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# DAILY *manna*

JANUARY – MARCH 2012

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GENERAL EDITOR

Rev Isaac Ong

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*Daily devotions for reading through the Bible*

Dear *Daily Manna* readers,

Blessed New Year!

A New Year. A new beginning. We are into the second leg of our two-year cycle through the Bible. And regardless of the progress that you have made in your spiritual life in the year gone by, every new year is yet another opportunity to know God more intimately, and to serve more faithfully.

In 2012, we will be going through the same route beginning at the Gospels and right through Revelation, but we will be covering new grounds in the daily writings. There is much to learn, and the Gospel is worth our studying again. As the hymn writer says, "I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat; what seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet." That is certainly our prayer as you embark on another year of reading through the Word of God.

A special note to parents. In 2012, we also launched the Daily Manna Jr. This is a daily devotional that is put together for your children (6-12 year olds). The format is essentially the same as the Daily Manna. Our prayer is that with the Daily Manna Jr. your children start the godly habit of reading the Word of God daily. You can request your copies of the Daily Manna Jr. by calling 6265-4295.

### ***A note to new Daily Manna readers***

In this book, you'll 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 1:1–25*

#### LESSON

**Jesus: Man the very Man  
yet God the very God**

#### VERSE 1

*The book of the generation  
of Jesus Christ, the son of  
David, the son of Abraham.*

The list of the genealogy of Jesus Christ [v. 1–16] is important to the main theme of Matthew, whose gospel was primarily written to a Jewish audience, in order to prove to them that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, “the son of David”. He is the Seed as promised in Genesis 3:15 and is well connected to Abraham [Genesis 12:3; 22:18; Galatians 3:16]. As David is stemmed genealogically from Abraham—he is called “the son of Abraham”—Jesus is genealogically tied to David. Thus Jesus has a royal connection to David [Romans 1:3].

There are also five women mentioned—Thamar, Rachab, Ruth, Bathsheba and Mary [v. 3, 5, 6, 16]. Each of them could be considered a disgrace in the pedigree of Jesus. Although Thamar played a harlot, her motive in forcing Judah was honourable [Deuteronomy 25:5–10]. Two of the other women, Rahab and Ruth, were Gentiles by birth but they were women of faith [Hebrews 11:31; Ruth 1:16–17]. The universality of the lineage of Jesus is thus illustrated.

The prophet Isaiah predicted the coming Messiah more than seven centuries before its fulfilment. The name “Jesus” is of the same signification with Joshua and Hosea in the Old Testament, and may be interpreted a “Saviour”. “Emmanuel” is Christ’s proper title because He is God as well as man, and dwelt among the sons of men for a time.

Matthew gave an account of His miraculous conception by the Virgin Mary. He was begotten by the Holy Ghost thus God is His Father. He is divine as well as human.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

#### **EZRA I**

#### **MATTHEW 1:1–25**

#### PRAYER

**Lord, may I begin to adore and appreciate both  
the humanity and deity of Christ.**

### BIBLE LESSON

### *Matthew 2:1–23*

#### LESSON

#### **Jesus, the King of kings**

#### 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.*

The wise men were actually a group of scholars who in their own right were scientists and religious philosophers. They were also familiar with the study of the stars [v. 2]. By the providence of God, they saw a miraculous star that announced the birth of the King. This unusual star led them to the place where the King was to be born [Numbers 24:17]. Their desire was to worship this long-expected personage Who was worthy of their best gifts.

While these magi were seeking for the newborn King, Herod the Great was fearful of Him [v. 3]. He was a cruel and crafty man who permitted no one to challenge him, not even his own family. A ruthless murderer, he had his own wife and her two brothers slain because he suspected them of treason. It was not surprising that he wanted to kill Jesus as well. He wanted to be the only one to bear the title “King of the Jews”.

Even more incredulous were the religious leaders who were well versed in the Scriptures but remained ignorant of the coming Messiah. They were able to pinpoint the exact location of the birth of the King [v. 5]. They quoted Micah 5:2 but did not obey it themselves. Bethlehem was barely five miles away from where they were, yet they were unwilling to seek and worship Him. It was the Gentiles who found Jesus. The Jews did not bother about Him [John 1:11].

May this New Year find us seeking after this Almighty King Who alone is worthy of the treasures of our hearts.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**EZRA 2**  
**MATTHEW 2:1–23**

PRAYER

**O Lord, let my soul pant and long for You.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 3:1–17*

**LESSON**

**To be a faithful  
instrument of the Lord**

**VERSE 17**

*And lo a voice from heaven,  
saying, This is my beloved Son,  
in whom I am well pleased.*

John the Baptist was the forerunner of our Lord Jesus Christ. He heralded the coming of the King [v. 3]. He spared no effort to summon people to the truths that save unto the uttermost. His preaching centred on the need of repentance. He called uncompromisingly for evidence of a changed heart and life. His ministry drew huge audiences [v. 5–6].

As successful as he was in his ministry, John acknowledged himself to be a servant. He taught people that there would be One coming Who was far greater than he [v. 11]. He alone could perform what John could only preach, which was baptising them in the power of the Spirit. It is the prerogative of His office to give to those who believe in Him the special graces and gifts of the Spirit. But on those who remain impenitent, He will deal with them with the fire of judgement [v. 12].

When a Jewish priest took up his priestly office at the age of 30, he had to be washed in water. Jesus began His ministry with a public baptism. While His baptism gave approval to John's ministry, it also pictured His future baptism on the cross. It was no wonder that soon after He came out of the water, the heart-warming words from His heavenly Father were heard, approving His mission on earth as the Saviour of the world [Isaiah 42:1–3].

Jesus had pleased the heart of His Father up to this point and would do so till the end of His public ministry on earth.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**EZRA 3**  
**MATTHEW 3:1–17**

**PRAYER**

**Lord, grant that I may ever be well-pleasing to  
You in life and in death.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 4:1–16*

LESSON

**Becoming conquerors  
through Christ**

VERSE 10

*Then saith Jesus unto him,  
Get thee hence, Satan: for it is  
written, Thou shalt worship  
the Lord thy God, and him  
only shalt thou serve.*

From the heights of His Father’s approval and the infilling of the Holy Spirit upon Him without measure, Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan [v. 1]. How ironic was the whole scenario that He was put in! He came face to face with the enemy, who was not afraid to assault Him, though knowing that He is the Son of God. He had succeeded in tempting the first Adam and brought sin into the world. Now with the last Adam, he had hoped to do even greater damage to God’s creation.

Jesus met the devil as a man and not as the Son of God. He did not use any of His divine power to defeat Satan, which was just what Satan wanted Him to do. Instead, Jesus used the spiritual resources that are available to all of us today—the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God [v. 4, 7, 10]. Three times the deceiver offered temptations and thrice our Lord defeated him with a text from Scripture: “It is written ...”

Though Satan left the scene a defeated foe, he never left our Lord Jesus for long as he would try harder again and again to seek our Lord’s downfall.

It was necessary for Christ to experience temptations so that He may be our sympathetic High Priest [Hebrews 2:16–18; 4:15–16]. Here, He defeated the devil and exposed his tactics. Because of His victory, we too can have victory through His Name.

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

PRAYER

**O Lord, let me learn to rely more on You to  
overcome the attacks of the evil one.**

### BIBLE LESSON

*Matthew 4:17–25*

#### LESSON

**Readiness to respond to  
His call**

#### VERSE 19

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

This would be the first year of Jesus' public ministry in and around the region of Galilee. Galilee is located in the northern province of Palestine. It is a place of great seclusion and safety. A mountainous region with lesser activities, it had far less exposure to tumults and popular commotions than Jerusalem.

The region of Galilee was also known as "Galilee of the Gentiles" [v. 15]. It was at the outskirts of the Jewish territory. This designation was one of reproach to the mind of a Jew. The population was very likely mixed with emigrants from nearby Gentile countries, and it was probably considered degraded and depraved. Moreover, they were also expressions that bore the spiritual ignorance of the people. No wonder the Lord made this area His mission field, for there was greater need for truths here [v. 16].

There was a pressing need for workers and helpers in these harvest fields [v. 18, 21]. Here humble and uneducated individuals were called to be His disciples and to be with Him in this great work. He would train them to be "fishers of men." Their response to His divine call was immediate [v. 20, 22]. There was no hesitation on the part of the disciples, as they could sense a degree of urgency in their Lord's appeal.

May we also be sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit in our hearts and conscience as to the needs of our own harvest fields, which are ready for the Gospel.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**EZRA 5**  
**MATTHEW 4:17-25**

#### PRAYER

**Lord, may I be willing to go where You would want me to serve.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 5:1–20***LESSON****Be authentic****VERSE 13**

*Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*

Salt is often considered harmful—at least where our health is concerned. We have heard warnings like “Don’t put too much salt on your food”. However, back in the period of Jesus, salt was considered a valuable commodity and a necessity in life. It was used to purify, to preserve, and to give flavour. Roman soldiers were partially paid with salt—the salt they received as pay was called a “*salarium*”, which is where we get the word “salary”. The *salarium* paid to Roman soldiers gave rise to such expressions as “being worth one’s salt”.

What does Jesus mean when he says we are the salt of the earth? He is actually referring to the silent witness of a Christian. Salt by itself is nothing more than little fine particles and in that state it is worthless. But when it is rubbed onto meat or added to food, it influences the flavour and transforms it from within. Similarly, for a Christian, it is the transforming influence that we have over other people’s lives that matters.

How authentic is your walk with God? Are the people around you drawn to the Christian faith because of your life? Do people who cross your path recognise that there is a difference in the way you live and how you conduct yourself?

We can either bring people to Christ or turn people away from Christ by the attitudes that we have in life. Make sure your attitudes are ones that Jesus would approve.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**EZRA 6**  
**MATTHEW 5:1–20**

**THOUGHT**

**Our lives may be the only Bible that our neighbours truly ever read.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 5:21–48*

**LESSON**

**Peace with God and with  
one's brother**

**VERSE 24**

*Leave there thy gift before the  
altar, and go thy way; first be  
reconciled to thy brother, and  
then come and offer thy gift.*

When we come to God in worship, we should recognise that we are righteous and acceptable to Him only because of His forgiving mercy. How can we worship Him and receive this pardoning grace when we are not right with others in our Christian family? We have to be right with one another if we claim to be right with God. This is what God has commanded us in Scripture. No matter how spiritual our worship may seem, if we have a relational conflict with another in Christ, and have not tried to resolve it, God will not accept our worship.

Sometimes people hold something against you when they should not. It does not matter if the problem is 90 per cent your fault or one per cent. If it is just one per cent, then repent of your one per cent. Sins are sins, and no matter how many or few, big or small, we are still guilty. Our ability to worship God sincerely and appropriately depends on whether we are repentant of our sins.

Jesus made it clear that correct interpersonal relationships are more important than correct religious ritual. It is true that God should be our primary focus. However, our relationship with God is better gauged by our inter-personal relationships than by our religious works.

The outward forms of religion are not as important as the heart that is reconciled and in unity with a brother. Although we cannot guarantee that the aggrieved brother will accept the resolution, we are obligated to make every effort to do so [Romans 12:18].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**EZRA 7**  
**MATTHEW 5:21–48**

**THOUGHT**

**Tear down walls and build bridges instead.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 6:1–15***LESSON****Motives for giving****VERSE 1**

*Take heed that ye do not your  
alms before men, to be seen  
of them: otherwise ye have no  
reward of your Father which is  
in heaven.*

In giving, there are three possible motives. One, we might be seeking the praises of men; two, we might be preserving our anonymity yet quietly congratulating ourselves; or three, we might be desirous of the approval of our divine Father alone. If you give for earthly recognition or hopes of rewards, your motives are wrong. You are not putting God first in your life; you are putting yourself above God.

Jesus is concerned with the hidden thoughts of the heart. He is concerned with our motivation for our “acts of righteousness”—whether we do them to be praised by men or to please God. The important thing is to be sure at every point that it is Christ Who receives the glory for our acts of giving. It is God Who saves and God Who enables our works of righteousness, and naturally, it is because of God that we give.

We are not to be self-conscious in our giving, for our self-consciousness will degenerate into self-righteousness. It is possible to turn an act of mercy into an act of vanity, so much so that our principal motive in giving is no longer for the good of the person receiving, but for ourselves instead.

Christian giving is to be marked by self-sacrifice, not by self-congratulation. What we should seek when giving is neither the praise of men nor self-commendation, but rather the approval of God. What, then, is the reward that our Heavenly Father gives the secret giver? Blessings from above [Acts 20:35].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**EZRA 8**  
**MATTHEW 6:1–15**

**THOUGHT**

**We should avoid doing good works in public that result in self-glory instead of God's glory.**

## BIBLE LESSON

*Matthew 6:16–34*

### LESSON

**What is your choice?**

### VERSE 21

*For where your treasure is,  
there will your heart be also.*

When Jesus tells us that our hearts follow our treasures, He is actually warning us that our treasures—the things we love—always betray the inner desires of our hearts. Our hearts tend to follow whatever we consider important, and we tend to focus all our attention on what we hold most dear.

What occupies your thoughts? Is it your financial investments or your social position? Is it your prized possessions or your own reputation? If so, these are the things you treasure, and these are the places where you find your heart. What are the things that you measure others by, the clothes they wear, their educational qualifications, or the furnishings of their homes? Or do you measure others by their success in the business world? If so, you know where your treasure lies, because we measure other people by that which we treasure.

When we set our hearts on the things of this earth and fall into the temptation of being worldly in our ways, we are committing idolatry because we are no longer focusing our attention on God. Rather, we have put our earthly riches above God, and we are adoring and even serving them. They have become our gods and our life.

Jesus challenges us to examine where our treasure really is. If your heart is focused on your Heavenly Father and on laying up treasures in heaven, your heart will be there too. Each of us worships something or someone. Who or what do you worship?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**EZRA 9**  
**MATTHEW 6:16–34**

THOUGHT

**That which we worship, that we love.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 7:1–20***LESSON****On judging****VERSE 1**

*Judge not, that ye be not  
judged.*

Critics of Christianity have often misused this text as a shield when confronted of their sins or when told the sins of others. It is often cited by people who think that the Christian faith is all about loving without judgement.

When Jesus says “Judge not”, He does not forbid us to contrast truths with falsehoods and to make distinctions between holiness and sinfulness. Instead, He is exhorting us to not condemn others simply because it is not our place to do so. Jesus does not want us to fault find, second-guess, gossip, or be cynical of those around us. He does not want us to assume that we know the motives of others. He wants us to be gracious to others as God has been gracious to us.

We make judgements about things every day. But if we condemn others for the sins we also commit, we have sinned grievously. Not only are we unrepentant of our own sins, we are also being hypocritical. When we rebuke others, be sure that our own conscience is clear.

However, this does not mean we should not warn others about the consequences of sins though we ourselves might be struggling with them. Jesus comes to this world to save sinners and we should love sinners like our Lord does. Be gentle and tactful when edifying one another. Ask God to grant us passion for lost souls, believing that He can heal anyone He wishes. Pray that He would give us the boldness to gently correct the sins of other people.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**EZRA 10**  
**MATTHEW 7:1–20**

**THOUGHT**

**The best critic is the Holy Spirit. Judgement is best left to Him.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 7:21–29*

**LESSON**

**Divine authority**

**VERSE 29**

*For he taught them as one  
having authority, and not as  
the scribes.*

Authority implies the right to govern and tell people under jurisdiction what to do. Authority is the legitimate power to make things happen. People today tend to rebel against the idea of authority. They want the freedom to do whatever they want, whenever they please. But Jesus teaches as One Who has authority. He speaks with divine authority, because His instructions are the Spirit-filled and life-giving, powerful and effective words of God. Jesus speaks straight from God and straight to your heart.

In this passage, the multitudes recognised something different in the words of Jesus, which was lacking in the teachings of the scribes. The scribes were the copyists of the law and often respected theologians during the time of Jesus. They relied on tradition as their authority.

Do we take the Lord Jesus' authority for granted? Do we accept it without understanding what power His words should have over our lives? Is your heart not stirred by His mighty claims, words and deeds, as the people of His time were? We are who we are by the grace of God through faith in Christ. As we respond to His power in our lives, He gives us the authority to live for Him and work in His name to build up God's Kingdom here on earth.

If you sensitively seek God's direction concerning what needs to be done, you will find the authority of God evident in your life, recognisable even by the people around you.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH I**  
**MATTHEW 7:21–29**

**THOUGHT**

**Jesus speaks, and demons flee. Jesus speaks, and we are free!**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 8:1–13*

LESSON

**Following God and  
knowing Him intimately**

VERSE 1

*When he was come down  
from the mountain, great  
multitudes followed him.*

After proclaiming the kingdom of God through the Sermon on the Mount, as well as the spirit of those who should enter the kingdom, our Lord descended and healed a leper in the presence of the multitudes, who continued to follow Him. Upon entering Capernaum, He healed a Centurion's servant remotely with His spoken word.

Notwithstanding the faithfulness and even the severity (in appearance) of much of His teaching, such was the power of His teachings [Matthew 7:28–29], which made great multitudes follow Him. Those to whom Christ has manifested Himself cannot but desire to be better acquainted with Him. Those who know much of Christ would covet to know more of Him. For in him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

“It is pleasing to see people so well affected to Christ, as to think they can never hear enough of Him; so well affected to the best things, as thus to flock after good preaching and to follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes,” said Matthew Henry. But alas, those who followed Him closely and constantly in His lifetime were few, compared with the multitudes that were but followers at large.

Pray for a greater manifestation of Christ to us through the meditation of His written Word in the secret place of the Most High. Then shall we know, if we thus follow on to know the Lord.

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

PRAYER

**Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 8:14–34*

**LESSON**

**Let the dead bury their  
dead**

**VERSE 22**

*But Jesus said unto him,  
Follow me; and let the dead  
bury their dead.*

In this passage, the miraculous healings of Christ continued, both physically as well as spiritually, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 53:4. Jesus laid down His terms of discipleship to two who desired to follow Him. He then displayed His sovereignty over the raging winds and the sea, and over devils.

The words of our Lord seemed to be stumbling blocks deliberately placed in the way of those who were anxious to become His disciples. The first, a scribe, offered himself as a disciple. The second, already a disciple, was called by Christ to follow Him but he asked for a postponement. He wished to put off becoming a true follower of Christ until he has buried his father who was still living. But Christ's reply was to let the spiritually dead bury their own physically dead. What is the explanation of this apparent unfeeling command?

This man had been for some time a disciple at large, hovering around the outer circle of Christ's followers. There had been a slackness or backwardness in him, indicating a disposition to fall away. Our Lord saw this man's spiritual condition and urged him to come to a decision at once. It was now or never. Every delay could result in a relapse into worldliness, and finally the straying away from Christ.

Are you hindered in the way of serious godliness by an over-concern for your family and relations? See that these lawful things do not hinder your decision to fully follow Christ. It is all for Christ or none at all.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 3**  
**MATTHEW 8:14–34**

**THOUGHT**

**He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. – Matthew 10:37**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 9:1–17*

**LESSON**

**Christ, the great  
Physician of body and  
soul**

**VERSE 6**

*But that ye may know that  
the Son of man hath power  
on earth to forgive sins, (then  
saith he to the sick of the  
palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed,  
and go unto thine house.*

In this passage, Christ entered His own city, Capernaum. His power to heal and forgive was manifested in the healing of the palsy. While the scribes charged Him for blasphemy, the multitudes marvelled and glorified God. Thereafter, Christ's calling of Matthew the tax collector and His condescension to eat with publicans drew criticism from the Pharisees, and the subject of fasting was raised by the disciples of John the Baptist.

Let us consider deeper the miraculous healing of the palsy. He could not come to Christ by himself but was brought by his friends, carried on a bed. We read not of anything said to Christ; probably the poor sick man could not speak for himself, and those who brought him chose rather to speak by actions than words. They just set him before Christ.

Note our Lord's word of comfort to the palsy—pardon for sin and recovery from sickness. Sin is the particular cause of this sickness. Sin may be pardoned but sickness not removed, or sickness removed and sin not pardoned. But the palsy received mercy in both. Christ then sent him home to be a blessing to his family, where he had been a burden before.

If you, through grace, have evidence of the forgiveness of your sins, finding peace with God and experiencing joy of salvation, then you have reasons to be of good cheer. Whatever outward troubles or afflictions you were once under, the Lord has made you a better person. Go and be a blessing to your loved ones.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 4**  
**MATTHEW 9:1–17**

**THOUGHT**

**Misery cries as well as sin, and mercy is no less quick of hearing than justice – Matthew Henry.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 9:18–38*

**LESSON**

**Christ, the Resurrection  
and the Life**

**VERSE 24**

*He said unto them, Give place:  
for the maid is not dead, but  
sleepeth. And they laughed  
him to scorn.*

This passage records several accounts of our Lord's miracles, including raising to life a ruler's daughter, healing a woman's issue of her blood, giving sight to two blind men, casting the devil out of one possessed and healing all manner of illness. He then went about preaching the Kingdom of God and, in compassion to the multitudes, prepared preachers for them.

Our Lord came to a ruler's house at his beckoning to lay His hands on his dead daughter, as the ruler believed that she would be restored to life. Upon entering his house, Jesus commented that the maid was but asleep, to the derision of everyone present. He had meant that in a short while she would rise again, just as a person would awake from sleep.

Death is a sleep. However, it is not the sleep of the soul—its activity ceases not. It is the sleep of the body, which lies down in the grave, still and silent, disregarded and alone, wrapped up in darkness and obscurity. Those who sleep in Jesus not only rest from their toils and labours of the day but also rest in the hope of a joyful waking again in the morning of the resurrection, when they shall awake refreshed to a new life, and to sleep no more.

But you must first be born again. He who is born once, die twice (physically and spiritually) but he who is born twice, die once (physically).

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 5**  
**MATTHEW 9:18-38**

THOUGHT

**Sleep is a short death, and death a long sleep. –  
Matthew Henry**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 10:1–15*

**LESSON**

**Give freely**

**VERSE 8**

*Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.*

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 6**  
**MATTHEW 10:1–15**

The sight of the multitudes distressed and scattered moved the Master with compassion. He appointed and sent out 12 apostles with a special commission to proclaim the message that the kingdom of heaven was at hand.

Today, Christians have a similar commission to go into the world and preach the Gospel. However, there are some differences. Our mission field is not confined to the house of Israel, and neither are we equipped with special powers to perform miracles. The cultural and historical contexts are also very different from those of biblical times.

However, one fundamental principle has not changed—we are to give freely because we have received freely. All we have is by the grace of God, which is freely given to us, without respect to person. Hence we must also freely give of ourselves, without respect to person. In the Bible, there are many examples of giving without expecting payment. In fact, the whole of the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ is an example. He has given to us even His life. We also have the example of Elisha, who refused payment from Naaman after he had been cured of leprosy. The good Samaritan in Jesus’ parable is another example.

Generous giving reflects the outpouring of a grateful heart that wishes to thank the Saviour for His redeeming love, His infinite atoning sacrifice and His obedience to the will of the Father. Are you using your God-given abilities and resources to serve your Master?

**THOUGHT**

**When we serve God, we must not expect “payment for services rendered”.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 10:16–42***LESSON****Truth brings divisions****VERSE 34**

*Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.*

A cursory reading of today's verse may suggest that Jesus is advocating violence and calling His disciples to wage some kind of holy war. But this is a misinterpretation. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, Who taught His disciples to "turn the other cheek" and rebuked Peter in the Garden of Gethsemane for striking off the ear of the servant of the high priest in order to protect Him. The Scripture is clear throughout on the fact that Jesus has come to give us peace—peace with God [Romans 5:1] and peace within [John 14:27].

From the context of verse 34, it is clear that Jesus is speaking about the divisions that will come, even among family members, over their beliefs about Him. In that respect, He has come to bring division. This inevitable outcome is also related in Luke 12:51. The conversion of a person from a non-Christian home all too often turns his family against him, as many of us from non-Christian families can testify.

Jesus was warning His disciples then that as they go out to preach the Gospel to the Jewish societies of His day, they must be prepared to face opposition and even persecution. Were his disciples ready for that? Jesus would know the difficulties involved because He Himself had faced resistance from His own earthly family.

No matter what the cost, one must follow Christ to the end, even if it means giving up one's family. Are you prepared to do that?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 7**  
**MATTHEW 10:16–42**

**THOUGHT**

**As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! – Romans 10:15b**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 11:1–19***LESSON****A perverse generation****VERSE 16**

*But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,*

After giving a glowing endorsement of the ministry of John the Baptist, our Lord turned His attention to the Jews. He referred to them simply as “this generation” here [v. 16] but in other parts of the Gospels, He used a much harsher language, often describing them as a “wicked” or “perverse” generation.

He likened them to spoilt children whining despite every effort to teach them. Through John, they were called to mourning but they would not mourn. They had resisted his rebukes and appeals, and said he was a railer and possessed an evil spirit. With Jesus, they were called to liberty and rejoicing. This, too, they rejected, labelling Him a drunkard and a glutton who did not obey moral laws.

Today’s generation is not any better. They criticise, nitpick and employ every argument—including so-called scientific theories—to reject and ridicule the Gospel. Christians are still mocked and persecuted for their faith. People still continue in their sinful behaviour. In addition, due to the influence of popular culture and the entertainment industry, the name of our Lord is often used in vain—as a swear word even by educated and respectable people. What could await a people so perverse and blasphemous but judgement?

Yet our Lord said that “wisdom is justified of her children” [v. 19]. When we follow His leading and are faithful to what He shows us, our lives will bear fruits that will stop the mouths of scornful scoffers.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**NEHEMIAH 8**  
**MATTHEW 11:1–19**

**PRAYER**

**Lord, let Your light so shine in our lives that others will see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 11:20–30*

**LESSON**

**Christians will also be  
judged**

**VERSE 23**

*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.*

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 9**  
**MATTHEW 11:20-30**

This section of Scripture can be divided into three parts. Firstly, the Lord warned of judgement on cities that have witnessed His mighty works but have not repented. Next, He taught about God's electing grace. Finally, He issued a gospel invitation. Many Christians who comfort themselves in thinking that the first part has no relevance to them would do well to re-examine these verses.

Our Lord said that the punishment for the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum would be even more severe than those of the openly wicked people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom—simply because they were completely indifferent to Jesus and His message and miracles. God's judgements are based not only on what people have done but also what they would have done but have not. This principle has grave implications for us as well. Today, we have easy access to the complete Bible and we have ample opportunities to hear the Gospel. Yet if we harden our hearts and reject the pleading of the Holy Spirit, how much more severe will our punishment be?

Week after week, many Christians sit under the voice of the sound preaching of God's Word. Yet we choose to grieve the Holy Spirit with our unchanged lives, going about our business as usual, not willing to spare an hour serving in church and wasting our days in front of the television, the computer or on the golf course, or some other frivolous activity.

How are we to answer God when judgement comes? Can we hope to escape God's judgement?

**THOUGHT**

**And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. – Luke 12:47**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 12:1–13*

**LESSON**

**On the Sabbath**

**VERSE 11**

*And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?*

The Pharisees were so conscious about observing the Sabbath that they failed to see its significance. God has instituted the Sabbath to make sure man rest after six days of work but the Pharisees interpreted the fourth commandment as a prohibition of work of any nature. They went further to comment that plucking the ear of corn for personal consumption on the Sabbath Day is a violation of God’s Law.

To this, Jesus quoted from Scripture on how David and his followers ate the showbread meant for the priests in the house of God when they were hungry [v. 3–4] and how the priests went on with their duties in the temple during the Sabbath [v. 5], but were faultless in the eyes of God. Jesus had a message for them. Quoting from the Old Testament, He told them God would have mercy and not sacrifice [v. 7].

By doing so, Jesus was not destroying the Law, but fulfilling it [Matthew 5:17]. Sacrifice is not pleasing to God if it is not done with a heart that does so justly, loves mercy and walks humbly with Him [Micah 6:6–8].

Jesus then proceeded to heal a man with a withered hand and rebuked the Pharisees who accused Him of breaking the Sabbath with the analogy of leaving a sheep in a pit bleating painfully because it was the Sabbath. In the words of our Saviour, “How much then is a man better than a sheep?”

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 10**  
**MATTHEW 12:1–13**

**MEDITATION**

**And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. – Mark 2:27**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 12:14–37*

**LESSON**

**Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost**

**VERSE 31**

*Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.*

Our Lord has warned us of the grave consequences of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. This refers to the deliberate rejection of Christ. God has through His revelation shown us the way to salvation but an unbelieving heart can be so hardened that it denies what is clearly revealed and refuses to accept it.

It is thus no wonder that some think that the greatest sin of man is that of unbelief—simply because the denial of Christ is the rejection of salvation, and with it, the forgoing of eternal life. He who is not forgiven in this age will not be forgiven in the world to come [v. 31–32].

Christ has fulfilled what was prophesied in the Old Testament of the chosen Servant and Messiah [v. 15–21]. It is only through Him that people were elected for salvation. However, we do not know who are the ones elected and who are not. Rather than wasting time judging people, we are to try our best to bring more souls into His fold.

Yet, this is not to say we cannot see the work of God in the life of a saved person. Jesus used the analogy of a good tree bearing good fruit to impart the teaching that a saved man should show good works [v. 33]. This is especially evident in a man's words and actions. The Lord warned us further that we would be judged by the very words that we speak. Can others see Christ in you?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 11**  
**MATTHEW 12:14-37**

**MEDITATION**

**In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. – Titus 2:7–8**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 12:38–50***LESSON****When cleansing is not enough****VERSE 45**

*Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

This passage tells of a sad story. A man has been cleansed of an unclean spirit [v. 43]. After that, he kept his heart empty, seeing it only proper to do so [v. 44]. Yet little did he know that the spirit would come back with seven others to dwell in him. And he ended up worse than before [v. 45].

This was the state of the Israelites then and the condition of many men now. Getting rid of one's sinful behaviour and thoughts is of no use without the invitation of Christ into one's heart. The evil spirit that left the man went around seeking rest, just like a roaring lion. When it came back to its old dwelling place, it found the man's heart still empty and perhaps proud of his garnished state, and thus ironically more susceptible to temptations and sins, which explains why the man ended up in a more hopeless state.

Christian conversion is not a simple emptying of one's mind, for an idle mind is often the workshop of the devil. In contrast, with the putting off of the old man comes the putting on of the new, just as with the crucifixion of the old self must come the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. When we part ways with our old lifestyles, we must embrace the abundant life of worship and prayer, and of servitude and fellowship.

The whole life is transformed—a Christian is one who is born again. What follows is the growing in God's wisdom and grace day by day.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 12**  
**MATTHEW 12:38-50**

**PRAYER**

**Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. – Psalm 51:10**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 13:1–23*

**LESSON**

**The mystery of election**

**VERSE 11**

*He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.*

The doctrine of election is one of the most wondrous yet, to some, unpalatable teachings. One often wonders how and why God elected some, and not others, to be His children. The nature of man is the same regardless of time and space, the Gospel of Christ is no different from beginning to end, but there are some who receive Christ with wide open hearts whereas there are others who choose to stay outside God’s kingdom despite all efforts to invite them in.

Speaking in parables, Christ has made the Gospel simple to some so that through analogies and metaphors, they can better understand the message. But to others, these parables proved hard to understand. In verse 12, Jesus explains how this works. If one is elected in Christ, one would grow in Him. Otherwise, whatever is preached to him would return void. Election is not the choice of man but of God and blessed indeed are those who are elected. Christ’s explanation of the parable of the sower [v. 18–23] further illustrates this point.

As Christians, we should feel privileged to be handpicked by God. However, this should not give us a sense of superiority over others. Instead, we should rejoice with much thanksgiving, yet with fear and trembling [Psalm 2:11], giving diligence to make our calling and election sure [2 Peter 1:10].

If you have not put your trust in Jesus, what is stopping you from doing so?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**NEHEMIAH 13**  
**MATTHEW 13:1–23**

**PRAYER**

**Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation. –  
Psalm 38:22**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 13:24–43*

**LESSON**

**The good seed**

**VERSE 38**

*The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;*

In today's reading, Christ gives us three parables, one of which He elaborated in detail [v. 24–30, 36–43]. This is the well-known parable of the wheat and the tares.

We often wonder why the wicked get away with their vile deeds and even prosper in their ways. Why would a righteous God allow evil to exist or even triumph in this world? This is a big question with many possible answers and one is offered here. Judgement is only a matter of time.

The field was first sown with good seeds [v. 24] but enemies came in and sowed tares [v. 25]. Both plants were fruitful, competing for the same nutrients [v. 26]. However, the master of the field did not get rid of the tares lest by doing so, He would destroy the wheat [v. 29]. Instead, He let both grow until harvest time and reap them separately, gathering the wheat into his barn and casting the tares into the furnace [v. 30].

You may feel depressed over the triumph of the wicked. But do not let these feelings take control of you or even develop into more negative feelings of envy, jealousy and unbelief. The good may suffer or be taken advantage of, but when the day of harvest comes, the wicked shall be cast into a furnace of fire [v. 42] and the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father [v. 43].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER I**  
**MATTHEW 13:24–43**

**MEDITATION**

**Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision:  
for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of  
decision. – Joel 3:14**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 13:44–58***LESSON****The problem with familiarity****VERSE 58**

*And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

Chapter 13 of Matthew closes on a regretful note. Although the people in Nazareth were astonished by Christ's great wisdom and mighty works [v. 54], they were held back by the fact that He was the son of a carpenter. They also knew His earthly family, who were ordinary people [v. 55–56]. Because the people of Nazareth were familiar with Jesus, they did not believe and honour Him [v. 57]. As a result, "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief" [v. 58].

At first glance, this is a very counter-intuitive response from our Saviour. In the mindset of the world, one would expect a person who is slighted to prove himself, especially when he has the ability to do so. But this is not the Christian approach. We read earlier that Christ had a gentle spirit. He would not strive or cry when He was treated unjustly. In response to the unbelief of His people, He simply did fewer mighty works.

As for the people, we can imagine how great their losses were! Here is the very Son of God, even God Himself, standing before them but they had missed out on all the privileges of having Him with them.

Are you depriving yourself of these privileges, too? The Gospel of Christ is beckoning, but is the world hindering you from believing in Him? If you are already a Christian, have you grown too comfortable in religion and forgotten the love of Christ and His mighty power?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER 2**  
**MATTHEW 13:44-58**

**MEDITATION**

**And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. – Matthew 24:12**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 14:1–12*

**LESSON**

**Whom should we please?**

**VERSE 4**

*For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.*

Here we learn several things about the character of John the Baptist and that of King Herod. John the Baptist was a righteous, courageous and outspoken man. He declared frankly that Herod's marriage with Herodias, his brother's wife, was not lawful. John was brave to confront the King, knowing that it would be dangerous to do so. Do we have the same courage to stand up for what we believe in? Are we bold enough to go out to the world and preach the Gospel, telling the unsaved ones that they are sinners who need Jesus?

In contrast to John the Baptist, we read that King Herod was a people-pleaser. He imprisoned John when rebuked for his adulterous marriage to Herodias, but Herod dared not kill John for he "feared the multitude" [v. 5]. Yet in a weak and drunken moment, Herod promised Herodias' daughter, Salome, anything she wanted because he had been infatuated with her dancing. Salome, corrupted by her evil mother, requested for John's head. Eager to show his power, Herod had to deliver his promise for fear of being embarrassed in front of his guests.

Are we at times like King Herod, trying to please man and seek approval of others rather than God? Are we overly consumed with our quest for power, authority and wealth on earth? Are we like Salome who sinned just to please her mother?

Be like John the Baptist. Testify that Jesus is the Son of God [John 1:34], trust in the Lord and stand up for righteousness.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**ESTHER 3**  
**MATTHEW 14:1–12**

**THOUGHT**

**Let us focus our eyes on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 14:13–36*

**LESSON**

**Peace in a volatile world**

**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 story of the feeding of the 5,000 reaffirms that Jesus cares, that He is compassionate and that He provides for those who are in need. The disciples did not rely on Jesus for help but advised Him to send the crowd away, as there was insufficient food. But Jesus' miracle proved that man could do nothing without the Lord. If we place our trust and faith in the Lord Jesus, we can do wonders with the help of God. We should use whatever small talent provided by the Lord to bless others effectively.

The story of Peter walking on the water is another reminder of this. Peter had the faith to get off the boat and walk on the water. His faith, however, wavered and he began to sink when he saw the fierce wind and rolling waves. But he still trusted Jesus and immediately called out to Jesus for help [v. 30].

You may be facing issues that seem difficult to resolve, or troubles and storms in life (health, loss of jobs or loved ones, broken relationships). When you take your eyes off Christ and focus on these earthly problems, you may see fear. But you must remember to call to Jesus. Stretch out your arms and let Jesus save you. Turn to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to strengthen your little faith in the Saviour.

“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” [Philippians 4:13].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER 4**  
**MATTHEW 14:13-36**

**MEDITATION**

**Cast your worries upon the Lord. Always remember to count your blessings, naming them one by one. Trust in the Lord and pray that He will increase our faith in Him. Trust that Jesus will help and comfort us throughout our life journey.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 15:1–20*

**LESSON**

**Clean hands and a pure heart**

**VERSE 11**

*Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

The Pharisees accused Jesus of breaking the tradition of the elders because He allowed His disciples to eat with unclean hands. Jesus in turn condemned these religious leaders as hypocrites, saying that all outward human efforts to please God would be vain if their hearts were far from God.

Jesus provided an example of how the Jews broke the commandment to honour their parents by hiding behind rituals. Such traditions allowed the Jews to be exempted from the financial duty of providing for parents if they vowed to give their money to God. They broke the commandment set by God by following the tradition set by the religious leaders, appearing to be religious in their external practices while harbouring evil desires.

We may read and know a great deal about God’s Word and hear many sermons but if we don’t apply what we learn, or if our words and actions are not sincere, we are just like the Pharisees.

Jesus teaches us that we need to keep our inner thoughts clean and holy. We should not have any sinful desires or evil thoughts. We need to pray for the Lord to transform our hearts to be capable of loving and serving Him. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully” [Psalm 24:3–4].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER 5**  
**MATTHEW 15:1–20**

**THOUGHT**

**Do you ask God for forgiveness of your sins? Pray that God will give you clean hands and a pure heart. Ask Him to help you stop sinning and begin serving Him wholeheartedly with joy, love and sincerity.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 15:21–39*

**LESSON**

**Faith and feeding of the  
Gentiles**

**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.*

The needy and desperate Canaanite woman addressed Jesus as “son of David”. As a Gentile, she recognised Jesus as the promised Messiah and believed that He could help her. Her strong faith in the Saviour, her determination to seek blessings from the Lord and her sincere plea for help had resulted in the Lord blessing her and her daughter. A distressed and troubled woman, she received grace and peace from the Lord.

We are like the Canaanite woman, unworthy of God’s mercy and grace. However, when we extend our hands to accept the Lord as our Helper and personal Saviour, we find peace and truth. Always remember to turn to Jesus for help. He is our eternal hope! Trust in the mercy of the Lord and your heart shall rejoice!

Following the response from Jesus to the Gentile woman, we read that Jesus continued to heal the multitudes including the lame, the blind, the dumb, the maimed as well as many others. The story of Jesus healing the Canaanite woman’s daughter and His feeding of the multitudes (who were mainly Gentiles) later demonstrates that the Lord has come to save not just the Jews but the Gentiles also.

The blessed multitude had witnessed the power of Jesus. Overwhelmed, they believed in Jesus and glorified the God of Israel [v. 31]. This story encourages us to bring the needy to Jesus, and to seek the Lord to save their souls. The power of Jesus will touch many who are weak and bring them eternal salvation. They will no longer be thirsty and weary.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER 6**  
**MATTHEW 15:21-39**

**THOUGHT**

**Learn from the Canaanite woman. Be humble in your prayer. Be steadfast in your faith in the Lord. Pray that the Lord will pardon your sins, increase your faith and teach you to live upon His fullness and bounty.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 16:1–28***LESSON****Taking up the cross****VERSE 24**

*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.*

Despite all the miracles performed by Jesus, the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted Jesus to show them a sign from heaven. Today, we encounter such stubborn people like the Pharisees as well, who choose not to believe despite all the signs and messages. Such spiritually blind people may also be like the Pharisees, thinking that they could earn their salvation by performing all the ritualistic “good” deeds, rather than believing in a gospel of pure grace that promises salvation.

We also read here of Peter’s confession of Christ [v. 16]. Peter believed in Jesus not by the influence of men but through the revelation of God. Similarly, it is by the grace of God that we are saved. We should continue to pray that many more will accept Christ as their personal Saviour, that their spiritual eyes will be opened and they be illumined by the Holy Spirit.

As His disciples, Jesus insists that we must deny ourselves, be prepared to suffer, take up the cross and follow Him. We need to constantly pray and do our devotion in order to bear this cross and walk the narrow path with Christ. We need to surrender our total self and personal agenda in order to let God control our life. We must learn to put to death our own ideas, desires and plans. Seek and do the will of God.

After taking up the cross, we are promised a great reward in heaven [v. 25]. “God always gives His best to those who leave the choice to Him” (Jim Elliot).

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER 7**  
**MATTHEW 16**

**PRAYER**

**Dear Lord, please help me to bear the cross. Constantly remind me to focus my eyes upon You. Remind me that it is pointless to gain the whole world if my soul is not saved.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 17: 1–13*

**LESSON**

**Jesus, God’s own Son**

**VERSE 5**

*While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*

This cloud, which is said to be a “bright” one, is a symbol of the divine presence and a token of the love, grace and favour of God. It is expressive of the brightness and clarity of the Gospel dispensation, in distinction from the obscurity of the legal one symbolised by the thick, dark and black cloud when God descended on Mount Sinai to give the Law.

“This is my beloved Son.” These words were from the same voice that had once been heard at Jesus’ baptism. Such a confirmation of the great confession of Peter is never to be forgotten. Some years later, when Peter wrote his second epistle, the remembrance of this night was as vivid as ever: “For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory.”

“Hear ye him.” The divine voice that spoke at Sinai and at Christ’s baptism was heard, declaring Christ’s superiority to Moses and Elias, that He is “the beloved Son”. God the Father commanded all to hear His Son, even His chosen servant Who was to lay down His life for those He came to save.

Henceforth, not Moses, nor Elias, is the lawgiver of the people of God, but Christ. The saints are encouraged to turn from every human teacher, even those as revered as Moses and Elias, to listen to our Lord. Hearing Him will lead you from error and sin into truth, righteousness and fitness for heaven.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER 8**  
**MATTHEW 17: 1–13**

**THOUGHT**

**But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. – Hebrews 1:8**

## BIBLE LESSON

*Matthew 17:14–27*

### LESSON

**Exceedingly sorry**

### VERSE 22

*And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men.*

Christ told His disciples that He would be killed and then raised from the dead on the third day. However, as recorded in the Gospel of Mark, the disciples did not understand what Jesus meant [Mark 9:32]. Luke added that “it was hid from them, that they perceived it not” [Luke 9:45], for plain statements were distorted and their meaning dulled through the continued and obstinate prejudices of the Jews.

The disciples’ immediate reaction was sorrow, most likely because they could not understand what Jesus was saying. They could not reconcile it with their own notion of “Messiah” that they had held for long. To them, the “Messiah” should be a temporal prince and the one delivering them from the servitude under which they had been suffering for a long time. Furthermore, it was difficult to imagine how the Son of God could die.

It was said that Jesus taught His disciples “as they were able to hear” [Mark 4:33]. He told them He had many things to say to them, but they could not bear them yet [John 16:12].

Are we so different today? We have heard Christian messages over and over again. We know the glory of accepting it and the tragedy of rejecting it. But many of us are just as far off as we ever were. We still accept the parts of the Christian message that we think apply to us, and refuse to understand the rest. Are you only believing part of God’s Word?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**ESTHER 9–10**  
**MATTHEW 17:14–27**

### MEDITATION

**And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. – 1 Corinthians 3:1**

### BIBLE LESSON

*Matthew 18:1–20*

#### LESSON

#### Finding the lost one

#### VERSE 12

*How think ye? If a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?*

Through this parable, our Lord shows us that it is not the will of our heavenly Father that even the least and meanest of believers should perish.

The parable starts with the picture of a complete flock. The hundred sheep are people who know our Lord in a personal way and the lost sheep represents someone who has backslidden. The mass could also refer to believers in general and the lost one, someone who is still outside Christ.

The errant ones, however few, are under the special care of the merciful Lord. God's love seeks for the lost. The Good Shepherd is not content with waiting for them to come back. He goes out to search for them. God is far more wonderful than one who just waits for a lost child to go back to him in a sorry and painful state. Jesus goes personally to seek for those who wander away. He goes out to search for them, no matter what it costs Him. Unlike God, man never forgets or forgives another person's past sins, especially trespasses made personally against him.

Have you backslidden? Are you still outside God's fold? Repent and seek God diligently. When we sincerely return to God, it is all joy. Not only does He put our sins behind, He forgives every transgression made against Him. And the most wondrous thing is, when you finally return to Him, you will realise that He has been looking out for you all along.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 1**  
**MATTHEW 18:1–20**

#### THOUGHT

**Let all those that seek Thee rejoice and be glad in Thee; and let such as love Thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified. – Psalm 70:4**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 18:21–35***LESSON****Forgiveness****VERSE 21**

*Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?*

The Apostle Peter in suggesting to forgive seven times a brother who had sinned against him was already showing patience past the Jewish norm of not forgiving another for more than three times. As a rabbi once said, “He who begs forgiveness from his neighbour must not do so more than three times.”

This rule, however, is not without its biblical warrant. It is implied several times in the book of Amos. One example: “Thus saith the LORD; For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they carried away captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom” [Amos 1:6].

Jesus’ answer is that the Christian must forgive 70 times seven, meaning that there is no limit to the amount of times one must forgive. Jesus illustrates this principle through a parable and teaches the lesson that runs through the entire New Testament: forgiveness. The parable was about a servant who was forgiven a great debt but dealt mercilessly with a fellow servant who owed him a debt that was a tiny fraction of what he himself had formerly owed his master. He could not forgive others the way his master had forgiven him.

“Blessed are the merciful,” said Jesus, “for they shall obtain mercy” [Matthew 5:7]. A person who mercifully forgives others is manifesting the spiritual fruit of salvation—that he has experienced the forgiveness of His father in heaven and is able to pass this love to others.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 2**  
**MATTHEW 18:21–35**

**THOUGHT**

**Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. – James 2:17**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 19:1–30*

**LESSON**

**Marriage, the God-ordained institution**

**VERSE 6**

*Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*

God created the earth and populated it with men and women. In His wisdom, God put in place the institution of marriage so that a man and a woman can support and look out for each other. Marriage is meant to be a lifelong commitment between the two parties involved. In biblical times, sex outside the marriage was not allowed and was punishable by death, though the compassionate Christ once forgave a repentant adulteress (but told her to sin no more) [John 8:11].

Women in ancient times had little right and were generally treated as properties of their fathers and, subsequently, of their husbands. The Pharisees sought to tempt Jesus into legitimising the act of men wilfully putting away their wives so that they could marry another. Jesus, knowing their malicious intentions, rebuked them from first principles [v. 4]. He shows us the intent of God in marriage and imparts the important teaching that husbands should respect their wives. In this ideal state, there should be no divorce at all [Mark 10:11–12; Luke 16:18].

This means that the husband is consecrated to the wife in marriage, and the wife to the husband. One becomes the exclusive possession of the other. In marriage, a man ought to leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife, so that they can become totally one flesh.

A new union is formed from two personalities whereby one complements the other. Sacrifices and adjustments have to be made by both so that the relationship is full, joyous and satisfying.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 3**  
**MATTHEW 19**

**THOUGHT**

**Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it. – Ephesians 5:24–25**

### BIBLE LESSON

#### *Matthew 20:1–16*

#### LESSON

#### Work

#### VERSE 7

*They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.*

In the parable of the labourers in the vineyard in today's lesson, we find two great assertions: the right of every man to work and the right of every man to a wage for his work. It is stressed that the first worker wanted a contract and agreed to a full day's wage. He regarded work simply as a means to getting money for food and lodging. On the other hand, the latecomers' attitudes were, "Pay me what you like, but give me a job to do". The vineyard owner could cut the pay of the latecomers, but he knew that if he had done so, there would be hungry mouths that night.

The Apostle Paul also had his views on work and idleness [1 Thessalonians 5:12–14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12], where he condemned idleness with a strong tone. He referred to his own example and how he did more than was required of him.

Work is a privilege. It is the pattern of life that God has ordained for us—one of the purposes for which we are created. "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it ... dress it and keep it" [Genesis 1:28; 2:15]. Good works is also the purpose of our salvation, the reason why we are created anew in Jesus [Ephesians 2:10].

As a carpenter, Jesus worked hard with His hands. Paul made tents for a living while he carried on the work of God assigned to him. We should do our best in our vocation.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 4**  
**MATTHEW 20:1–16**

#### PRAYER

Lord, thank You for teaching us that work is a blessing.

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 20:17–34*

**LESSON**

**Knowing not what you  
ask**

**VERSE 21**

*And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.*

In the beginning of Chapter 18, the disciples were arguing who would be the greatest in Christ's kingdom. Before the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus announced for the third time His betrayal, arrest, crucifixion and resurrection [Matthew 16:21; 17:22]. He clearly mentioned the Cross, but it did not register with His disciples.

The mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee, made the foolish demand of having her sons "sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom" [v. 21]. They were selfishly asking for glory for themselves, and not for the Lord. The request was motivated by pride. Jesus reproved the ignorance and error of their petition: "Ye know not what ye ask." Jesus reminded them that suffering precedes blessings and privileges. He also revealed to them that the special throne was available to those whom the Father had chosen.

When you pray, don't fall into this error by making thoughtless, inconsiderate requests. Don't ask for things without reflecting on how much your supplications involve. Are you ready to carry your cross and follow Christ? Are you willing to give up the world and endure hardship for Christ's sake? If you are not ready, our Lord might answer: "Ye know not what ye ask."

Let us be aware of thoughtless and rash petitions. Be humble, strive to do good, walk in His footsteps and rest all hopes on the ransom paid by our Master's blood.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 5**

**MATTHEW 20:17-34**

THOUGHT

**Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God. – Ecclesiastes 5:2a**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 21:1–22***LESSON****Who is this?****VERSE 11**

*And the multitude said, This is  
Jesus the prophet of Nazareth  
of Galilee.*

**T**hirty-three years earlier, the magi came to inquire, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” [Matthew 2:2a]. Here the people asked, “Who is this?” This time round, the multitude answered, “This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee” [v. 10–11]. They revered Him as a prophet.

The term “prophet” was first used of Abraham [Genesis 20:7], although Moses was the first to be designated a prophet with the prominence that we usually associate with the term. In Deuteronomy 18:15–22, God promised that a Prophet would rise, whose word would have final authority. This promise has been fulfilled by our Lord Jesus Christ [Luke 24:19].

In ancient times, prophets had a two-fold function. They were foretellers and forth-tellers. As foretellers, they were seers [1 Samuel 9:9] who declared a message concerning the future. They testified of coming events beforehand [1 Peter 1:11]. As forth-tellers, they were to preach according to God’s Word, calling others to repentance. Jesus as a Prophet was both a foreteller and forth-teller. His works, words and ways testified of His authority as the Spokesman and Representative of God. He revealed Himself to be a mighty Prophet.

The Apostle Paul once asked, “Who art Thou, Lord?” Was Jesus merely a good man, a good teacher or a miracle worker? The Bible tells us that He is the Christ, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Do you believe that? If you do, now is the time to turn from your sin, trust Jesus for your salvation and follow Him.

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**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
JOB 6  
MATTHEW 21:1–22**

**PRAYER**

**Lord Jesus, with so many still rejecting You,  
take away everything within me that would stop  
another from receiving You as Saviour and Lord.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 21:23–46***LESSON****Son, go work today in my vineyard****VERSE 28**

*But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.*

When the Lord Jesus Christ sojourned on this earth, He worked with His hands and mind all His life. His greatest work was not making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk or even the dead to rise. Neither was it teaching as One having authority or scathingly denouncing the Pharisees for their hypocrisy. His greatest work was His supreme sacrifice during those three dark hours on Calvary. His greatest work was dying for us.

The vineyard is an analogy frequently used in the Bible. It often represents God's kingdom or the Church. God has graciously saved us and made us His own. He has endowed us with gifts or talents to be used in His service. He has promised to reward us if these gifts were fully and rightly employed [Romans 12:6–8].

In His vineyard, there is work for all and He expects the best from us. We are to work for His glory. Are we among the people who are cultivating the vineyard of the Lord of hosts [Isaiah 5:7]? Are we faithfully serving Him in a way that pleases Him and doing so to the limit of our capacity? When the Lord of the vineyard returns, will He receive of the fruit of His vineyard?

The primary objective in all service for the Lord is the winning of souls for Him. Let us be zealous in reaching out to the lost.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 7**  
**MATTHEW 21:23–46**

**PRAYER**

**When I consider the work of Jesus on this earth that led to Calvary, I pray that all my labour will glorify You.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 22:1–14***LESSON****Rejecting the invitation  
of God****VERSE 14***For many are called, but few  
are chosen.*

Jesus told this parable of the wedding banquet at a time when He was facing severe opposition from the Jewish leaders and would soon be betrayed and crucified.

In this parable, a king was preparing a wedding banquet for his son. The Kingdom of Heaven was this wedding banquet. God the Father was this king and the bridegroom was Jesus, the Son. There are different stages in this story: the special guests' refusal to attend [v. 1–3], the violent opposition to the second invitation, which resulted in the killing of the messengers [v. 4–7], the extension of the invitation to any who would come [v. 8–10], and the rejection of the guest who was not clothed in proper attire [v. 11–14].

This parable portrays man's spiritual indifference to the Gospel invitation. Their unbelief in God is the reason for their refusal. Again and again, Jesus invited them to follow Him. The account turned serious when the man without proper wedding clothes was not only thrown out of the banquet but also bound and cast into darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth.

It is not enough to make an outward response to the Gospel invitation; you need to come into God's presence in the way He prescribed. The proper attire for entering God's Kingdom is the robe of righteousness of Christ, it is in His merits, it is in true repentance for sin and faith in Him. Are you properly attired for the kingdom of God?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 8**  
**MATTHEW 22:1–14**

**THOUGHT**

**To reject the offer of grace is to reject God's only provision for eternal life.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 22:15–46*

**LESSON**

**Silencing His enemies**

**VERSE 37**

*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

The Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians tried to entrap Jesus with questions. They were furious because Jesus claimed to be God and many were following Him. The Herodians asked if it was lawful to pay tax to Caesar. Being Jewish leaders, the Pharisees despised paying taxes but the Herodians were loyal to the Roman Empire. Christ replied that as Caesar’s image was stamped upon the coin, they were to pay taxes. Similarly, as we are created in the image of God, His image is stamped upon us as His children. We submit ourselves to Him as our ultimate authority.

The Sadducees were a wealthy, aristocratic party who did not believe in the resurrection. They asked Jesus whose wife a woman would be in the resurrection if she had married seven times. Jesus rebuked their ignorance of the Scriptures. In the resurrection, we will be like the angels of God—no longer subject to human wants or passions. We will never get tired or hungry, old or be tempted but will certainly know and love one another.

The Pharisees tried to make things difficult for Jesus by asking Him which is the greatest commandment in the Law. Jesus’ answer was simple, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” and “Love thy neighbour as thyself”. All the other laws hang on these two commandments.

Let us ask God to strengthen and deepen our love for Him and to reflect His love in our motives and attitudes, words and actions towards others.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 9**  
**MATTHEW 22:15–46**

**THOUGHT**

**Duty to God and duty to man—both are summed up in the word “love”.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 23:1–12***LESSON****Warning against  
hypocrisy****VERSE 5**

*But all their works they do for  
to be seen of men: they make  
broad their phylacteries, and  
enlarge the borders of their  
garments,*

A hypocrite is a pretender, often professing love but actually not loving. A hypocrite utters the pretty words of love, carries out the motions of love, and puts on a charming face of love, but does not possess love in his heart. Hypocrites give the illusion, the pretence and the deceit of authenticity, but they are all deception.

The Pharisees—religious leaders of Jesus’ day—were the symbols of hypocrisy and pretence. In today’s passage, we read that Jesus reached a climax of intense anger towards the Pharisees. His charge was that they preached but they did not practise; they laid burdens on others’ shoulders but did not lift a finger to help; they did all their deeds to be seen by men and were not aware of the omniscient God; they loved the places of honour at feasts and the greetings of respect in the market places.

These religious leaders were led by the opinions of men and their self-interests. Their professed religiosity made them as abominable as unrepentant sinners, if not more. So it is with many Christians today. On the outside, they give a good performance of being a Christian, being eager to be seen involved in all good works, but it is all a front. Inside, their hearts are far from the love of God and for Him.

Jesus wants us to be truthful and humble. He says, “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted” [v. 12].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 10**  
**MATTHEW 23:1–12**

**THOUGHT**

**Beware! Our capacity for wrongdoing actually increases in direct proportion to our confidence that we can prevent it, or our belief that we are above it.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 23:13–39***LESSON****Rebuking the scribes and Pharisees****VERSE 23**

*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

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**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
JOB 11  
MATTHEW 23:13–39**

The rebuke by Jesus revealed the Pharisees and scribes' unwillingness to accept Jesus as their Messiah and teacher. The reason is that they never experienced a spiritually illuminated mind of repentance that saw beyond social status and external appearance. With much grief, Jesus denounced the religious leaders' spiritual play-acting. By teaching their man-made traditions instead of God's truth, they had blocked people from the true kingdom experience. He also pronounced condemnation on these hypocritical legalists [v. 13–15].

Jesus disapproved of the misguided religious pledges—seeing them as examples of superficial worship. He called them fools whose focus on these pledges and oaths was nothing but a material symbol. Lost in the pledge was the transformed heart that worshipped the transcendent God [v. 6–23]. Spurgeon once said, “There are none so stupid as those who will not learn, and none so blind as those who will not see.” Are you one of such?

Jesus used a rabbinic proverb of the gnat and the camel, along with the traditional practice of whitewashing tombs, to emphasise the mistaken idea that outward ceremonial practices make for inner purity. Instead of outward practice, Jesus called for inward spiritual renewal that cleanses from the inside out [v. 24–33].

The presence of the Messiah and His peace only comes when a person chooses to acknowledge his utter spiritual helplessness and his need for the saving grace of Jesus Christ. It is then that he can bend his knees and worship in Christ's holy presence. Are you willing to do that?

**PRAYER**

**Lord, transform me and help me to conform to Your refinements of true spirituality, true devotion and Kingdom character.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 24:1–31*

**LESSON**

**The disciples’ mistaken concept of Messiahship**

**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.*

Jesus told His disciples that the temple buildings would be destroyed and this caused them to be very concerned. They asked when this would happen, and when “the end” and His “coming” would occur. They probably thought that Jesus would be there and then take the mantle of Messiahship and inaugurate the kingdom of God in all its power.

Jesus warned them against such thinking. There would be a delay before the end comes. Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed but the life of the Church would continue. The future would be characterised by the violent persecution of Christ’s followers as well as terrible tribulations in Judea. Hearing this, the disciples were shocked. They thought, as disciples of the Messiah, they would be immediately and eminently victorious; the Promised Land would be easily conquered and the worship of God restored.

Jesus also drove home the point that His disciples should not be deceived either by world events or by people claiming to know which are the signs of the end. Jesus began telling His disciples about the sign of His coming. The sun and moon would be darkened and stars (possibly comets or meteorites) would fall from the sky [v. 29]. Only then would we see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

Quite simply, there are no advance signs of Jesus’ coming. He will come when He comes, and the people who are then alive will know it is happening.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 12**  
**MATTHEW 24:1–31**

**THOUGHT**

**Let us be exhorted to live responsibly and faithfully, compassionately and courageously while waiting for our Lord’s return.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 24:32–51***LESSON****No one knows****VERSE 36**

*But of that day and hour  
knoweth no man, no, not  
the angels of heaven, but my  
Father only.*

To the disciples' question on when the end would come, Jesus replied that no one could prophesy when the end would occur or when He would come. In fact, the truth is that only the Father knows. Yet after His resurrection, the disciples still pressed Jesus for an answer. Again, Jesus told them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power" [Acts 1:7].

Despite Jesus' clear instructions on this, many Christians throughout the centuries have repeated the mistake of the Apostles. Many have tried to prognosticate when the end would come, and have almost always said it would be "very soon". But history has proved Jesus right and every single prognosticator wrong. We can never know in advance when the end will come.

So what are we to do in the meantime, while we await Jesus' return? Watching world events is not what Jesus is speaking about here. What all Christians must watch is their relationship with God. They are always to be ready to meet their Maker. In the parable of the faithful servant, Jesus told His disciples to avoid worldly sins, and flee from the attractive temptation of sin. The Master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect Him and at an hour he is not aware of [v. 45–51].

The lesson for us is that we always need to be spiritually ready, precisely because we can never know when He will return.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 13**  
**MATTHEW 24:32–51**

**PRAYER**

**Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. – Revelation 22:20b**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 25:1–13*

**LESSON**

**Are you ready to meet  
Christ?**

**VERSE 6**

*And at midnight there was  
a cry made, Behold, the  
bridegroom cometh; go ye out  
to meet him.*

In biblical times, when a Jewish man was ready for marriage, his father would choose the bride for him. He would then send a servant to the girl's father to present the proposal for the betrothal. If the girl accepted the proposal, she would drink the offered cup of wine to seal the marriage covenant. From then on, she would be consecrated for the bridegroom even though the couple might never have seen each other. This separation would usually remain for a year or more, during which the bride would prepare herself for marriage and gather her trousseau. The bridegroom would prepare a room in his father's house for his new family.

At an appointed time in the evening, unknown to the bride, the bridegroom and his attendants will leave the father's house and conduct a torch procession to the bride's house. The groom's arrival at the bride's home would be preceded by a shout to inform the bride and her attendants that the groom had come to take her to his home, where a wedding party and guests were already gathered.

The significance of the wedding analogy was not missed by the listeners during Jesus' days. God the Father chooses the elect from the beginning. When a person accepts Jesus as Saviour, he belongs to Christ, and he is to live a holy life and prepare for Christ's coming to take him to His heavenly home.

Are you living a holy life for Christ and are you prepared for His coming, which may be soon?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 14**  
**MATTHEW 25:1–13**

**PRAYER**

**O Lord, teach us to number our days, that we may  
apply our hearts unto wisdom.**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 25:14–30*

**LESSON**

**Your talents are God's gifts**

**VERSE 15**

*And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.*

Let us consider today the gifts that God gives to every man. In a modern world where men have appeared to achieve much, especially in science and technology, it is easy for us to think that all we have achieved are due to our own abilities and intelligence. We often fail to see that we owe our talents and abilities to God. In fact, God gives us gifts and talents freely [Romans 8:32], according to His sovereign will [1 Corinthians 7:7].

Each of us has our own unique talents, such as singing, preaching or using our hands and feet. Thank God for the talents that He has given to us. The question before us now is this: What is the purpose for which God has given us these gifts?

The answer: to glorify God's name. If you are good at singing, are you using your voice to glorify God in the choir? If you are good at teaching, are you a Sunday school teacher? Consider the talents that God has given you, and see how you can best make use of them to do God's work.

You can decide how you want to make use of your talents—whether for God's work or against it. As seen in today's passage, hiding one's talents instead of using them for God's glory amounts to disobedience. So let us purpose in our hearts to glorify His name with our talents.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 15**  
**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****Christ's glorious return****VERSE 31**

*When the Son of man shall  
come in his glory, and all the  
holy angels with him, then  
shall he sit upon the throne of  
his glory.*

**F**or our meditation this day, let us consider God's Word concerning our Lord's promised return. Jesus Himself promised that He would prepare a place for us in His Father's mansion, and that He would return to "receive [us] unto [Himself]; that where [He is], there [we will] be also" [John 14:1–3]. To those who put their trust in Him, this is great assurance and hope as they continue their pilgrim journey in this sin-cursed world—they will find true rest in the presence of God Himself.

In what manner will our Lord return on that day? Definitely not like the incarnation when our Lord came as a lowly servant, but in glory with all the holy angels with Him. Indeed, He will return as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish His rule for a thousand years [Revelation 19]. He will return not just to judge but also to make war against all unrighteousness and wickedness in this world—He will return to cast the evil one and his allies into the lake of fire.

Take a moment to consider this grim fact. Christ's return is sure because God's Word promises it. Do not be falsely assured into thinking that the return of Christ is not time yet—God's Word warns us that the time will come like a thief in the night. It will be unannounced and unpredictable. Those who do not belong to Him will be judged and will face eternal damnation.

Seek Jesus and receive His salvation even today.

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**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
JOB 16–17  
MATTHEW 25:31–46**

**MEDITATION**

**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. – John 1:12**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 26: 1–25*

**LESSON**

**Betrayal**

**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.*

Our Lord prophesied that one of His Apostles would betray Him. He not only prophesied of His betrayal, but also the manner in which He would be murdered (crucified on the cross) and the day this would occur (in two days, during the Passover). He knew who it was that would betray Him. Since Jesus knew in advance all the details of the betrayal, why didn't He do anything to stop the event from occurring?

Betrayal is not a new theme in the Bible. Adam betrayed God's trust when he disobeyed God's command and ate of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Nevertheless, there are also good men in the Bible who resisted this particular evil. David, when he had a chance to kill Saul in the cave of Engedi, did not do so, as he felt that it was a betrayal against God's anointed ruler over him.

Man is created in God's holy image. However, because of sin, man is no longer able to live up to the standard of holiness that God sets. When we sin, we betray the holiness that God expects of us. As Christians, when we sin, we betray the liberty that Christ has given to us—the liberty to choose right from wrong.

What is the remedy to sin? Look to God and ask Him for forgiveness. Ask Him to guide you so that you may discern what is right for the glory of His name.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 18**  
**MATTHEW 26:1–25**

**MEDITATION**

**Thy Word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee. – Psalm 119:11**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 26:26–46*

**LESSON**

**Offended because of  
Christ**

**VERSE 31**

*Then saith Jesus unto them,  
All ye shall be offended  
because of me this night: for  
it is written, I will smite the  
shepherd, and the sheep of the  
flock shall be scattered abroad.*

Our Lord Jesus continued to prophesy of the events leading up to His crucifixion. He warned His disciples that all of them would be offended because of Him. In Greek, the word “offend” means to be stumbled or tripped up or to be enticed to sin, apostasy or displeasure. Our Lord foresaw that His disciples would be scattered abroad like sheep without a shepherd. Indeed, without His presence to guide them, they would be lost, stumbling easily into sin.

Without God, the world is truly lost. We can see from the Old Testament accounts how godless men behaved. In the days of Babel, men had forgotten God and thought they could reach heaven in their own strength. In Noah’s days, the whole world was enticed with so much sin that they ignored Noah’s warnings of God’s impending judgement on them.

In today’s modern world, the situation is not much different. Men have become complacent, and God is far from their minds. However, the fact is that God is still in control, and He is still the One Who sustains His creation. Most important of all, God has provided a way for men to know Him.

The Bible is God’s inspired Word, and has been given to us so that we not only know God but also know how to be reconciled to Him. Jesus Christ is the only way to God. So let us seek Him daily through His Word, so that we will not be like scattered sheep without a shepherd.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 19**  
**MATTHEW 26:26–46**

**MEDITATION**

**For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now  
returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your  
souls. – 1 Peter 2:25**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 26:47–75*

**LESSON**

**Denial**

**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.*

It is interesting to note the Greek words used in verses 70, 72 and 75. The word used in verses 70 and 72 is the Greek word *arneomai*, which means to deny, refuse or contradict. However, the word used in verse 75 is *aparneomai*, which means to deny utterly. Perhaps out of fear of being arrested, Peter had set out to simply deny the accusations of the crowd. It was then that our Lord's earlier words came to haunt him, as he realised that Jesus had actually warned him that he was in danger of complete and utter denial of his Lord.

Do you also tend to deny your witness for our Lord, perhaps out of fear of men and consequences? Take heed that you could be in danger of utterly denying your faith. Similarly, do you seek excuses for your sins? Take heed that you are in danger of God's judgement with every little temptation that you give in to.

Remember that God is our shield and help, and we should not fear what man can do to us [Psalm 118:6]. Instead, we should take a page from Daniel's three friends, who would rather be thrown into the fiery furnace than deny God.

However, if we have failed in the past, take heart also from this account that God is all-merciful. Just as He had restored Peter, let us also seek God with a contrite heart, so that He would forgive us and restore us again into His fellowship.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 20**  
**MATTHEW 26:47-75**

**MEDITATION**

**For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. – 2 Timothy 1:7**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 27:1–10***LESSON****Morning thoughts****VERSE 1**

*When the morning was come,  
all the chief priests and elders  
of the people took counsel  
against Jesus to put him to  
death.*

**T**he wicked chief priests struck hard and fast. The enemies of God wasted neither time nor opportunity in plotting to kill the Son of God. To the Jews, the chief priests were respectable religious and civic leaders. However, their hearts and minds were evil. “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” [Jeremiah 17:9].

Not long after Peter had betrayed our Lord Jesus, He was condemned by the Sanhedrin [Matthew 26:57]. The thought that consumed the minds of the chief priests and elders was how they might kill a man whom they knew was innocent. During this time, our Lord Jesus was all alone because “all the disciples forsook Him, and fled” [Matthew 26:56b]. What a contrast between the evildoers and the disciples.

Our Lord Jesus says, “The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” [Luke 16:8b]. Those who are of this world devote more time, energy and thought to the pursuit of their desires than Christians in the pursuit of Christ. While the disciples scattered in fear, the evildoers strategised. While God’s people wallow in apathy in God’s work, the world abounds with enthusiasm in their opposition to God.

“Now it is high time to awake out of sleep ... The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” [Romans 13:11–12].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 21**  
**MATTHEW 27:1–10**

**THOUGHT**

**It only takes the silence of God’s people for falsehood to thrive.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 27:11–32***LESSON****The reluctant cross  
bearer****VERSE 32**

*And as they came out, they  
found a man of Cyrene, Simon  
by name: him they compelled  
to bear his cross.*

There are many people in the Gospels who came on the scene for a moment but left an enduring impression. Our Lord Jesus said of the woman who anointed Him, “Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her” [Matthew 26:13]. Simon the Cyrenian falls into this category.

Not much is known about Simon. We know that he was from Cyrene, which was a city in Libya, North Africa. He had two sons—Alexander and Rufus [Mark 15:21]. They were leaders in the early church. Men of Cyrene preached the Gospel in Antioch [Acts 11:20], and there could be a possible link with Simon.

The one thing we know about Simon was that he was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus. It was the custom in those days that the guilty carry the instrument of his own execution. Our Lord Jesus, weakened from much physical torture, was unable to bear his cross the whole distance, so the Roman soldiers compelled Simon to carry His cross. Unbeknownst to him, Simon was requisitioned for the service of the King of kings that day. Simon might be the reluctant cross bearer that day, but in the years after that, he had a wonderful story to tell his sons. The incident changed his life.

Likewise, no encounter with Christ would leave you unchanged and unmoved. And every cross-bearing for Christ would leave you with a glorious testimony for your children and the world.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 22****MATTHEW 27:11–32****THOUGHT**

**Are you willing to be requisitioned for Christ’s service? Are you a cross bearer?**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 27:33–56*

**LESSON**

**Watching death**

**VERSE 36**

*And sitting down they watched  
him there;*

**D**eath is a gruesome sight. We need only recall the photos of victims in German concentration camps and the killing fields of Cambodia. One cannot watch death with emotional detachment.

Yet this seems to be the case with the Roman soldiers. They sat down at the foot of the cross and watched Jesus there. The soldiers were keeping watch, though it was unlikely that they were keeping a watch on Jesus himself. He was too weak to move. Rather, the soldiers were there to prevent the disciples from trying to rescue their Master.

Crucifixion was a punishment designed to produce maximum pain in the person before he succumbed to death. This was not the first time that these hardened soldiers were assigned to watch over a crucified man and they took the crucifixion to be another day of work. Their impiety was seen in their playing a game of chance to see who would get Jesus' garments [v. 35]. It was not enough for these men to watch a man die. They had to derive some entertainment from it. These Roman soldiers had no idea that they were presiding over the death of the Son of God. Truly, it can be said that seeing eyes see not.

What do you see when you look at the Cross? If we look at the Cross with calmness and detachment, and not realise that it is the glory of God, then it too can be said of us that though we see Christ on the Cross, we really have seen nothing.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 23**  
**MATTHEW 27:33–56**

**THOUGHT**

**Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. –  
Isaiah 45:22**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 27:57–66***LESSON****Jesus' disciple****VERSE 57**

*When the even was come,  
there came a rich man of  
Arimathaea, named Joseph,  
who also himself was Jesus'  
disciple.*

It had been six hours since Christ was crucified. He died at the ninth hour [v. 46], about three o'clock in the afternoon, and just a few hours before the Sabbath. The body of our Lord Jesus had to be removed from the cross and interred. The honour fell on the shoulders of Joseph of Arimathaea. The Gospel writers describe Joseph as "an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God" [Mark 15:43b], meaning that Joseph was not only a leader of the Jews but also a man known for his integrity. He was also a rich man [v. 57].

The best description of Joseph was that he was a disciple of Jesus. Joseph was a secret disciple because he feared the Jews [John 19:38]. Some may be tempted to judge Joseph in haste because he was a closet Christian. But Mark said that he "went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus" [Mark 15:43].

We cannot despise Joseph's cowardice without also despising the disciples who forsook Christ. Let us "judge nothing before the time" [1 Corinthians 4:5a]. No doubt, both Joseph and Nicodemus were late in their public confession of Christ. Nevertheless, they were true disciples. By God's providence, He reserved these two secret believers for the solemn task of burying our Lord Jesus [John 19:39].

When the time came, Joseph made an unequivocal confession not merely by his lips, but also by his act. His one act of service no doubt changed his life forever.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 24**  
**MATTHEW 27:57-66**

**THOUGHT**

**When God presented the opportunity for service, Joseph seized it. Will you?**

**BIBLE LESSON***Matthew 28:1–10***LESSON****Fear mixed with joy****VERSE 8**

*And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.*

It was the first morning after the Crucifixion. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ had crushed the hopes of the disciples. Our Lord had spoken to them about His death and resurrection but His promise of the resurrection was farthest from their minds. The women had brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus [Mark 16:1]. They were concerned about who could move the stone away from the sepulchre so that they could give Jesus a decent burial. They fully expected to see a corpse.

However, it was not to be. The angel of the Lord met the women and said, “Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said” [v. 5–6a]. These words evoked a confusion of emotions. The women went away with mixed emotions. There was fear because of the events that had transpired—the shaking of the earth, the removal of the stone and the appearance of an angel. Then there was joy—Christ’s resurrection. But fear set in again. The body was missing. Did their Lord rise or was His body taken away?

The women went away with fear and great joy because they had not fully relied on the testimony of the angel. But how gracious Christ was that He met with the women while they doubted and so removed all their fear.

There are times when we experience conflicting feelings—faith and fear, joy and apprehension. “I believe but ...” What should we do? Meet with Christ in the Scriptures.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 25**  
**MATTHEW 28:1–10**

**THOUGHT**

**Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. – John 5:39**

**BIBLE LESSON**

*Matthew 28:11–20*

**LESSON**

**I am with you always.**

**VERSE 20**

*Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*

These are the final words of our Lord Jesus before His ascension. He had given the mandate to the disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” [Matthew 28:19–20a].

Whom our Lord calls, He also equips. We are to teach everything He has commanded. We are to teach all things concerning Him. We are to preach Christ alone. Paul says, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” [1 Corinthians 2:2]. Where our Lord sends, He will also go. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world” [v. 20c]. As far as He sends us, so far will He be with us. That is the promise of our Lord Jesus’ presence and providence.

There is also a time element in this promise. Our Lord promises that He will be with us “even unto the end of the world”, not just the end of our lives but the end of this age. This is the meaning of “world”. This means that there will never be a time when Christ is not with us.

The Psalmist writes, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? ... If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me” [Psalm 139:7–10].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 26**  
**MATTHEW 28:11–20**

**PRAYER**

**O Lord, be with us unto the end. Guide and strengthen us in life, and bring us safely through the valley of the shadow of death, to Thy blessed presence, where there is fullness of joy forevermore.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 1:1–13***LESSON****Jesus is God****VERSE 11**

*And there came a voice from  
heaven, saying, Thou art my  
beloved Son, in whom I am  
well pleased.*

John the Baptist, who preached in the wilderness, was a very simple man in both his clothing and diet. One does not need to be fancifully dressed to be effective in ministering God's Word. Likewise, as hearers, we ought to be attracted to clear and faithful preaching rather than be fascinated by men who preach in pleasant and sweet words. The Gospel may be old but the message that John preached remains the same today. Repent of your sins. It is that simple—repent.

John was the forerunner for Christ and though he baptised many people, he declared that he could but only baptise with water. Jesus would come after him and baptise with the Holy Ghost. The reason is that Jesus Himself is God.

Water baptism is an outward show of our faith. We openly and publicly declare our faith through water baptism. The water is merely a symbolic gesture. We are baptised by the Holy Spirit at the time we receive Jesus as our personal Saviour.

John certainly did not think he was fit to baptise Jesus, though he was asked by Jesus to do so. However, Jesus need not repent because He is sinless. He is God and cannot sin. When Jesus was baptised, heaven opened and Trinity was presented in a very definitive way. The Holy Spirit descended like a dove, and God the Father spoke with a voice from heaven. Jesus is God indeed.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 27**  
**MARK 1:1–13**

**THOUGHT**

**This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all  
acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world  
to save sinners; of whom I am chief. – 1 Timothy  
1:15**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 1:14–28***LESSON****The authority of Jesus****VERSE 17**

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

John was not put into prison for any criminal offence but for his belief in, and testimony for, God. The Gospel deals with our sins, teaching us to repent, which is the last thing the unbelieving world wants to hear. The world may try to stop the preaching of the Gospel simply because its inhabitants would rather live in sin.

However, God's work is never frustrated because of human resistance. In fact, God's work progresses in spite of what man has done to oppose it, and despite what man has done to advance it. God will accomplish His will no matter what.

Jesus walked by the Sea of Galilee to select His disciples. He called Simon, Andrew, James and John to follow Him. They would henceforth be fishers of men. They did not hesitate but left behind whatever they were doing to follow Jesus. He did not call the well-educated and influential people but chose humble fishermen. God only looks for a willing heart. Do not ignore the call of your Saviour. We should gladly do all to please Him and serve Him in gratitude because He has saved us.

When Jesus taught in the synagogue at Capernaum, people noticed that He preached with authority. He was preaching Himself and His Word. He further demonstrated His authority by casting out unclean spirits and healing the sick. Only God can command demons because He is the Creator of the universe. Even demons recognise and acknowledge that Jesus is God. Do you recognise His authority and thus obey His commands?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 28**  
**MARK 1:14–28**

**THOUGHT**

**So then neither is he that planteth any thing,  
neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the  
increase. – 1 Corinthians 3:7**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 1:29–45***LESSON****Heaven, our final destination****VERSE 38**

*And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.*

Jesus continued His ministry by performing more miracles and His new disciples were there to witness His power. He healed the sick and cast out demons. The response of the people was overwhelming. So many people wanted to meet Jesus that He had to go to other towns to preach. But the multitude came to Jesus for the wrong reason. They only wanted physical healing.

Today there are many people who still look to Jesus for our physical healing. They too have their focus wrong. We should seek Jesus for spiritual healing instead.

Some people would like to live on earth for as long as they can. Worldly vices can be so attractive that some wish they can be here forever. But none of us can live beyond the lifespan spelt out for mankind—a sojourn of 60 to 80 years. “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years ...” [Psalm 90:10].

We should be aware that after this life on earth, there is eternity. Yes, Jesus is the Great Physician and He is able to heal our bodies. But more importantly, Jesus came to redeem us so that we can have eternal life. This is what the Gospel is all about. We are to repent of our sins and receive Jesus as our Saviour so that we can have eternal life. Trusting Jesus means we can live forever. Are you excited about this?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 29**  
**MARK 1:29–45**

**THOUGHT**

**The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. – Psalm 90:10**

## 1 MARCH

### BIBLE LESSON

*Mark 2:1–17*

#### LESSON

**Jesus loves even you**

#### 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.*

Jesus returned to Capernaum and was swamped by people seeking to be healed. The house was crowded with people looking for physical healing but Jesus preached to them instead. Have you wondered why He would not attend to the sick first? Which is more important: to repent and be forgiven of our sins, or be healed of our physical illness only to die again in sin?

Though the people who came to Jesus had other purposes or motives, He was compassionate to heal them. The place was so crowded that one of those who came had to be lowered through the roof lying on a bed. Seeing his faith, Jesus forgave him of his sins and he was able to walk out through the door.

Jesus dealt lovingly and compassionately with people. Yet the sceptics—in the guise of the scribes and Pharisees—had always doubted Jesus. Sadly, this state has not changed much. We still meet those who refuse to accept the Gospel, dismissing the fact that Jesus is God.

When Jesus sat down to eat with publicans and sinners, yet again there were those with criticisms ready to hurl at Him. However, God has the answer even before we utter any word aloud. If all of us are righteous, Jesus need not come. He came to save sinners whom He loves. While we only love certain people, Jesus loves everyone including you and me.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 30**  
**MARK 2:1–17**

#### THOUGHT

**That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. – Matthew 5:45**

## 2 MARCH

### BIBLE LESSON

*Mark 2:18–28*

### LESSON

**Jesus, Lord of the Sabbath**

### VERSE 28

*Therefore the Son of man is  
Lord also of the sabbath.*

Should Christians fast, put on sack cloth and pull a long face to show that we are sober? While we are serious about our faith, we should also be joyful because we know that we have been liberated and have eternal life.

There is joy in every believer's heart and our heart matters most to God. It is one thing to be religious and put on a front but it is another thing to enjoy fellowship with the Lord.

Jesus came not to impose old laws or to introduce more laws. He came to die on our behalf so that we can have a new life. He illustrated this by saying that one could not sew a new piece of cloth to an old garment. The new piece of cloth would shrink, thus causing a bigger tear in the old garment. And one could not put new wine into old wineskins because the fermentation of the new wine would produce a gas and burst the old wineskin. The point our Lord is teaching is that a believer cannot live his new life through Christ according to the old economy.

Jesus was also questioned why His disciples plucked corn and why He healed on the Sabbath. The answer and principle that Jesus taught here is that the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath. He is the Lord of the Sabbath! We observe the Sabbath because we love Him and worship the Lord of the Sabbath in gratitude and joy.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 31**  
**MARK 2:18–28**

### THOUGHT

**Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. – 2 Corinthians 3:6**

### BIBLE LESSON

*Mark 3:1–12*

#### LESSON

**Jesus came so that we can  
be healed**

#### 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.*

There is no shortage of critics of Jesus from His time to this day. There are people who always have unkind remarks and ridicule for our Lord. Today, they turn their words against the Gospel. The world is not against Christians but against the Word of God [John 7:7].

Even as Jesus was healing the sick and the demon-possessed, the scribes accused Him of working on the Sabbath. They only wanted to find trouble with Jesus. But Jesus always had a ready answer. He asked whether it was better to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil. Is it better to save life or to kill? Thank God that we are commanded to do good to all, especially to fellow believers [Galatians 6:10].

However, Jesus was angered by the hardness of their hearts. God has every right to be angry with those who break His laws. He has a plan to save us from punishment and Jesus came to execute this plan of salvation. Despite the love of God, there are many who harden their hearts, rejecting the Gospel.

Rejecting the Gospel is bad enough but there are those, such as the Pharisees, who are always thinking of ways to persecute Jesus in order to destroy the Gospel. Man cannot destroy the work and the Word of God. If God were to deal with us according to our sins, we would all have perished. Thank God for dealing with us according to His grace and mercy.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 32**  
**MARK 3:1–12**

QUESTION

**Have you done any good work for Jesus today?**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 3:13–35***LESSON****Called to be His disciples****VERSE 14**

*And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,*

**W**e do not know why Jesus chose the 12 to be Apostles, though we do know that it was not because of anything they had done. God did the choosing. “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you” [John 15:16a]. God has the prerogative as to whom He chooses. More importantly, when God calls, we should respond the way the Apostles did.

We also read of those who doubted Jesus when He cast out demons. Jesus is God and demons acknowledged this as well. Even demons had to obey God’s commandments because He is the Almighty. In doubting, the people were rejecting the works of both the Holy Spirit and Jesus. This is unpardonable [v. 29].

God is willing to forgive every sin but you would have to confess them before Him. Jesus died for all and that includes all sinners. If we do not believe in Jesus as our Saviour, we cannot be forgiven. If we are not forgiven, we cannot be reconciled with God because of our sins. God is holy and will not condone sin. Therefore, if we do not have the right relationship with God, we can never be with Him for eternity.

Thank God that He forgives all our sins as long as we come repentantly before Him. The grace of forgiveness is given freely to everyone who believes. The important question is: Have you accepted the Lord Jesus in your heart?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 33****MARK 3:13–35****THOUGHT**

**... Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief. –  
Mark 9:24**

### BIBLE LESSON

*Mark 4: 1–20*

#### LESSON

**God blesses the “good ground”**

#### VERSE 11

*And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables.*

The Parable of the Sower teaches us that there are different kinds of people in this world and how they respond to the Gospel is determined by God. The wayside, the stony ground and the thorny patch are all different reactions of the natural man to the Gospel. Some men reject the Gospel outright while others accept it on their natural strength for a short time. Yet others seem to accept it but are really more inclined to the world than the Word.

There are also those who encounter the Gospel, receive it joyously, put it in their hearts and minds, understand it, and bear fruit. What makes this group of people different from the others? Jesus gave the answer to His disciples shortly after telling the parable to the multitudes: “Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.”

The disciples are the “good ground”. The difference between the good ground and the other types of “ground” is God’s miraculous and sovereign act of opening a person’s mind. This opening of the mind is similar to the tilling of the ground. It creates a favourable condition to enable the seed to germinate. Similarly, God gives the “good ground” the gift of the saving faith and the Holy Spirit so that the seed can take root and grow.

The apostle Paul reminds us: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us” [Titus 3:5a].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 34**  
**MARK 4:1–20**

#### THOUGHT

**God expects and requires fruit from those who enjoy the Gospel ... Christian graces daily exercised, Christian duties duly performed. – Matthew Henry**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 4:21–41***LESSON****Storms in life****VERSE 41**

*And they feared exceedingly,  
and said one to another, What  
manner of man is this, that  
even the wind and the sea obey  
him?*

Following a day full of teaching, Jesus and His disciples sailed across the Sea of Galilee. A windstorm arose, beating waves into their boat. Jesus was sleeping but was awakened by His disciples because they feared for their lives. Jesus rebuked the wind, calmed the sea and reproached His disciples for their lack of faith.

As Jesus' followers, we are not exempted from storms in life. We live in a world where storms strike, literally and figuratively. Christians experience these tempests, just like anyone else. Christians face trials such as illness, accidents, disappointments and death. The Apostle Paul experienced the perils of literal storms and shipwrecks.

God never promised Christians exemption from the storms of life. If we find ourselves in the midst of trouble, do not think it strange. How shall we react when the stormy times come? Shall we cry out like the disciples who were fearful and weak in faith: "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" [v. 38b] Or do we weather the storms with confident faith and calm repose?

Take heart in knowing that our Lord Jesus still helps us deal with our storms. He is the source of mercy and grace in times of need. To overcome fear in storms, pray. As you grow in your faith, believe that God will protect and deliver you. When the storms of life engulf you, our gracious Lord stands ready to calm your heart and mind.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 35**  
**MARK 4:21–41**

**THOUGHT**

**Even the wind and the sea obey Jesus. Shall we not obey Him Who has authority in heaven and on earth?**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 5: 1–20***LESSON****Go home to thy friends****VERSE 19**

*Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.*

Jesus cast out a legion of devils from a man and restored him to good health and sense. The man was not only dispossessed of Satan, he was also granted a special grace that caused him to desire to be with Christ. But Jesus told him, “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.” Here we learn from our Lord that a believer’s own home has the first claims on his attention.

The man is now turned from darkness to light, from the chains of Satan to the power of God. So he ought to go to his family and friends and declare the great things that God had done for his body and soul.

“Go home to thy friends.” Home is the place above all others where a child of God ought to do good. Home is the place where his best affections ought to be focused. Home is the place where he should strive daily to witness for Christ and be a living epistle for Him. May we remember this lesson.

Can you imagine this demoniac man going back into the mountains and among the tombs where he used to live, and reverting to the characteristics of his former devil-ridden life? Who would believe him when he talks about being healed? Similarly, which family or friend of ours would believe us when we say “Christ is my Saviour” if our lives are exactly the same as before?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 36**  
**MARK 5:1–20**

**THOUGHT**

**May it never be said of us that we are saints abroad but wicked by our own fireside; talkers about religion abroad, but worldly and ungodly at home! – J.C. Ryle**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 5:21–43***LESSON****Restored to life****VERSE 23**

*And besought him greatly,  
saying, My little daughter lieth  
at the point of death: I pray  
thee, come and lay thy hands  
on her, that she may be healed;  
and she shall live.*

Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, was probably wealthy enough to have sought the best medical help for his dying daughter. When all else failed, he turned to Jesus for help and our Lord restored the dead girl to life.

We often think and talk as if wealth is the great antidote to sorrow, as if money can immunise us from illness and death. We must realise that these perils come to palaces as well as to cottages, to the rich as well as to the poor.

Let us learn from this miracle that position and wealth in life does not put a man beyond the reach of sorrow and pain. Jairus probably had a lot of money yet it could not keep death away from his beloved daughter. The children of wealthy rulers are just as liable to pain as the children of poor workers. Illness is a great leveller as it makes no distinctions between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the powerless.

Let us also see in this miracle proof of what Jesus can do for lost souls. He can help believers overcome sin and walk in newness of life. Is your soul weary or sick? Call on the Lord to come. Entreat Him to help you. He that came to the rescue of Jairus is still plenteous in mercy and mighty in power. He is the Great Physician Who prescribes God's Word to make us well.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE

IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 37**

**MARK 5:21–43**

**THOUGHT**

Heaven is the only place where “the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity” [Isaiah 33:24].

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 6: 1–29***LESSON****Whosoever shall not  
receive or hear****VERSE 11**

*And whosoever shall not  
receive you, nor hear you,  
when ye depart thence, shake  
off the dust under your feet  
for a testimony against them.  
Verily I say unto you, It shall  
be more tolerable for Sodom  
and Gomorrha in the day of  
judgement, than for that city.*

**T**o men who will not hear or receive the Gospel, our Lord has this to say: “It shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgement.” How can God possibly judge the horrors of Sodom and Gomorrah less severely than His own people who reject the Gospel?

While the Sodomites were judged for their immoral actions, the Israelites would be judged for their rejection of the Messiah. God will judge Israel more harshly than Sodom and Gomorrah because Israel had the Old Testament. But He will judge us even more severely because we have both the Old and New Testaments.

We assume that as long as we are attending church, and do not murder, steal or cheat, we are in no great danger of judgement. But we need something more than just abstinence from outward irregularities to save our souls. It is a great sin to hear the Gospel and not believe it, to be invited to repent and yet remain indifferent.

We have the Bible in our hands. We have the Gospel of salvation preached to us regularly. But have we received it into our hearts? Have we obeyed it in our lives? Our Lord says we will be guiltier than the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. People in these cities had never heard the Gospel and therefore they had not blatantly rejected it. As for us, we have heard the Gospel and yet would not believe. May we search our hearts lest we ruin our souls.

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**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE**
**IN 2 YEARS, READ****JOB 38****MARK 6:1–29****THOUGHT**

**If we have not truly believed, now is the time to do so. If we are saved, now is the time to prove it.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 6:30–56***LESSON****Rowing against the wind****VERSE 48**

*And he saw them toiling in rowing; for the wind was contrary unto them: and about the fourth watch of the night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have passed by them.*

After sending the crowd away, Jesus ordered His disciples to get into their boat and start rowing across the sea to Bethsaida. He gave them a direction and a destination.

Having a direction and destination in life is good. But it is not enough to only know where we are going and how we get there. The disciples were rugged men but they were no match for the winds blowing against them. They were toiling in rowing in the middle of the sea, in the middle of the night. A lot of effort was expended but little progress was made. They needed a power far greater than theirs to move forward. Note how our Lord saw the trouble His disciples were in. He came walking on the water to cheer them: “Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid.” And He changed the stormy sea into a calm refuge.

Similarly, our Lord Jesus always sees our toils and distress in this world. He sees all our battles and strife. He sees us in the storms. He sees us not with the eyes of an indifferent spectator but with eyes filled with tender love. This is a great comfort to us. If only we can get this thought into our hearts, it will give us immense courage to face our sorrows and struggles.

Whatever our circumstances are, the Lord Jesus sees us. The same pair of eyes that saw the disciples tossing in the sea is ever looking over us.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 39**  
**MARK 6:30–56**

**THOUGHT**

**Blessed are people who see difficulty as a test, not a curse, and believe the Lord is looking over them while they row against the winds of trials and temptations.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 7:1–23***LESSON****The futility of lip service****VERSE 6**

*He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

In the Gospel of Mark, our Lord Jesus is portrayed as the Servant-Teacher. We read of the scribes reproaching Jesus for disregarding the traditions of the elders. The Pharisees were obsessed with outward ceremonial washing [v. 1–13]. In contrast to such legalism, our Lord set them straight on the source of true defilement. Man’s sinful nature originating from the heart is described to us from verses 14 to 23.

Do not misunderstand the teaching of Jesus here. Tradition per se is not a bad thing [2 Thessalonians 2:15]. There is also nothing wrong in observing various cultural traditions. However, allowing human tradition to replace the authority of God’s Word is rendering the latter ineffectual. The example given here is declaring “Corban” on whatever is due to one’s parents to excuse one from one’s duties of filial piety.

True worship from the heart always takes precedence over lip service. Works do not save us. However, our salvation in Christ must result in good deeds. We are Christ’s workmanship and created in Christ Jesus unto good works [Ephesians 2:10]. The truth of James 1:22 must be evidenced in the life of a believer. We must be trust-worthy, acting upon what we say and not making empty promises.

Let us be wary of legalism in our attitude and service for the Lord. The Pharisees and the scribes are too busy with adhering to man’s traditions. Actions always speak louder than words. Therefore, when our Christian talk does not match our walk, we are guilty of hypocrisy.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**JOB 40**  
**MARK 7:1–23**

**PRAYER**

**Lord, help me to mean what I say and say what I mean.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 7:24–37***LESSON****Publishing glad tidings****VERSE 36**

*And he charged them that they should tell no man: but the more he charged them, so much the more a great deal they published it;*

Jesus now focused His attention on reaching out to the Gentiles in the borders of Tyre and Sidon [v. 24–30]. His loving compassion moved Him to heal the Syrophenician woman’s daughter. Likewise, His restoration of a man’s hearing and speech showed His loving mercy [v. 31–37].

Our natural inclination is to tell others what our benefactors have done for us. This is only human because of our indebtedness to that particular person. The Samaritan woman in John 4:29 did the same. “Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” However, the deaf stammerer and his friends were told not to publicise this miracle [v. 36]. The same command was also given later to the man healed of his blindness [Mark 8:26].

Wherever Jesus went, He attracted a big crowd, though many came only to witness His miracles. Yet it was not time for our Lord Jesus to begin His public ministry. He wanted to focus on teaching His disciples privately at that time. Hence, He was not ready to make known His miraculous deeds.

How about you? Are you excited about telling others of God’s saving grace? Or are you fearful? Don’t be afraid or hesitant about proclaiming the Gospel. Be a bearer of good news wherever you go. Be like the deaf stammerer, who could not be silent about what Christ had done for him.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 41**  
**MARK 7:24–37**

**PRAYER****Lord, help me to be a herald of good news.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 8:1–26***LESSON****Beware of corrupting  
influence****VERSE 15**

*And he charged them, saying,  
Take heed, beware of the  
leaven of the Pharisees, and of  
the leaven of Herod.*

Two miracles were mentioned in this passage. The miraculous feeding of the four thousand met the physical needs of the crowd. Yet the Pharisees and the Herodians still asked for signs. Even the disciples themselves lacked spiritual understanding of its significance [v. 1–21]. As what we have read earlier in Mark 7:36, Christ gave a similar command after healing the blind man in Bethsaida [v. 22–26].

Furthermore, Christ sounded a warning to His own disciples. He pointed out their lack of spiritual understanding of His divine power manifested in those miracles. He also rebuked Peter for misunderstanding of the nature of Christ's kingdom [v. 33].

Our Lord Jesus knew that the Pharisees were looking for signs to prove His deity. The Pharisees were spiritually blinded with obstinate unbelief even after witnessing such miracles first hand. They placed more emphasis on legalism, formalism and traditionalism, choosing to obey man-made rules. Added to this was the leaven of Herod, representing materialism and worldliness. Both Herod's supporters and the Pharisees were united in their evil plot against Jesus [Mark 3:6]. The evil influence of the Sadducees stressed on the leaven of liberalism.

In the Bible, leaven always symbolises corruption, referring to false teachings that pollute the Gospel. All believers must not allow external worldly influence to creep into our lives. It is not easy to keep the world out of the church. Don't let the world into the church by your liberal, legalistic and worldly attitudes. Pray for wisdom to sift out the "leaven" in your service for the Lord.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**JOB 42**  
**MARK 8:1–26**

**WARNING**

**A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. –  
Galatians 5:9**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 8:27–38***LESSON****Forsaking all****VERSE 34**

*And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

After Peter's confession of Christ as the Son of the living God, our Lord proceeded to teach His disciples about the way of the cross of Calvary. Once again, the impulsive Peter showed his lack of understanding of Christ's imminent suffering [v. 27–33]. The full extent of discipleship was taught by Christ in this closing section. The cause of Christ involves "all or nothing" [v. 34–38].

Peter's remonstrance and objection to his Master bearing the cross was the reason for Christ's teaching about cross-bearing. The cross was equally necessary for all His followers. Making a serious commitment to Christ is to deny oneself. Self-denial means relinquishing one's personal rights and surrendering to Christ, letting Him take full control. Instead of living a self-centred life, every child of God must live a Christ-centred life.

The next step in this path of discipleship is to "take up his cross". Though puzzling to us today, this figure of speech used by Jesus was well-understood by the people during His time. Death by crucifixion was well known in those days in Israel. A condemned criminal would have to carry his own cross beam to his place of execution. Hence, it meant going out to die. Christ's disciples must be prepared to suffer shame and pain, too.

Following Christ is a continuous, personal relationship of obedience. We must be sensitive and faithful to His leading. Bearing one's cross involves more than enduring a difficult circumstance. We must be prepared to die for Christ, if need be.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS I**  
**MARK 8:27–38**

**MEDITATION****Have you decided to follow Jesus?**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 9:1–13***LESSON****Exceeding white****VERSE 3**

*And his raiment became  
shining, exceeding white as  
snow; so as no fuller on earth  
can white them.*

This portion of Scripture tells us of a glorious event in human history—the transfiguration of Christ. Jesus had led three of His disciples up a high mountain and transfigured before them [v. 2], appearing together with Elijah and Moses [v. 4].

What would you feel if you were one of the three chosen disciples to have a glimpse of the glory of God? Would you be awestruck? The disciples were so afraid that they knew not what to say [v. 6]. They were probably trembling when they heard the voice of God the Father commanding them to hearken to His Son [v. 7]. The transfiguration also left them pondering the prophecies in Scripture [v. 10–13].

Yet there is another element in this episode that is less noticed—the glorious beauty of this manifestation. Christ appeared to them in white—in clothing so white no laundrymen on earth can whiten. Have you wondered what hue of white that would be? “Exceeding white as snow” here is but an attempt to make this visual pleasure communicable using human language. Look intently at any white object. The white the disciples saw, and for that matter, any colour we are going to see when we meet God face to face, is going to be much fuller and richer than the most beautiful colour in this world.

White also represents holiness here. Any self-righteousness and assumed godliness on earth are but nothing compared to the perfect holiness we are going to experience and comprehend when Christ comes back for us.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**PROVERBS 2**  
**MARK 9:1–13**

**MEDITATION**

**Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. – Isaiah 1:18a**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 9:14–29***LESSON****Entering no more****VERSE 25**

*When Jesus saw that the people came running together, he rebuked the foul spirit, saying unto him, Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him.*

We read here how Jesus had cast out an evil spirit from the son of a man. Though it might only seem to be yet another miracle of Christ, there are many precious lessons to be learnt.

Jesus' disciples had failed to cast out the spirit. This was because of their lack of faith. They might be taken aback by how fierce the spirit was. Jesus' exhortation to them after the whole event was to improve their prayer lives. Let us always be found close to God. Jesus also told the man whose son was afflicted that there was a need for him to believe in God, for "all things are possible to him that believeth". To this, the man cried out: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Let us always cry to God for help to increase our faith.

This spirit was an evil one. Before he left the boy, he rent him sore, so much so that everyone thought the boy was dead. Yet Jesus took him by the hand and raised him up. By the charge of Christ, the spirit came out of the boy and would enter no more into him. What great power! What blessed assurance!

Similarly for us, we were once lost in sin and the devil had tormented us sore, but once Jesus held our hands and entered our lives, we are dead to sin and transformed into a new man. Never would we want to go back to the old man again! May sin not have dominion over us.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 3**  
**MARK 9:14–29**

**MEDITATION**

**Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. – 2 Corinthians 5:17**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 9:30–50***LESSON****Have peace one with another****VERSE 50**

*Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.*

Many lessons are covered in these 21 verses. We read of Christ's prophecy of His resurrection [v. 30–32], His teaching on who is the greatest [v. 33–35], His exhortation on receiving a child [v. 36–42] and His instruction on fleeing temptations [v. 43–48]. This section ends with Christ's analogy of Christians as salt [v. 49–50].

Christians are supposed to be like salt, which was a precious commodity at that time. Salt was much sought, as they were used for preserving food, penetrating deeply into flesh to transform it from within. In this context, Christ further exhorted His disciples to have salt in themselves, and have peace one with another, which brings us back to the verses where Christ was addressing the disciples who were fighting about who among them was the greatest.

We are one body in Christ and should co-labour with one another to serve Him better. Yet we often let envy and jealousy get in our way. Instead of uniting together to act as a savouring agent, we strive against one another. This is even found among mature Christians who compete against one another to see whose ministry is faring better.

However, if we keep our eyes on Jesus and take a moment to meditate on the objectives of our service and ministry, we will realise that there is no such thing as “your ministry” or “my ministry”, but only God's ministry. And ministries are only various means to one ultimate end—the furtherance of God's kingdom and the doing of His will.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**PROVERBS 4**  
**MARK 9:30–50**

**MEDITATION**

**If any man desires to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 10:1–16***LESSON****Matters of the heart****VERSE 15**

*Verily I say unto you,  
Whosoever shall not receive  
the kingdom of God as a  
little child, he shall not enter  
therein.*

We are reminded today again about the importance of childlike faith [v. 13–16]. By being childlike in our Christian faith, we believe and trust our Lord Jesus whole-heartedly. There is no second-guessing or hypocrisy—we simply yield ourselves to Christ.

This is what Jesus requires of us—to take the step of faith like a believing child. It is not a great step. Our faith starts like a small mustard seed [Matthew 13:31–32]. Once we take the step, God will help us grow. It has very much to do with our hearts. Unless the heart is right, one can never be in tune with the will of God.

We see here how deceitful and distorted the heart can be [v. 1–12]. The Pharisees were seeking to trap Jesus in an ethical dilemma [v. 2]—Moses allowing a man to put away his wife [v. 4] seemed contradictory to God’s first intention of lifelong wedlock [v. 9]. Why did Moses allow divorce then? Jesus’ reply again points towards the hearts of men—Moses had written the precept because of man’s hardheartedness. When Jesus was asked the same question again, He gave the charge against groundless divorce.

In this passage, we see how the heart can be contorted. From seeking excuses for remarrying to setting traps to test Christ, the heart is indeed deceitful above all things. And yet it is this very heart that is to bring us to Christ like the faith of a child.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 5**  
**MARK 10:1–16**

**PRAYER**

**Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. – Psalm 4:4**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 10:17–31***LESSON****Then Jesus beholding him  
loved him****VERSE 21**

*Then Jesus beholding him  
loved him, and said unto him,  
One thing thou lackest: go thy  
way, sell whatsoever thou hast,  
and give to the poor, and thou  
shalt have treasure in heaven:  
and come, take up the cross,  
and follow me.*

**W**e have here a rich young ruler who claimed that he had observed God’s commandments since young but was grieved because he could not live up to Christ’s charge—to sell whatever he had, give the money to the poor and follow Him. From thereon we have Christ’s exclamation, “How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God” [v. 24], and its idiomatic analogy in verse 25.

Some misinterpreted this as a woeful sentence against rich people but surely this is not true. Just as the love of money rather than money itself is the root of all evil [1 Timothy 6:10], the stumbling block for the rich young ruler was not the fact that he was rich but that he trusted in his riches. Jesus saw this in his heart and challenged him to give up his carnal-mindedness to follow Him, but the ruler was unable to do so. For that matter, a poor man can also face the same predicament if he trusts in riches. His belief in wealth and covetousness alone is enough to prevent him from following Jesus wholeheartedly.

Where do you put your trust? We often miss a very important part of verse 21. Jesus did not challenge the rich ruler to shame him. Instead, He had asked him because He “beholding him loved him”. Jesus did not want him to miss out on the greater inheritance and eternal life [v. 30].

What then is your response to Christ’s love for you?

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**TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
PROVERBS 6  
MARK 10:17–31**

**MEDITATION**

**No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. – Luke 16:13**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 10:32–52***LESSON****Two requests****VERSE 36**

*And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?*

In today's portion of Scripture, we read of two requests: one from Christ's disciples, James and John; and another from the blind Bartimaeus. In both cases, Jesus had asked them directly what He could do for them [v. 36, 51], always seeking to minister to them [v. 45], but the respective answers He gave to them were quite different.

To the sons of Zebedee, Jesus asked them whether they were willing to bear His cup [v. 38], which they answered yes [v. 39], though they probably did not know the full extent of this commitment. But as to their wish to sit by His side, Jesus told them that this glorious privilege would only be given to whom it was prepared [v. 40]. He then proceeded to teach His disciples an important doctrine on ministering [v. 44–45].

On the other hand, we read that blind Bartimaeus' request was granted immediately [v. 52]. Contrite and dejected [v. 46], this poor beggar had cried out to Jesus [v. 47] despite all efforts by people around to stop him [v. 48]. His faith had made him whole.

Within these few verses, we can learn much about sending our prayers of petition to God. Learn to pray in faith motivated by a humble and contrite heart—God would hear our prayers. If He does not answer them immediately, there must be a reason. As you wait patiently, reflect on your own motivations when you pray. Are you praying according to God's will or are you motivated by worldly concerns?

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 7**  
**MARK 10:32–52**

**MEDITATION**

**Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. – James 4:2–3**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 11***LESSON****Effective prayer****VERSE 25**

*And when ye stand praying,  
forgive, if ye have ought against  
any: that your Father also  
which is in heaven may forgive  
you your trespasses.*

The triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem is recorded in specific detail by Mark [v. 1–11]. Here we see the multitude welcoming Him by crying “Hosanna”. The cursing of the barren fig tree is a warning about the consequences of fruitlessness. The cleansing of the temple is to reform abuses and ungodly service [v. 12–18]. Our Lord also taught His disciples how to pray effectively. Any ill will against anyone cannot be harboured at all [v. 19–26]. This passage ends with the chief priests, the scribes and the elders being questioned about John the Baptist. They failed in their evil intention to question the authority of Jesus [v. 27–33].

Our key verse for today is a reminder of one of the petitions in the Lord’s Prayer [Matthew 6:12]. Psalm 66:18 also teaches the condition of effective prayer. It is useless to pray grudgingly because our Lord Jesus knows the thoughts and intents of every heart.

Likewise, the need for reconciliation with anyone must be resolved before communing with God [Matthew 5:23–24]. Our service will count for nothing if our hearts are not right and we bear grudges against anyone.

How is your prayer life? The hindrances for effective praying in faith must be dealt with. Just as Christ has forgiven us, we must be ready to forgive others. The extent of forgiveness is mentioned in Matthew 18:21–22. Has anyone offended you and you are still bothered by it? Pray for a forgiving spirit. Remember, when God forgives, He also chooses to remember our sins no more.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**PROVERBS 8****MARK 11****PRAYER**

**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. – Luke 23:34a**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 12:1–12***LESSON****The chief cornerstone****VERSE 10**

*And have ye not read this scripture; The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.*

**H**aving silenced the Jewish religious leaders who questioned His authority, the Lord narrated the parable of the vineyard. The parable is quite simple—God is the Husbandman, the Vineyard is His Kingdom, His servants (builders) are the religious leaders, and His Son is, evidently, Jesus. God had planted a vineyard and gave it to His servants but they refused to give God the fruits of His land, and ultimately wanted to seize the vineyard for themselves.

The lesson, as summarised in verse 9, is that God will one day judge those servants and destroy them. Then Jesus quoted the cornerstone passage in Psalm 118:22–23, which the Jewish leaders knew well. Jesus was prophesying that he would be rejected and killed. Nevertheless, he claimed that he would be the cornerstone for the coming Kingdom of God.

That the stone refers to Jesus Christ is confirmed in many passages of Scripture, for example, “This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” [Acts 4:11–12].

The Jewish leaders know that Jesus had used the parable against them. But instead of repenting, “they sought to lay hold of Him”. Sadly, this is the same response of many when presented with the Gospel. They do not realise that the rejection of Jesus Christ does not make them free from God’s judgement. Rather, their very rejection will be the basis of God’s judgement and punishment.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 9**  
**MARK 12:1–12**

**THOUGHT**

**Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him. – Psalm 2:12**

### BIBLE LESSON

*Mark 12:13–44*

#### LESSON

#### The foremost commandment

#### VERSE 33

*And to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.*

It is ironic that one of the most fundamental and important truths of the Christian faith should come from the lips of a man whose original intention was to trap Jesus with difficult questions.

Having been silenced in their earlier attempts to question and diminish Jesus' authority, the Jewish leaders sent their cronies to use difficult questions pertaining to issues like paying taxes to Rome, the resurrection, and the Mosaic Law, to "catch Him in His words" [v. 13]. However, our Lord's answers not only revealed their hypocrisy [v. 15] and ignorance of God's Word [v. 24] but also forced them to acknowledge the fundamental error of the religious leaders of those days. They drew near to God with their mouths and honoured Him with their lips but their hearts were far from Him [Matthew 15:8].

The situation is not much different today. Employing so-called scientific knowledge like evolution and human philosophy, and using every tool available at their disposal, such as the mass media and the Internet, the enemies of God from both outside and within the Church try to undermine the authority of God's Word.

Indeed, we live in perilous times and the Christian's best defence is to arm himself with a firm grounding in the Bible and walk close to Jesus each day. Leaders have to remember and obey our Lord's instruction to Peter by the sea of Tiberias [John 21]—to feed His flock with the sound and faithful instruction of God's Word.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 10**  
**MARK 12:13–44**

#### THOUGHT

**Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. – Ephesians 6:11**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 13:1–13***LESSON****Beware of false prophets****VERSE 6**

*For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.*

As Jesus and His disciples were leaving the Temple, the disciples were awestruck by the size and grandeur of the Temple complex [v. 1]. Josephus, a Jewish historian, described the Temple during Jesus' time as "covered all over with plates of gold of great weight, and, at the first rising of the sun, reflected back a very fiery splendour, and made those who forced themselves to look upon it to turn away, just as they would have done at the sun's own rays". However, Jesus foretold of its complete destruction by the Romans in AD 70.

This chapter is commonly referred to as Jesus' Olivet Discourse. The passage is about the eschatological events that will end this age. In answering the two questions raised by His disciples [v. 4], the Lord gave insights to what they could expect in the end times.

The Lord might not have answered all their inquiries but He spoke plainly of the dangers that would exist in the world. There will be many false Christs, whose purpose is to deceive as many as possible, so much so that even believers will be taken in by their falsehood [v. 6, 22]. The world will experience international warfare, widespread famine and numerous earthquakes. But these are merely the "beginnings of sorrows", for the end is not yet come [v. 8].

True believers will face severe persecutions but in the face of such difficult and frightening times, God's own continuing faithfulness will be evident to preserve them [v. 11–13].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 11**  
**MARK 13:1–13**

**PRAYER**

**Lord, thank You for Your preservation now and in the future.**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 13:14–37***LESSON****The coming of Christ is imminent****VERSE 26***And then shall they see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.*

Prior to the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's people shall experience unimaginable afflictions. These will be true in the areas around Israel after the desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Antichrist in the end times, as predicted by Prophet Daniel [Daniel 9:27; 11:31; 12:11]. This event is known as the Great Tribulation.

Jesus foretold not only of the terrifying holocaust of that day, which would surpass all other sufferings of God's precious chosen people, but He also mentioned that there would be safety and hope when they flee to the mountains [v. 14–16; Zechariah 13:8–9]. God will preserve a redeemed remnant of the nation of Israel. He will do it through the shortening of their days of sufferings.

Finally, at the end of these tribulation periods, the Lord Himself will return with great power and glory. The heavenly bodies will be shaken out of their places by His holy presence. He will manifest Himself in His unveiled glory, so that entire world will be able to see Him at once [Revelation 6:16]. Then, He will punish the Antichrist and his followers and will gather His saints for glory and reward.

The Lord ends His discourse with a solemn word, "Watch", which is repeated thrice for emphasis [v. 33, 35, 37]. Since no one will ever know when His coming will occur, there is a need for believers to be attentive and vigilant. Take heed! It will require every one of us to be always ready and watchful.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 12**  
**MARK 13:14–37**

**PRAYER**

**O Lord, what a joy it will be when the Saviour I shall see with my own eyes!**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 14:1–31***LESSON****Friend or foe?****VERSE 6**

*And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me.*

This chapter marks the beginning of the passion or suffering of our Lord and Saviour. Note the various reactions of the religious leaders, Judas Iscariot, Mary of Bethany and the disciples. The Jewish religious leaders conspired to arrest Jesus and put Him to death but were fearful that the people might revolt and rescue Jesus. As such, they were pleasantly surprised when Judas volunteered his help.

Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord because of a covetous heart. He volunteered to identify Jesus to the priests and scribes to help them arrest Jesus. This was in sharp contrast to the wholehearted devotion of Mary. Recall how David was similarly betrayed by his counsellor, Ahitophel. Interestingly, both traitors suffered the same tragic end of hanging themselves [2 Samuel 17:23; Matthew 27:5].

Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, seized the opportunity to express her love and devotion by anointing Jesus with precious ointment. The disciples were quick to condemn her for this waste, murmuring that the ointment could have been sold and the money given to the poor. However, our Lord commended her pious action, saying that she had done what she could, and her deed would be remembered by all throughout the ages. The disciples confidently advocated their total commitment to the Lord but fled and forsook Him after He was arrested [Mark 14:50]. Peter even denied Him three times.

God will honour those who honour Him. Always stand up for the Lord.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**PROVERBS 13**  
**MARK 14:1–31**

**PRAYER**

**Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. – Psalm 139:23–24**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 14:32–52***LESSON****Why sleepest thou?****VERSE 36**

*And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.*

The Garden of Gethsemane was a scene of both agony and victory for Jesus. He is fully God and fully man. He pleaded as man for God the Father to remove the cup of suffering from Him. However, as Mediator and Saviour, He submitted Himself to God's sovereign will, ready to do His Father's bidding. Though He prayed for an alternative plan, He affirmed His desire to do God's will.

Jesus brought three of His closest disciples with Him for moral support and fellowship. This were the same trio who had the privilege of witnessing His glory at the Mount of Transfiguration [Matthew 17:1–9]. He told them to watch and pray with Him but they were found sound asleep—twice! The Lord completed His communion with God the Father, “and he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?” [v. 37]

This question was posed to Peter probably because he once boasted that not only would he always acknowledge Jesus, he was also willing even to die for Him [v. 31]. Peter, who would die for his Master, was not able even to keep watch with Him.

“Sit ye here, while I shall pray” [v. 32]. Jesus fortified Himself with prayer against the coming trials and temptations. He bade His disciples to do likewise [Luke 22:40], for His arrest would also put them in similar situations. Jesus wants us to live for Him, not to die for Him.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 14**  
**MARK 14:32–52**

**REMINDER**

**Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak. – Mark 14:38**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 14:53–72***LESSON****A distant follower****VERSE 54**

*And Peter followed him afar off, even into the palace of the high priest: and he sat with the servants, and warmed himself at the fire.*

Jesus was arrested and had to face two trials—a religious trial by the Sanhedrin, followed by a civil trial officiated by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate [Matthew 27:2]. The Jewish religious leaders were in so great a hurry to expedite the sentence of Jesus that they were not concerned about breaking the Sabbath laws. A kangaroo court was set up at night and during the Passover feast. This was a judicial farce with no justice in mind.

The court could not find a charge to condemn Jesus to death. The false witnesses did not give a consistent testimony. Out of desperation, the high priest asked Jesus, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” He feigned religious horror when Jesus answered in the affirmative—a response he was expecting. Jesus was then charged with blasphemy—a crime punishable by death under Jewish law.

All the disciples forsook Jesus and fled as predicted [v. 50]. Peter followed from a distance, wanting to know what would happen to Jesus, yet afraid of being identified with Him. Though Peter was recognised three times [v. 66–72], he vehemently denied any association with Jesus. Look at how Peter had fallen—from standing to sitting with the enemies of Christ, and to making himself comfortable in their company [v. 54].

Are we like Peter? Do our friends and relatives know that we are followers of Christ? Jesus said: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” [Matthew 10:32].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 15**  
**MARK 14:53–72**

**REMINDER**

**Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. – Psalm 1:1**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 15:1–21***LESSON****Without a murmur****VERSE 5***But Jesus yet answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled.*

Soon, Jesus found Himself bound and brought before Pilate by the chief priests. Standing before Pilate and being “accused of many things” [v. 3], Jesus answered nothing. Indeed, to the marvel of Pilate, Jesus stood “mute.” Yet, deep within Pilate’s heart, he could find no wrong in the Person before him. In fact, he knew that the chief priests had sent Jesus to him because of envy [v. 10].

As for Jesus, amidst the false charges against Him, He kept silent. Jesus stood humbly, submitting to the groundless accusations made against Him without a murmur. More importantly, His submissiveness was because He knew His sufferings were of God’s will.

The practical lesson we can take away from Jesus’ “silence” is one found in the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the meek” [Matthew 5:5]. Our Lord was guiltless and yet made no defence at all. Like a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth [Isaiah 53:7]. Christ is our perfect example of meekness. Let us learn to suffer patiently, not to complain about whatever the Lord sees fit to lay upon us. Take heed to your ways that you offend no one with your tongue in times of temptation, taking caution to irritation or ill temper whatever the situation may be [Psalm 39:1].

Nothing glorifies God as much as patient suffering. As 1 Peter 2:20b has exhorted us perfectly, “... when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**PROVERBS 16**  
**MARK 15:1–21**

**THOUGHT**

**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. – Matthew 5:5**

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 15:22–47***LESSON****Trusting in Him****VERSE 34**

*And at the ninth hour Jesus  
cried with a loud voice, saying,  
Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?  
Which is, being interpreted,  
My God, my God, why hast  
thou forsaken me?*

It was noon, yet darkness blanketed the whole land. By three in the afternoon, the Saviour had uttered His dying words [v. 34], heaved His last breath and given up His spirit. “It is finished.” The great work of salvation was done. The thick veil of the temple, which separated man from God, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom [v. 38]. Jesus, the propitiation of our sins, had set us right before God.

However, this question is often asked among God’s children: Is it possible to be forsaken of God for a time and yet be loved by Him? We need not doubt this, as our Lord was also forsaken for a season and even when He was forsaken, He was still the beloved Son, in whom the Father was “well pleased”.

When illness grips us or a peculiar affliction strikes us, it sometimes constrains us to cry out, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” However, God’s turning away of His face is always for a higher purpose and we can rest assured in His promise that He will never leave or forsake us.

Take heart. Those who feel “forsaken” need to learn from our Lord’s experience not to give way to despair. Be still before the Lord and wait upon Him. Let us together with Job say by faith, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” [Job 13:15a].

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ  
**PROVERBS 17**  
**MARK 15:22–47**

**PRAYER**

Dear Lord, all my desire is before Thee and my groaning is not hidden from Thee.

**BIBLE LESSON***Mark 16:1–20***LESSON****Making Christ known****VERSE 15**

*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*

After the resurrection of Jesus and His appearance before His beloved friends and disciples, Jesus left us His last command: “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.”

These are words of great significance—instructions on the work that we should occupy ourselves with before Christ comes again. The world is groaning in sin and needs the Gospel; and the salvation of the Gospel is to be offered freely to all mankind. As Christians, we are given this charge—to reach out to lost souls. This task is urgent, for he who confesses his sins and believes in Christ shall be saved [v. 16]. To be given the Great Commission is a great privilege. The Almighty God can save souls without our help but He has chosen us—weak vessels that He has created—to carry out His will.

Do you have someone to share the Gospel with today—a neighbour, an office colleague or a relative? Don't wait! Labour on patiently—preaching, teaching and warning of His coming. Spiritual battles are never easy but we are also told that the Lord will be with us if we follow His commandment. Rest assured our work for Him is not in vain.

Let us close the pages of Mark's gospel with the encouragement from Psalm 126:5–6. We may go on our way heavily, and sow with many tears; but if we sow Christ's precious seeds, joyful would be the day when we bring in our sheaves.

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TO COMPLETE THE BIBLE  
IN 2 YEARS, READ

**PROVERBS 18**  
**MARK 16**

**THOUGHT****Let us labour together in Christ's harvest.**





