented men who have fallen far into the pit, where only God could rescue.

However, after meeting with Christ, he was “clothed, and in his right mind” [v. 15]. The man used to be naked and stripped of all decency but now he was clothed and sane. He represented the old self who desperately needed to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ.

No matter how much men are controlled by evil, the Lord Jesus cares and has the power to drive out their demons, only if they put their trust in Him. This is a wonderful hope, even for the most wretched and hopeless.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 18
MARK 5:1–20

THOUGHT

Demons attack men because they hate the image of God in men.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 5:21–43***LESSON****Laying hold of Jesus’
power****VERSE 28***For she said, If I may touch
but his clothes, I shall be
whole.*

A certain woman had suffered from haemorrhage for 12 years. She was desperate and was regarded as “spiritually and socially unclean”. She went to many doctors for treatment, draining her finances, yet her illness only became worse.

Today, when people feel a spiritual need, they too go to different “doctors” and spend a great deal of time and money. They go to “Doctor Entertainment” but find no joy. They go to “Doctor Self-Help” or “Doctor Inspiration” but are not lifted. They approach “Doctor Yoga” or “Doctor Meditation” but cannot find peace.

Only Jesus can help. The suffering woman said to herself: “If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole.” She believed in the healing power of Jesus. She reached out to touch Jesus’ garment. She was healed instantly. Jesus could sense her touch of desperation and He had responded in love. There is a huge difference between “bumping into Jesus” and “reaching out to touch Him in faith”. We can go to church Sunday after Sunday and “bump into Jesus”. This is not the same as reaching out to touch Him in faith. Charles Spurgeon said: “It is not every contact with Christ that saves men; it is the arousing of yourself to come near to him.”

Jesus told the woman: “Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.” Her fear and trembling were gone; she was now filled with inner peace. She had been made whole bodily and spiritually.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 19
MARK 5:21–43

THOUGHT

When all else fails, there is Jesus. It is sad that most people try all else before reaching out to Him.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 6: 1–29***LESSON****Rejected by His own people****VERSE 6***And he marvelled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching.*

When Jesus returned to His hometown, Nazareth, His neighbours did not flock to Him. Rather, they wondered how He had become so powerful in both word (preaching) and work (miracles). Jesus left Nazareth as a carpenter and came back a rabbi, complete with a team of disciples.

“Is this not the carpenter?” was no compliment. It was a way of pointing out that Jesus had no formal theological training to be a rabbi. “Is this not the Son of Mary?” was also not flattery. It was contrary to Jewish practice to describe a man as the son of his mother, even if she was a widow, except in insulting terms.

“And they were offended at Him.” These neighbours of Jesus knew very little about Him but they thought they knew everything about Him. The contempt these people showed said more about their character than it did about Jesus. Jesus “marvelled because of their unbelief”. The people in Nazareth were probably envious of the prominence Jesus had achieved. Their unbelief was just incredible. These town folks had personally witnessed Jesus’ wisdom and heard all about His miracles, yet they did not accept Him. Jesus acknowledged their rejection and left them.

It is bewildering to think of men rejecting the salvation of Christ Who delivers them from sin, death and the coming judgement. Men’s inability to believe God and trust Him is indeed amazing! Would the Lord Jesus marvel at our little faith or unbelief?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 20
MARK 6:1–29

THOUGHT

For with God nothing shall be impossible. – Luke 1:37

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 6:30–56***LESSON****Jesus' compassion on the
multitude****VERSE 42***And they did all eat, and
were filled.*

Jesus knew His disciples needed a rest after they returned from their ministry in Galilee. But the multitude “ran afoot thither out of all cities, and outwent them” [v. 33]. In the evening, the disciples asked Jesus to send them away, for they had nothing to eat [v. 36].

Both Jesus and His disciples saw exactly the same need among the multitude. The disciples' solution was to “get rid of” the need by asking the people to leave. Jesus had a different solution. He wanted to dine with them because He loved them. He told the disciples, “Give ye them to eat” [v. 37]. Jesus' instruction must have seemed so extravagant to His disciples. The thought of spending a year's income to feed this multitude one meal was not only impossible but also possibly a waste.

The disciples had often linked crowds with “work” and “demands”, especially at a time like this when they were deprived of their well-deserved rest. But Jesus was “moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd” [v. 34]. Each seeking face reflected a need, a hunger or a hurt. Understandably, it never crossed the mind of the disciples that Jesus might provide for the multitude with an “extravagant” miracle. Sure enough, with just five loaves and two fishes, 5,000 people were well-fed that evening.

God has resources that we know nothing about, so we must trust Him and be at peace even when we cannot figure out how He is going to provide.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 21
MARK 6:30–56

THOUGHT

God can do great things with our small gifts and talents to touch the lives of others.

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 7:1–23

LESSON

Defilement from within

VERSE 23

All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

The Gospel of Mark emphasises the ministry of Christ as the Servant-Teacher, focusing on His deeds, with Chapter 7 recording for us some important teachings of our Lord. It records the traditions of the elders—Jewish Pharisees put too much importance on outward ceremonial laws which are only of man’s making [v. 1–13]—as well as place the focus rightly on the condition of man’s heart [v. 14–23]. Only our innermost thoughts and affections can affect and defile us.

We read of the importance placed on traditions by the Pharisees. They were obsessed with external ceremonial washing, equating external piety with spirituality. In their legalistic ways, the Pharisees even worked their way around the Fifth Commandment [Exodus 20:12]. By declaring “corban” on an item to consecrate it to God, they withheld support due to their parents [v. 11].

In contrast to such legalism, our Lord Jesus stresses on a spiritual understanding of the Law of God. The analogy to the law of nature in Matthew 7:17 serves to point out the truth that whatever we say, think and do reveals our innermost thoughts. Only what comes from within our hearts can hurt us. Hence, Christ’s teaching on inward purity takes precedence over outward, superstitious ceremonial observances. In fact, there is nothing wrong in observing traditions, provided it does not supersede the law of love.

Have you been over-zealous in keeping up appearances of outward piety? Are you guilty of replacing God’s Word with man’s traditions? Let us remember to exalt the Word of God.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 22
MARK 7:1–23

PRAYER

Meditate on Psalm 19:14.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 7:24–37***LESSON****Salvation for all****VERSE 27**

But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.

From teaching the Jews, we read of our Lord Jesus helping the Gentiles. In seeking Christ's healing touch upon her child, the Syrophoenician woman showed the extent of a mother's love for her daughter [v. 24–30]. What our Lord Jesus did manifested His loving compassion for any humbled sinner. The next miracle [v. 31–37] again reveals the love of Christ, this time for a deaf and dumb man.

A mother's love for her child knows no bounds. No obstacle is too great for her to overcome, no sacrifice too demanding for her to meet. However, human sacrificial love can never be compared to the love of God. Divine love always reaches out to the lost. John 3:16 states clearly the extent of God's love for us.

The miracles mentioned here—casting out a demon and restoring a man's impediment— reveal God's love and mercy being extended to the Gentiles. Just like how charity begins at home, the privilege of salvation was first given to the Jews. The Apostle Paul would first preach to the Jews in synagogues and then reach out to the non-Jews. Gentiles are included in God's all-encompassing love.

Thank God for His ministry of reconciliation [2 Corinthians 5:19–20]. As God's children, we must emulate His example of reaching out to the lost [Luke 19:10]. How compassionate are you to others in need? If you are not a believer, will you humble yourself to accept even just a "crumb" of mercy by receiving our Lord Jesus as your personal Saviour?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 23
MARK 7:24–37

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for extending Your love towards me.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 8:1–26***LESSON****Dull of understanding****VERSE 18**

*Having eyes, see ye not?
And having ears, hear
ye not? and do ye not
remember?*

Here, as in the preceding chapter, we read of the miraculous works of our Lord Jesus. The feeding of the four thousand took care of the physical needs of the crowd. However, the Pharisees and Herodians were blinded by stubborn unbelief. The disciples' reactions were no better [v. 1–21]. This section ends with the healing of the blind man in Bethsaida [v. 22–26].

Our Lord Jesus is always full of loving compassion in His dealings with people. Here we see Him empathising with the hungry multitude. He was concerned for their physical as well as their spiritual needs. This should motivate us to be compassionate for others, too.

Many of us may be surprised at the unbelief of people in those days, despite their witnessing of those miracles first-hand. They needed signs to prove to them the deity of Christ. Our Lord Jesus warned His disciples to “take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod” [v. 15]. “Leaven” here refers to their false teachings. However, even Christ’s own disciples misunderstood and could not fully grasp the true nature of His Kingdom.

How about you? Are you guilty of a lapse of memory about the goodness of our Lord? Do you soon forget God’s deliverance of your trials the minute they are over? If you care to count your blessings, they are indeed numerous. God’s grace is very bountiful and He is willing and able to grant us both our needs and wants.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 24
MARK 8:1–26

THOUGHT

Count your blessings, name them one by one.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 8:27–38***LESSON****What think ye of Christ?****VERSE 29**

*And he saith unto them,
But whom say ye that I am?
And Peter answereth and
saith unto him, Thou art
the Christ.*

Peter's attestation to the deity of Christ is the main emphasis in this closing section of Mark 8. The disciples now realised that Jesus is the Christ. They had misunderstood His imminent suffering on the cross of Calvary [v. 27–33]. What followed next was Christ's teaching on discipleship. Taking up the cross involves full allegiance to Christ, even at the expense of our lives [v. 34–38].

The answers to "Whom do men say that I am?" were unexpected. It was surprising how the people could mistake Christ for John the Baptist and the prophets. What do you think the response would be when this question is addressed to you?

The same question, this time worded more personally, was posed directly to the disciples. "But whom say ye that I am?" The most outspoken disciple, Peter, confessed, "Thou art the Christ." This showed his comprehension of Who Christ is—the Anointed One, the promised Messiah. However, Peter's next response to Christ's declaration of His imminent suffering showed his traditional understanding of a glorious Messiah. Christ's rebuke of Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan" revealed the stakes involved in God's messianic plan. It is a fierce spiritual warfare.

On a personal note, who is Christ to you? Is He a miracle-working God Whom you look to only in times of need? Are you willing to pay the price of discipleship? If you are a believer, pray for strength to serve Christ whole-heartedly.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 25
MARK 8:27–38

QUESTION**Is Christ the Lord and Saviour of your life?**

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 9:1–13***LESSON****Loving God's presence****VERSE 5**

And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.

What a mountain-top experience! The three favoured Apostles, Peter, James and John, were privileged to witness the transfiguration of Christ. Elijah and Moses appeared and were engaged in conversation with Jesus. It was a vision of supernatural splendour. The disciples were awed by this glimpse of Heaven's glory and did not want to leave such hallowed ground. Peter suggested building shelters so as to extend the stay of the heavenly guests and their glorious experience.

The cloud of glory was a symbol of divine presence [v. 7] as in the days of the exodus, when God led the Israelites using a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night. God the Father spoke a second time in testimony of His Son, and commanded the disciples to hear and obey Him. He first spoke at the baptism of Jesus in public declaration of the sonship of Christ [Matthew 3:17].

This inner circle of disciples was also with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane [Mark 14:33]. They were chosen for a very special leadership role. Through the manifestations of His glory, and those of His patience in suffering and impending death, He was preparing them for the work of the Gospel ministry.

May we say like David does in Psalm 27:4, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 26
MARK 9:1–13

PRAYER**O for a closer walk with God.**

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 9:14–29***LESSON****Believing faith****VERSE 23**

*Jesus said unto him, If thou
canst believe, all things
are possible to him that
believeth.*

As Jesus and the three disciples descended from the mountain, He saw a great crowd waiting at the foot and noticed the scribes challenging the other nine disciples, who were powerless to deliver a demonic child. Not one of the disciples was able to cast out the demon from the boy, and the scribes took advantage of this situation to discredit their Master before the people.

When Jesus questioned the scribes on the cause of the contention, they kept silent. Instead, the distraught father came forward and pleaded for help and compassion, wondering whether Jesus could help where His disciples had failed. “If Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us,” he said [v. 22b]. Jesus responded, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth,” stressing the fact that believing faith must come from the person in need of help.

Compare the pleas of the leper [Mark 1:40] and the Syrophenician woman [Mark 7:26] with the father of this demonic child. The leper’s words, “If Thou wilt,” indicated an acknowledgment of the Almighty power of Jesus and an appeal to His benevolence. The Gentile woman was content with one crumb of power and grace, and our Lord had honoured her great faith by delivering her daughter from demon possession.

Jesus reprimanded the nine disciples who failed in the exorcism because of their lack of faith and prayer. How often have we fallen to this same state of unbelief and ineffectiveness in our service for God? Let us go to Him for renewed faith and power through prayer.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 27
MARK 9:14–29

MEDITATE

**Let me at a throne of mercy
Find a sweet relief;
Kneeling there in deep contrition,
Help my unbelief.**

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 9:30–50

LESSON

Service leading to honour

VERSE 35

And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.

Jesus spent time privately with His disciples to instruct and prepare them for His death and resurrection. They were grieved and could not grasp the situation but were afraid to ask. Sadly, they were more concerned with their personal ambitions as to who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our Lord used a little child to teach them the lesson of humility and service before honour.

When asked what they had been arguing about along the way, the disciples kept silent, as they feared a reprimand for their pride and ambition for worldly grandeur. How heart-breaking it must have been for our Lord that His disciples were esteeming themselves better than others at this time of His impending suffering and death. Jeremiah rightly pointed out that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked [Jeremiah 17:9].

Jesus elaborated that the two conditions of true greatness were humility and service. Jesus Himself exemplified this by His ultimate sacrifice at the cross of Calvary [Mark 10:45]. His was a life of self-denial and wholehearted devotion to the service of others. His divine glory was voluntarily exchanged for human lowliness [Philippians 2:7]. This is in contrast to man's idea of greatness, which is to lord over others. The lesson is that he who wants to be the greatest must be always ready to serve others in a spirit of humility and self-sacrifice.

It is time to do a spiritual check-up on our motives for service.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 28
MARK 9:30–50

THOUGHT

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. – Matthew 23:12

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 10:1–16

LESSON

Children and the Kingdom

VERSE 14

But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

In the discourse on divorce [v. 2–12], Jesus proclaimed God’s perfect and ideal plan for marriage. It is for keeps, to end only by death. He further clarified that Moses permitted divorce because of the hardness of man’s heart [v. 5]. From marriage comes the blessing of children—a rich heritage from God and not a liability [Psalms 127–128].

During His earthly ministry, our Lord had always welcomed children into His presence. The attitude of His disciples revealed that they did not consider children as important. They probably thought that they were doing Jesus a great favour by chasing the children and their parents away from Him. How quickly have they forgotten their Master’s teaching regarding children in the previous chapter [Mark 9:36–37].

Jesus was much displeased when He saw His disciples chasing children away from His presence. He immediately ordered that they be brought forward so that He could bless and pray for them [v. 16]. Take note that the infant Jesus was also once brought to the temple for blessing [Luke 2:28]. Nothing should hinder children from coming to know God, “for of such is the kingdom of God”. Children should be directed to the Saviour at the earliest age possible.

Parents are encouraged to bring their children to the Lord for salvation and dedication. Hannah presented her son, Samuel, to God at a very young age and, later, Samuel responded to God’s call into fulltime service [1 Samuel 3:9].

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 29
MARK 10:1–16

PRAYER

Lord, may we have childlike faith.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 10:17–31***LESSON****The peril of riches****VERSE 22**

And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.

The rich, young ruler came running to Jesus to inquire about the way to eternal life [v. 17]. He knelt in humility as a mark of respect in recognition of the position and authority of our Lord as a revered Teacher. He was concerned about eternal life but had the wrong notions on how to attain it.

This was revealed in his question, “What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Notice his pride and self-righteous attitude with regard to his many good deeds. Ironically, this man’s wealth had robbed him of the blessing of eternal life.

This young ruler was a man of substance and influence. He could have been a useful disciple for the Lord but his idolatrous love for mammon rendered him ineffective. He could not bear to part with his riches and had left with sorrow in his heart. Our Lord loved him but he was unwilling to take up his cross and follow Jesus. There can be no compromise in salvation and discipleship. This young man thought that he had done everything right. In actual fact, he lacked the one thing that was the most important—a living faith in God.

None of us can boast that we deserve the grace of God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” [Ephesians 2:8–9]. Many people today are blinded to this truth and have mistakenly tried to find their own way to eternal life through good works.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 30
MARK 10:17–31

THOUGHT

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. – Luke 12:34

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 10:32–52***LESSON****The supreme example****VERSE 45**

*For even the Son of Man
came not to be ministered
unto, but to minister, and
to give his life a ransom for
many.*

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus once again shared His imminent suffering and death with His disciples. They were afraid and could not understand why He had to go that way. Sadly, they were more concerned about their own selfish desires and interests. Two disciples, James and John, secretly approached Jesus with a request to have the two places of highest honour in His Kingdom. This desire was in their minds despite the fact that their Master had just told them plainly of His impending death.

This love for pre-eminence and power is governed by a worldly spirit and ought not to be so among the followers of Christ. The other disciples were very much displeased to know the attempts of the sons of Zebedee to obtain superior rank—simply because they, too, had been thinking of the same request. Jesus had to draw distinctions between worldly greatness and spiritual greatness, which should be the aspiration of the disciples.

Jesus resolved their power struggle with the teaching of humility and service. He who would be the greatest must sacrifice his own will to promote the welfare and happiness of others. He enforced the lesson by His own supreme example of self-denial and total devotion in ministering to others, even to the extent of laying down His life for mankind.

To be in the Kingdom of God, one has to have a humble attitude of a servant. Greatness may be measured by honour and authority in the worldly kingdom but in Christ's kingdom, it is measured by humility and service.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 31**MARK 10:32–52****MEDITATE**

If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. – Luke 9:23

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 11

LESSON

Praying with confidence

VERSE 24

*Therefore I say unto you,
What things soever ye
desire, when ye pray, believe
that ye receive them, and ye
shall have them.*

Jesus was teaching Peter about prayer. The analogy of moving the mountain to the sea is used to demonstrate the power of prayer if God so wishes to answer. In this lesson, the pre-conditions attached to effective prayer are, firstly, you must be a believer [v. 22] and, secondly, you ought not to hold any grievances against your fellow brothers and sisters [v. 25].

We have all heard this wrong saying before: Pray for anything and He will grant it to you. The world has bundled God into a bottle, like a genie. Ask and you shall receive. Does a child get everything he asks his parents for? If a good parent withholds things for the good of his child, what more our holy heavenly Father? Do not believe in what the world wants you to believe. The world may influence you to believe in yourself, or to “think positively”. Some may teach that if you focus hard enough on your goal, success will ensue. God’s Word tells us otherwise, that our life is “a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” [James 4:14].

What then are the conditions for effective prayer? Abide in Christ. His words must abide in us [John 15:7]. We must ask according to His will [1 John 5:14]. We must have faith in God [Mark 11:22].

When the above conditions are fulfilled, we will pray according to God’s will and not ask amiss.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 32
MARK 11

PRAYER

Dear God, help us not to pray for things that serve our own interests. Rather, help us to be fruitful for Thee and in so doing, ask according to Thy will.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 12:1–12***LESSON****God's love and
longsuffering for sinners****VERSE 6***Having yet therefore one
son, his wellbeloved, he sent
him also last unto them,
saying, They will reverence
my son.*

In this parable, the lord of the vineyard is analogous to God, the vineyard to Israel, the husbandmen to Israel's religious leaders, the servants to the faithful prophets and priests, the son to Jesus, and the others to the Gentiles.

We can witness God's love and longsuffering for the sins committed by the husbandmen. The freedom given to the husbandmen to care for the vineyard had been turned into greed. Repeatedly, the husbandmen humiliate, beat and even killed the servants sent by the lord. Finally, the lord sent his own son. But the wicked husbandmen did not revere him and killed him as well. This was God's final solicitation to Israel. The rejection of the Son is the rejection of God Himself, which will bring about the wrath of God against the rebel. The loving forbearance of God in His offering of Jesus Christ for the redemption of men prompted this final mission of love.

What did the lord of the vineyard therefore do? He will come and destroy the husbandmen. When they denied the fruits, he did not distraint upon them for rent, nor disseize them for non-payment. But when they killed his servants and his son, he was determined to destroy them. This was fulfilled when Jerusalem was laid waste and the Jewish nation extirpated and made a desolation. He will give the vineyard to others.

This was fulfilled in the taking in of the Gentiles and the abundance of fruits that the Gospel would bring forth to all the world from henceforth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 33
MARK 12:1–12

THOUGHT

Let sinners guard against a proud and carnal spirit; if they revile or despise the preachers of Christ, they would have also done so to their Master, had they lived when He was upon earth.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 12:13–44***LESSON****Jesus' perfect answer****VERSE 17**

And Jesus answering said unto them, Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. And they marvelled at him.

What a gripping and suspenseful story that is recorded for us in the Bible! We see the religious leaders laying a trap for Jesus by asking him a trick question, “Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?” Either a yes or no answer would have landed Jesus in trouble.

A positive answer would mean that Jesus supported Rome, which would turn the people against Him. A negative answer would bring accusations of treason and rebellion against Rome, and lead to civil penalties for Him.

How would you answer such a question if you were asked in front of a crowd? All eyes were on Jesus then. The religious leaders thought they had the perfect question to trap him, but Jesus' answer was equally perfect: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's” [v. 17]. On top of all that, He also exposed their self-interest and wrong motives. Jesus' answer meant that the coin that bears the emperor's image should be given back to the emperor whereas we, who bear God's image, belong to God.

Are you paying your taxes (rendering to “Caesar” what is his) honestly? Cheating in your tax declaration is not God honouring. Are you giving up your life to God? Our life belongs to God and we should all commit our time and talents to Him.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 34
MARK 12:13–44

CHALLENGE

Pay your taxes honestly and consecrate yourself to God.

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 13:1–13

LESSON

**Persecution because of
the Lord's Name**

VERSE 13

*And ye shall be hated of all
men for my name's sake:
but he that shall endure
unto the end, the same shall
be saved.*

The Mount of Olives rises above the east of Jerusalem. From its slope, a person can look down to the city and see the Temple. The Temple was one of the most beautiful buildings then. It was on this mount that Jesus answered His disciples' question on the signs regarding the end times.

Jesus, in answering the disciples' question, did not seek to satisfy their curiosity. Instead, His answer hit right into their hearts and conscience. In the end times, many will be deceived and persecution of Christians will ensue. Although this may be distressful, His disciples will enjoy peace of mind, though there is chaos all around. The work that they have been called to do will continue on. Though their efforts may be crushed and brought down, the Gospel cannot be. The salvation promised is more than deliverance from evil. It is everlasting blessedness.

What a contrast to the promises and lure of the world! The world may bring you fame, glory and riches but for Christians, suffering for the Lord is expected. Believing in Jesus all the way needs perseverance because our faith will be challenged and opposed by others. Great trials will sift the true Christians out from fair-weather believers.

Are you ready to bear this burden? What does this earn you? Enduring to the end does not earn salvation for us but it does mark the fruits of our salvation. The assurance of our salvation will keep us going in the midst of persecution.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 35
MARK 13:1–13

CHALLENGE

Be ready to take up your cross and be persecuted for righteousness' sake.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 13:14–37***LESSON****When will the Lord come again?****VERSE 35**

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning.

This entire chapter tells us about the manner we should live while we wait for Christ's return. Contrary to what the disciples were seeking for when they asked about the signs of end times, Jesus' answer in this chapter was not given to promote discussions on prophetic timetables but to stimulate right living for God in a world where he was largely ignored. This is applicable even for today.

Expect the end of days to come very shortly. However, do not inquire when it will come, for no one knows the day or the hour. Our duty is to watch and pray. Our Lord Jesus, when He ascended on high, left something for all His servants to do. We ought to be always on our watch, in earnest expectation of His return.

We know not whether our Master will come in the days of our youth, or when we are old but we know that when He comes, it will be a great day of glory and judgement. Our greatest care should be placed on our eternal life and we should live our temporal days on earth prayerfully and watchfully so that whenever our Lord chooses to come, He may not find us indulging in ease and sloth, and mindless of our work and duty.

Watch, that you may be found in peace, without spot, and blameless.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 36
MARK 13:14–37

PRAYER

Dear God, help us to occupy ourselves, not in worldly pursuits but in your service, till Jesus comes again.

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 14:1–31

LESSON

A memorial of her

VERSE 9

*Verily I say unto you,
Wheresoever this gospel
shall be preached
throughout the whole
world, this also that she
hath done shall be spoken
of for a memorial of her.*

Are you torn between the secular world and your service for the Lord? Is your obsession with things of the world preventing you from committing yourself wholeheartedly to God? When you are passionately doing God’s work, do you fear the worldly opinions of others?

In these verses we are considering today, we see two contrasting examples. On the one hand, we have Mary pouring precious ointment onto our Lord’s head [v. 3]. On the other, we see Judas betraying Jesus for money [v. 10–11]. Mary’s wholehearted adoration was met with much indignation from the world, who claimed that she was wasting her resources. Judas’ betrayal was applauded by the respected religious leaders then.

What is your attitude towards the things of the world? Do you consider spending your time and resources for God’s work a waste? Would you rather spend your efforts accumulating worldly wealth? Or are you weary and troubled when the world mocks you in your single-hearted work for Jesus? Our Lord tells us that all earthly riches shall pass away, and the only things that stay are the things we do for Him.

This chapter also records for us our Lord’s breaking of bread with His disciples [v. 12–25]. We must remember Him and He will remember us. Are we like Mary or are we like Judas? Or are we like Peter, who first claimed that “although all shall be offended, yet will not I” [v. 29] but turned out denying Him thrice in front of everybody during times of trials?

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ

EXODUS 37
MARK 14:1–31

THOUGHT

**Remember Thee and all Thy pains
And all Thy love to me;
Yea, while a breath, a pulse remains,
Will I remember Thee.**

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 14:32–52***LESSON****A certain young man****VERSE 52***And he left the linen cloth,
and fled from them naked.*

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was sorrowful, not for the pains He was going to suffer from but for the grievous sins of man [v. 32–35]. Even in this time of great distress, His disciples failed to keep watch with Him. They were sleepy [v. 37] and had succumbed to their flesh [v. 38–40]. Jesus continued to pray until the time he was to be betrayed. When that fateful moment came, His disciples forsook him and fled [v. 50].

Verses 51–52 record for us what happened to a “certain young man” who wore nothing but was only wrapped with a linen cloth. In his desperate attempt to flee, he left the cloth behind and fled naked. It was not written who this man was but many believe it was Mark himself. The fact that only the Gospel of Mark records this event suggests that it was the writer’s guilty confession of his own departure.

It might be easy to stay faithful in good times but will you abide with Him in times of difficulties? Let us always seek to equip ourselves so that when painful times come, we are clothed with the full armour of God. Let us watch and pray so that we will not fall into diverse temptations, be they those of sloth or unbelief.

Let us fight the good fight of faith and, at the end of our race, be able to look back as a good Christian warrior, instead of recounting ourselves as “a certain” someone who fled when we were tested.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 38
MARK 14:32–52

THOUGHT

May I be willing, Lord, to bear Daily my cross for Thee;
Even Thy cup of grief to share – Thou hast borne all for me.
Lest I forget Gethsemane, Lest I forget Thine agony,
Lest I forget Thy love for me, Lead me to Calvary.

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 14:53–72***LESSON****Holding our peace****VERSE 61**

But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?

Jesus was brought before the high priest but no one was able to present a case that could convict Him of deserving a death sentence [v. 55]. Many gave false witnesses against Him but their testimonies did not match [v. 56–59].

Jesus could have done something to prove that He was God or even punish His accusers for breaking the Ninth Commandment. Instead, He “held His peace, and answered nothing” [v. 61a]. Even when His accusers spat on Him, struck Him and dared Him to prove Himself through prophesying, He did not retaliate [v. 65]. However, this is perhaps not the most painful thing. He was denied by His close disciple, Peter—not once, or twice, but three times. When confronted by people who testified that he was with our Lord Jesus, Peter swore and cursed, claiming he knew not “this man” [v. 71].

Are people spreading false rumours about you? Are people daring you to prove yourself? Do your friends despise and forsake you? Are you suffering as a Christian? The Lord knows your sorrows. In fact, He had gone through them all. “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” [Hebrews 4:15].

Remember how He had responded to all these abuses and betrayals? He held His peace. He treated His accusers with love [Luke 23:34] because He knows the truth.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 39
MARK 14:53–72

CONSIDER

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned. – 1 Timothy 1:5

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 15:1–21***LESSON****And he marvelled****VERSE 5***But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.*

We have read of how Jesus had held His peace though He was falsely accused by the priests and painfully betrayed by His friends. We have learnt that He had done this because He knew the truth and had treated His accusers with love. Now we see that His silence had brought about another consequence. He had caused the top Roman ruler in Palestine to marvel [v. 5].

Deep inside the heart of Pontius Pilate, he knew for certain what the real issue involved in the trial of Jesus was: “For He knew that the chief priests had delivered Him for envy”. Out of envy, the religious leaders had accused Him falsely [v. 3]. Out of envy, they actually moved the people to release a murderer instead of the Saviour [v. 11]. Out of envy, they plotted to crucify Jesus.

Watching this episode unfold, what would a non-believer like Pilate think? We read of his decisions and his actions, but what did he actually think? The Bible recorded for us two things. First, he knew that Christ could not be found guilty and the only reason why He was sentenced to death was that the masses, fuelled by the religious leaders’ sinful covetousness, wished to see Jesus crucified. Second, he marvelled at Jesus’ silence despite all the accusations and threats.

Pilate could have turned cynical to the religious people but the peace and meekness of Christ had caught his attention. Read 1 Peter 2:23.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
EXODUS 40
MARK 15:1–21

CONSIDER**How is your testimony to a non-believer?**

BIBLE LESSON*Mark 15:22–47***LESSON****Waiting for the Kingdom
of God****VERSE 43**

*Joseph of Arimathaea, an
honourable counsellor,
which also waited for the
kingdom of God, came, and
went in boldly unto Pilate,
and craved the body of
Jesus.*

While Jesus was suffering on the cross, His garments were parted and lots were cast for them [v. 24]. He was crucified with a mocking inscription [v. 26] and, together with two thieves beside Him [v. 27], he was mocked by passers-by [v. 29–32], fulfilling everything that was prophesied in Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22.

Then the work was finished [v. 37]. The veil between God and man was finally rent in twain [v. 38]. The first conversion after the death of Jesus took place immediately in the next verse. The centurion who stood over against Him exclaimed, “Truly this man was the Son of God.”

All the while, when Jesus was suffering on the cross, there were people whose hearts were drawn to Him, especially the women who looked from afar [v. 40–41] and later beheld where He was laid [v. 47]. And there was Joseph of Arimathaea, who went bravely to Pilate and asked for the body of Christ, bringing Him down, wrapping Him in the linen and laying Him in a sepulchre and burying Him [v. 46].

Joseph was described as a man who “waited for the kingdom of God” [v. 43]. He believed in Jesus’ teachings and promises. He saw, or at least heard of, the sufferings and death of Christ and he went boldly to ask for His body from Pilate. He placed the body of his Master at rest, waiting in faith for God’s Kingdom.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS I
MARK 15:22–47

CONSIDER

**“Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God?”
Read Mark 4:30–32.**

BIBLE LESSON

Mark 16

LESSON

Rolling away the stone

VERSE 3

And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

Many people have observed the devotion the women had for our Lord as recorded in the last few chapters of the Gospel of Mark—the anointing of Christ in Bethany [Mark 14:3–9] and the watching of His sufferings [Mark 15:40–41]. Now we read that they were the first to visit Christ at the sepulchre, bringing along sweet spices to anoint Him very early in the morning.

They went simply because of their earnest wish to honour Him. They knew that the sepulchre was sealed with a big stone [Mark 15:46] but that did not stop them from going. In this light, it was perhaps natural for them to wonder among themselves even as they were making their journey there, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”

But their worries were unnecessary because “when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.” Great news was awaiting the whole world, and it was Mary Magdalene who first told it, though several did not believe when they first heard from her. We then read of the commission of the 11 disciples and our Lord’s ascension in the concluding verses of this Gospel.

Do we have devotion as deep as that of Mary Magdalene? Do we love Christ so much that we are willing to go ahead with our work for Him despite daunting challenges ahead? Pray and commit everything to the Lord and, if it is His will, He will roll away the giant stone that lies ahead.

TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE
IN 2 YEARS, READ
LEVITICUS 2–3
MARK 16

SING

**Rolled away, rolled away, rolled away,
Ev’ry burden of my heart rolled away;
Ev’ry sin had to go ‘neath the crimson flow.**

