

Bread from Heaven

When the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, “What is it?”...Moses said to them, “It is the bread which Yahweh has given you to eat.” – Exodus 16:15

[John 6:22-40, Capernaum] On the next day, the multitude that stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was no other boat there, except the one in which his disciples had embarked, and that Jesus hadn't entered with his disciples into the boat, but his disciples had gone away alone. However boats from Tiberias came near to the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks. When the multitude therefore saw that Jesus wasn't there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats, and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus. When they found him on the other side of the sea, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?”

Jesus answered them, “Most certainly I tell you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves, and were filled. Don't work for the food which perishes, but for the food which remains to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For God the Father has sealed him.”

They said therefore to him, “What must we do, that we may work the works of God?”

Jesus answered them, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.*”

They said therefore to him, “What then do you do for a sign, that we may see, and

*This is the work of
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whom he has sent*

believe you? What work do you do? Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness. As it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’” [Exodus 16:4]

Jesus therefore said to them, “Most certainly, I tell you, it wasn't Moses who gave you the bread out of heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.”

They said therefore to him, “Lord, always give us this bread.”

Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will not be hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But I told you that you have seen me, and yet you don't believe. All those whom the Father gives me will come to me. He who comes to me I will in no way throw out. For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. This is the will of my Father who sent me, that of all he has given to me I should lose nothing, but should raise him up at the last day. This is the will of the one who sent me, that everyone who sees the Son, and believes in him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”

The Jews therefore murmured concerning him, because he said, “I am the bread which came down out of heaven.” They said, “Isn't this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then does he say, ‘I have come down out of heaven?’”

1. What's the turning point in this story? Why does Jesus say this? How do they respond?
2. Are you working or believing? How is believing a work? Do you seek signs? How so?
3. Jesus, I'm hungry and thirsty for recognition and approval; please give me yourself so...



September 2

Words of Life

The mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving kindness shall not depart from you, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed.” – Isaiah 54:10

[John 6:41-7:1] Therefore Jesus answered them, “Don’t murmur among yourselves. No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, ‘They will all be taught by God.’ [Isaiah 54:13] Therefore everyone who hears from the Father, and has learned, comes to me. Not that anyone has seen the Father, except he who is from God. He has seen the Father. Most certainly, I tell you, he who believes in me has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, that anyone may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. Yes, the bread which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews therefore contended with one another, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

Jesus therefore said to them, “Most certainly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you don’t have life in yourselves. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he who feeds on me, he will also live because of me. This is the bread which came down out of heaven—not as our fathers ate the manna, and died. He who eats this bread will live forever.” He said these

things in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.

You have the words of eternal life

Therefore many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, “This is a hard saying! Who can listen to it?”

But Jesus knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at this, said to them, “Does this cause you to stumble? Then what if you would see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before? It is the spirit who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and are life. But there are some of you who don’t believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who didn’t believe, and who it was who would betray him. He said, “For this cause have I said to you that no one can come to me, unless it is given to him by my Father.”

At this, many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Jesus said therefore to the twelve, “You don’t also want to go away, do you?”

Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and know that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus answered them, “Didn’t I choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” Now he spoke of Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, for it was he who would betray him, being one of the twelve.

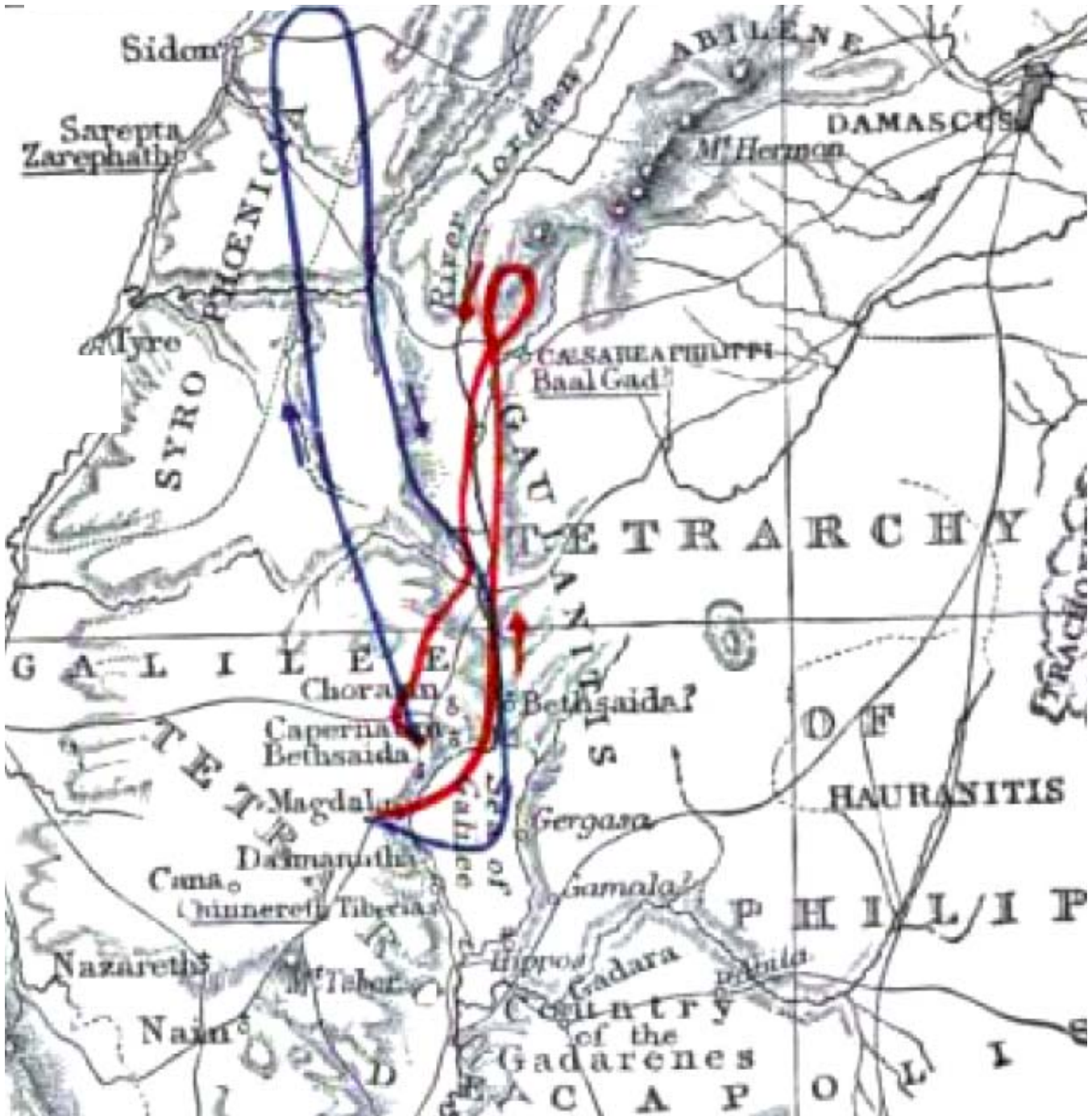
After these things, Jesus was walking in Galilee, for he wouldn’t walk in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him.

1. How do we eat and drink Jesus? How is this related to his words being spirit and life?
2. What about Jesus causes you to stumble? Do you believe your faith in him was “given”?
3. Jesus, you chose me; thank you! I want to be a true disciple, not a devil, so please help...

From Capernaum to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and back.

As shown by the blue line, Jesus journeys from Capernaum to the vicinity of Tyre, where he heals the daughter of the SyroPhoenician woman (Mar. 6); returning, he comes to the east side of the Sea of Galilee, feeds 4000 (Mar. 8), and crosses the sea to Bethsaida and Magdala, where a blind man was restored (Mar. 10).

As shown by the red line, Jesus journeyed to Casarea Philippi, where Peter confessed him the Son of God (Mar. 11), and on a mountain (probably Hermon) Jesus was transfigured (Mar. 12); then an epileptic child was healed (Mar. 13), and Jesus returned to Capernaum.



September 3
(Beginning of Jesus' Third Year of Ministry)

The Evil Within

Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvelous work...and the wisdom of
their wise men will perish. – Isaiah 29:14

[Mark 6:30-34, Capernaum] Then the Pharisees, and some of the scribes gathered together to him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of his disciples eating bread with defiled, that is, unwashed, hands, they found fault. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, don't eat unless they wash their hands and forearms, holding to the tradition of the elders. They don't eat when they come from the marketplace, unless they bathe themselves, and there are many other things, which they have received to hold to: washings of cups, pitchers, bronze vessels, and couches.) The Pharisees and the scribes asked him, "Why don't your disciples walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with unwashed hands?"

He answered them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, 'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' [Isaiah 29:13]

"For you set aside the commandment of God, and hold tightly to the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and you do many other such things." He said to them, "Full well do you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother;' [Exodus 20:12] and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.' [Exodus 21:17] But you say, 'If a man tells his father or his mother, "Whatever profit you might have

**Evil things come from
within, and defile the man.**

received from me is Corban, that is to say, given to God;" then you no longer allow him to do anything for his father or his mother, making void the word of God by your tradition, which you have handed down. You do many things like this."

He called all the multitude to himself, and said to them, "Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing from outside of the man, that going into him can defile him; but the things which proceed out of the man are those that defile the man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"

Then the disciples came, and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying?"

But he answered, "Every plant which my heavenly Father didn't plant will be uprooted. Leave them alone. They are blind guides of the blind. If the blind guide the blind, both will fall into a pit."

When he had entered into a house away from the multitude, his disciples asked him about the parable. He said to them, "Are you thus without understanding also? Don't you perceive that whatever goes into the man from outside can't defile him, because it doesn't go into his heart, but into his stomach, then into the latrine, thus purifying all foods?" He said, "That which proceeds out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the hearts of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, sexual sins, murders, thefts, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, an evil eye, false testimony, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands doesn't defile the man." [Matthew 15:1-20]

1. What evil, human teachings have you held as doctrine? Where are these ideas from?
2. How do you hide the evil within by outward show? What will you do today to stop?
3. Jesus, so much evil is still within me; please clean me inside and help me today to...

September 4

A “Dog’s” Faith

I will record Rahab [Egypt] and Babylon among those who acknowledge me. Behold, Philistia, Tyre, and also Ethiopia: “This one was born there.” Yes, of Zion it will be said, “This one and that one was born in her;” – Psalm 87:4-5

[Mark 7:24-30, near Tyre] From there he arose, and went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon. He entered into a house, and didn’t want anyone to know it, but he couldn’t escape notice. For a Canaanite woman, whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, having heard of him, came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by race. She begged him that he would cast the demon out of her daughter. But he answered her not a word.

His disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away; for she cries after us.”

But he answered, “I wasn’t sent to anyone but the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”

But she came and worshiped him, saying, “Lord, help me.” But Jesus said to her, “Let the children be filled first, for it is not appropriate to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.”

But she answered him, “Yes, Lord. Yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs which fall from their masters’ table.”

He said to her, “Woman, great is your faith! For this saying, go your way. Be it done to you even as you desire. The demon has gone out of your daughter.”

She went away to her house, and found the child having been laid on the bed, with the demon gone out. [Matthew 15:21-28]

1. Why did Jesus not answer at first, and then talk about dogs? Was he sent only to Israel?
2. How do you ask Jesus for help? Will you be more persistent today? About what things?
3. Jesus, my faith is small, but I want it to be great; today I urgently plead that you will...

September 5

Private Healing, Public Praise

Yahweh said to him, “Who made man’s mouth? Or who makes one mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Isn’t it I, Yahweh? – Exodus 4:11

[Mark 7:31-37, Decapolis] Again he released, and he spoke clearly. He departed from the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and came to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the region of Decapolis. They brought to him one who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. They begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside from the multitude, privately, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat, and touched his tongue. Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, “**Ephphatha!**” that is, “**Be opened!**” Immediately his ears were opened, and the impediment of his tongue was

Looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, ... “Be opened!”

He commanded them that they should tell no one, but the more he commanded them, so much the more widely they proclaimed it. They were astonished beyond measure, saying, “He has done all things well. He makes even the deaf hear, and the mute speak!” Great multitudes came to him, having with them the lame, blind, mute, maimed, and many others, and they put them down at his feet. He healed them, so that the multitude wondered when they saw the mute speaking, injured whole, lame walking, and blind seeing—and they glorified the God of Israel. [Matthew 15:30-31]

1. Why did Jesus command those he healed not to tell anyone? Are “multitudes” good?
2. What have you begged Jesus to do? What has he commanded you? Did you obey him?
3. Jesus, you do all things well; yet I often don’t understand why you do some things,...

September 6

The Lesson of the Loaves

“Now therefore what is under your hand? Give me five loaves of bread in my hand, or whatever there is present”...So the priest gave him holy bread – 1 Samuel 21:3,6

[Mark 8:1-10, Decapolis] In those days, when there was a very great multitude, and they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to himself, and said to them, “I have compassion on the multitude, because they have stayed with me now three days, and have nothing to eat. If I send them away fasting to their home, they will faint on the way, for some of them have come a long way.”

His disciples answered him, “From where could one satisfy these people with bread here in a deserted place?”

He asked them, “How many loaves do you have?”

They said, “Seven.”

He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves. Having given thanks, he broke them, and gave them to his disciples to serve, and they served the multitude. They had a few small fish. Having blessed them, he said to serve these also. They ate, and were filled. They took up seven baskets of broken pieces that were left over. Those who had eaten were about four thousand men, besides women and children. Then he sent them away. [Matthew 15:38]

1. Why did the disciples answer Jesus doubtfully, even after he fed 5,000? Do you do this?
2. What “loaves” could you offer Jesus? What is stopping you from giving them to him?
3. Jesus, help me learn the lesson of the leftovers so I’m ready for the lesson of the loaves...

September 7

Fearing Men, Not God

'Hear now this, foolish people, and without understanding; who have eyes, and don't see; who have ears, and don't hear: Don't you fear me?' – Jeremiah 5:21-22

[Matthew 16:1-12, Galilee] The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and testing him, asked him to show them a sign from heaven. But he sighed deeply in his spirit, and answered them, "Why does this generation seek a sign? When it is evening, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.' In the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the appearance of the sky, but you can't discern the signs of the times! An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and there will be no sign given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah."

He left them, and again entering into the boat, departed. The disciples came to the other side and had forgotten to take bread and they didn't have more than one loaf in the boat with them. Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

They reasoned among themselves, saying, "We brought no bread."

Why do you reason among yourselves, you of little faith

Jesus, perceiving it, said, "Why do you reason among yourselves, you of little faith, 'because you have brought no bread?' Don't you yet perceive, neither understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, don't you see? Having ears, don't you hear? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? Nor the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many baskets you took up? How is it that you don't perceive that I didn't speak to you concerning bread? But beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."

Then they understood that he didn't tell them to beware of the yeast of bread, but of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. [Mark 8:11-21]

1. What is the "teaching of the Pharisees"? Why were they seeking signs? Do you do that?
2. What's the connection between not seeing/hearing, sign seeking, and not fearing God?
3. God, I question Jesus' authority because I'm guarding my image before men; please...

September 8

Made to See, Step by Step

The hearing ear, and the seeing eye,
Yahweh has made even both of them.— Proverbs 20:12

[Mark 8:22-26, Bethsaida] He came to Bethsaida. They brought a blind man to him, and begged him to touch him. He took hold of the blind man by the hand, and brought him out of the village. When he had spit on his eyes, and laid his hands on him, he asked him if he saw anything.

He looked up, and said, “I see men; for I see them like trees walking.”

Then again he laid his hands on his eyes. He looked intently, and was restored, and saw everyone clearly. He sent him away to his house, saying, “Don’t enter into the village, nor tell anyone in the village.”

He asked him if he saw anything

1. Why did Jesus ask if he saw anything? Shouldn't he know if he healed him completely?
2. What has Jesus done for you? Is there still more he could do? Why such “piecemeal”?
3. Dear Jesus, my small faith only allows you to give me things in pieces, but you build...

September 9
Turning Point

None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give God a ransom for him. For the redemption of their life is costly, no payment is ever enough –
Psalm 49:7-8

[Mark 8:31-9:1, Caesarea Philippi] Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, as he was praying alone he asked his disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?”

They said, “Some say John the Baptizer, some, Elijah, and others, Jeremiah, or one of the old prophets is risen again.”

He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?”

Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I also tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give to you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven; and whatever you release on earth will have been released in heaven.” Then he commanded the disciples that they should tell no one that he was Jesus the Christ. He began to teach them that the Son of Man must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He spoke to them openly.

He began to teach them that the Son of Man must...be killed

Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, “Far be it from you, Lord! This will never be done to you.” But he, turning around, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter, and said, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me for you have in mind not the things of God, but the things of men.”

He called the multitude to himself with his disciples, and said to them, “Whoever wants to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; and whoever will lose his life for my sake and the sake of the Good News will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? For what will a man give in exchange for his life? For whoever will be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed of him, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels and then he will render to everyone according to his deeds”

He said to them, “Most certainly I tell you, there are some standing here who will in no way taste death until they see the Kingdom of God come with power.” [Matthew 16:21-28, Luke 9:18-27]

1. Mark wrote with Peter’s help, and this is the turning point in his gospel. Why is this so?
2. When have Jesus’ words conflicted with the way you thought things should be?
3. Jesus, you rocked Peter’s world, yet you called him “rock”; help me to be like Peter...

September 10

Exposing Jesus' Glory

...the appearance of the brightness all around. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of Yahweh. When I saw it, I fell on my face, and I heard a voice of one that spoke. – Ezekiel 1:28

[Mark 9:2-13, Mt. Hermon(?)] After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and brought them up onto a high mountain privately by themselves, *to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered—his face shone like the sun, and he was changed into another form in front of them. His clothing became glistening, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. Elijah and Moses appeared to them in glory, and they were talking with Jesus and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.*

Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they were fully awake, they saw his glory, and the two men who stood with him. It happened, as they were parting from him

Peter answered Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. If you want, let’s make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” For he didn’t know what to say, for they were very afraid.

While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud came, overshadowing them, and they were afraid as they entered into the cloud, and a voice came out of the cloud, “This is my

beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Listen to him.”

**This is my
beloved Son**

When the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces, and were very afraid. Jesus came and touched them and said, “Get up, and don’t be afraid.”

Suddenly looking around, they saw no one with them any more, except Jesus only. They were silent, and told no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

As they were coming down from the mountain, he commanded them that they should tell no one what things they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. They kept this saying to themselves, questioning what the “rising from the dead” meant.

They asked him, saying, “Then why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

He said to them, **“Elijah indeed comes first, and restores all things. How is it written about the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be despised? But I tell you that Elijah has come, and they didn’t recognize him, and they have also done to him whatever they wanted to, even as it is written about him.”** Then the disciples understood that he spoke to them of John the Baptizer. [Matthew 17:1-13, Luke 9:28-36]

1. How does God’s first proclamation of Jesus’ sonship (Jan. 14) differ from this one?
2. How is this “seeing the Kingdom with power” (Mar. 11)? How do you see the Kingdom?
3. Jesus, you reveal your power to me in so many ways, but I can’t see past the hard things...

September 11

Desperate Father, Despairing Disciples

Yahweh said to Satan, "Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Yes, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Isn't this a burning stick plucked out of the fire?" – Zechariah 3:2

[Mark 9:14-32, Caesarea Philippi] Coming to the disciples *on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain*, he saw a great multitude around them, and scribes questioning them. Immediately all the multitude, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and running to him greeted him. He asked the scribes, "What are you asking them?"

One of the multitude answered, "Teacher, I brought to you my son, who has a mute spirit; *have mercy for he is my only child. He is epileptic, and suffers grievously; and wherever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and wastes away. I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they weren't able.*"

He answered him, "Unbelieving generation, *how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to me.*"

They brought him to him, and when he saw him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground, wallowing and foaming at the mouth.

He asked his father, "*How long has it been since this has come to him?*"

He said, "From childhood. Often it has cast him both into the fire and into the water, to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us, and help us."

Jesus said to him, "*If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.*"

Immediately the father of the child cried out with tears, "I believe. Help my unbelief!"

I believe. Help my unbelief!

When Jesus saw that a multitude came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to him, "*You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again!*"

Having cried out, and convulsed greatly, it came out of him. The boy became like one dead; so much that most of them said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand, and raised him up; and he arose and was cured from that hour. *They were all astonished at the majesty of God.*

When he had come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we cast it out?"

He said to them, "*Because of your unbelief. For most certainly I tell you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you. But this kind can come out by nothing, except by prayer.**" [*often "and fasting" was added here]

They went out from there, and passed through Galilee. He didn't want anyone to know it. For he was teaching his disciples, and said to them, "*Let these words sink into your ears, for the Son of Man is being handed over to the hands of men, and they will kill him; and when he is killed, on the third day he will rise again.*"

They were exceedingly sorry, but they didn't understand the saying, and were afraid to ask him. *It was concealed from them, that they should not perceive it.* [Matthew 17:14-23, Luke 9:37-45]

1. What prayer drove out this demon? Why would the early church add "and fasting"?
2. Why did scribes often question Jesus' ministry (Jan. 21)? Why did the disciples despair?
3. Jesus, my desperate prayer is... and I'm despairing now because... Thank you that...

September 12

Jesus Pays the Tolls for Our Souls

Each man shall give a ransom for his soul to Yahweh...half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary...to make atonement for your souls...that it may be a memorial...to make atonement for your souls. – Exodus 30:12-16

[Matthew 17:24-27, Capernaum] When they had come to Capernaum, those who collected the didrachma coins came to Peter, and said, "Doesn't your teacher pay the didrachma?"

He said, "Yes."

When he came into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, "What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth

receive toll or tribute? From their children, or from strangers?"

Do the kings of the earth receive toll... from their children?

Peter said to him, "From strangers."

Jesus said to him, "Therefore the children are exempt. But, lest we cause them to stumble, go to

the sea, cast a hook, and take up the first fish that comes up. When you have opened its mouth, you will find a stater coin*. Take that, and give it to them for me and you." [*worth two didrachma coins]

1. What was the significance of when Jesus said, "But"? Who are the children? Strangers?
2. Why this coin-fish miracle? What strange miracle have you seen? Why did God do it?
3. Jesus, you ransomed me so I could be a child of God; help me not to cause to stumble...



Children, Outsiders, and the Hierarchy of Heaven

The time comes, that I will gather all nations and languages; and they shall come, and shall see my glory – Isaiah 66:18

[Mark 9:33-50, Capernaum] He came to Capernaum, and when he was in the house he asked them, “What were you arguing among yourselves on the way?”

But they were silent, for they had disputed one with another on the way about who was the greatest.

He sat down, and called the twelve; and he said to them, “If any man wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.” He took a little child, and set him *by his side* in their midst and said, “Most certainly I tell you, unless you turn, and become as little children, you will in no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever therefore humbles himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.” Taking him in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever receives one such little child in my name, receives me, and whoever receives me, doesn’t receive me, but him who sent me. *For whoever is least among you all, this one will be great.*”

John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone who doesn’t follow us casting out demons in your name; and we forbade him, because he doesn’t follow us.”

But Jesus said, “Don’t forbid him, for there is no one who will do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For whoever is not against us is on our side. For whoever will give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you are Christ’s, most certainly I tell you, he will in no way lose his reward. Whoever will cause one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble, it would be better for him if he were thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around his neck. Woe to

the world because of occasions of stumbling! For it must be that the occasions come, but woe to that person through whom the occasion comes! If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having your two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire, ‘where their worm doesn’t die, and the fire is not quenched.’ [Isaiah 66:24] If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life lame, rather than having your two feet to be cast into Gehenna, into the fire that will never be quenched—‘where their worm doesn’t die, and the fire is not quenched.’ [Isaiah 66:24] If your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out. It is better for you to enter into the Kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into the Gehenna of fire, ‘where their worm doesn’t die, and the fire is not quenched.’ [Isaiah 66:24] For everyone will be salted with fire, and every sacrifice will be salted with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, with what will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

”See that you don’t despise one of these little ones, for I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. For the Son of Man came to save that which was lost. “What do you think? If a man has one hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine, go to the mountains, and seek that which has gone astray? If he finds it, most certainly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine which have not gone astray. Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.” [Matthew 18: 1-14, Luke 9:46-48]

Become as
little children

1. Who does Jesus welcome? Did the disciples also? Do you welcome them? How so?
2. What does “salted with fire” mean? How does “sacrifice” and cutting off change this?
3. Jesus, so I won’t make others stumble, I will cut off even my most precious things, like...



September 14

Our Forgiving Hearts Heal Christ's Body

You shall set apart three cities...whoever kills his neighbor unawares...he shall flee to one of these cities and live...that innocent blood not be shed – Deuteronomy 19:2-10

[Matthew 18:15-35] “If your brother sins against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained back your brother. But if he doesn't listen, take one or two more with you, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. [Deuteronomy 19:15] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembly. If he refuses to hear the assembly also, let him be to you as a Gentile or a tax collector. Most certainly I tell you, whatever things you bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever things you release on earth will have been released in heaven. Again, assuredly I tell you, that if two of you will agree on earth concerning anything that they will ask, it will be done for them by my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in their midst.”

Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?”

Jesus said to him, “I don't tell you until seven times, but, until seventy times seven. Therefore the Kingdom of Heaven is like a certain king, who wanted to reconcile accounts with his servants. When he had begun to reconcile, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But because he

Forgive your brother from your hearts

couldn't pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, with his wife, his children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down and kneeled before him, saying, ‘Lord, have patience with me, and I will repay you all!’ The lord of that servant, being moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

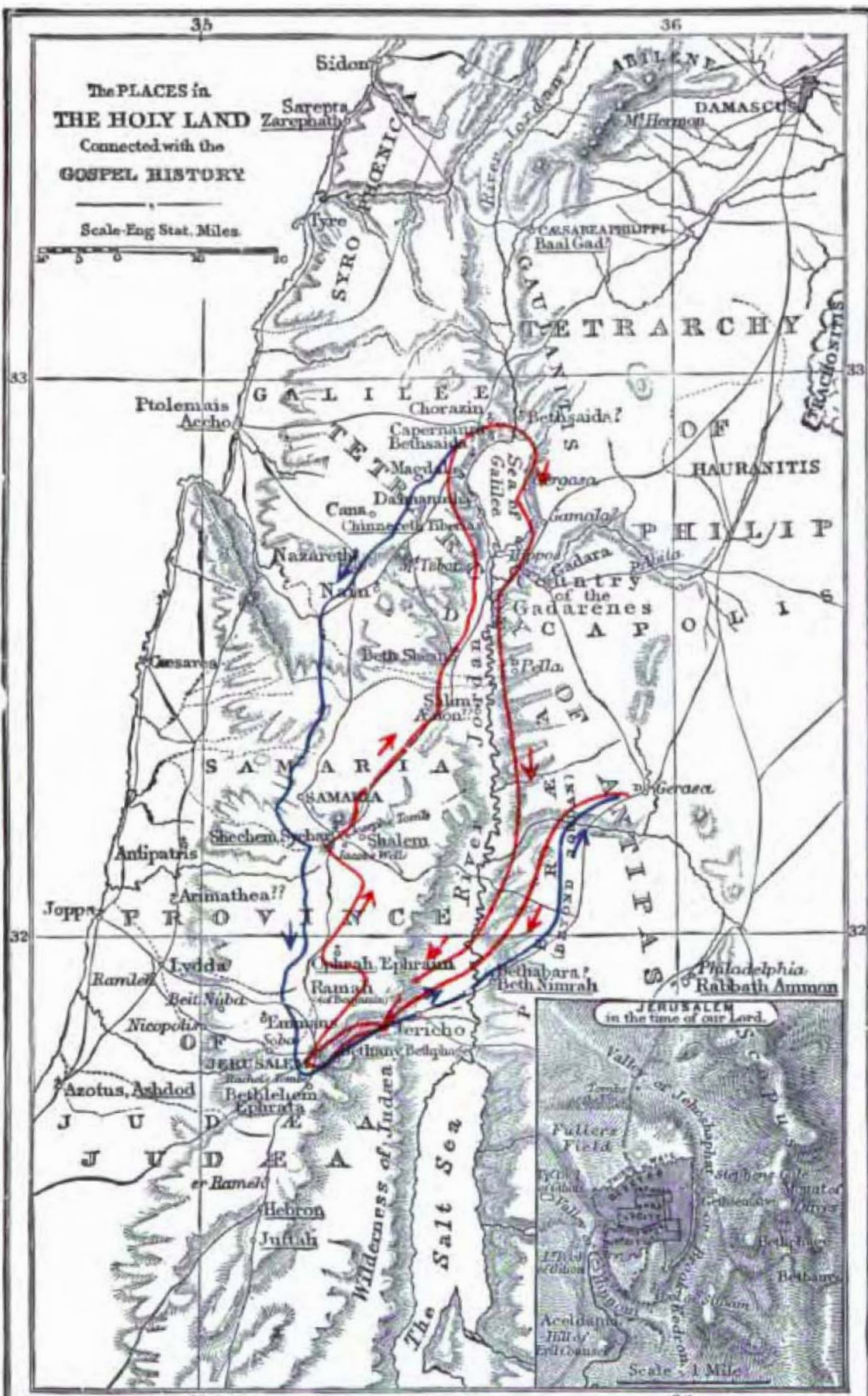
“But that servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, who owed him one hundred denarii, and he grabbed him, and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’

“So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you!’ He would not, but went and cast him into prison, until he should pay back that which was due. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were exceedingly sorry, and came and told to their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him in, and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt, because you begged me. Shouldn't you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, even as I had mercy on you?’ His lord was angry, and delivered him to the tormentors, until he should pay all that was due to him. So my heavenly Father will also do to you, if you don't each forgive your brother from your hearts for his misdeeds.”

1. How do binding and releasing relate to “assembly” (Mar. 11)? Does your church do this?
2. How does this parable convict you? What can you do today to forgive from your heart?
3. Jesus, I need your Body, which you established on earth for our good; today I will help...

The PLACES in
THE HOLY LAND
 Connected with the
GOSPEL HISTORY

Scale—Eng. Stat. Miles



Previous page: From Capernaum to Jerusalem, then back to Galilee, and finally to Jerusalem again

As shown by the blue line, Jesus leaves Capernaum, journeying to the Feast of Tabernacles at Jerusalem, through Samaria, where his disciples wish to burn a village with fire from heaven (Mar. 17). At Jerusalem he taught in the Temple and in the country round about (Mar. 18-Apr. 6). Then he went away beyond Jordan, into Perea, where he taught and uttered many parables, including that of the Prodigal Son (Apr. 7-19).

As shown by the red line, he then returned to Bethany, where Lazarus was raised from the dead (Apr. 17-18) and retired to Ephraim (Apr. 19). He then passed through Samaria and made a final circuit of Galilee (Apr. 20-23) and once more entered Perea, where, after much teaching (Apr. 24-29) he returned toward Jerusalem. At Jericho a blind man was restored and Zaccheus approved (Apr. 30-May 2). Then he triumphantly entered Jerusalem (May 3). During the Passover-week he went out morning and evening to Bethany, and at the close of the week died upon the Cross, and on the first day of the next week ROSE FROM THE DEAD.

The location of the several appearances of Jesus to the disciples after the Resurrection is sufficiently clear without delineation

September 15

Face Set Like Flint for Jerusalem

I gave my back to the strikers...For the Lord Yahweh will help me...therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be disappointed. He is near who justifies me – Isaiah 50:6-8

[John 7:2-10, Galilee] Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths*, was at hand. His brothers therefore said to him, “Depart from here, and go into Judea, that your disciples also may see your works which you do. For no one does anything in secret, and himself seeks to be known openly. If you do these things, reveal yourself to the world.” For even his brothers didn’t believe in him. [*early October]

Jesus therefore said to them, “My time has not yet come, but your time is always ready. The world can’t hate you, but it hates me, because I testify about it, that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not yet going up to this feast, because my time is not yet fulfilled.”

Having said these things to them, he stayed in Galilee. But when his brothers had gone up to the feast, then he also went up, not publicly, but as it were in secret.

[Luke 9:51-62, Samaria] It came to pass, when the days were near that he should be taken up, he intently set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face. They went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, so as to prepare for him. They didn’t receive him, because he was

He intently set his face to go to Jerusalem

traveling with his face set towards Jerusalem. When his disciples, James and John, saw this, they said, “Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from the sky, and destroy them, just as Elijah did?”

But he turned and rebuked them, “You don’t know of what kind of spirit you are. For the Son of Man didn’t come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

They went to another village. As they went on the way, a certain man, a scribe, said to him, “I want to follow you wherever you go, Lord.”

Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

He said to another, “Follow me!”

But he, another of his disciples, said, “Lord, allow me first to go and bury my father.”

But Jesus said to him, “Leave the dead to bury their own dead, but you go and announce the Kingdom of God.”

Another also said, “I want to follow you, Lord, but first allow me to say good-bye to those who are at my house.”

But Jesus said to him, “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the Kingdom of God.” [Matthew 8:19-22]

1. Jesus’ persecutions are starting, how does he respond? How do you respond to “strikers”?
2. In persecution, it’s harder to follow Jesus; what barriers prevent you from following him?
3. Jesus, your last winter on earth was hard for you and your followers; please help me...

September 16

Who is Jesus?

His delight will be in the fear of Yahweh.
He will not judge by the sight of his eyes – Isaiah 11:3

[John 7:11-36, Jerusalem] The Jews therefore sought him at the feast, and said, “Where is he?” There was much murmuring among the multitudes concerning him. Some said, “He is a good man.” Others said, “Not so, but he leads the multitude astray.” Yet no one spoke openly of him for fear of the Jews. But when it was now the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. The Jews therefore marveled, saying, “How does this man know letters, having never been educated?”

Jesus therefore answered them, “My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me. If anyone desires to do his will, he will know about the teaching, whether it is from God, or if I am speaking from myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory, but he who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. Didn't Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law? Why do you seek to kill me?”

The multitude answered, “You have a demon! Who seeks to kill you?”

Jesus answered them, “I did one work, and you all marvel because of it. Moses has given you circumcision (not that it is of Moses, but of the fathers), and on the Sabbath you circumcise a boy. If a boy receives circumcision on the Sabbath, that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me, because I made a man completely healthy on the Sabbath? Don't judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

Therefore some of them of Jerusalem said, “Isn't this he whom they seek to kill?”

Don't judge according to appearance

Behold, he speaks openly, and they say nothing to him. Can it be that the rulers indeed know that this is truly the Christ? However we know where this man comes from, but when the Christ comes, no one will know where he comes from.”

Jesus therefore cried out in the temple, teaching and saying, “You both know me, and know where I am from. I have not come of myself, but he who sent me is true, whom you don't know. I know him, because I am from him, and he sent me.”

They sought therefore to take him; but no one laid a hand on him, because his hour had not yet come. But of the multitude, many believed in him. They said, “When the Christ comes, he won't do more signs than those which this man has done, will he?” The Pharisees heard the multitude murmuring these things concerning him, and the chief priests and the Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.

Then Jesus said, “I will be with you a little while longer, then I go to him who sent me. You will seek me, and won't find me; and where I am, you can't come.”

The Jews therefore said among themselves, “Where will this man go that we won't find him? Will he go to the Dispersion among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What is this word that he said, ‘You will seek me, and won't find me; and where I am, you can't come?’”

1. Who here believes in Jesus? Who doesn't? Why? Why don't your friends believe him?
2. Over a year earlier, Jesus healed on Saturday; is this the “one work” he mentions? Why?
3. Jesus, I'd be like a Pharisee but for you helping me see who you really are; help me to...

September 17

Jesus Offers Spirit-Water, Pharisees Hoard Human-Power

In the former time, he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali; but in the latter time he has made it glorious, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations – Isaiah 9:1

[John 7:37-52, Jerusalem] Now on the last and greatest day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink! He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, from within him will flow rivers of living water.” But he said this about the Spirit, which those believing in him were to receive. For the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus wasn’t yet glorified.

Many of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, said, “This is truly the prophet.” Others said, “This is the Christ.” But some said, “What, does the Christ come out of Galilee? Hasn’t the Scripture said that the Christ comes of the seed of David, [2 Samuel 7:12] and from Bethlehem, [Micah 5:2] the village where David was?” So there arose a division in the multitude because of him. Some of

them would have arrested him, but no one laid hands on him. The officers therefore came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, “Why didn’t you bring him?”

The officers answered, “No man ever spoke like this man!”

The Pharisees therefore answered them, “You aren’t also led astray, are you? Have any of the rulers believed in him, or of the Pharisees? But this multitude that doesn’t know the law is accursed.”

Nicodemus (he who came to him by night, being one of them) said to them, “Does our law judge a man, unless it first hears from him personally and knows what he does?”

They answered him, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and see that no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.”

1. What is Jesus talking about? What is the crowd worried about? Do you act like this?
2. How do the Pharisees silence opposition? Have you experienced or done this? Why?
3. Holy Spirit, I have received you because I believe in Jesus; please help water flow from...

September 18

Jesus Payment Trumps the Law

The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron...The heart is deceitful above all things...who can know it? I, Yahweh, search the mind...Those who depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken Yahweh – Jeremiah 17:1-13

[John 7:53-8:11, Jerusalem] Everyone went to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Now very early in the morning, he came again into the temple, and all the people came to him. He sat down, and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery. Having set her in the midst, they told him, "Teacher, we found this woman in adultery, in the very act. Now in our law, Moses commanded us to stone such. [Leviticus 20:10] What then do you say about her?" They said this testing him, that they might have something to accuse him of.

But Jesus stooped down, and wrote on the ground with his finger. But when they

continued asking him, he looked up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw the first stone at her." Again he stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.

They, when they heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning from the oldest, even to the last. Jesus was left alone with the woman where she was, in the middle. Jesus, standing up, saw her and said, "Woman, where are your accusers? Did no one condemn you?"

She said, "No one, Lord."

Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way. From now on, sin no more."

1. Early writings skip 8:1-11; why? What was Jesus writing (Jer. 17)? Where's the man?
2. Who have you judged lately? Did you think about your own sins? How can you change?
3. Jesus, I'm as dirty as an adulteress, but you take away my condemnation, please help me...

The Light of I AM

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of Yahweh is risen on you. For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but Yahweh will arise on you, and his glory shall be seen on you – Isaiah 60:1-2

[John 8:12-29, Jerusalem] Again, therefore, Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.”

The Pharisees therefore said to him, “You testify about yourself. Your testimony is not valid.”

Jesus answered them, “Even if I testify about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from, and where I am going; but you don’t know where I came from, or where I am going. You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one. Even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent me. It’s also written in your law that the testimony of two people is valid. [Deuteronomy 17:6] I am one who testifies about myself, and the Father who sent me testifies about me.”

They said therefore to him, “Where is your Father?”

Jesus answered, “You know neither me, nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” Jesus spoke these words in the treasury, as he taught in the temple. Yet no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

*Unless you believe
that I AM, you will
die in your sins*

Jesus said therefore again to them, “I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sins. Where I go, you can’t come.”

The Jews therefore said, “Will he kill himself, that he says, ‘Where I am going, you can’t come?’”

He said to them, “You are from beneath. I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. I said therefore to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am he*, you will die in your sins.” [*or: I AM]

They said therefore to him, “Who are you?”

Jesus said to them, “Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you. However he who sent me is true; and the things which I heard from him, these I say to the world.”

They didn’t understand that he spoke to them about the Father. Jesus therefore said to them, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and I do nothing of myself, but as my Father taught me, I say these things. He who sent me is with me. The Father hasn’t left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him.” As he spoke these things, many believed in him.

1. How does Jesus “judge no one”? Would you have believed in him after this? Why?

2. What prevents you from fully trusting your life in Jesus’ hands? What should you do?

3. Jesus, like a Pharisee, I judge you in human terms, but I need to fully trust you, please...



September 20

Jesus, the Great I AM

God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM," and he said, "You shall tell the children of Israel this: 'I AM has sent me to you.'" – Exodus 3:14

[John 8:30-59] Jesus therefore said to those Jews who had believed him, "If you remain in my word, then you are truly my disciples. You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

They answered him, "We are Abraham's seed, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How do you say, 'You will be made free?'"

Jesus answered them, "Most certainly I tell you, everyone who commits sin is the bondservant of sin. A bondservant doesn't live in the house forever. A son remains forever. If therefore the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are Abraham's seed, yet you seek to kill me, because my word finds no place in you. I say the things which I have seen with my Father; and you also do the things which you have seen with your father."

They answered him, "Our father is Abraham."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God. Abraham didn't do this. You do the works of your father."

They said to him, "We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father, God."

Therefore Jesus said to them, "If God were your father, you would love me, for I came out and have come from God. For I haven't come of myself, but he sent me. Why don't you understand my speech? Because you can't hear my word. You are of your father, the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and doesn't stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks

Before Abraham came into existence, I AM

on his own; for he is a liar, and its father. But because I tell the truth, you don't believe me.

Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? He who is of God hears the words of God.

For this cause you don't hear, because you are not of God."

Then the Jews answered him, "Don't we say well that you are a Samaritan, and have a demon?"

Jesus answered, "I don't have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. But I don't seek my own glory. There is one who seeks and judges. Most certainly, I tell you, if a person keeps my word, he will never see death."

Then the Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and the prophets; and you say, 'If a man keeps my word, he will never taste of death.' Are you greater than our father, Abraham, who died? The prophets died. Who do you make yourself out to be?"

Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say that he is our God. You have not known him, but I know him. If I said, 'I don't know him,' I would be like you, a liar. But I know him, and keep his word. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day. He saw it, and was glad."

The Jews therefore said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?"

Jesus said to them, "Most certainly, I tell you, before Abraham came into existence, I AM." Therefore they took up stones to throw at him, but Jesus was hidden, and went out of the temple, having gone through their midst, and so passed by.

1. Exodus 3:14 connects Yahweh (God's name) to I AM; how does Jesus use this name?
2. How can you remain in Jesus' word today? How can you avoid lying and "killing"?
3. Jesus, you are the eternal I AM—one with Yahweh, God of Abraham, today I will...

September 21

The Appointed 70 Go and Return with Joy

At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who shall be found written
in the book – Daniel 12:1

[Luke 10:1-24, Jerusalem(?)] Now after these things, the Lord also appointed seventy others, and sent them two by two ahead of him into every city and place, where he was about to come. Then he said to them, “The harvest is indeed plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest, that he may send out laborers into his harvest. Go your ways. Behold, I send you out as lambs among wolves. Carry no purse, nor wallet, nor sandals. Greet no one on the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’ If a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Remain in that same house, eating and drinking the things they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Don’t go from house to house. Into whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat the things that are set before you. Heal the sick who are therein, and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God has come near to you.’ But into whatever city you enter, and they don’t receive you, go out into its streets and say, ‘Even the dust from your city that clings to us, we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the Kingdom of God has come near to you.’ I tell you, it will be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.

“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment

Rejoice that your names
are written in heaven

than for you. You, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades. Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me. Whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”

He said to them, “I saw Satan having fallen like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will in any way hurt you. Nevertheless, don’t rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

In that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I thank you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in your sight.”

Turning to the disciples, he said, “All things have been delivered to me by my Father. No one knows who the Son is, except the Father, and who the Father is, except the Son, and he to whomever the Son desires to reveal him.”

Turning to the disciples, he said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things that you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see the things which you see, and didn’t see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and didn’t hear them.”

1. Why were the 70 joyful? Why should they be joyful? Are you joyful for this today?
2. Harvest laborers are worthy of wages; how much will you provide for them this year?
3. Jesus, I’ve seen mighty works, yet I’m not giving you my all; thank you for the joy of...

September 24

Jesus Says, "Keep Seeking God in Prayer"

You shall seek Yahweh your God, and you shall find him, when you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul. – Deuteronomy 4:29

[Luke 11:1-13, Judea] It happened, that when he finished praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John also taught his disciples."

He said to them, "When you pray, say, 'Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us day by day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. Bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

He said to them, "Which of you, if you go to a friend at midnight, and tell him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have

nothing to set before him,' and he from within will answer and say, 'Don't bother me. The door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give it to you'? I tell you, although he will not rise and give it to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence, he will get up and give him as many as he needs.

"I tell you, keep asking, and it will be given you. Keep seeking, and you will find. Keep knocking, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives. He who seeks finds. To him who knocks it will be opened.

"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he won't give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he asks for an egg, he won't give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?"

1. How do you pray? What would happen if each part of the Lord's Prayer was answered?
2. How do the parables' comparisons of God strike you? Will you persevere in prayer?
3. Father, give me the Holy Spirit, who prays "groanings which can't be uttered" for me...



September 26

Sign-Seekers with Evil Eyes

The people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from their greatest even to their least. – Jonah 3:5

[Luke 11:29-36] When the multitudes were gathering together to him, he began to say, "This is an evil generation. It seeks after a sign. No sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah, the prophet. For even as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will also the Son of Man be to this generation. The Queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and will condemn them: for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, one greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh will stand up in the judgment with this generation, and will

condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, one greater than Jonah is here.

See whether the light that is in you isn't darkness

"No one, when he has lit a lamp, puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, that those who come in may see the light. The lamp of the body is the eye. Therefore when your eye is good, your whole body is also full of light; but when it is evil, your body also is full of darkness. Therefore see whether the light that is in you isn't darkness. If therefore your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly full of light, as when the lamp with its bright shining gives you light."

1. Again, how does Jesus' response differ from a year earlier? Why does he discuss lamps?
2. How does sign-seeking indicate "evil eyes"? Does your religious light have a dark side?
3. Jesus, some seem religious, but their inner light is darkness; I want to have good eyes...

September 27

The Pharisees Refuse Jesus' Antidote for Pride

Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you, and break off your sins by righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the poor – Daniel 4:27

[Luke 11:37-54, Judea] Now as he spoke, a certain Pharisee asked him to dine with him. He went in, and sat at the table. When the Pharisee saw it, he marveled that he had not first washed himself before dinner.

The Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but your inward part is full of extortion and wickedness. You foolish ones, didn't he who made the outside make the inside also? But give for gifts to the needy those things which are within, and behold, all things will be clean to you. But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, but you bypass justice and the love of God. You ought to have done these, and not to have left the other undone. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seats in the synagogues, and the greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like hidden graves, and the men who walk over them don't know it.”

One of the lawyers answered him, “Teacher, in saying this you insult us also.”

He said, “Woe to you lawyers also! For you load men with burdens that are difficult to carry,

The scribes and the Pharisees began to be terribly angry

and you yourselves won't even lift one finger to help carry those burdens. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. So you testify and consent to the works of your fathers. For they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles; and some of them they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zachariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.’ Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. Woe to you lawyers! For you took away the key of knowledge. You didn't enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in, you hindered.”

As he said these things to them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be terribly angry, and to draw many things out of him; lying in wait for him, and seeking to catch him in something he might say, that they might accuse him.

1. Do you just clean up your outside? What is Jesus' antidote for this? How does it work?
2. Do Pharisees' and lawyers' woes differ? Which target your sins? Will you get angry?
3. Jesus, I love looking good and telling others what to do; so today I'll take your antidote...

September 28

Fearing God, Not Men

Neither fear their threats, nor be terrorized. Yahweh of Armies is who you must respect as holy. He is the one you must fear. He is the one you must dread. He will be a sanctuary. – Isaiah 8:12-14

[Luke 12:1-12, Judea] Meanwhile, when a multitude of many thousands had gathered together, so much so that they trampled on each other, he began to tell his disciples first of all, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. But there is nothing covered up, that will not be revealed, nor hidden, that will not be known. Therefore whatever you have said in the darkness will be heard in the light. What you have spoken in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops.

“I tell you, my friends, don’t be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom you should fear. Fear him, who after he has killed, has power to cast into Gehenna. Yes, I tell you, fear him.

*When they bring you
before...the rulers...the
Holy Spirit will teach you*

“Aren’t five sparrows sold for two assaria coins? Not one of them is forgotten by God. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Therefore don’t be afraid. You are of more value than many sparrows.

“I tell you, everyone who confesses me before men, him will the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God; but he who denies me in the presence of men will be denied in the presence of the angels of God. Everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, don’t be anxious how or what you will answer, or what you will say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that same hour what you must say.”

1. What does yeast represent (Mar. 9)? How does fearing God help? Who do you fear?
2. Who are your “rulers”? Will you let the Holy Spirit help you confess Jesus to them?
3. Holy Spirit, I don’t want to blaspheme you by hindering your work, today I will...



A Heart on God, Not on Things

For the eyes of Yahweh run back and forth throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. – 2 Chronicles 16:9

[Luke 12:13-40, Judea] One of the multitude said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.”

But he said to him, “Man, who made me a judge or an arbitrator over you?” He said to them, “Beware! Keep yourselves from covetousness, for a man’s life doesn’t consist of the abundance of the things which he possesses.”

He spoke a parable to them, saying, “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth abundantly. He reasoned within himself, saying, ‘What will I do, because I don’t have room to store my crops?’ He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns, and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. I will tell my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.”’

“But God said to him, ‘You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you. The things which you have prepared—whose will they be?’ So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, don’t be anxious for your life, what you will eat, nor yet for your body, what you will wear. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they don’t sow, they don’t reap, they have no warehouse or barn, and God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than birds! Which of you by being anxious can add a cubit to his height? If then you aren’t able to do even the least things, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow. They don’t toil, neither

do they spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if this is how God clothes the grass in the field, which today exists, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith?

Don’t seek what you will eat or what you will drink; neither be anxious. For the nations of the world seek after all of these things, but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek God’s Kingdom, and all these things will be added to you. Don’t be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Sell that which you have, and give gifts to the needy. Make for yourselves purses which don’t grow old, a treasure in the heavens that doesn’t fail, where no thief approaches, neither moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

“Let your waist be dressed and your lamps burning. Be like men watching for their lord, when he returns from the marriage feast; that, when he comes and knocks, they may immediately open to him. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord will find watching when he comes. Most certainly I tell you, that he will dress himself, and make them recline, and will come and serve them. They will be blessed if he comes in the second or third watch, and finds them so. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what hour the thief was coming, he would have watched, and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore be ready also, for the Son of Man is coming in an hour that you don’t expect him.”

*Seek God’s Kingdom,
and all these things
will be added to you*

1. As in the Sermon on the Mount (Jan. 31) Jesus urges God-reliance; what do you rely on?
2. Do you relate to the rich fool or the watching servants? What if Jesus came back today?
3. Jesus, I don’t know when I’ll see you face to face, but I want to be ready today, so I’ll...



September 30

Trusting Yahweh Before the Fire is Kindled

The sun will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,
before the great and terrible day of Yahweh comes.

It will happen that whoever will call on the name of Yahweh shall be saved – Joel 2:31

[Luke 12:41-59] Peter said to him, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everybody?”

The Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his lord will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the right times? Blessed is that servant whom his lord will find doing so when he comes. Truly I tell you, that he will set him over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My lord delays his coming,’ and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken, then the lord of that servant will come in a day when he isn’t expecting him, and in an hour that he doesn’t know, and will cut him in two, and place his portion with the unfaithful. That servant, who knew his lord’s will, and didn’t prepare, nor do what he wanted, will be beaten with many stripes, but he who didn’t know, and did things worthy of stripes, will be beaten with few stripes. To whomever much is given, of him will much be required; and to whom much was entrusted, of him more will be asked.

“I came to throw fire on the earth. I wish it were already kindled. But I have a baptism to

be baptized with, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to give peace in the earth? I tell you, no, but rather division. For from now on, there will be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. They will be divided, father against son, and son against father; mother against daughter, and daughter against her mother; mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

He said to the multitudes also, “When you see a cloud rising from the west, immediately you say, ‘A shower is coming,’ and so it happens. When a south wind blows, you say, ‘There will be a scorching heat,’ and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky, but how is it that you don’t interpret this time? Why don’t you judge for yourselves what is right? For when you are going with your adversary before the magistrate, try diligently on the way to be released from him, lest perhaps he drag you to the judge, and the judge deliver you to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison. I tell you, you will by no means get out of there, until you have paid the very last penny.”

1. What new reason for God-reliance does Jesus give? How is his train of thought altered?

2. How do interpreting the time and settling with adversaries relate? Who’s your adversary?

3. Jesus, soon I will see you face to face; so I rely on you with what you’ve entrusted to me...

