

GLOSSARY

- Apostles** Early followers of Jesus commissioned to lead the Church after his death.
- Bible** Fundamental Christian scripture consisting of the Old and New Testaments.
- Catholic** The largest Christian denomination, which follows a Church hierarchy led by the bishop of Rome (i.e., the Pope).
- Disciples** Jesus' followers.
- Eastern Orthodox** The church diocese originally of the eastern Roman Empire that rejects the supreme authority of the bishop of Rome.
- Gnosticism** The Near Eastern religious movement from 100 to 400 C.E. which aims to free one's spirit from the evil material world by acquiring special knowledge (gnosis).
- Holy Spirit** Divine presence and agent of guidance for Christians. One person of the Trinity, along with the Father and Son.
- Judaizers** First-century Jewish Christians who maintained that Christians were still bound by traditional Jewish laws.
- Messiah** Hebrew term for "anointed one" or "king," indicating that someone is set aside for a divinely appointed office, either in a religious, apocalyptic sense or in a political, revolutionary sense.
- New Age** Contemporary religious movement based on the astrological view that the present Piscean age is ending and will be succeeded by a new age of Aquarius.
- Pentecostal** Protestant religious movement emphasizing baptism of the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues.
- Pope** Head of the Church and successor to the Apostle Peter according to the Roman Catholic tradition.
- Protestant** Christian denominations whose lineages derive from the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation.
- Quelle (or Q)** A written sayings list, no longer extant, that Matthew and Luke used as a source for Jesus' teachings.
- Synoptic Gospels** Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, which are similar in content, in contrast to the Gospel of John, which vastly differs from all three.
- Trinity** Doctrine that God is a unity of three persons: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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JESUS' BIRTH AND MINISTRY

PRINCE OF PEACE AND SUFFERING SERVANT

The principal value of the Old Testament for Christianity is that Christ is the ultimate fulfillment of its covenants and messianic prophecies. Nowhere is that seen more clearly than in the following two selections from Isaiah on the birth of the prince of peace and the suffering servant. For Christians, these are allusions to Jesus' birth and his suffering on the cross.

9.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.

53.

He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light (of life) and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Source: Isaiah 9:6–7, 53:2–11, from *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (International Bible Society, 1984). Reprinted by permission.

BIRTH OF JESUS

Two of the four canonical Gospels give accounts of the birth of Jesus, each slightly different. The following is Luke's version. The author of Luke was an educated non-Jewish Christian and thus his Gospel reflects the broader non-Jewish implications of both Jesus' life and the Christian Church. Unlike Matthew, Luke begins by placing the birth story in the context of Roman emperor Augustus' reign.

In those days it so happened that a decree was issued by Emperor Augustus that a census be taken of the whole civilized world. This first census was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everybody had to travel to their ancestral city to be counted in the census. So Joseph too went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, because he was a descendant of David, to be counted in the census with Mary, to whom he was engaged; Mary was pregnant. It so happened while they were there that the time came for her to give birth; and she gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a feeding trough, because the travelers' shelter was no place for that.

Now in the same area there were shepherds living outdoors. They were keeping watch over their sheep at night, when a messenger of the Lord stood near them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They became terrified. But the messenger said to them, "Don't be afraid: I bring you good news of a great joy, which is to benefit the whole nation; today in the city of David, the Savior was born to you—he is the Anointed, the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a feeding trough."

And suddenly there appeared with the messenger a whole troop of the heavenly army praising God:

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people whom he has favored!

It so happened when the messengers left and returned to heaven that the shepherds said to one another, "Come on! Let's go over to Bethlehem and see what has happened, the event the Lord has told us about." And they hurried away, and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby lying in a feeding trough. And when they saw it they reported what they had been told about

this child. Everyone who listened was astonished at what the shepherds told them. But Mary took all this in and reflected on it. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; everything turned out just as they had been told.

Now eight days later, when the time came to circumcise him, they gave him the name Jesus, the name assigned him by the heavenly messenger before he was conceived in the womb.

Now when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord—as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male that opens the womb is to be considered holy to the Lord"—and to offer sacrifice according to what is dictated in the Law of the Lord: "A pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons." . . .

And when they had carried out everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to Nazareth, their own city. And the boy grew up and became strong, and was filled with wisdom; and God regarded him favorably.

Source: Luke, 2:1–24, 39, 40, from *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, ed. Robert J. Miller (Polebridge Press, Harper San Francisco, 1994). Reprinted by permission.

JESUS' BAPTISM, TEMPTATION, AND FIRST DISCIPLES

The first canonical Gospel to appear was Mark. Mark focuses more on activities in the life of Jesus than on teachings. His narrative is concise, matter-of-fact, and probably written for a non-Jewish audience in Rome about 70 C.E. Because virtually the entire content of Mark's account is included in the longer Gospels of Matthew and Luke (which use Mark as one of several sources), Mark's Gospel was typically not the most popular. However, as modern scholars try to identify the earliest recorded accounts of Jesus, preference is now given to Mark's narrative. The following selection, from the opening chapter of Mark, describes Jesus' baptism by John the Baptizer. This initiated his ministry, his temptation in the desert where he confronted Satan, and his acquiring of his first followers. Some scholars believe that after Jesus' death early Christians had to explain why the Jewish populace did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah. Mark has an explanation that both Matthew and Luke adopt: Jesus purposefully kept word of his messiahship from circulating in order to minimize conflict with officials. Referred to as the messianic secret, this explanation appears twice in the following passage.

The good news of Jesus the Anointed begins with something Isaiah the prophet wrote:

Here is my messenger,
whom I send on ahead of you
to prepare your way!
A voice of someone shouting in the wilderness:
"Make ready the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight."

So, John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness calling for baptism and a change of heart that led to forgiveness of sins. And everyone from the Judean countryside and all the residents of Jerusalem streamed out to him and got baptized by him in the Jordan river, admitting their sins. And John wore a mantel made of camel hair and had a leather belt around his waist and lived on locust and raw honey. And he began his proclamation by saying:

"Someone more powerful than I will succeed me, whose sandal straps I am not fit to bend down and untie. I have been baptizing you with water, but he'll baptize you with holy spirit."

During the same period Jesus came from Nazareth, Galilee, and was baptized in the Jordan by John. And just as he got up out of the water, he saw the skies torn open and the spirit coming down toward him like a dove. There was also a voice from the skies: "You are my favored son—I fully approve of you."

And right away the spirit drives him out into the wilderness, where he remained for forty days, being put to the test by Satan. While he was living there among the wild animals, the heavenly messengers looked after him.

After John was locked up, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming God's good news. His message went:

"The time is up: God's imperial rule is closing in. Change your ways, and put your trust in the good news!"

As he was walking alone by the Sea of Galilee, he spotted Simon and Andrew, Simon's brother, casting [their nets] into the sea—since they were fishermen—and Jesus said to them: "Become my followers and I'll have you fishing for people!"

And right then and there they abandoned their nets and followed him.

When he had gone a little farther, he caught sight of James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John mending their nets in the boat. Right then and there he called out to them as well, and they left their father Zebedee behind in the boat with the hired hands and accompanied him.

Then they come to Capernaum, and on the sabbath day he went right to the synagogue and started teaching. They were astonished at his teaching, since he would teach them on his own authority, unlike the scholars.

Now right there in their synagogue was a person possessed by an unclean spirit, which shouted, "Jesus! What do you want with us, you Nazarene? Have you come to get rid of us? I know you, who you are: God's holy man!"

But Jesus yelled at it, "Shut up and get out of him!"

Then the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions, and letting out a loud shriek it came out of him. And they were all so amazed that they asked themselves, "What's this? A new kind of teaching backed by authority! He gives orders even to unclean spirits and they obey him!"

So his fame spread rapidly everywhere throughout Galilee and even beyond.

They left the synagogue right away and entered the house of Simon and Andrew along with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her right away. He went up to her, took hold of her hand, raised her up, and the fever disappeared. Then she started looking after them.

In the evening, at sundown, they would bring all the sick and demon possessed to him. And the whole town would crowd around the door. On such occasions he cured many people afflicted with various diseases and drove out many demons. He would never let the demons speak, because they realized who he was.

And rising early, while it was still very dark, he went outside and stole away to an isolated place, where he started praying. Then Simon and those with him hunted him down. When they had found him they say to him, "They're all looking for you."

But he replies: "Let's go somewhere else, to the neighboring villages, so I can speak there too, since that's what I came for."

So he went all around Galilee speaking in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Then a leper comes up to him, pleads with him, falls down on his knees, and says to him, "If you want to, you can make me clean."

Although Jesus was indignant, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and says to him, "Okay—you're clean!"

And right away the leprosy disappeared, and he was made clean. And Jesus snapped at him, and dismissed him curtly with this warning: "See that you don't tell anyone anything, but go, have a priest examine [your skin]. Then offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, as evidence [of your cure]."

But after he went out, he started telling everyone and spreading the story, so that [Jesus] could no longer enter a town openly, but had to stay out in the countryside. Yet they continued to come to him from everywhere.

Source: Mark 1, from *The Complete Gospels*.

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Matthew's Gospel was written for a Jewish audience, and it continually draws parallels from the Old Testament. He incorporates Jesus' sayings into five distinct discourses—possibly representing the five books of Moses, to symbolize a new Torah. The Sermon on the Mount is the first of these; again, the mountain motif here parallels the story of Moses receiving the Law at Mount Sinai. Many of the teachings in Matthew overlap those in Luke, suggesting that they independently drew their information from a third source (called Q by contemporary scholars). Some sayings in the Sermon on the Mount also appear in Luke in a section often called the Sermon on the Plain (6:20–49). Matthew's discourse opens with a description of how the kingdom of God will involve a dramatic reversal of conditions for the oppressed and faithful. Citizens of the kingdom

must distinguish themselves through obedience to a new law, principally one of love for others, forgiveness, and trust in God.

5. Taking note of the crowds, he climbed up the mountain, and when he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He then began to speak, and this is what he would teach them:

Congratulations to the poor in spirit!
 Heaven's domain belongs to them.
 Congratulations to those who grieve!
 They will be consoled.
 Congratulations to the gentle!
 They will inherit the earth.
 Congratulations to those who hunger and thirst for justice!
 They will have a feast.
 Congratulations to the merciful!
 They will receive mercy.
 Congratulations to those with undefiled hearts!
 They will see God.
 Congratulations to those who work for peace!
 They will be known as God's children.
 Congratulations to those who have suffered persecution for the sake of justice!
 Heaven's domain belongs to them.

"Congratulations to you when they denounce you and persecute you and spread malicious gossip about you because of me. Rejoice and be glad! In heaven you will be more than compensated. Remember, this is how they persecuted the prophets who preceded you.

"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its zing, how will it be made salty? It then has no further use than to be thrown out and stomped on. You are the light of the world. A city sitting on top of a mountain can't be concealed. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket but rather on a lampstand, where it sheds light for everyone in the house. That's how your light is to shine in the presence of others, so they can see your good deeds and acclaim your Father in the heavens.

"Don't imagine that I have come to annul the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to annul but to fulfill. I swear to you, before the world disappears, not one iota, not one serif, will disappear from the Law, until that happens. Whoever ignores one of the most trivial of these regulations, and teaches others to do so, will be called trivial in Heaven's domain. But whoever acts on [these regulations] and teaches [others to do so], will be called great in Heaven's domain. Let me tell you: unless your religion goes beyond that of the scholars and Pharisees, you won't set foot in Heaven's domain.

"As you know, our ancestors were told, 'You must not kill' and 'Whoever kills will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you: those who are angry with a companion will be brought before a tribunal. And those who say to a companion, 'You moron,' will be subject to the sentence of

the court. And whoever says, 'You idiot,' deserves the fires of Gehenna. So, even if you happen to be offering your gift at the altar and recall that your friend has some claim against you, leave your gift there at the altar. First go and be reconciled with your friend, and only then return and offer your gift. You should come to terms quickly with your opponent while you are both on the way [to court], or else your opponent will hand you over to the judge, and the judge [will turn you over] to the bailiff, and you are thrown in jail. I swear to you, you'll never get out of there until you've paid the last dime.

"As you know, we once were told, 'You are not to commit adultery.' But I tell you: Those who leer at a woman and desire her have already committed adultery with her in their hearts. And if your right eye gets you into trouble, rip it out and throw it away! You would be better off to lose a part of your body, than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna. And if your right hand gets you into trouble, cut it off and throw it away! You would be better off to lose a part of your body, than to have your whole body wind up in Gehenna.

"We once were told, 'Whoever divorces his wife should give her a bill of divorce.' But I tell you: Everyone who divorces his wife (except in the case of infidelity) makes her the victim of adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again, as you know, our ancestors were told, 'You must not break an oath,' and 'Oaths sworn in the name of God must be kept.' But I tell you: Don't swear at all. Don't invoke heaven, because it is the throne of God, and don't invoke earth, because it is God's footstool, and don't invoke Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great king. You shouldn't swear by your head either, since you aren't able to turn a single hair either white or black. Rather, your responses should be simply 'Yes' and 'No.' Anything that goes beyond this is inspired by the evil one.

"As you know, we once were told, 'An eye for an eye' and 'A tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you: Don't react violently against the one who is evil: when someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other as well. If someone is determined to sue you for your shirt, let that person have your coat along with it. Further, when anyone conscripts you for one mile, go along an extra mile. Give to the one who begs from you; and don't turn away the one who tries to borrow from you.

"As you know, we once were told, 'You are to love your neighbor' and 'You are to hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors. You'll then become children of your Father in the heavens. [God] causes the sun to rise on both the bad and the good, and sends rain on both the just and the unjust. Tell me, if you love those who love you, why should you be commended for that? Even the toll collectors do as much, don't they? And if you greet only your friends, what have you done that is exceptional! Even the pagans do as much, don't they? To sum up, you are to be as liberal in your love as your heavenly Father is."

6. "Take care that you don't flaunt your religion in public to be noticed by others. Otherwise, you will have no recognition from your Father in the heavens. For example, when you give to charity, don't bother to toot your own horn as some phony pietists do in houses of worship and on the street. They are seeking human recognition. I swear to you, their grandstanding is its own reward. Instead, when you give to charity, don't let your left hand in on what your right hand is up to, so your acts of charity may remain hidden. And your Father, who has an eye for the hidden, will applaud you.

"And when you pray, don't act like phonies. They love to stand up and pray in houses of worship and on street corners, so they can show off in public. I swear to you, their prayers have been answered! When you pray, go into a room by yourself and shut the door behind you. Then pray to your Father, the hidden one. And your Father, with his eye for the hidden, will applaud you. And when you pray, you should not babble on as the pagans do. They imagine that the length of their prayers will command attention. So don't imitate them. After all, your Father knows what you need before you ask. Instead, you should pray like this:

Our Father in the heavens,
your name be revered.
Impose your imperial rule,
enact your will on earth as you have in heaven.
Provide us with the bread we need for the day.
Forgive our debts
to the extent that we have forgiven those in debt to us.
And please don't subject us to test after test,
but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their failures and offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive yours. And if you don't forgive the failures and mistakes of others, your Father won't forgive yours.

"When you fast, don't make a spectacle of your remorse as the pretenders do. As you know, they make their faces unrecognizable so their fasting may be publicly recognized. I swear to you, they have been paid in full. When you fast, comb your hair and wash your face, so your fasting may go unrecognized in public. But it will be recognized by your Father, the hidden one, and your Father, who has an eye for the hidden, will applaud you.

"Don't acquire possessions here on earth, where moths and insects eat away and where robbers break in and steal. Instead, gather your nest egg in heaven, where neither moths nor insects eat away and where no robbers break in or steal. As you know, what you treasure is your heart's true measure.

"The eye is the body's lamp. If follows that if your eye is clear, your whole body will be flooded with light. If your eye is clouded, your whole body will be shrouded in darkness. If, then, the light within you is darkness, how dark that can be!

"No one can be a slave to two masters. No doubt that slave will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and disdain the other. You can't be enslaved to both God and a bank account!

"That's why I tell you: Don't fret about your life—what you're going to eat and drink—or about your body—what you're going to wear. There is more to living than food and clothing, isn't there? Take a look at the birds of the sky: they don't plant or harvest, or gather into barns. Yet your heavenly Father feeds them. You're worth more than they, aren't you? Can any of you add one hour to life by fretting about it? Why worry about clothes? Notice how the wild lilies grow: they don't slave and they never spin. Yet let me tell you, even Solomon at the height of his glory was never decked out like one of them. If God dresses up the grass in the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into an oven, won't [God care for] you even more, you who don't take anything for granted? So don't fret. Don't say, 'What am I going to eat?' or 'What am I going to drink?' or 'What am I going to wear?' These are all things pagans seek. After all, our heavenly Father is aware that you need them. You are to seek [God's] domain, and his justice first, and all these things will come to you as a bonus. So don't fret about tomorrow. Let tomorrow fret about itself. The troubles that the day brings are enough."

7. "Don't pass judgment, so you won't be judged. Don't forget, the judgment you hand out will be the judgment you get back. And the standard you apply will be the standard applied to you. Why do you notice the sliver in your friend's eye, but overlook the timber in your own? How can you say to your friend, 'Let me get the sliver out of your eye,' when there is that timber in your own? You phony, first take the timber out of your own eye and then you'll see well enough to remove the sliver from your friend's eye.

"Don't offer to dogs what is sacred, and don't throw your pearls to pigs, or they'll trample them underfoot and turn and tear you to shreds.

"Ask—it'll be given to you; seek—you'll find; knock—it'll be opened for you. Rest assured: everyone who asks receives; everyone who seeks finds; and for the one who knocks it is opened. Who among you would hand a son a stone when it's bread he's asking for? Again, who would hand him a snake when it's fish he's asking for? Of course no one would! So if you, worthless as you are, know how to give your children good gifts, isn't it much more likely that your Father in the heavens will give good things to those who ask him?

"Consider this: Treat people in ways you want them to treat you. This sums up the whole of the Law and the Prophets.

"Try to get in through the narrow gate. Wide and smooth is the road that leads to destruction. The majority are taking that route. Narrow and rough is the road that leads to life. Only a minority discover it.

"Be on the lookout for phony prophets, who make their pitch disguised as sheep; inside they are really voracious wolves. You'll know who they are by what they produce. Since when do people pick

grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? Every healthy tree produces choice fruit, but the rotten tree produces spoiled fruit. A healthy tree cannot produce spoiled fruit, any more than a rotten tree can produce choice fruit. Every tree that does not produce choice fruit gets cut down and tossed on the fire. Remember, you'll know who they are by what they produce.

"Not everyone who addresses me as 'Master, master,' will get into Heaven's domain—only those who carry out the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will address me: 'Master, master, didn't we use your name when we prophesied? Didn't we use your name when we exorcised demons? Didn't we use your name when we performed all those miracles?' Then I will tell them honestly: 'I never knew you; get away from me, you subverters of the Law!'"

"Everyone who pays attention to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a shrewd builder who erected a house on bedrock. Later the rain fell, and the torrents came, and the winds blew and pounded that house, yet it did not collapse, since its foundation rested on bedrock. Everyone who listens to these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a careless builder, who erected a house on the sand. When the rain fell, and the torrents came, and the winds blew and pounded that house, it collapsed. Its collapse was colossal."

And so, when Jesus had finished this discourse, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, since he had been teaching them on his own authority, unlike their [own] scholars.

Source: Matthew 5-7, from *The Complete Gospels*.

GOOD SAMARITAN AND PRODIGAL SON

Of the approximately thirty parables of Jesus, the two most famous appear only in Luke: the good Samaritan and the prodigal son. Luke sets both parables in a larger narrative context. The good Samaritan parable is introduced in a dialog between Jesus and a lawyer (adapted from Mark 12:28-34) on loving one's neighbor. Jesus then explains that the notion of one's neighbor crosses religious and social boundaries, just as a Samaritan aids a battered Jew in spite of enmity between their two ethnic groups. The prodigal son parable is one of three that Jesus gives in response to criticisms that he associates with sinners. The parable's message is one of forgiveness. The father (representing God) forgives the younger son (representing non-Jews) who squanders his inheritance, while the dutiful older brother (representing Jews) protests.

10. On one occasion, a legal expert stood up to put him to the test with a question: "Teacher, what do I have to do to inherit eternal life?"

He said to him, "How do you read what is written in the Law?"

And he answered, "You are to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your energy, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus said to him, "You have given the correct answer; do this and you will have life."

But with a view to justifying himself, he said to Jesus, "But who is my neighbor?"

Jesus replied:

This fellow was on his way from Jerusalem down to Jericho when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him, beat him up, and went off, leaving him half dead. Now by coincidence a priest was going down that road; when he caught sight of him, he went out of his way to avoid him. In the same way, when a Levite came to the place, he took one look at him and crossed the road to avoid him. But this Samaritan who was traveling that way came to where he was and was moved to pity at the sight of him. He went up to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring olive oil and wine on them. He hoisted him onto his own animal, brought him to an inn, and looked after him. The next day he took out two silver coins, which he gave to the innkeeper, and said, "Look after him, and on my way back I'll reimburse you for any extra expenses you have had."

"Which of these three, in your opinion, acted like a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?"

He said, "The one who showed him compassion."

Jesus said to him, "Then go and do the same yourself."

15. Now the toll collectors and sinners kept crowding around Jesus so they could hear him. But the Pharisees and the scholars would complain to each other: "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: . . .

Once there was this man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, "Father, give me the share of the property that's coming to me." So he divided his resources between them.

Not too many days later, the younger son got all his things together and left home for a faraway country, where he squandered his property by living extravagantly. Just when he had spent it all, a serious famine swept through that country, and he began to do without. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him out to his farm to feed the pigs. He longed to satisfy his hunger with the carob pods, which the pigs usually ate; but no one offered him anything. Coming to his senses he said, "Lots of my father's hired hands have more than enough to eat, while here I am dying of starvation! I'll get up and go to my father and I'll say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and affronted you; I don't deserve to be called a son of yours any longer; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" And he got up and returned to his father.

But while he was still a long way off, his father caught sight of him and was moved to compassion. He went running out to him, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. And the son said to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and affronted you; I don't deserve to be called a son of yours any longer."

But the father said to his slaves, "Quick! Bring out the finest robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Fetch the fat calf and slaughter it; let's have a feast and celebrate, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and now is found." And they started celebrating.

Now his elder son was out in the field; and as he got closer to the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the servant-boys over and asked what was going on.

He said to him, "Your brother has come home and your father has slaughtered the fat calf, because he has him back safe and sound."

But he was angry and refused to go in. So his father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, "See here, all these years I have slaved for you. I never once disobeyed any of your orders; yet you never once provided me with a kid goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours shows up, the one who has squandered your estate with prostitutes—for him you slaughter the fat calf."

But [the father] said to him, "My child, you are always at my side. Everything that's mine is yours. But we just had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead, and has come back to life; he was lost, and now is found."

Source: Luke 10:25–37; 15:1–3, 11–32, from *The Complete Gospels*.

PETER RECEIVES THE KEYS

Early Christian traditions typically traced their lineage back to an original follower of Jesus. Early Gnostics viewed Jesus' brothers, James and Thomas, as their founders. For Ethiopians, the founder is the eunuch of Acts 8. For the Orthodox of Constantinople, he is Andrew the Apostle. The Catholic Church, though, considers its foundation to be Peter, the first supreme Pope. The concept of the Petrine Papacy is based on two doctrines. First, the doctrine of apostolic succession maintains that the original Apostles had authority over specific regional churches, which they passed on to their successors. Peter established the Church of Rome, and at his death authority was passed to Linus. Second, the doctrine of the primacy of Peter, forged in the third through fifth centuries, maintains that Peter was given supreme authority over all Church congregations. The argument for this latter claim is based on the following passage from Matthew. Drawing from a scene in Mark 8:27 in which Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, Matthew then recounts that Jesus rewarded Peter with keys to the kingdom of God. Although the language is metaphorical, Peter is clearly given sweeping authority, indicating Matthew's allegiance to the Petrine tradition. Matthew continues by foreshadowing Jesus' fate.

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he started questioning his disciples, asking, "What are people saying about the son of Adam?"

They said, "Some [say, 'He is] John the Baptist,' but others, 'Elijah,' and others, 'Jeremiah or one of the prophets.'"

He says to them, "What about you, who do you say I am?"

And Simon Peter responded, "You are the Anointed, the son of the living God!"

And in response Jesus said to him, "You are to be congratulated, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you but my Father who is in heaven. Let me tell you, you are Peter, 'the Rock,' and on this very rock I will build my congregation, and the gates of Hades will not be able to overpower it. I shall give you the keys of Heaven's domain, and whatever you bind on earth will be considered bound in heaven, and whatever you release on earth will be considered released in heaven."

Then he ordered the disciples to tell no one that he was the Anointed.

From that time on Jesus started to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem, and suffer a great deal at the hands of the elders and ranking priests and scholars, and be killed and, on the third day, be raised.

And Peter took him aside and began to lecture him, saying, "May God spare you, master; this surely can't happen to you."

But he turned and said to Peter, "Get out of my sight, you Satan, you. You are dangerous to me because you are not thinking in God's terms, but in human terms."

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If any of you wants to come after me you should deny yourself, pick up your cross, and follow me!"

"Remember, by trying to save your own life, you are going to lose it, but by losing your own life for my sake, you are going to find it. After all, what good will it do if you acquire the whole world but forfeit your life? Or what will you give in exchange for your life?"

"Remember, the son of Adam is going to come in the glory of his father with his messengers, and then he will reward everyone according to their deeds. I swear to you: Some of those standing here won't ever taste death before they see the son of Adam's imperial rule arriving."

Source: Matthew 16:13–28, from *The Complete Gospels*.

LAZARUS RAISED FROM THE DEAD

The Gospel of John presents an account of Jesus that is almost entirely different from that of the synoptic Gospels. In John, Jesus' ministry is three years, as opposed to one year; the subject of eternal life is emphasized, and not the kingdom of God; Jesus performs no exorcisms, refers to himself as the son of God, is the subject of his own teachings, and says little about the poor. Although Jesus performs miracles in both John and the synoptics, the purpose is different. In John, they are intentionally performed as signs indicating his divine role, whereas in the synoptics such signs are shunned and miracles are depicted mainly as acts of compassion. In the following passage, Jesus performs his most dramatic miracle by raising a dead man to life. For John, as well as the synoptics, Jesus' supernatural powers were seen by the Jewish leaders as a threat to social and religious stability, inciting them to plot against him.

Now someone named Lazarus had fallen ill; he was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. (This was the Mary who anointed the Master with oil and wiped his feet with her hair; it was her brother

Lazarus who was sick.) So the sisters sent for [Jesus]: "Master, the one you love is sick."

But when Jesus heard this he said, "This illness is not fatal; it is to show God's majesty, so God's son also will be honored by it."

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. When he heard that [Lazarus] was sick, he lingered two more days where he was; then he says to the disciples, "Let's go to Judea again."

The disciples say to him, "Rabbi, just now the Judeans were looking for the opportunity to stone you; are you really going back there?"

"Aren't there twelve hours in the day?" Jesus responded. "Those who walk during the day won't stumble; they can see by this world's light. But those who walk at night are going to stumble, because they have no light to go by."

He made these remarks, and then he tells them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going to wake him up."

"Master, if he's only fallen asleep," said the disciples, "he'll revive." (Jesus had been speaking of death but they thought that he meant [he was] only asleep.)

Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead; and I'm happy for you that I wasn't there, so you can believe. Now let's go to him."

Then Thomas, called "the Twin," said to his fellow disciples, "Let's go along too, so we can die with him."

When Jesus arrived, he found that [Lazarus] had been buried four days earlier. Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away, and many of the Judeans had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went to meet him; Mary stayed at home. "Master," said Martha, "if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died. Still I know that whatever you ask of God, God will grant you."

Jesus says to her, "Your brother will be resurrected."

Martha responds, "I know he'll be raised in the resurrection on the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am resurrection and life; those who believe in me, even if they die, will live; but everyone who is alive and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

"Yes, Master," she says, "I believe that you are the Anointed, God's son, who is to come to earth."

At this point she went to call her sister Mary, telling her privately, "The Teacher is here and is asking for you." When she heard that, she got up quickly and went to him.

Jesus hadn't yet arrived at the village; he was still where Martha had met him.

When the Judeans, who hovered about her in the house to console her, saw Mary get up and go out quickly, they followed her, thinking she was going to the tomb to grieve there. When Mary got to where Jesus was and saw him, she fell down at his feet. "Master," she said, "if you'd been here, my brother wouldn't have died."

When Jesus saw her crying, and the Judeans who accompanied her crying too, he was agitated and deeply disturbed; he said, "Where have you put him?"

"Master," they say, "come and see."

Then Jesus cried.

So the Judeans observed, "Look how much he loved him." But some wondered: "He opened the blind man's eyes; couldn't he have kept this man from dying?"

Again greatly agitated, Jesus arrives at the tomb; it was a cave, and a stone lay up against the opening. Jesus says, "Take the stone away."

Martha, sister of the dead man, replies, "But Master, by this time the body will stink; it's been four days."

Jesus says to her, "Didn't I tell you, if you believed you'll see God's majesty?" So they took the stone away, and Jesus looked upwards and said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. I know you always hear me, but I say this because of the people standing here, so they'll believe that you sent me." Then he shouted at the top of his voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound in strips of burying cloth, and his face covered with a cloth. Jesus says to them, "Free him [from the burying cloth] and let him go."

As a result, many of the Judeans who had come to Mary and observed what Jesus had done came to believe in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and reported what Jesus had done.

So the ranking priests and Pharisees called the Council together and posed this question to them: "What are we going to do now that this fellow performs many miracles? If we let him go on like this, everybody will come to believe in him. Then the Romans will come and destroy our [holy] place and our nation."

Then one of them, Caiaphas, that year's high priest, addressed them as follows: "Don't you know anything? Don't you realize that it's to your advantage to have one person die for the people and not have the whole nation wiped out?"

(He didn't say this on his own authority, but since he was that year's high priest he could foresee that Jesus would die for the nation. In fact, [he would die] not only for the nation, but to gather together all God's dispersed children and make them one [people].)

Source: John 11:1-54, from *The Complete Gospels*.

JESUS' DEATH

LAST SUPPER

Jesus' final days took place in Jerusalem during the Jewish holiday of Passover. The four Gospels depict Jesus and his disciples gathering for a meal, known as the "Last Supper" (Luke describes this as the traditional meal of the Passover festival). At this meal, according to the synoptic Gospels, Jesus performed ritual acts with the bread and wine.