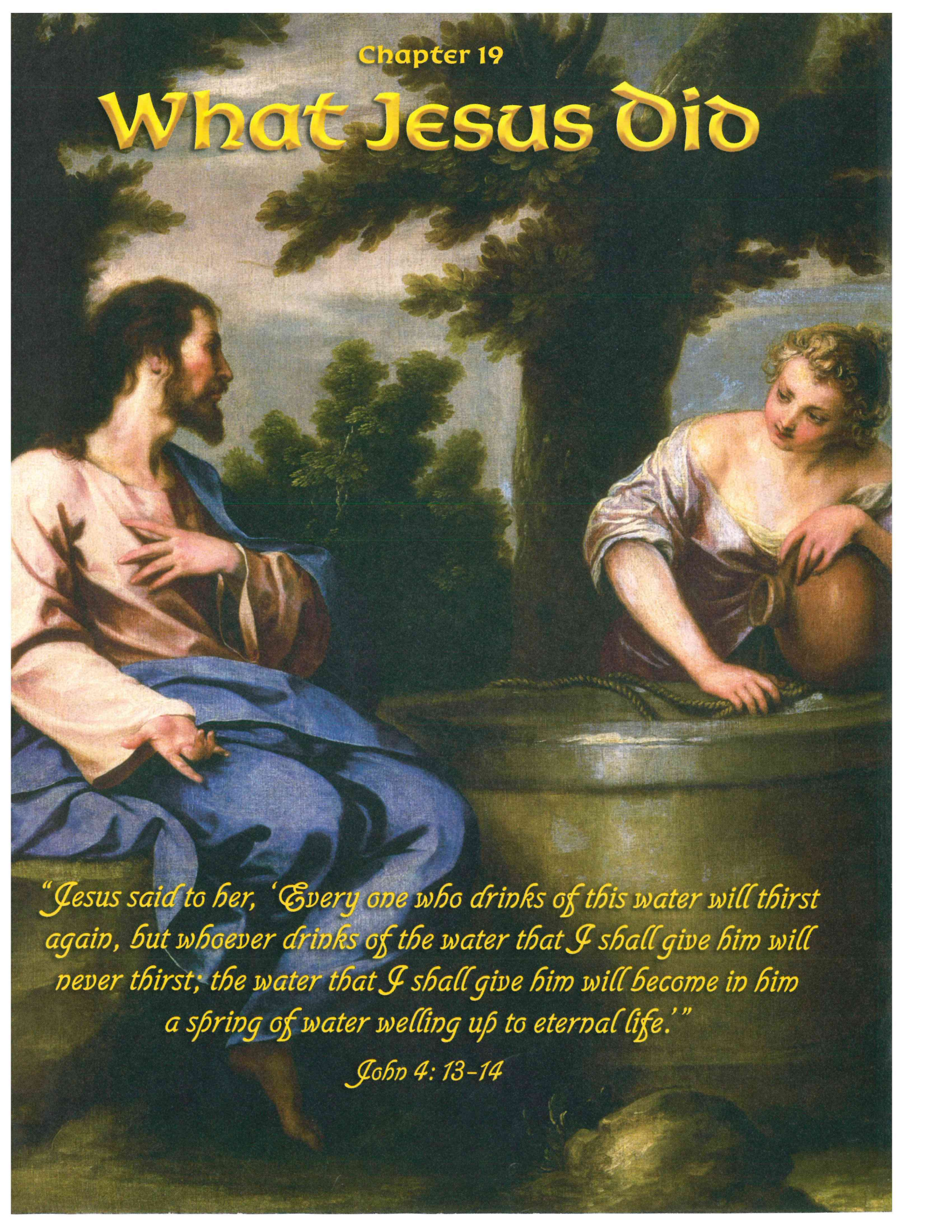


# What Jesus Did



*“Jesus said to her, ‘Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’”*

*John 4: 13-14*



Chapter 19

# What Jesus Did



**Read**

**Matthew**  
4:1 - 11

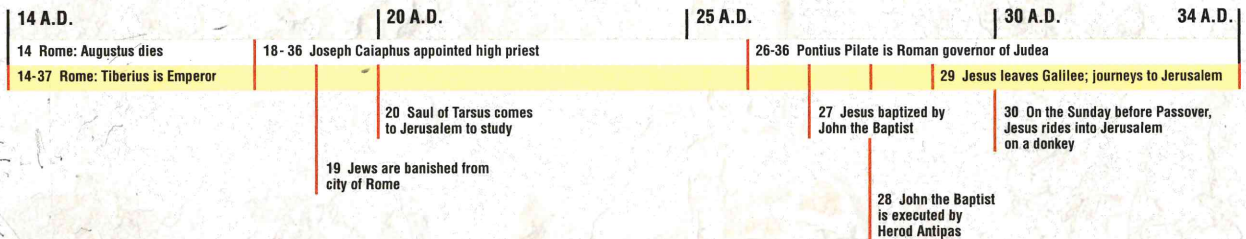
**Mark**  
1:1 - 45  
6:30 - 44  
11:1 - 10

**John 2:1 - 22**

**W**hen Peter, the head of the apostles, came to preach the Gospel in the house of a Gentile for the first time, he gave a quick summary of the truth about Jesus.

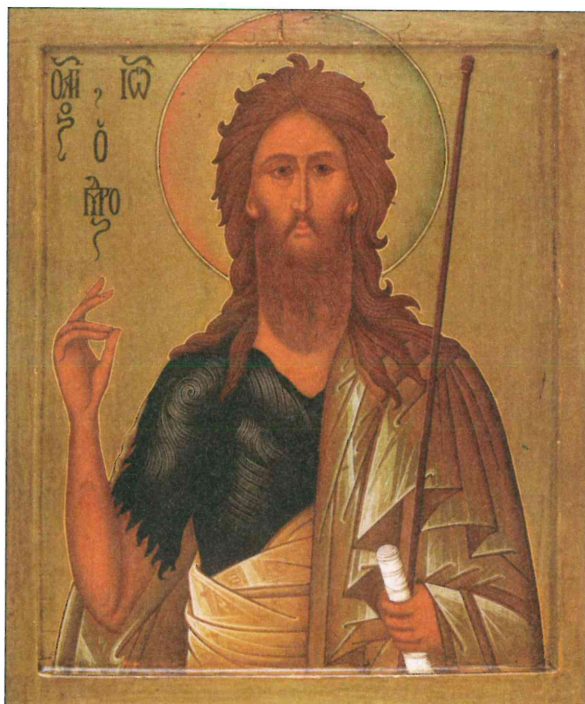
You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest; not to all the people, but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. (Acts 10: 36-43)

We know who Jesus was: he was the Son of David, the Anointed One who had been promised by the prophets, and the Word of God, God made flesh, born in a human body but eternally begotten of the Father.



Now we need to know what he did. Jesus had a very specific mission during his short life on earth. His life was the perfect fulfillment of all the promises in the Old Testament. Peter's summary gives us the basic outline that everyone who tells the story of Jesus follows.

The four Gospels tell the story of Jesus' life in different ways. Since they were written to tell us the truth about who Jesus was, they do not always put the events of his life in historical order. Instead, sometimes the Gospel writers arranged the stories in the way that best explained the truth they were trying to express. Sometimes that means the same stories appear in different places in different Gospels. The basic outline is always the same, but the details are not always in the same order.



## John The Baptist Makes Straight The Way

**Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:2-8; Luke 3:1-20; John 1:6-8; 1:19-28**

- **John the Baptist was a Levite.**
- **Hundreds came to John to confess their sins.**
- **His ministry fulfilled the prophecy that Elijah would return and “turn the hearts” of the people.**

In all four Gospels, the story of Jesus' ministry begins the same way: with the story of the man who prepared the way.

John the Baptist was a Levite, a member of the priestly tribe. He was also a cousin of Jesus, older by only a few months.

The Gospel writers tell us exactly what John looked like:

**Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather belt around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. (Mk 1:6)**



Back in 2 Kings, when King Ahaziah's messengers met a man along the road who insulted the king, the king asked them what the man looked like.

**He said to them, "What kind of man was he who came to meet you and told you these things?" They answered him, "He wore a garment of haircloth, with a girdle of leather about his loins." And he said, "It is Elijah the Tishbite." (2 Kgs 1:7-8)**

The prophet Elijah was instantly recognizable by what he wore. John the Baptist dressed exactly the same way as Elijah.

John had a simple message: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." People from all over Judea came to confess their sins to him and be baptized in the Jordan as a sign of their repentance. Often, John would rebuke the people who came with strong words—"You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" But they still came to him by the hundreds. John became so popular that the government started to worry about him.

Why would the government worry about a prophet in the wilderness? After all, what harm could there be in people repenting of their sins?

The answer is in what the people thought of when they heard the words "kingdom of heaven." That could mean only one thing: the Christ was coming. And many Judeans expected that the Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) would overthrow the current corrupt government and rule as a perfect earthly king. Naturally, that idea worried the members of the current corrupt government.

John himself preached that he was only a forerunner. Priests and Levites came from Jerusalem to ask him the question on everyone's mind: "Are you the Christ?"

"I am not the Christ," John answered. Well then, who was he? Was he Elijah? Was he the "prophet like me" that Moses had promised (Dt 18:15)? No, John answered: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."<sup>1</sup>

"Then why are you baptizing, if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" the priests asked.

"I baptize with water," John answered, "but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie."<sup>2</sup>

The last words of the last prophet in the Old Testament promise that Elijah will return.

**Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with a curse. (Mal 4:5)**

Earlier generations interpreted that to mean that Elijah himself would literally come back from the dead before the Christ arrived. Jesus Christ would interpret that promise typologically when his disciples asked him about it:

**He replied, "Elijah does come, and he is to restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands." Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. (Mt 17:11-13)**





John the Baptist's ministry fulfilled Malachi's prophecy: a prophet like Elijah (remember that John even looked like Elijah) came and turned the hearts of the people, so that huge crowds came to confess their sins and repent.

John the Baptist is "more than a prophet" (Lk 7: 26). In him, the Holy Spirit concludes his speaking through the prophets. John completes the cycle of prophets begun by Elijah (cf. Mt 11:13-14). He proclaims the imminence of the consolation of Israel; he is the "voice" of the Consoler who is coming (Jn 1: 23; cf. Is 40: 1-3). As the Spirit of truth will also do, John "came to bear witness to the light" (Jn 1: 7; cf. Jn 15: 26; 5: 35). In John's sight, the Spirit thus brings to completion the careful search of the prophets and fulfills the longing of the angels (cf. 1 Pt 1:10-12). "He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.... Behold, the Lamb of God" (Jn 1: 33-36). (CCC 719)

## Jesus Baptized

**Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22**

*(John 1: 32-34 leaves out the baptism, but tells what John the Baptist saw when Jesus was baptized)*

- **Jesus' baptism by John identified Jesus with us sinners.**
- **As a Levite and prophet, John anointed Jesus for his ministry.**
- **The Spirit came to Jesus as it had to the kings of Israel when they were anointed.**

One day when John was baptizing in the Jordan, a man came who was different from the rest.

**Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. (Mt 3:13-15)**



Why did Jesus want to be baptized by John? What did he mean by "it is fitting to fulfill all righteousness?"

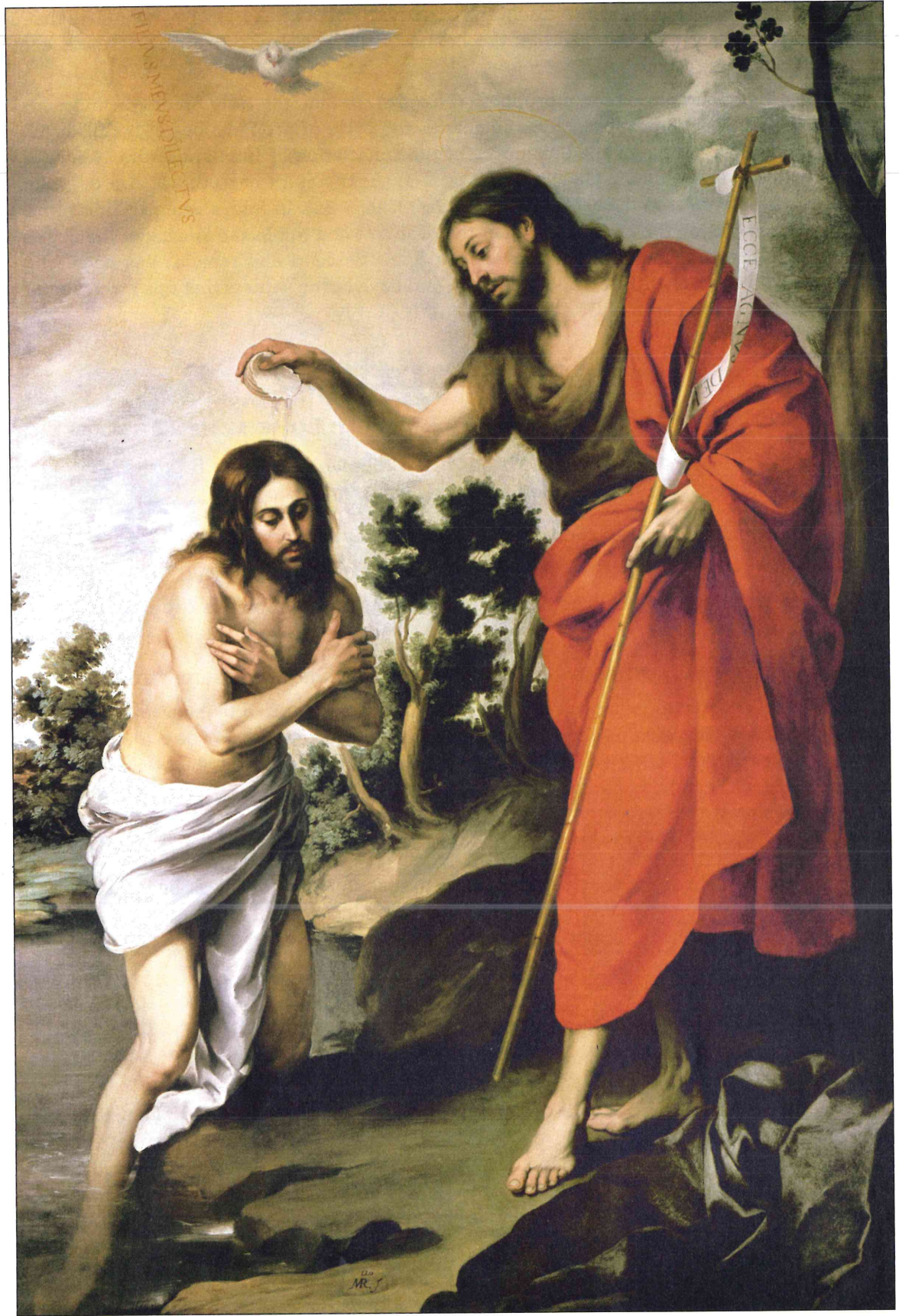
First of all, although Jesus was sinless himself, it was fitting for him to be identified with us, the sinful human race. He freely chose to go through everything sinners would have to go through.

We should also remember that John the Baptist was a Levite and a prophet. Jesus was the Son of David, the heir to David's kingdom. David and all the kings after him were anointed by Levites; a Levite would also baptize Jesus.

**And when Jesus was baptized, he went up immediately from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending on him like a dove, and alighting on him; and behold, a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." (Mt 3:16-17)**

The dove reminds us of the dove that Noah sent out after the Flood. Like the Flood, Baptism is a new creation. We also







recall the kings of Israel who were anointed by Levitical priests. When Saul was anointed, “the spirit of God came mightily upon him” (1 Sm 10:10). When David was anointed, “the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward” (1 Sm 16:13). The Gospel writers are showing us that Jesus himself was the perfect Anointed One.

The setting, too, reminds us of famous events in the Old Testament. Joshua—whose name is the same as “Jesus” in Hebrew—crossed the Jordan to bring Israel into the Promised Land. In the same way, the Israelites had crossed the Red Sea on their way to Sinai.

The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (Jn 1:29; cf. Is 53:12). Already he is anticipating the “baptism” of his bloody death (cf. Mk 10:38; Lk 12:50). Already he is coming to “fulfill all righteousness,” that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins (Mt 3:15; cf. 26:39). The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son (cf. Lk 3:22; Is 42:1). The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to “rest on him” (Jn 1:32-33; cf. Is 11:2). Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism “the heavens were opened” (Mt 3:16)—the heavens that Adam's sin had closed—and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation. (CCC 536)

## The Temptation In The Wilderness

**Matthew 4: 1-11; Mark 1: 12-13; Luke 4: 1-13**

- **Jesus prepares for his ministry by fasting in the wilderness.**
- **The symbolic number forty recalls the fasts of Moses and Elijah and the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness.**
- **Jesus overcomes the temptations that Adam and Israel could not resist.**

**B**efore his ministry began, though, Jesus prepared for it by fasting in the wilderness for forty days—the same time Elijah (1 Kgs 19:8) and Moses (Ex 24:18) had spent fasting in the wilderness of Sinai, the number of years Israel had spent wandering in the wilderness before entering the Promised Land (Dt 1:3), the number of days and nights of rain it took to engulf the world in the Flood (Gn 7:12) so it could be newly created.

During his fast, while he was still in the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by the devil. The word “tempted” means “tested”; Jesus could not have sinned, since he was God incarnate. But it was fitting for Jesus, the perfect man, to face the temptations that had caused all other humans to sin. And the devil wanted to find out whether Jesus was really the Son of God.

Now, the devil knew that Jesus was truly human. After a long fast, he was painfully hungry. So the devil attacked him first through his stomach.

**And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written,**

**‘Man shall not live by bread alone,**

**but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.’” (Mt 4: 3-4)**

The devil was trying to make Jesus turn away from the path of suffering and think about himself. But Jesus replied by quoting Scripture (Dt 8:3), reminding the devil that God's plan is far more important than human hunger.



So the devil tried another tactic.

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and set him on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

'He will give his angels charge of you,' and  
'On their hands they will bear you up,  
lest you strike your foot against a stone.'

Jesus said to him, "Again it is written,

'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'" (Mt 4: 5-7)

This time the devil himself was quoting Scripture! (The devil quotes from Ps 91:1-12; Jesus answers with

Dt 6:16.) If Jesus was the Son of God, the devil said, then it should be no trouble to prove it. But when Jesus refused that temptation, the devil tried once more.

And the devil took him up, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory; for it has been delivered to me, and I give it to whom I will. If you, then, will worship me, it shall all be yours." (Lk 4: 5-7)

This was the most important test of all. Jesus had the opportunity to be the kind of Christ most Judeans expected: a glorious king who would conquer the world. He could rule Israel and all the Gentiles with justice and mercy, and he would never have to suffer on the cross. He could be "like God," as the devil had told Adam and Eve. But the price the devil asked was that Jesus should worship him.

Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written,

'You shall worship the Lord your God  
and him alone shall you serve.'

(Mt 4:10)

After that, the devil gave up—although Luke adds that he left only "until an opportune time."<sup>3</sup> The devil never stops fighting against the Kingdom of Heaven; he is always watching for his opportunity.

As the new Adam, Jesus had overcome the temptation that the first Adam had been unable to resist. As the King of Israel, Jesus had repeated the trial of Israel in the wilderness, but had overcome the temptation to worship false gods.

Jesus' temptation reveals the way in which the Son of God is Messiah, contrary to the way Satan proposes to him and the way men wish to attribute to him (cf. Mt 16: 21-23). This is why Christ vanquished the Tempter for us: "For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sinning."<sup>4</sup> By the solemn forty days of *Lent* the Church unites herself each year to the mystery of Jesus in the desert. (CCC 540)





## Water Into Wine

Jesus' first miracle almost seems frivolous. In most of the miracle stories we remember, Jesus healed someone who had been suffering miserably for years, or even raised someone from the dead. But in this case the only problem was that a wedding party had run out of wine.

On the third day there was a marriage at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there; Jesus also was invited to the marriage, with his disciples. When the wine failed, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "O woman, what have you to do with me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now six stone jars were standing there, for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the steward of the feast." So they took it. When the steward of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward of the feast called the bridegroom and said to him, "Every man serves the good wine first; and when men have drunk freely, then the poor wine; but you have kept the good wine until now." This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed in him. (Jn 2:1-11)





Why would Jesus choose this occasion to be the first time he “manifested his glory”? It was a nice thing to do for the young married couple, but we can be sure that John, the Gospel writer, means to say more than that.

Why did Jesus say “My hour has not yet come”? The idea of wine must have provoked that enigmatic statement. Although he consents to help the bridegroom here, the time for Jesus to provide wine is really when his “hour” comes. The “hour” is the time of Jesus’ suffering on the cross; we commemorate that suffering in the Eucharist, where the wine becomes the blood of Christ.

*The Gospel reveals to us how Mary prays and intercedes in faith. At Cana (cf. Jn 2:1-12), the mother of Jesus asks her son for the needs of a wedding feast; this is the sign of another feast—that of the wedding of the Lamb where he gives his body and blood at the request of the Church, his Bride. It is at the hour of the New Covenant, at the foot of the cross (cf. Jn 19:25-27), that Mary is heard as the Woman, the new Eve, the true “Mother of all the living.” (CCC 2618)*

## Cleansing The Temple

**John 2:13 - 36**

**A**ccording to John, Jesus began his public ministry with what must have looked like an outburst of bad temper to the priests and elders of Jerusalem. But the poor of the city knew exactly why Jesus was angry.

*And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he taught, and said to them, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.” (Mk 11:15-17)*

If the chief priests had not already seen Jesus as their enemy, they certainly did after this episode. But “all the multitude was astonished at his teaching,” Mark reports. The ordinary poor believers must have felt the same way Jesus felt about the money-changers and pigeon-sellers.

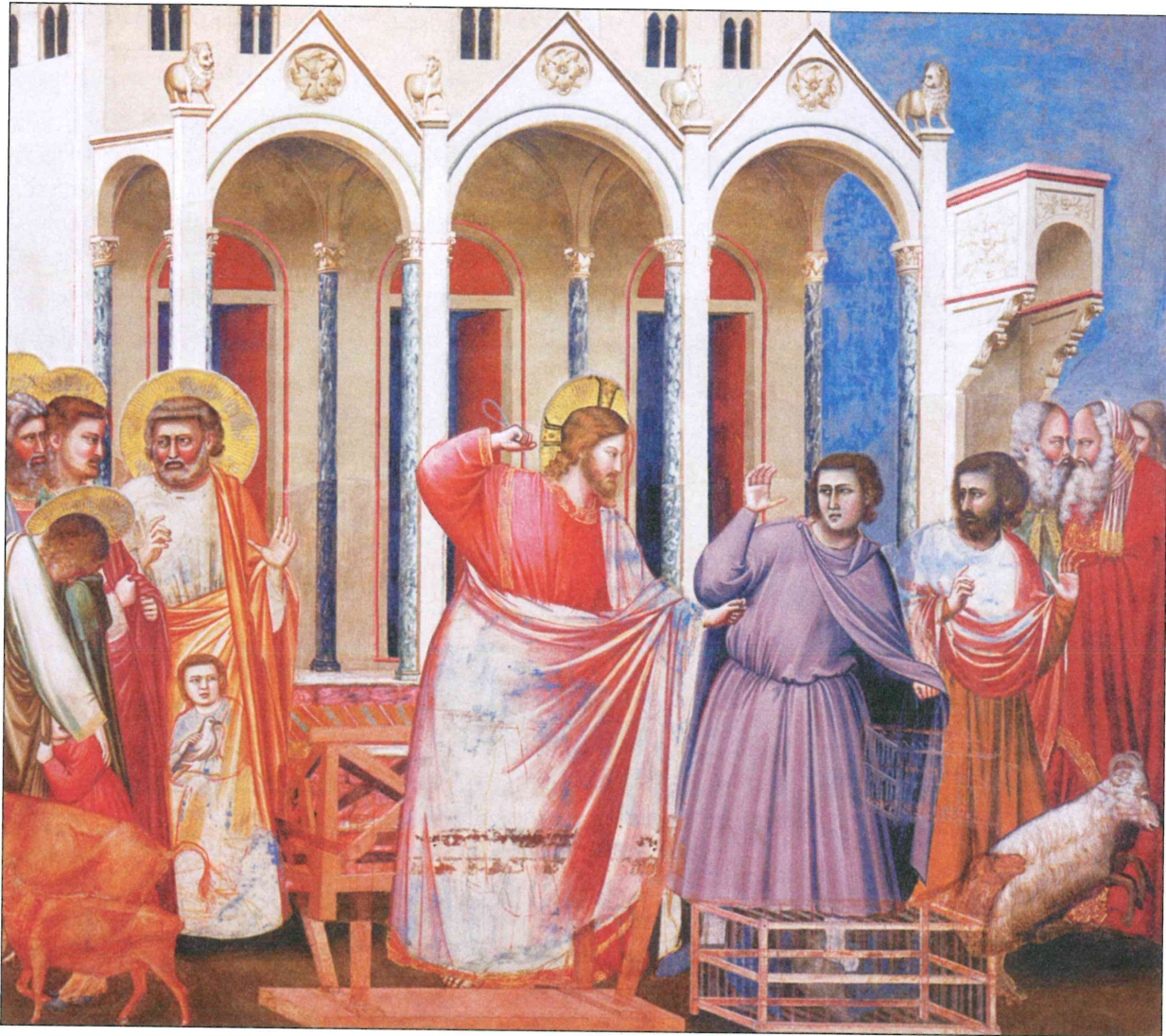
What the vendors were selling was religion. For one thing, faithful Jews had to pay their Temple tax. But although the people of Judea used Roman money for much of their business, the Temple tax could be paid only in Temple currency. The “money-changers” would do the currency exchange—keeping a healthy percentage for themselves, of course.

Jewish religion also required animal sacrifices at certain times. It was hard for pilgrims to bring sacrificial animals with them over long distances, so the animal sellers helpfully offered to sell them the animals on the spot—at inflated prices.

So Temple worship had become big business. For Jesus, though, there was an even worse desecration. The Temple was a series of concentric courts. The outermost court, the Court of the Gentiles, was supposed to be a place where people of all nations could come to worship the True God. When Jesus said, “Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations?’” he was quoting Isaiah 56:7. Isaiah foresaw a time when all nations, not just Israel, would come to the Temple to worship:

*And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,  
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,  
and to be his servants,  
every one who keeps the sabbath, and does not profane it,*





and holds fast my covenant—  
these I will bring to my holy mountain,  
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;  
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices  
will be accepted on my altar;  
for my house shall be called a house of prayer  
for all peoples.  
(Is 56: 6-7)

The Court of the Gentiles was supposed to be the place where “foreigners who join themselves to the LORD” could offer their worship. Instead, it had been turned into a noisy street market, cluttered up with vendors’ stalls and filled with the sound of hawkers’ cries and clanking coins.

John places the cleansing of the Temple near the beginning of Jesus’ ministry; other Gospel writers place it near the end. Perhaps Jesus did it more than once, or perhaps the Gospel writers were simply arranging events topically. By starting Jesus’ ministry with this story, John points out that Jesus is bringing a New Covenant. The old institutional religion had turned into big business, a series of formal observances that mainly benefited the rich. Jesus announced the coming of a new age, in which the spirit of the law, not the letter, would be the important thing.





View of the Sea of Galilee and the Mt. of Beatitudes in spring.

## The Land Of Zebulun And Naphtali

**E**xcept for the visit to Jerusalem mentioned in John, most of Jesus' early ministry was in Galilee. He might have chosen Galilee in part because Judea was a dangerous place: John the Baptist had just been arrested for speaking out against the immoral life of Herod, the son of Herod the Great. But Matthew recognized the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy:

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

The land of Zebulun and Naphtali,  
toward the sea, across the Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles —  
the people who sat in darkness  
have seen a great light,  
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death,  
light has dawned.

(Mt 4: 12-16)

Jesus made Capernaum, a town on the Sea of Galilee, his headquarters. Capernaum was right on the border of Zebulun and Naphtali.



# Jesus' Galilean Ministry



Capernaum area viewed from the southeast.



## Healing The Sick

**F**rom Capernaum Jesus traveled throughout the region, preaching and doing good. The word spread quickly that Jesus was healing the sick. Mark tells us that his fame caused him some trouble. After healing a leper, Jesus asked the man not to say anything to anyone.

**But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter. (Mk 1: 45)**

The miraculous healings began to make some people suspect that Jesus was the promised Son of David. In the time of the Messiah, according to Isaiah, Zion would be restored and the sick would be healed.

**And no inhabitant will say, "I am sick;"  
the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity. (Is 33: 24)**

The man of the Old Testament lives his sickness in the presence of God. It is before God that he laments his illness, and it is of God, Master of life and death, that he implores healing (cf. Pss 6: 3; 38; Is 38). Illness becomes a way to conversion; God's forgiveness initiates the healing (cf. Pss 32: 5; 38: 5; 39: 9, 12; 107: 20; cf. Mk 2: 5-12). It is the experience of Israel that illness is mysteriously linked to sin and evil, and that faithfulness to God according to his law restores life: "For I am the Lord, your healer" (Ex 15: 26). The prophet intuitively that suffering can also have a redemptive meaning for the sins of others (cf. Is 53: 11). Finally Isaiah announces that God will usher in a time for Zion when he will pardon every offense and heal every illness (cf. Is 33: 24). (CCC 1502)

Miraculous healings were one of the things the faithful People of God expected to see as signs of the true Son of David, the Christ. As Isaiah shows, sickness was thought to be bound up with sin. It was the sinfulness of the people that brought on their sickness. The forgiveness of sins would come with healing.

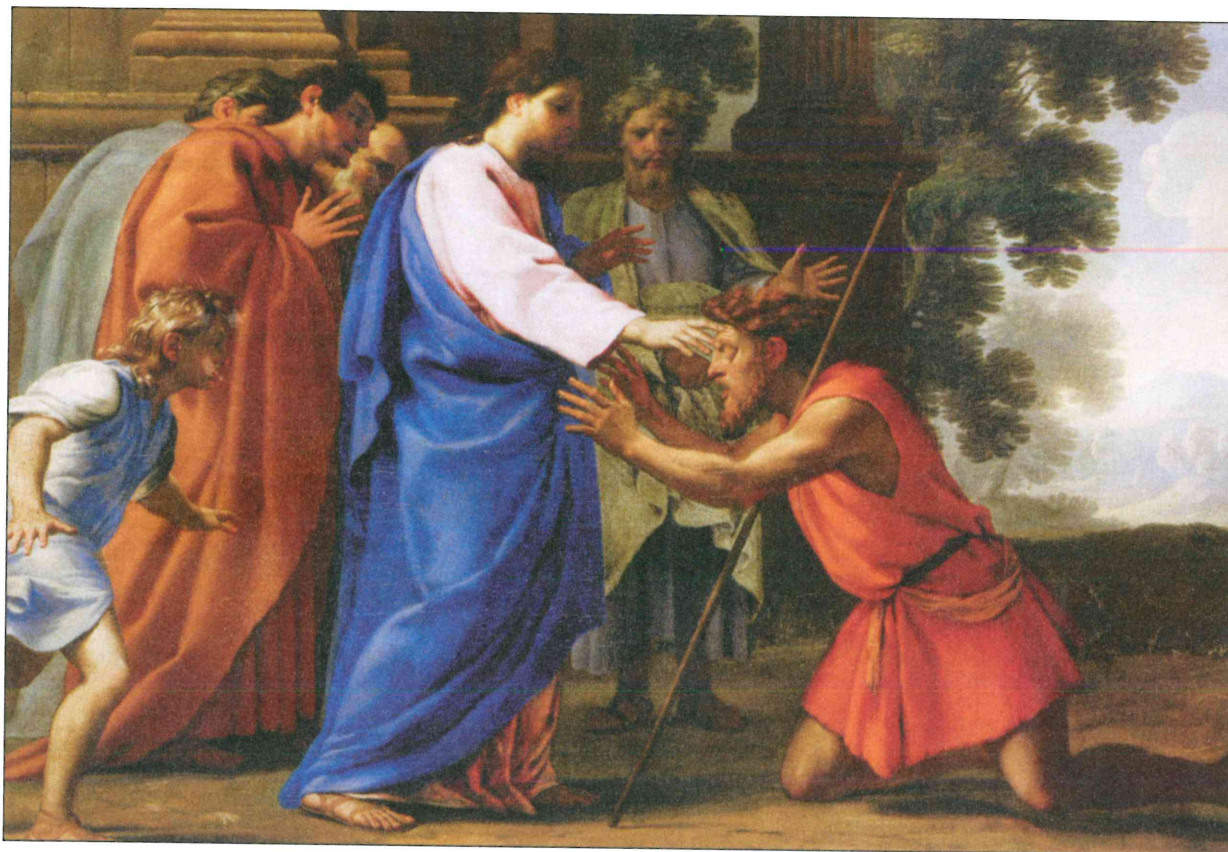
**And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room for them, not even about the door; and he was preaching the word to them. And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and when they had made an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic lay. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "My son, your sins are forgiven." (Mk 2: 1-5)**

How could Jesus say "your sins are forgiven"? Only God could forgive sins, and only the priests at the Temple in Jerusalem could declare sins forgiven.

**Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, "Why does this man speak like this? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they questioned like this within themselves, said to them, "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say to you, rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he rose, and immediately took up the pallet and went out before them all; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like it." (Mk 2: 6-12)**

Jesus claimed the authority to forgive sins! No wonder the scribes called him a blasphemer. He was making himself equal to God!





## Who Sinned?

**W**hile ordinary people seem to have understood who Jesus was, the greatest Scripture scholars of the age failed to understand. Matthew brings home that point by telling the story of two blind men who understood who Jesus was.

*And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes, saying, "According to your faith let it be done to you." And their eyes were opened. (Mt 9: 27-30)*

The eyes of the two blind men did not see, but their hearts could "see" the truth about Jesus: he was the promised Son of David, the Lord's Anointed. The scribes and Pharisees, whose eyes worked well enough, were blind to that spiritual truth.

Although Jesus often pronounced forgiveness of sins as part of his healing, he was careful to point out that sin was not always the cause of sickness.

*As he passed by, he saw a man blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him." (Jn 9: 1-3)*

When Jesus healed that man, though, the Pharisees still insisted that the man was "born in utter sin." It was the Pharisees who were really blind and really sinners. Even when they saw God working in Jesus, they refused to believe it.





## Casting Out Demons

Jesus also cast out many demons in his ministry.

**Satan or the devil and the other demons are fallen angels who have freely refused to serve God and his plan. Their choice against God is definitive. They try to associate man in their revolt against God. (CCC 414)**

His power over demons ought to have shown everyone who he was. The demons themselves recognized him at once, but many of the Pharisees and other leaders of the people were too stubborn to do that. Once again, it was the ordinary people who recognized who Jesus was long before the leaders did.

**And immediately there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." (Mk 1: 23-27)**

Jesus simply spoke, and the demon could not resist his command. That ought to have been enough to show who Jesus was. Yet the scholars of the day could convince themselves that Jesus cast out demons by demonic power.

**And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out demons. And he [Jesus] called them to him and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house." (Mk 3: 22-27)**

Jesus' answer must have left them wondering even more. They could easily understand his parable of a robber binding a strong man. But when the strong man was Satan, who could be strong enough to bind him?



## Eating With Sinners

Jesus' social life was also a source of disgust and surprise to the Pharisees and their followers. A good Pharisee kept himself from even casual contact with "sinners"—that is, people who did not follow the Law, as interpreted by the Pharisees. Yet Jesus could be found, day after day, visiting the outcasts and even the Gentiles and having dinner with them.

In fact, one of Jesus' most devoted followers was a tax collector named Levi or Matthew—the author, tradition tells us, of the Gospel bearing his name. Tax collectors were hated throughout the Roman world, because they were usually extortionists. When the Romans contracted with a local tax collector, they cared only that the right amount got back to Rome. The way to get rich at it was to collect more than the Romans required and keep the extra money. Even an honest tax collector would be hated by many in Judea and Galilee, since he represented the Gentile conquerors who ruled the Promised Land. The more fanatical Jews insisted that it was wrong for a Jew even to pay his Roman taxes. If anyone was a "sinner," certainly it was the hated tax collector.



So when Jesus stopped at the tax office and said to the man behind the desk, "Follow me," many people were surprised. They were even more surprised when he went to dinner at the man's house—a dinner attended by all his friends from the tax office.

**And as he sat at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" But when he heard it he said, "Those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick. Go and learn what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.' For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." (Mt 9: 10-13)**



## Women And Samaritans

**E**ven more shocking was the way Jesus talked to women and Samaritans. A well-bred man did not talk to women in public, and no Jew would speak to a Samaritan.

Luke especially emphasizes Jesus' ministry to Samaritans, and only Luke includes Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan (see the next chapter of this book). For Luke, the only Gentile among the Gospel writers, it was important to show that Jesus extended his ministry beyond the Jews. But the Samaritan ministry has another significance as well. Samaritans were descended from the mixture of the remnant of Israel with foreigners imported by the Assyrians. By bringing the Good News to Samaritans, Jesus fulfills the promises that the whole kingdom of Israel would be restored.

Unlike other teachers, Jesus treated women as human beings with minds and hearts. Naturally, women followed him in great numbers. Some of his most faithful followers were women, and it was one of those women to whom he first revealed himself after his resurrection.



## The Twelve

**J**esus had hundreds of followers, but he entrusted his ministry to twelve in particular. That number twelve is not an accident: it is the same number as the number of tribes in Israel, and the prophets had proclaimed that the Messiah would restore the kingdom of Israel, bringing all the tribes back together under his rule. Jesus' twelve "apostles"—a Greek word that means "ones who are sent"—not only went with him throughout his ministry, but (more importantly) would be the leaders of his Church, the new Israel.

You might have expected Jesus to choose distinguished leaders of the people for those twelve vital positions. Instead, most of them came from the lower classes. When he did choose one who was close to the ruling class, it was Matthew—a tax collector, whose job made him universally hated among the Jews. The apostles were an unlikely group to lead a spiritual revolution.

Like many Jews, some of the Apostles had two names—a Jewish name, by which they were known to family and friends, and a Greek or Roman name, which was useful in business in the Gentile world. Sometimes different writers use one name or the other, but the list of apostles is really the same:

**Simon Peter**

**Andrew**

**James**

**John**

**Philip**

**Bartholomew (or Nathanael)**

**Thomas**

**Matthew (or Levi)**

**James, son of Alphaeus**

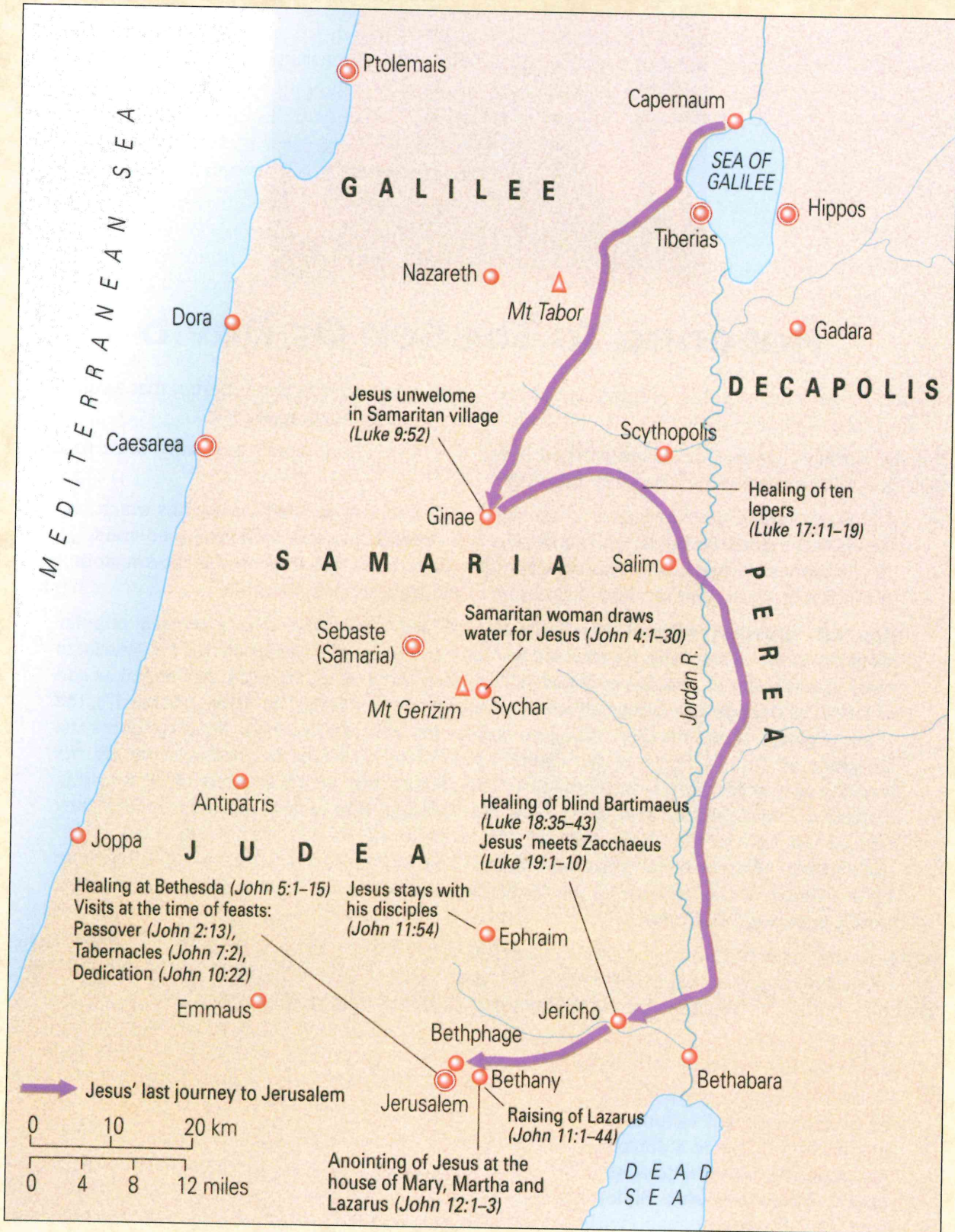
**Judas (or Thaddaeus), son of James**

**Simon "the Zealot"**

**Judas Iscariot**



# Jesus' Journey To Jerusalem







## Hosanna To The Son Of David

**A**fter three years of public ministry, Jesus knew it was time to face the suffering that awaited him in Jerusalem. He knew that the authorities there were planning to kill him.

But the ordinary people of Jerusalem had heard the news about Jesus, and they were ready to welcome him as the Son of David, the Messiah.

And many spread their garments on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And those who went before and those who followed cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mk 11: 8-10)

How will Jerusalem welcome her Messiah? Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of "his father David" (Lk 1: 32; cf. Mt 21: 1-11; Jn 6: 15). Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (*Hosanna* means "Save!" or "Give salvation!"), the "King of glory" enters his City "riding on an ass" (Ps 24: 7-10; Zec 9: 9). Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth (cf. Jn 18: 37). And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God's poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds (cf. Mt 21: 15-16; cf. Ps 8: 3; Lk 19: 38; 2: 14). Their acclamation, "Blessed be he who comes in the name of the LORD" (cf. Ps 118: 26), is taken up by the Church in the "*Sanctus*" of the Eucharistic liturgy that introduces the memorial of the Lord's Passover. (CCC 559)

And how did Jesus ride through those crowds? Not in a chariot, or on a litter, or on a white horse, the way a king might be expected to ride. He was riding on a colt, the foal of a donkey. It was a triumph—but it was the incongruous triumph that Zechariah had prophesied:

Rejoice heart and soul, daughter of Zion!  
Shout for joy, daughter of Jerusalem!  
Look, your king is approaching,  
he is vindicated and victorious,  
humble and riding on a donkey,  
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
(Zec 9: 9, New Jerusalem Bible)

The triumph would not last long. Within a week, the rejoicing would be turned to mourning, and the promised Kingdom of David would appear to be lost forever.



## SUPPLEMENTARY READING

**John Paul II: *Dives in misericordia***

Before His own townspeople, in Nazareth, Christ refers to the words of the prophet Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” These phrases, according to Luke, are His first messianic declaration. They are followed by the actions and words known through the Gospel. By these actions and words Christ makes the Father present among men. It is very significant that the people in question are especially the poor, those without means of subsistence, those deprived of their freedom, the blind who cannot see the beauty of creation, those living with broken hearts, or suffering from social injustice, and finally sinners. It is especially for these last that the Messiah becomes a particularly clear sign of God who is love, a sign of the Father. In this visible sign the people of our own time, just like the people then, can see the Father.

It is significant that, when the messengers sent by John the Baptist came to Jesus to ask Him: “Are you he who is to come, or shall we look

for another?” He answered by referring to the same testimony with which He had begun His teaching at Nazareth: “Go and tell John what it is that you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.” He then ended with the words: “And blessed is he who takes no offense at me.”

Especially through His lifestyle and through His actions, Jesus revealed that love is present in the world in which we live—an effective love, a love that addresses itself to man and embraces everything that makes up his humanity. This love makes itself particularly noticed in contact with suffering, injustice and poverty—in contact with the whole historical “human condition,” which in various ways manifests man’s limitation and frailty, both physical and moral. It is precisely the mode and sphere in which love manifests itself that in biblical language is called “mercy.”

Christ, then, reveals God who is Father, who is “love,” as St. John will express it in his first letter; Christ reveals God as “rich in mercy,” as we read in St. Paul. This truth is not just the subject of a teaching; it is a reality made present to us by Christ.



*“As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea;...And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.’” (Mt 4: 18-19)*



VOCABULARY

**BAPTIZE**

To wash ceremonially. The baptism of John the Baptist was an external sign of repentance. The sacrament washes away the stain of original sin.

**CAPERNAUM**

A town on the Sea of Galilee that became Jesus' home during his Galilean ministry.

**COURT OF THE GENTILES**

The outer court of the Temple in Jerusalem where Gentiles were permitted. In the time of Jesus, it was cluttered up with money-changers and vendors.

**DEMON**

One of the fallen angels who rebelled against God. Jesus Christ's power over demons was one of the signs of his divinity.

**FAST**

To go without food. Fasting is an ancient religious practice that denies the wants of the body in order to strengthen the spirit.

**JOHN THE BAPTIST**

A cousin of Jesus, older by six months. His baptizing and preaching in the wilderness prepared the way for Jesus.

**LAMB OF GOD**

A title given not only to the Passover sacrifice at the Exodus but also to Jesus Christ as the perfect sacrifice "who takes away the sins of the world."

**LEPER**

Someone who suffers from leprosy, a serious skin disease.

**MONEY-CHANGERS**

Businessmen who exchanged the ordinary Roman coins used in everyday business to the special Temple coinage used to pay the Temple tax. They notoriously took a certain percentage for themselves.

**PILGRIM**

Someone who makes a journey for religious reasons. Jewish pilgrims from all over the world came to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple.

**TEMPT**

To test, usually by offering something forbidden. The devil offered Jesus food, divine protection, and earthly glory at the price of worshipping Satan.

**TWELVE, THE**

The Twelve Apostles whom Jesus chose to help him in his ministry. Twelve is also the number of tribes of Israel.



*"And taking the five loaves and the two fish he looked up to heaven, and blessed, and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. And they ate and were satisfied." (Mk 6: 41-42)*



## STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What Old Testament prophet did John the Baptist resemble, especially in the way he dressed?
2. From what tribe did John the Baptist come?
3. What was John the Baptist's message?
4. Why did Jesus want to be baptized by John?
5. How many days did Jesus stay in the wilderness?
6. What was the third temptation the devil presented Jesus with in the desert? *396*
7. According to John, what was Jesus' first public miracle?
8. What is John's point in including the cleansing of the Temple story at the beginning of Jesus' ministry?
9. Why did the scribes call Jesus a blasphemer when he was curing the paralytic? *352*
10. Why would a man get sick, according to the Jews?
11. What profession did Matthew follow before becoming Jesus' disciple? *355*
12. Whose prophecy did Jesus fulfill when he entered Jerusalem on a donkey? *356 b*

## PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. The mission God gave the Israelites was to believe in the one God and keep the covenant. List the similarities and differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant given by Jesus. How did Jesus' life bear witness to these differences? Why did he choose twelve apostles?
2. How did Jesus' dealings with tax collectors, prostitutes, and Samaritans signify a radical change in the notion of basic human worth and forgiveness?
3. After reading the Scriptures, the Jewish people were expecting Elijah himself to precede the Messiah, but God sent John the Baptist. Though John the Baptist resembled Elijah very closely, he was still not Elijah himself. What does this tell us about a strictly literal interpretation of the Bible?





FROM THE CATECHISM

**517** Christ’s whole life is a mystery of *redemption*. Redemption comes to us above all through the blood of his cross (cf. Eph 1: 7; Col 1: 13-14; 1 Pt 1: 18-19), but this mystery is at work throughout Christ’s entire life:

- already in his Incarnation through which by becoming poor he enriches us with his poverty (cf. 2 Cor 8: 9);
- in his hidden life which by his submission atones for our disobedience (cf. Lk 2: 51);
- in his word which purifies its hearers (cf. Jn 15: 3);
- in his healings and exorcisms by which “he took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Mt 8: 17; cf. Is 53: 4);
- and in his Resurrection by which he justifies us (cf. Rom 4: 25).

**551** From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission (cf. Mk 3: 13-19). He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and “sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal” (Lk 9: 2). They remain associated for ever with Christ’s kingdom, for through them he directs the Church:

**As my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint for you that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22: 29-30).**

**566** The temptation in the desert shows Jesus, the humble Messiah, who triumphs over Satan by his total adherence to the plan of salvation willed by the Father.

**574** From the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, certain Pharisees and partisans of Herod together with priests and scribes agreed together to destroy him (cf. Mk 3: 6; 14: 1). Because of certain acts of his expelling demons, forgiving sins, healing on the sabbath day, his novel interpretation of the precepts of the Law regarding purity, and his familiarity with tax collectors and public sinners (cf. Mt 12: 24; Mk 2: 7, 14-17; 3: 1-6; 7: 14-23) — some ill-intentioned persons suspected Jesus of demonic possession (cf. Mk 3: 22; Jn 8: 48; 10: 20). He is accused of blasphemy and false prophecy, religious crimes which the Law punished with death by stoning (cf. Mk 2: 7; Jn 5: 18; Jn 7: 12; 7: 52; 8: 59; 10: 31, 33).

**1505** Moved by so much suffering Christ not only allows himself to be touched by the sick, but he makes their miseries his own: “He took our infirmities and bore our diseases” (Mt 8: 17; cf. Is 53: 4) (Lk 6: 19; cf. Mk 1: 41; 3: 10; 6: 56). But he did not heal all the sick. His healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God. They announced a more radical healing: the victory over sin and death through his Passover. On the cross Christ took upon himself the whole weight of evil and took away the “sin of the world” (Jn 1: 29; cf. Is 53: 4-6) (Mt 8: 17; cf. Is 53: 4), of which illness is only a consequence. By his passion and death on the cross Christ has given a new meaning to suffering: it can henceforth configure us to him and unite us with his redemptive Passion.

**Endnotes**

1. Jn 1: 19-23.
2. Jn 1: 24-27.
3. Lk 4: 13.
4. Heb 4: 15.

