

CHAPTER TWELVE

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1 FILTHY RAGS

Jesus was a master storyteller, often using parables to make a point. A parable is a story that contains one simple message. In this case, he directed the story to those who thought they were *right* with God because they trusted in themselves.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. *Luke 18:9,10*

In the Jewish culture of that day, Pharisees were viewed as meticulous keepers of Moses’ law. In contrast, tax collectors were considered to be crooks. Now here were two people from opposite ends of the moral spectrum, praying in the same place.

THE PHARISEE

*“The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I *fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’”*

Luke 18:11,12

*His fasting, or doing without food, was presumably for giving time to prayer. He also gave a tenth of his income to a charitable cause.

In patting himself on the back, the Pharisee mentioned only a couple of things that he did or did not do. His list could have been lengthy. But that didn’t matter. The *way* he prayed showed the attitude of his heart. He was relying on his own right living (or good works) to make himself righteous before God.

THE TAX COLLECTOR

“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’”

Luke 18:13

The tax collector was overwhelmed by the awareness that he was a sinner and that he desperately needed God’s help. He begged God for mercy, asking him to provide a way to escape the rightful punishment for his sin. Jesus continued:

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:14

Justified means to be declared righteous.

REPENTANCE

It is interesting that Jesus tied repentance to humility. The Scripture makes it very clear that pride is what caused Satan to fall. It is also pride which causes man to hold back from admitting that he is a sinner, needing to trust God. The Pharisee was convinced that if he was diligent in observing all the Law and performing good deeds, God would be pleased. He was proud to the point that he was blind to his own need. Jesus said:

"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men."

Mark 7:6-8

BLIND

Outwardly, the Pharisees went through the motions of appearing righteous, but inwardly they were sinful. They also undercut the intent of the Ten Commandments by adding their own man-made rules. Jesus said:

"Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down."

Mark 7:13

The Pharisees believed that their *religious* observances, their *good works* and their Jewish *birth* would make them right with God.

Jesus said that these things do nothing to make a person acceptable, because evil...

"... come[s] from inside and make[s] a man 'unclean.'"

Mark 7:23

The Scripture is clear on this point: good deeds do not earn a right standing with God. Indeed it says...

... all our righteous acts are like filthy rags ...

Isaiah 64:6

SLAVES

Sometimes folk view themselves as models of perfection, but the Scripture states quite the opposite. It says that all people ...

... are slaves to sin, which leads to death ... *Romans 6:16*

Sin has wrapped its chains around the life of every human.

"I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin."
John 8:34

We often get frustrated because the harder we try to do that which is right, the more we seem to fail. Just as we get one area of life under control, we find ourselves falling short in another. In every way, the sin nature works against our efforts to live right. It's no wonder New Year resolutions rarely succeed.

In addition, the Word of God speaks of Satan making man his SLAVE. This doesn't necessarily mean that a person has been dabbling in the occult; rather, the Devil manipulates man by temptation and pride to accomplish his ends. Indeed, Satan works very hard to convince man that he is inherently good. The Scripture says that people need to ...

... come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.
2 Timothy 2:26

Just because man is a slave to sin and Satan, does not justify a devilish lifestyle. God still holds everyone responsible for the choices they make. But being slaves does create a dilemma. The sort of perfection man needs to enter the presence of a perfect God, is far beyond man's capability to achieve.

The age-old question asked by the prophet Job still remains.

... how can a mortal be righteous before God? *Job 9:2*

How can we get rid of our sin and gain a *righteousness equal to God's righteousness* so we can be accepted in his presence?

I WAS BORN A CHRISTIAN ...

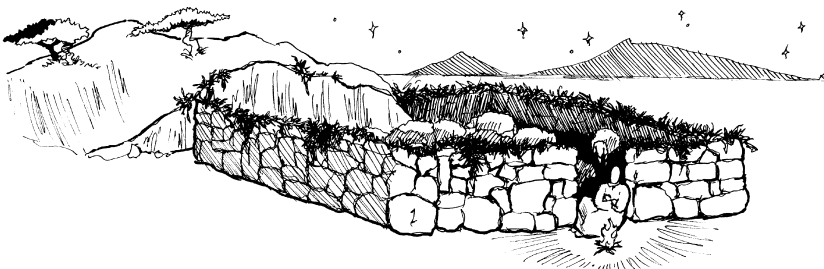
The word *Christian* implies *Christ-one* or *belonging to the household of Christ*. The biblical meaning has been distorted and confused beyond belief. But even in the original sense of the word, to say that one has been *born a Christian* is not accurate. Being born in a *Christian home* no more makes you a Christian than being born in a hospital makes you a doctor. Physical birth has nothing to do with our relationship with God or our future destiny.

Though the term is used of entire nations, rightly understood it can only apply to an individual. Some supposedly *Christian nations* have perpetrated terrible crimes in the name of Christ. Others are morally corrupt.

2 THE WAY

Often Jesus used common day to day experiences to illustrate spiritual truth. In this story, Jesus began by reminding his listeners of the sort of pen in which sheep were kept. The enclosure was constructed using stones, upon which thorny vines were encouraged to grow. The purpose of these brambles was to dissuade wild animals or thieves from crawling over the wall. The pen had only one entrance.

During the day, the shepherd would lead his flock out to the pasture for grazing. At night, the flock would be returned to the fold and the shepherd would sleep in the entrance. No one could enter nor could the sheep leave without disturbing the guardian. The shepherd's body literally became the door to the pen.



Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep."

John 10:7

Jesus compared those who trust him as being sheep, safely secured in the sheep pen.

"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved."

John 10:9

Jesus said that *he* alone was the gate—there were no other doors. It was only through *him* that one could be *saved* from the terrible consequences of sin. It was only through him that one could have eternal life.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."

John 10:10

Thieves do not care about the welfare of sheep. The Scripture calls them false teachers. Often they misuse the Word of God to feed a power trip or thicken their wallets. These *thieves* fabricate a way to earn eternal life—a way that appears good, but still ends in spiritual death.

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.

Proverbs 14:12



On the other hand, Jesus came to give a full life to those who trust in Him, a life abundant with joy. Jesus said ...

"I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." *John 14:6*

Jesus said: He is the *only way* to God.
 His Word is the *only truth*.
 Eternal **life** can *only* be found in Him.

Jesus emphasized that no one can come to God any other way. Just as the shepherd was the only gate to the sheepfold, so Jesus is the only way to God.

3 THE PLAN

As you study the life of Jesus, you see that little by little he revealed to his disciples the plan and purpose behind his coming to planet earth.

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. *Matthew 16:21*

Jesus did something that is humanly impossible. He foretold the exact method by which he would be put to death. Not only did he say how he would be killed, but he described some of the events leading up to that death. Peter, one of the disciples didn't like what he was hearing.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" *Matthew 16:22*

In many ways, Peter was like some people today. They deny that such an event could ever have happened to Jesus, if he was truly God. But Jesus had some strong words for Peter.

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." *Matthew 16:23*

Jesus told Peter he was playing into the hands of Satan. He said that Peter did not understand God's agenda, whereby ...

... he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. *Matthew 16:21*

But why was Jesus saying this? We will understand more as we go along.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

One week after Jesus told his disciples of his plan, he took three of them up a mountain to give them a glimpse of who he really was.

After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.

Matthew 17:1,2

Jesus' outward appearance was transformed—his face shone like the sun and his clothes radiated a sparkling white light. The same awesome, dazzling pure light of God's presence that had filled the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle was made apparent to the disciples. It had been there all along—in Jesus—but people could not see it.

Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

Luke 9:30,31

Peter was astounded by it all. It seems he began to blabber whatever ideas began to fill his head.

Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

Matthew 17:4,5

God the Father spoke from Heaven.

When the disciples heard this, they fell face down to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them. "Get up," he said. "Don't be afraid." When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Matthew 17:6-8

What a stupendous event! At that time, the disciples didn't know what to make of it all, but later Peter would write:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain!

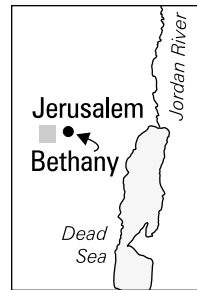
2 Peter 1:16-18

4 LAZARUS

Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. So the sisters sent word to Jesus, "Lord, the one you love is sick." John 11:1,3

Lazarus, Mary and Martha were close friends of Jesus who lived a couple of miles from Jerusalem. At the time of this event, Jesus was on the other side of the Jordan River, a full day's journey from Bethany.

Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days. John 11:5,6



Now that doesn't make sense. In this day of quick-response rescue teams, everyone knows that when someone is seriously ill, you don't dawdle. But Jesus stayed where he was for another two days! What was going on in his mind?

Then he said to his disciples, "Let us go back to Judea."

"But Rabbi," they said, "a short while ago the Jews tried to stone you, and yet you are going back there?"

So then he told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him."

John 11:7,8,13,14

DEAD FOUR DAYS

On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days. Bethany was less than two miles from Jerusalem, and many Jews had come to Martha and

Mary to comfort them in the loss of their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

“Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.” *John 11:17-22*

We are not told what Martha thought Jesus might ask God for, but one thing is abundantly clear—she had faith in him.

Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” *John 11:23,24*

Martha wasn't surprised at Jesus' statement. She knew that the Scripture says that all people will come back to life, but that would occur at the end of the world when everyone will be judged by God. Until then, a person only dies once.

Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?” *John 11:25,26*

These were potent words. Jesus told Martha that Lazarus did not have to wait until the day of judgment to be raised back to life. Jesus was the one who gave life, and therefore had the power to restore life to Lazarus at any moment. Did she believe him?

“Yes, Lord,” she told him, “I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.” *John 11:27*

Martha not only believed Jesus; she also affirmed that he was the Christ—the Messiah.

“Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

Jesus wept. *John 11:34,35*

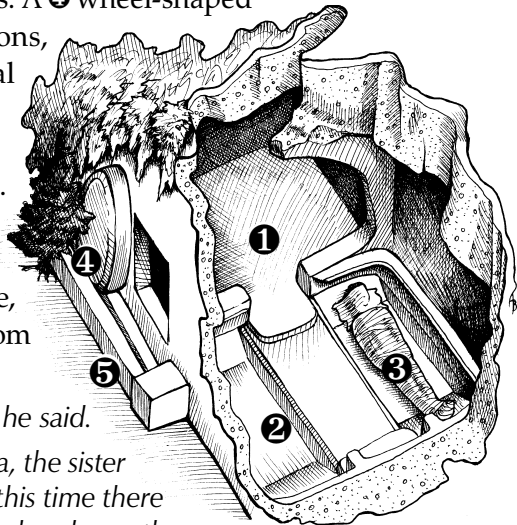
There has been much speculation about why Jesus cried. Some have conjectured that Jesus grieved at the thought of bringing Lazarus back to life—back from all the joy and perfection of Heaven—back to the earth with all its sin and sorrow. The Scripture doesn't tell us why, but the fact that he wept does show us that Jesus experienced human feelings, even though he was sinless.

Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?"

Jesus, once more deeply moved, came to the tomb. It was a cave with a stone laid across the entrance. John 11:36-38

The traditional Jewish burial of the day often involved placing the body in a tomb which, over time, became the last resting place of successive generations. A natural cave was commonly used, though sometimes the sepulcher was hewn out of solid rock. These tombs were large; you could stand upright in the ❶ weeping chamber. Inside, ❷ shelves were carved on which to lay the ❸ bodies. A ❹ wheel-shaped rock weighing several tons, was hewn to tightly seal the entrance. Resting in a ❺ trench, this door could be rolled back and forth. When closed, the door rested in a small hollow in front of the entrance, preventing the stone from rolling open.



"Take away the stone," he said.

"But, Lord," said Martha, the sister of the dead man, "by this time there is a bad odor, for he has been there four days."

Then Jesus said, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?"

So they took away the stone. Then Jesus looked up and said, "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me."

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.

Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

John 11:39-44

It was a good thing that Jesus said, “Lazarus...” If he had simply said “come forth!” the whole cemetery would have emptied its dead. Lazarus was alive! His friends had to unwind the long strips of burial clothes before Lazarus could walk away. There was no doubt that Jesus had performed a tremendous miracle.

Therefore many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, put their faith in him. But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what Jesus had done. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin.¹

“What are we accomplishing?” they asked. “Here is this man performing many miraculous signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.”

So from that day on they plotted to take his life.

John 11:45-48,53

Some believed, but others plotted. Not even a resurrection could convince the chief priests and Pharisees. They had too much at stake—their power and their pride. It sort of sounds like Lucifer. No doubt it was!

WHAT KIND OF A MAN IS THIS?

Jesus left no doubt as to who he was. On one occasion, the disciples found themselves in a storm at sea. Though Jesus was on board, he was sound asleep. On being awakened and told of the peril they were in, Jesus...

...got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm.

The men were amazed, and said, “What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?”

Matthew 8:26,27 NASB

Just as God spoke the waters into existence when he created the world, so Jesus calmed them by his word. And just as God created life in the beginning by speaking, so Jesus was able to restore life at his command. He said...

“I am the resurrection and the life.”

John 11:25

5 HELL

For three years Jesus taught all who would listen. It seems an incredibly brief span of time considering everything that happened. His teaching ranged from comforting to provoking, from parables to accounts of real people. On this occasion, Jesus related the following true story:

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.”

Luke 16:19-21

THE BEGGAR DIES

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side.”

Luke 16:22

For the intent of this study, *Abraham’s side* is equivalent to Heaven and is sometimes referred to as *paradise*. The man in question here was a different person than the Lazarus in the last story. This Lazarus went to *paradise*, not because he was poor, but because he trusted the Lord.

THE RICH MAN DIES

“The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’”

Luke 16:22-24

The rich man had gone to Hell, not because he was wealthy, but because he ignored God’s Word and lived only for himself while on earth. He begged Abraham for help.

“But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’”

Luke 16:25,26

It's FINAL

The Word of God makes it clear that one can only repent—have a change of mind—while here on earth. After a person dies, there is no second chance, no opportunity to escape Hell for Heaven. Those who die and are not in a right relationship with God remain separated from him forever. Nowhere does the Scripture suggest that one can escape this place of suffering. Even though the rich man cried out for a measure of relief from his torment and misery, there was none. Mercy can only be received during this lifetime. The rich man continued ...

“He answered, ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’”

Luke 16:27,28

Even though this man was in terrible agony, he could remember his life on earth. He knew that his five brothers were not right with God and wanted them to be warned.

“Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’

‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’

[Abraham] said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

Luke 16:29-31

Earlier on, we read of one whom Jesus raised from the dead. Yet in spite of this great demonstration of power, many still would not accept Jesus as their Savior and King. Instead, they plotted to kill him. The Scripture says that if people refuse to believe the message of salvation proclaimed by God’s prophets, then ...

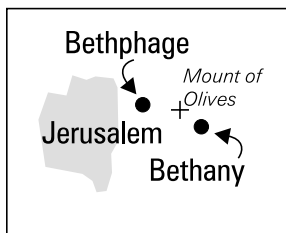
“... they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.”

Luke 16:31

<p>The description of Hell is almost synonymous with that of the Lake of Fire.² The Bible says that those who enter Hell have already entered everlasting punishment.</p>
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6 ACCEPTANCE AND BETRAYAL

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here.



Mark 11:1,2

When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest!”

Mark 11:7-10

The word *hosanna* means *save now*. The crowd was giving Jesus an impromptu version of a Roman parade normally used to welcome a triumphant conqueror. They were applauding and praising him in hopes that he would oust their Roman oppressors.

Unbeknown to them, they were fulfilling a 500 year-old prophecy. The Prophet Zechariah had written that Jesus would receive just such a welcome.



Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Zechariah 9:9

This is the only time Jesus ever allowed such a momentous reception on his behalf. He had a reason. Jesus was forcing the hand of those who were out to kill him. He wanted them to act now, without delay.

Now the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some sly way to arrest Jesus and kill him. “But not during the Feast,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

Mark 14:1,2

From the perspective of the shouting crowd, it was time for Jesus to announce that he was the true King of Israel. But for the religious leaders who were plotting his death, it was an awkward situation. If Jesus needed to be put off the stage, now was the time, but they were afraid of the public reaction. Jesus was obviously very popular.

The city was crammed with people for the Passover, many of whom were expectantly watching Jesus in the hope that he would evict the Romans. But as the hours passed with no official proclamation of his kingship, his hero-status was fast fading.

THE PASSOVER MEAL

Jesus instructed two disciples to arrange a room for the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"

"It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me."

Mark 14:17-20

When Jesus chose his twelve disciples three years earlier, he knew that one was a traitor.

A 1000 years before this time, the Prophet David, in speaking of this betrayal, had written from THE SAVIOR'S perspective ...



"Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me."

Psalms 41:9

BETRAYED

The traitor was Judas Iscariot. Though he was treasurer for the disciples, he was also a thief. Apparently, he oiled his ambitions and lined his pockets without the disciples being any the wiser. But Jesus knew, and apparently Satan knew it too. He had been watching for a weak link in Jesus' armor, a time and place to crush THE PROMISED SAVIOR forever. Now Satan

saw his opportunity. Judas was willing. As the Passover bread was being served, the Devil made his move.

As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

“What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him.

John 13:27,28

And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money.

Luke 22:4,5

THE BROKEN BREAD AND THE CUP

This scenario with Judas happened in the middle of the meal. While the traitor went about his diabolical mission, Jesus continued with the supper. It has great significance.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

Mark 14:22

Obviously they weren’t eating Jesus’ flesh, and yet Jesus was saying that the broken Passover loaf represented his body. The disciples must have been rather perplexed. Did this have to do with his earlier reference to himself as the Bread of Life?

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.

Mark 14:23,24

Again the symbolism was similar—Jesus’ blood would soon be poured out for *many* people. We will see the significance of this later on.

*When they had sung a *hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

Mark 14:26

|*a song
praising God

Thursday Night:

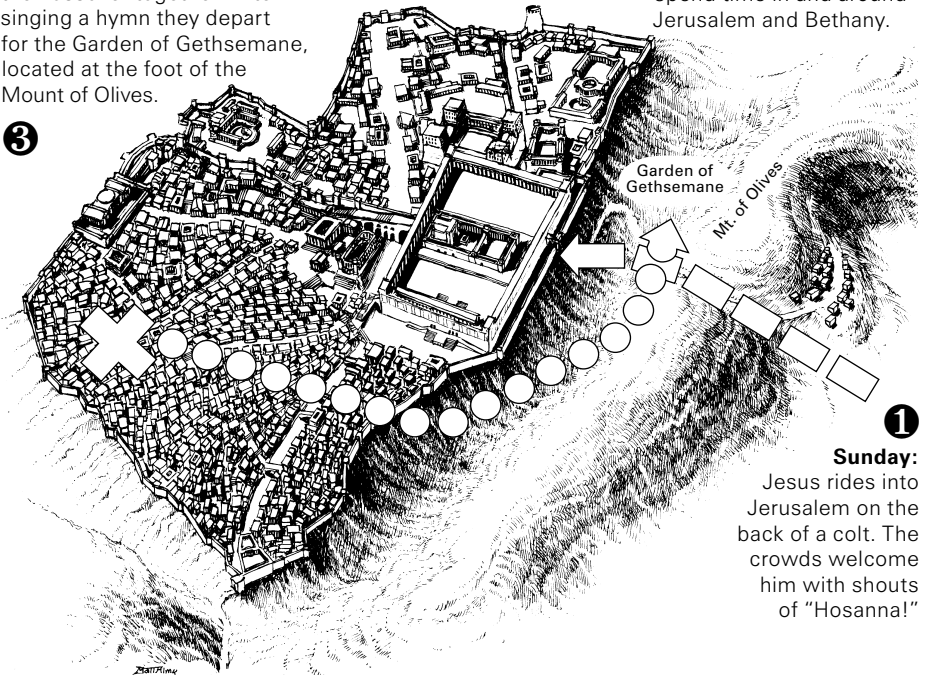
Jesus and his disciples celebrate the Passover together. After singing a hymn they depart for the Garden of Gethsemane, located at the foot of the Mount of Olives.

3

2

Monday to Wednesday:

Jesus and his twelve disciples spend time in and around Jerusalem and Bethany.



1

Sunday:

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on the back of a colt. The crowds welcome him with shouts of "Hosanna!"