

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS AND MUHAMMAD ON MORALITY AND LAW: THE HEART OF LEGITIMACY

©2014 Rudolph C. Barnes, Jr. and the Barnes-Wall Foundation

Commentators:

Rudolph C. Barnes, Jr., Waleed El-Ansary and James Nates

<i>Table of Contents</i>	Page 1
Introduction	10
Chapter 1: The Gospel of Mark--Introduction	16
<u>Sin, righteousness and the family of God</u>	
1. Jesus came to call sinners, not the righteous (Mk 2:15-17)	17
2. The family of God and spiritual kinship (Mk 3:31-35)	21
<u>Love of God and neighbor: a common word of faith</u>	
3. The greatest commandment (Mk 12:28-33)	25
<u>Love over law</u>	
4. Civil disobedience on Sabbath: love over law (Mk 2:23-28; 3:1-6)	31
5. Individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean (Mk 7:14-23)	35
6. Marriage, divorce and human sexuality (Mk 10:5-12)	39
<u>Virtues and vices</u>	
7. Lamp on a stand (Mk 4:21-23)	43
8. Riches and salvation (Mk 10:17-27)	45
9. Widow's mite (Mk 12:41-44)	49
<u>The kingdom of God</u>	
10. The kingdom of God: parable of a mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32)	51
11. Humility: leaders as servants (Mk 9:35; 10:41-44)	54
12. Church and state: conflicting concepts of sovereignty (Mk 12:13-17)	57

Faith and hypocrisy

13. Sowing the seeds of faith (Mk 4:1-20)	61
14. Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16)	66
15. Hypocrisy and sanctimony (Mk 12:38, 39)	69

Jesus as Christ and the Resurrection

16. Parable of the wicked tenants (Mk 12:1-9)	72
17. Life after death and the resurrection (Mk 12:18-27)	74
18. The anointing of Jesus (Mk 14:3-8)	78

Chapter 2: The Gospel of Matthew--Introduction	81
The Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12)	82
Faith and morality: salt and light (Mt 5:13-16)	88
Laws and love: the new standard higher than the old (Mt 5:17-20)	90
Anger and reconciliation (Mt 5:21-24)	93
Resolving disputes out of court: the risks of litigation (Mt 5:25,26)	97
Adultery and lust (Mt 5:27,30)	99
Integrity: plain talk, no oaths (Mt 5:33-37)	100
Submission, retribution, and giving to all who ask (Mt 5:38-42)	102
Love for enemies (Mt 5:43-48)	104
Ostentatious giving (Mt 6:1-4)	107
Prayer in secret: the Lord's prayer (Mt 6:5-13)	110
Forgiveness (Mt 6:14,15)	113
Fasting (Mt 6:16-18)	114
The light within you (Mt 6:22,23)	116

Faith, God, and money	
(Mt 6:24)	117
Do not worry	
(Mt 6:25-34)	119
Do not judge	
(Mt 7:1,2)	121
Effective prayer	
(Mt 7:7-11)	123
The golden rule	
(Mt 7:12)	124
Faith for the few: the narrow gate	
(Mt 7:13,14)	126
Faith evidenced by works as a tree by its fruit	
(Mt 7:15-20)	128
Faith and works: parable of the wise and foolish builders	
(Mt 7:24-27)	130
Instructions to the disciples	
(Mt 10:5,6,9-18,23)	133
Courage: open and fearless speech	
(Mt 10:26-31)	136
Rest for the weary	
(Mt 11:28-30)	139
Faith, words, and judgment	
(Mt 12:33-37)	141
Tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds	
(Mt 13:24-30; 36-43)	144
The kingdom: the parables of the treasure and the pearl	
(Mt 13:44-46)	149
The parable of the net	
(Mt 13:47-50)	151
The old and the new	
(Mt 13:51,52)	154
Leading others astray	
(Mt 18:7-9)	157
Brotherly correction	
(Mt 18:15-17)	160
Forgiveness: the parable of the unmerciful servant	
(Mt 18:21-35)	162
Celibacy and sexual preference	
(Mt 19:11,12)	165
Envy and equity: the parable of the workers in the vineyard	
(Mt 20:1-16)	167
Integrity and hypocrisy: talk is cheap	
(Mt 21:28-31)	170
A new invitation: parable of the wedding feast	
(Mt 22:1-14)	172

Hypocrisy: practice what you preach (Mt 23:1-12)	175
Condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes (Mt 23:13-36)	178
End times: the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1,2,16-21,29,32,33,36-51)	183
Be ready: parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13)	190
Christian stewardship: the parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30)	192
The last judgment (Mt 25:31-46)	195
The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31,36-45)	198
The arrest of Jesus (Mt 26:50,52,55,56)	201
Jesus on the cross (Mt 27:46)	203
 Chapter 3: The Gospel of Luke--Introduction	209
Follow me (Lk 5:27,28)	210
Give and you will receive (Lk 6:36-38)	212
Criticizing self before others: blind leading the blind (Lk 6:39-42)	214
Sinners, forgiveness, and love (Lk 7:36-50)	217
Unconditional commitment to discipleship (Lk 9:57-62)	221
Loving your neighbor: parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37)	223
Too busy to hear Jesus: Mary and Martha (Lk 10:38-42)	226
Persistence (Lk 11:5-8)	228
Greed and hoarding possessions (Lk 12:13-21)	231
Treasures and the heart (Lk 12:33,34)	235
Expectations (Lk 12:35-48)	238
Dissension, not peace (Lk 12:49-53)	241
Interpreting the times (Lk 12:54-56)	244

Suffering not God's will (Lk 13:1-5)	248
Patience with sinners (Lk 13:6-9)	251
Humility in social matters (Lk 14:7-11)	253
Serving the least of those instead of friends (Lk 14:12-14)	255
Effective planning (Lk 14:28-32)	258
Lost and found: parables of the lost sheep and coin (Lk 15:1-10)	261
Sibling rivalry: parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32)	263
Shrewdness, stewardship, and the danger of riches (Lk 16:1-15)	267
The Law (Lk 16:16-18)	272
Insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31)	275
The duty of discipleship (Lk 17:7-10)	279
The unseen kingdom of God (Lk 17:20,21)	282
Persistence in prayer (Lk 18:1-8)	287
Sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican (Lk 18:9-14)	289
Zacchaeus: money and salvation (Lk 19:1-10)	292
Watch and pray (Lk 21:34-36)	294
Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Lk 22:66-70)	296
The way to Calvary (Lk 23:26-32)	298
Forgiveness on the cross (Lk 23:34)	299
 Chapter 4: The Gospel of John--Introduction	 301
Doing business in the temple (Jn 2:12-16)	302
At the feast in Jerusalem (Jn 7:2-24)	304
Justice or mercy: the adulterous woman (Jn 8:1-11)	307

Blindness as punishment for sin (Jn 9:1-3)	312
The good shepherd (Jn 10:1-18)	315
Jesus predicts his death (Jn 12:19-24)	318
Washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:12-17)	320
Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31)	323
A new command: love one another (Jn 13:34,35)	325
Jesus before Pilate (Jn 18:28-31; 33-38)	330
 The Rest of the Story:	
The Mystical Teachings of Jesus on Faith	332
 Chapter 5: The Gospel of Mark	336
The call for repentance (Mk 1:15)	336
The call to discipleship (Mk 1:17,18)	337
Power over evil (Mk 1:25,26)	338
Power to heal (Mk 1:41)	340
Power to forgive sins (Mk 2:5; 8-11)	341
New standards of morality and faith: new wineskins (Mk 2:19-22)	343
Miracles: the work of Satan or God? (Mk 3:24-27)	344
Blasphemies (Mk 3:28,29)	345
Parable of seed and harvest (Mk 4:26-29)	346
Power over nature: calming the tempest (Mk 4:37-40)	347
A prophet is without honor in his hometown (Mk 6:4)	347
God's commands and the traditions of the Pharisees (Mk 7:6-13)	348
A sign from heaven (Mk 8:12)	350

Threat to the faith: the yeast of the Pharisees (Mk 8:15,17,18)	351
The authority of Jesus (Mk 8:27-30; 11:29,30,33)	352
Destiny: prediction of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33)	355
Selfless service: the cost of discipleship (Mk 8:34-37)	356
Ashamed of Jesus (Mk 8:38)	358
The coming Kingdom of God (Mk 9:1)	359
The transfiguration (Mk 9:7-13)	360
Accepting children as Jesus (Mk 9:37)	361
Tolerance (Mk 9:39,40)	361
Casting off sin (Mk 9:42-48)	363
Request for precedence (Mk 10:38-40)	364
The power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness (Mk 11:22-25)	365
Rejection of the capstone (Mk 12:9-11)	366
Lineage of Jesus: Christ as son of David (Mk 12:35-37)	367
 Chapter 6: The Gospel of Matthew	 369
The temptation of Jesus (Mt 4:4,7,10)	369
Pearls to pigs (Mt 7:6)	370
The true disciple (Mt 7:21-23)	371
Faith of the centurion in the authority of Jesus (Mt 8:5-13)	371
Leaders in short supply (Mt 9:36-38)	373
Faith and persecution (Mt 10:19-22,24,25)	373
Messenger for Jesus (Mt 10:40-41)	374
Message of faith for John the Baptist (Mt 11:4-6)	375

Praise for John the Baptist (Mt 11:7-15)	376
The rejection of Jesus (Mt 11:16-24)	377
Return of evil (Mt 12:43-45)	379
Parable of the yeast (Mt 13:33)	380
Test of faith: walking on water (Mt 14:27-33)	381
Prayer in common: the church (Mt 18:19,20)	382
Jerusalem lamented (Mt 23:37-39)	383
 Chapter 7: The Gospel of Luke	 385
Liberation (Lk 4:14-30)	385
Authority to perform miracles (Lk 10:17-20)	386
Renouncing family and possessions (Lk 14:26,27,33)	387
 Chapter 8: The Gospel of John	 391
From doubt to belief: Nathanael (Jn 1:47-51)	391
Born again of the spirit: Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-13)	392
Faith and eternal life (Jn 3:14-18)	394
The light of the world (Jn 3:19-21)	399
Living water (Jn 4:5-14)	400
Worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:21-26)	401
Bread of life (Jn 4:32-34; 6:25-58)	403
The truth will make you free (Jn 8:31-36)	407
Judgment: bringing sight and blindness (Jn 9:39-41)	409
Blasphemy or Word of God? (Jn 10:25-39)	411

Pride and peer pressure: honor of men ahead of God (Jn 12:42-49)	413
Life after death: many rooms in my Father's house (Jn 14:1-4)	415
The way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:5-14)	416
Love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace (Jn 14:15-31; 16:13,33)	418
The vine of love (Jn 15:1-8,16)	419
The farewell prayer of Jesus: the unity of all believers (Jn 17:1-26)	420
Political authority from God (Jn 19:11)	423

END NOTES	425
------------------	-----

APPENDICES:

QUICK REFERENCE TOPICAL INDEX	434
CROSS-REFERENCE INDEX: Gospel verses to topics	451
INDEX OF SELECTED PROVISIONS FROM THE QUR'AN	469
1. Belief and Unbelief/rewards and punishments	470
2. Belief, rewards and punishment for Jews and Christians	476
3. Standards of morality and law	486
4. Dietary laws	489
5. Family law (marriage, divorce and sexuality)	491
6. The Law of War and morality of violence	498
7. Stories about Jesus	503
8. Stories from the Hebrew Bible (with index)	507
INDEX OF SELECTED PROVISIONS FROM JEWISH (MOSAIC) LAW	547
1. Blasphemy, obedience and rewards/punishments	548
2. The ten commandments	558
3. Personal injury, property/commercial and general laws	563
4. Family law (marriage and sexual relations)	578
5. The law of war and God's will in war	585
6. Dietary laws	593
7. Ceremonial purification laws, sacrifices and rituals	597
About the Commentators	652

Introduction

The Teachings of Jesus and Muhammad on Morality and Law: The Heart of Legitimacy

Legitimacy is about those normative standards of right and wrong that are shaped by religion and expressed in morality and law. Christians and Muslims make up more than half of the world's population, and they all look to *the word of God* for their standards of legitimacy. For Christians Jesus was *the word of God made flesh*, while Muslims believe the Qur'an, dictated by the Prophet Muhammad, is *the word of God made book*. For these believers *the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad on morality and law* are at *the heart of legitimacy*.

Standards of legitimacy can vary dramatically from place to place.¹ In Islamist regimes changing one's religion (apostasy) and criticizing religion (blasphemy) are capital crimes, while in Western democracies the freedoms of religion and expression are fundamental rights. Much of the hate and violence in the world can be attributed to conflicting religious beliefs and standards of legitimacy. The premise of this book is that a comparative study of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad can help reconcile religious conflict by revealing that most contentious interfaith issues are more cultural, political and secular than religious.

This book compares those teachings of Jesus chosen by Thomas Jefferson as "the most sublime moral code ever designed by man"² with similar teachings of Muhammad. While Jefferson admired Jesus he was critical of the Christian religion. As a man of faith and a child of the Enlightenment he emphasized reason and morality over the mysteries of religious revelations and church doctrines. Jefferson understood the power of religion and believed that the moral teachings of Jesus provided the foundation for universal human rights and justice.

Jefferson knew that religion could both support and threaten democracy, human rights and the secular rule of law, and that true justice required civil or human rights to protect minorities from a tyranny of the majority. Jefferson's motives as a libertarian might be challenged since he was a slaveholder, but as the author of the Declaration of Independence and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution no one can deny his influence in shaping our libertarian national values.

Culture shapes religion, and the secular libertarian values of the Enlightenment reshaped Western religions. In this context *libertarian* values refer to those liberal ideals of democracy, human rights and equality under secular law, which are distinguished from those neo-libertarian ideals that make narcissism, greed and unrestrained ambition virtues and justify the wealthy and powerful exploiting the poor. Neither Jesus nor Muhammad addressed democracy, human rights or the secular rule of law since they were not relevant to their time and place, so that Christians and Muslims must use reason to adapt their ancient teachings to modern times, and that means balancing individual freedom with the need to provide for the common good.

Religion: The Search for Truth through Revelation and Reason

Religion includes both mystical and moral beliefs. Mystical beliefs define our relationship with God and are based on divine revelations beyond human knowledge and reason, while moral beliefs govern our relationships with other people and are based on revelations shaped by reason. *Revelation* is based on the word of God as revealed through scripture, while *reason* is based on human knowledge. While most modern people of faith consider both revelation and reason in their search for truth, religious fundamentalists rely entirely on revelation.

Concepts of justice differ based on the degree to which revelation or reason shapes standards of legitimacy and whether individual rights are balanced with responsibilities for the common good. True justice requires that rights are balanced with responsibilities and that revelation is subject to the test of reason. The Enlightenment used reason to challenge ancient religious standards of legitimacy that were based on revelations that ignored libertarian values, and that is a continuing issue at the heart of legitimacy in making the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad relevant to our time and place.

Balancing individual rights with the responsibility to provide for the common good requires putting love over law. The greatest commandment is taken from the Hebrew Bible and combines the command to love God with the command to love our neighbors as ourselves, and Jesus defined our neighbors to include unbelievers in the story of the good Samaritan. A distinguished group of Muslim scholars has embraced the greatest commandment as their own and offered it as a *common word* of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike.³

A *common word* of love for God and neighbor can balance individual rights with providing for the common good and also

promote religious reconciliation in a world of increasing religious diversity, but it will require that fundamentalist believers use reason to interpret the revelations of their holy scriptures and accept and respect those of other faiths rather than seeking to convert them. Loving others means accepting their religious differences, but the history of Christianity and Islam is replete with examples of religious coercion and condemnation in the name of God.

The libertarian ideals of the Enlightenment transformed Judaism and Christianity in the West but had little effect on the tribal cultures of the Islamic East. Western religions have embraced religious and political freedom while in Islamist regimes religious law denies such freedoms. Blasphemy and apostasy continue to be punished as crimes and some regimes condone barbaric tribal practices such as female circumcision and honor killings under Islamic law.⁴

Legitimacy includes both voluntary moral standards and coercive laws. Human rights cannot exist unless religious standards of legitimacy are voluntary and coercive laws are made only by elected legislators; and if religious laws are imposed on unbelievers in a theocratic democracy, there can be no real freedom. In libertarian democracies believers are free to assert the moral supremacy of God's law over man's law through political debate and elections, and they can even resort to peaceful civil disobedience without undermining the supremacy of the secular rule of law, as was demonstrated by Dr. Martin Luther King.

Some Islamist leaders have said that *God is the only legislator* and invoked divine sanction to impose coercive laws that deny fundamental freedoms and equality under the law, citing the supremacy of revelation over reason in matters of legitimacy and law. Muslims in emerging democracies must choose whether their laws will continue to be based on revelation (Sharia) or made by elected representatives subject to fundamental human rights to ensure equal justice under law.⁵

Similarities and Differences in Christianity and Islam

The sayings of Jesus are taken from the four gospel accounts of the New Testament and the Gospel of Thomas. None are objective historical accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. Each was written long after the death of Jesus to different faith communities in the early church, and each reflected different perspectives of the emerging Christian faith.

The sayings of the Prophet Muhammad are taken from the Qur'an and *hadith*. The Qur'an is considered by Muslims to be the sacred and immutable word of God revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, while the *hadith* is more analogous to the Christian Gospels, being stories about the life and teachings of Muhammad.

There are similarities in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, but even more similarities in the Qur'an and the Hebrew Bible, both of which emphasize strict obedience to holy laws as God's standard of righteousness. Jesus taught that God's standard of righteousness required putting [love over law](#) as mandated in [the greatest commandment](#) to love God and neighbor--even *unbelieving* neighbors. And while neither Jesus nor Muhammad mentioned human rights, the primacy of [love over law](#) enables religion to escape the oppression of antiquated holy laws and embrace more libertarian values based on loving others.

The Qur'an emphasizes salvation and condemnation at death (the Last Day), with believers who have done good works to be rewarded with eternal bliss in heaven while unbelievers are condemned to suffer eternal misery in hell. (see [Selected provisions of the Qur'an on Belief and unbelief/rewards and punishment](#) in the Appendices) Jesus taught that the peace and joy of salvation begins in this world with the sharing of God's forgiveness, love and mercy with others, including unbelievers.

The Qur'an asserts that fighting one's enemies is God's will and a supreme virtue of faith. (see [Selected provisions of the Qur'an on The Law of War and the morality of violence](#)) Jesus did not address the legitimacy of warfighting (the *Just War Tradition* came later) but instead taught [love for enemies](#) and [reconciliation](#) with adversaries.

The Qur'an states that Jews and Christians are *people of the Book* and describes Jesus as a messenger of God like Muhammad who never claimed to be a son or coequal with God, and then condemns as unbelievers those Christians who believe that Jesus was God's son, and all who do not accept the Qur'an as the full and final word of God. (see [Selected provisions of the Qur'an on Jews, Jesus and Christians in Islam](#) in the Appendices)

Many of the similarities and differences in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad can be attributed to their historical settings. The first part of Muhammad's ministry (c. 610-622 C.E.) in Mecca was similar to that of Jesus in 1st century Palestine. Muhammad and his followers lived under the ruling

Quraysh tribe, and like Jesus under Roman rule, Muhammad avoided matters of politics and war. But in the second half of his ministry (c. 622 to 632 C.E.), Muhammad, like Moses, asserted the divine right to rule and led his followers across a lawless desert to Medina, where Muhammad became a holy warrior like Joshua, who was the successor to Moses.

Since those ancient times theocratic regimes have used religion and holy laws to prohibit sin by limiting freedom; but history has shown that oppressive theocracies have done more harm than good. In libertarian democracies believers embrace religious freedom with the separation of [church and state](#). They rely on reason and moral persuasion to counter immorality and on democratically made laws to provide law and order and to balance individual rights with responsibility for the common good.

The teachings of Moses, Muhammad and Jesus did not address freedom, democracy and human rights because they weren't options for their time and place. While Moses and Muhammad used sacred law to provide law and order and to promote the common good in their ancient environments, Jesus lived under Roman rule and never sought nor exercised worldly power. Instead he promoted forgiveness and sacrificial love and condemned envy, greed, anger and hatred as moral matters of the heart. The emphasis of Jesus on the moral obligations of faith rather than coercive holy laws opened the way for libertarian democracy to blend faith with freedom and rights with responsibilities.

The challenge for Jews, Christians and Muslims today is to use reason to interpret revelation and adapt the truths of their ancient scriptures to modern issues. [The greatest commandment](#) to love God and neighbor coupled with the reason of the Enlightenment enabled religions in the Western world to embrace democracy, human rights and the secular rule of law, and Islamic cultures in the East can do the same today.

Structure and Purpose

The first four chapters of this book include the teachings of Jesus from *The Jefferson Bible* and reference is made to related teachings from the other Gospel accounts, including the Gospel of Thomas. These teachings of Jesus are followed by related teachings of Muhammad from the Qur'an and hadith. In the first chapter the teachings from Mark are arranged by theme to provide eighteen lessons suitable for an interfaith study.

The remaining five chapters are *the rest of the story* and include all other teachings of Jesus from the Gospel accounts

but without comparable teachings from the Qur'an and hadith. Commentary is provided on all teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, and topics are cross-referenced. Some teachings of Jesus that were not selected by Jefferson have been included to ensure coherence, and are noted as such. Appendices provide an alphabetized list of topics, an index relating Gospel verses to topics, and [selected provisions of the Qur'an](#) and [Selected Provisions of Jewish \(Mosaic\) Law](#) arranged by category.

The words of Jesus in the four canonical gospels are taken from *The New International Version* (NIV) of the New Testament.⁶ The Gospel of Thomas is taken from *The Five Gospels*, as are the SV rankings for the sayings of Jesus. These rankings were determined by the weighted voting of a group of scholars known as *The Jesus Seminar*, and range from SV1 (almost certainly said by Jesus) to SV4 (almost certainly not said by Jesus). They do not represent the prevailing view of biblical scholarship but illustrate how modern scholarly opinion and reason can challenge traditional interpretations of the teachings of Jesus.⁷

The Gospels are in chronological order, beginning with the Gospel of Mark as the earliest of the gospels. Topic headings introduce each teaching, followed by the teaching, notes on parallel and related teachings in other Gospel accounts, and commentary. Next are comparable teachings from the Qur'an and hadith followed by commentary, concluding with joint commentary on the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad. Parallel teachings of Jesus from other Gospel accounts are usually not repeated, but topics of related teachings are cross-referenced and underlined.

Many New Testament scholars, including those of *The Jesus Seminar*, have confirmed the prescience of Thomas Jefferson in his choice of the moral teachings of Jesus in his *Bible*. They emphasize the supremacy of [love over law](#) and of *reason over revelation* when they conflict; and the teachings of Jesus debunk fundamentalist religions that assert that God's absolute truth is set forth in an inerrant and infallible holy book.⁸

The purpose of this book is to help Jews, Christians and Muslims better understand how their concepts of legitimacy have been shaped by the teachings of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, and how [the greatest commandment](#) is a *common word* of love and faith that can help bring people of faith together as they seek peace in a world beset by religious prejudice, hatred and violence.⁹

Rudolph C. Barnes, Jr.

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Gospel of Mark

Mark is thought to be the first of the four gospels written (around 70 C.E.), but Paul's letters were written between 48 and 62 C.E. Paul's letters were instructions to early Christian churches rather than the story of Jesus or a compilation of his teachings. They were a mix of Paul's Pharisaic theology and his understanding of the teachings of Jesus, and they likely influenced all the gospel writers, including Mark.

Paul wrote before the Roman war (66-70 C.E.) which ended with the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem; all the gospel accounts were written after 70 C.E. and reflected understandings of the gospel message shaped by the relationship of the early church with the larger Jewish community and Roman authorities. Those relationships changed dramatically after the Roman war, so that the gospel accounts may not give us an accurate picture of the pre-war setting in which Jesus actually lived and taught.

Mark is the first of three gospels known as *the Synoptics* (with one eye), since they are clearly related and corroborate one another. But each of the writers--Mark, Matthew, and Luke--was different: each had a different purpose and bias in their writings. Mark was the first and perhaps least embellished of the gospel accounts, but he was influenced by contemporary beliefs in magic and mythology, the natural result of a primitive understanding of science and medicine.¹⁰

John Mark, like Luke, was not a disciple, but was thought to have written the Gospel of Mark for Peter while in Rome. This gave Mark a high priority for inclusion in the new Christian Bible which was assembled by Marcion and other early church leaders in 150 C.E. from the many gospel accounts then in circulation.¹¹ As the shortest of the gospels, there are fewer teachings of Jesus reported in Mark than in the other gospels.

The plan followed by Mark, while the least systematic of the Synoptics, is considered historically highly probable. It describes Jesus as a man who was first warmly received by the public, but then rejected because his teachings were radical and did not comport with Jewish expectations of a messiah. They were expecting a political and military leader on the order of Moses, Joshua or David, and Jesus did not fit that profile.¹²

The teachings of Jesus from Mark are arranged thematically and include suggested questions to aid in a structured interfaith study of the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad.

Lesson #1:

*** Jesus came to call sinners, not the righteous**

Jesus called Levi (Matthew) the tax collector, and then joined Levi and others at his home for dinner. When the Pharisees saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners, they questioned why he chose to eat with such unacceptable people.

On hearing this, Jesus said to them, It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.[SV2] I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.[SV3](Mk 2:17)

Notes: See Mt 9:10-13; Lk 5:29-32; Lk 19:10; I Tim 1:15 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: When Jesus said: *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners*, he was speaking to Jews who considered the righteous as those who obeyed Mosaic Law and sinners as the disobedient. His audience would have considered the healthy to be the obedient or ritually pure/clean Jew and the sick to be those who were disobedient or impure/unclean (see [clean and unclean](#), and for those many Jewish dietary laws and ceremonial and purification laws that defined religious purity see the Appendix on [Selected Provisions of Jewish \(Mosaic\) Law](#)). The message of Jesus was one of [love over law](#), so that those in his audience who thought they had achieved righteousness by obedience to religious purity laws would have missed his point. Jesus began his ministry with [the call for repentance](#) (Mk 1:15) followed by [the call to discipleship](#) (Mk 1:17); both were based on the call of Jesus to [follow me](#) to attain salvation. As a standard of righteousness Jesus emphasized that we love God by loving others (see [the greatest commandment](#) and [the new command](#)) rather than by following the religious rules and rituals of Mosaic Law, including the atonement ritual of blood sacrifice that was at the heart of Jewish temple worship. In Matthew's version of the above saying, Jesus tells the Pharisees: *It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick.[SV2] But go and learn what this means: "I desire [mercy, not sacrifice](#)."* [SV4] *For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.[SV3](Mt 9:10-13; Ho 6:6; Am 5:21)* Jesus echoed the prophets Hosea and Amos in asserting that God preferred our mercy, compassion or love for others, over the rituals of blood sacrifice to demonstrate our love for God and cleanse us from sin; and this theme was evident when Jesus later admonished the Pharisees for emphasizing religious rules when they criticized him for picking grain on the Sabbath (see Mt 12:7 in [civil](#)

disobedience: [love over law](#)). Jesus also refuted a prevalent Jewish view that God rewarded the righteous (those obedient to the Law) with health and prosperity and punished disobedient sinners with poverty and suffering. This view saw health and wealth as evidence of one's righteousness, with misery and suffering as evidence of one's sin. Jesus reversed this worldly order of merit in the [Beatitudes](#) where those who suffered were said to be blessed, and in Luke's account those who were thought to be blessed with worldly wealth, health and prosperity were doomed to suffer. Jesus taught that sin was separation from the love of God, and that love for the world's wealth and power was sinful since it blinded people to the transforming power of the love of God and eternal life (see [riches and salvation](#) and [the danger of riches](#)). Jesus taught that our [suffering was not God's will](#) in [blindness as punishment for sin](#); he explained that *God causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.* [SV2] (Mt 5:45; see [love your enemies](#)). As for salvation, Jesus used the mystical metaphor of God's kingdom to describe a spiritual condition of peace that provided release from the bondage of sin and death (see [the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed](#), [the unseen kingdom of God](#) and [born again of the spirit](#)). Jesus taught that we bring judgment upon ourselves based on how we treat others, especially the least of those among us (see [the last judgment](#)). Jesus sought those sinners and outcasts of Jewish society, such as tax collectors and prostitutes, who were ignored or rejected by self-righteous Jews (see [Zacchaeus](#) and [the adulterous woman](#)). Jesus deplored self-righteousness, best illustrated in the parable of [the Pharisee and the publican](#), and in John's Gospel he used the paradox of [bringing sight and blindness](#) to criticize the Pharisees for their [hypocrisy and sanctimony](#). There was irony in Jesus telling the sanctimonious Pharisees that he came to save sinners, not the righteous, since the sanctimonious were blind to their sin and in need of repentance and salvation (see [the seven woes](#)). Jesus emphasized [humility and leaders as servants](#) and the relationship between [sin, forgiveness and love](#): Those who have been forgiven much have a greater capability to love others than those who have been forgiven little (see also [give and you will receive](#) and [lost and found: the lost sheep](#)). (Barnes)

Related teaching of Muhammad:

Hadith Qudsi

"O son of Adam, I shall go on forgiving you so long as you pray to Me and aspire for My forgiveness, whatever may be your defaults. O son of Adam, I do not care even if your sins should

pile up to the sky; and should you beg pardon of Me, I would forgive you. O son Adam, if you come to me with an earthful of sins and meet Me, not associating anything with Me (in worship), I would come to you with an earthful of forgiveness." (Tirmidhi) "If I had created a humanity in which no one would sin and say *astaghfir Allah* (that is, I take pardon unto God), I would destroy that humanity and create another humanity which would be able to say *astaghfir Allah*."

Hadith

"By Him Who holds my soul, if ye did not sin, verily would Allah do away with you, and bring forth a people who sin and would ask forgiveness of Allah, and to them would He forgive." (Muslim, p. 58 in *TTW*)

Commentary on the teaching of Muhammad: These amazing *hadith* mean that one of the Divine Names, al-Ghafur, the Ever-Forgiving, would be annulled if there were no sinners for God to forgive. And since the Divine Names are aspects of the Divine Nature, none of them can just be written off. There is thus a remarkable correspondence between this esoteric *hadith* and Mark 2:17 when it is understood that Jesus is being ironic with respect to the sanctimonious Pharisees. Also related to this is the *hadith*, "When God wishes well unto His servant, He causes him to see the faults of his soul" (p. 81, *TTW*). And with respect to calling people to repentance, "God is the Protecting Friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light. As for those who disbelieve, their patrons are false deities. They bring them out of light into darkness." (Q2:257)

Regarding sanctimony, a *hadith* states, "God looks not at your figures, nor at your outward appearance, but He looks at your hearts and deeds." (Muslim) The Qur'an states: "It is not piety, that you turn your faces to the East and to the West. True piety is [that of] the one who believes in God and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the prophets, and who gives of his substance, however cherished to kinsmen and orphans and the needy and the traveler and beggars, and for slaves, and who observes prayer and pays the alms, and those who fulfill their covenant when they have engaged in a covenant, those who endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship, and peril are the ones who are truthful, and these are the ones who are fearful." (Q 2:177) With regard to sanctimony among Jews, the Qur'an states: "Say: 'O you of Jewry, if you claim that you are the [favored] friends of God, to the exclusion of other people, then long for death, if you are truthful'," and "Say: 'Assuredly the death from which you flee will indeed encounter you; then you will be

returned to the Knower of the Unseen and the visible, and He will inform you of what you used to do'." (Q 62:6 and 8).
(Ansary)

Joint Commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Both Jesus and Muhammad taught of a God of mercy and forgiveness and urged sinners and hypocrites to repent and do God's will. Jesus condemned the sins of self-righteousness and the love of worldly wealth and power as obstacles to repentance and the transforming power of God's love that overcomes the bondage of sin and death and provides new spiritual life. Jesus emphasized that we love God by sharing God's love and mercy with others, not by following religious rules and rituals. While not all Jews of Jesus' day emphasized obedience to the religious rules and rituals of Mosaic Law as the standard of righteousness, the gospel accounts indicate that to be the prevalent view of Jewish religious leaders at the time. In a similar fashion to Moses, Muhammad emphasized the need to believe and obey the dictates of the Qur'an, which includes stories of Abraham, Moses and Noah, along with the requirement to do good works; and Muhammad taught that God rewarded righteous believers with eternal life in paradise and condemned unbelieving sinners to eternal suffering in the fires of hell. While Muhammad taught that Jews and Christians were *People of the Book*, he considered most to be unbelievers and hypocrites (see Appendix on [Selected provisions of the Qur'an, belief and unbelief](#), pp 472-475). (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Who are sinners?
2. Who are the righteous?
3. What was the call of Jesus and the message of Muhammad?
4. What is the nature of repentance, forgiveness and salvation?

Lesson #2:

* The family of God: the true kinsmen of Jesus

Reports of crowds following Jesus and his performance of miracles throughout Galilee alarmed his family, who set out to take charge of him, saying, "*He is out of his mind.*" (Mk 3:21) When his mother and brothers arrived where Jesus was staying they sent someone to let him know they had come for him. When told that his mother and brothers were waiting outside for him, Jesus said:

³³*Who are my mother and my brothers? he asked.* ³⁴*Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, Here are my mother and my brothers.* ³⁵*Whoever does God's will is my brother, and sister, and mother.* [SV3] (Mk 3:33-35)

Notes: See Mt 12:46-50; Lk 8:19-21; 11:27,28; Th 99:1-3 (Sources: Mk, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: With his family nearby, Jesus taught that doing God's will was the standard for spiritual kinship with him in the family of God. Matthew, Luke and Thomas have almost identical sayings by Jesus that are rated SV3 and SV2 by skeptical scholars, reflecting the likelihood that this saying originated with Jesus. The message is clear: A spiritual relationship with Jesus is not based on blood ties or mystical beliefs in his divinity, but on doing God's will; and doing God's will is summarized in [the greatest commandment](#) as loving God and neighbor as oneself, and one's neighbor includes those of other faiths (see [the story of the good Samaritan](#)). Elsewhere Jesus taught that we must love our enemies and the least of those among us (see [love for enemies](#); [laws and love: new standard higher than the old](#); [love over law: civil disobedience](#); [love, forgiveness, and sinners](#); and [the last judgment](#)). Jesus expected his followers to do God's will, even if it meant giving up their vocation and leaving their family (see [the call to discipleship](#), [renouncing family and possessions](#) and [the cost of discipleship](#)). Jesus supported family responsibilities so long as they did not limit love for others (see [marriage, divorce, and human sexuality](#)) but foretold that his radical teachings would divide families (see [dissension, not peace](#)) even as the rewards were worth the cost (Mt 19:27-30). This teaching raises other family issues that relate to the virgin birth of Jesus and nativity accounts that proclaim him to be the Messiah and God's Son. Luke reports that Mary was told by the angel Gabriel that her son would be God's chosen Son (Lk

1:26-38), but here Mary and her other sons thought that Jesus was "out of his mind" to begin such a ministry, and none of the friends and neighbors of Jesus seemed to know that he was destined to be the Messiah, since he was rejected in his hometown synagogue when he announced his divine mission (see [liberation, rejection of Jesus](#) and [a prophet is without honor in his hometown](#)). The blessedness of Mary is questioned in a passage from Luke's Gospel: ²⁷*A woman in a crowd had called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."* ²⁸*Jesus replied, Blessed rather are those that hear the word of God and obey it.*[SV3](Lk 11:27,28; see also Th 79:1-3). The Gospel of Thomas includes the most shocking statement linked to parentage of Jesus: Jesus said, *Whoever knows the father and the mother will be called the child of a whore.*[SV4](Th 105). The Gospel of John also reports the friends and family of Jesus doubting him as the Messiah (Jn 6:41-43; 7:2-5; see [bread of life](#)). In any event, questions about Jesus' birth and parentage do not diminish his authority as *the Word of God*. All the Gospels report the ministry of Jesus beginning when the Holy Spirit descended upon him like a dove in the River Jordan (Mk 1:9-11; Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21,22; Jn 1:32-34), which was both an incarnation event for Jesus and a paradigm for our spiritual rebirth (see [born again of the Spirit](#)). The coming of the Holy Spirit (Jn 24:25,26) demonstrated the power of the Spirit over the flesh and the commitment to follow Jesus as the word of God more important than worldly status and following religious rules and rituals (see [the lineage of Jesus; the truth will make you free; faith and eternal life; love, the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace](#), and [worship in spirit and truth](#)). (Barnes)

Related teachings of the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:103) (49:10)

And hold fast to God's bond [literally rope], together, and do not scatter; remember God's grace upon you when you were enemies, and He brought your hearts together so that by His grace you became brothers; and you were upon the brink of a pit of fire; but He delivered you from it. So God makes clear to you His signs that you might be guided. (3:103)

The believers are indeed brothers. Therefore [always] make peace between your brethren, and fear God, so that perhaps you might receive mercy. (49:10)

Related teaching of Muhammad:

Hadith

"No man is a true believer unless he desireth for his brother that which he desireth for himself." (Abu Dawud)

"A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim. So he should not oppress him nor should he hand him over to (his satan or to his self which is inclined to evil). Whoever fulfills the needs of his brother, God will fulfill his needs; whoever removes the troubles of his brother, God will remove one of his troubles on the Day of Resurrection; and whoever covers up the fault of a Muslim, God will cover up his fault on the Day of Resurrection." (Bukhari and Muslim)

"No one of you becomes true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself." (Bukhari and Muslim)

"A Muslim is brother to a Muslim. He should neither deceive him nor accuse him of lying, nor leave him without assistance. Everything belonging to a Muslim is inviolable for a Muslim; his honor, his blood and property. Piety is here (and he pointed to his chest thrice). Despising one's Muslim brother is enough evil for a person." (Tirmidhi)

"God will cover up on the Day of Judgment the defect (faults) of the one who covers up the faults of the others in this world." (Muslim)

"When a man loves his brother (for God's sake) he should tell him that loves him." (Tirmidi and Abu Dawud)

"He who removes from a believer one of his difficulties of this world, God will remove one of his troubles on the Day of Judgment; and he who finds relief for a hard-pressed person, God will make things easy for him on the Day of Judgment; he who covers up (the faults) of a Muslim, God will cover up (his faults) in this world and in the Hereafter. God supports His slave as long as the slave is supportive of his brother; and he who treads the path in search of knowledge, God makes that path easy, leading to Paradise for him. The people who assemble in a house from the houses of God, reciting the Book of God, learning it and teaching, there descends upon them the tranquility, and mercy covers them, the angels flock around them, and God mentions them in the presence of those near Him; and he who lags behind in doing good deeds, his high descent will not make him go ahead." (Muslim)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The occasion for the revelation of (3:103) was an emerging battle between the 'Aws and Khazraj, two tribes of Madina whom the Prophet had united in peace and renamed the Ansar, or "Helpers." The tribes were reminded of their tribal feuds of the past and were about to

engage in battle once again when this verse was revealed. Al-Tustari maintains that the esoteric meaning of the verse refers to adhering to our covenant with God to profess His Oneness (*tawhid*), giving us a "rope" in the sense that whoever clings to it will reach God. The other Quranic verses and hadith are largely self-explanatory. (Ansary)

Joint Commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Jesus referred to God as his Father and taught that all who did God's will were his spiritual kin and members of the universal family of God, without regard to their religion. Jesus was a Jew who never promoted any religion, not even his own, and he summarized God's will in [the greatest commandment](#) to love God and neighbor; and in [the story of the good Samaritan](#) Jesus defined our neighbors to include apostate *unbelievers*. Muhammad taught that Muslims should be kind to strangers, meaning *unbelievers*, and acknowledged Jews, Christians and Muslims to be *People of the Book*; but he taught that Allah had no family or son and that anyone who believed that God had a son was an unbeliever and blasphemer. Muhammad also considered most Jews and Christians to be *unbelievers* since they rejected the Qur'an as the last and immutable word of God, and Muhammad repeatedly said that all such *unbelievers* were condemned by God to eternal punishment in hell when they died (see [Appendix on selected provisions of the Qur'an, belief and unbelief, rewards and punishment](#), pp 469-484). Loving one's unbelieving neighbor is difficult for fundamentalist and exclusivist believers whose holy books state that *unbelievers* are condemned to eternal damnation. Most Jews and Christians are not fundamentalists and do not believe that God condemns *unbelievers*, but most Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the perfect and immutable word of God and it includes language that condemns the *unbeliever*. Even so, Muslim scholars have offered [the greatest commandment](#) to love God and neighbor as a *common word* of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, but until religious fundamentalists and exclusivists can love their *unbelieving* neighbors as they love God, religious reconciliation will remain elusive. (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. How does this teaching relate to religious exclusivity?
2. What is God's will?
3. What does it mean to be a spiritual brother or sister of Jesus (the Son of God and Son of Man), and to be a member of the family of God and to be a child of God?

Lesson #3:

* The greatest commandment

When asked by a teacher of the law which of the commandments was the most important, Jesus replied with the traditional priority to love God, and then made it clear that we love God by loving our neighbors as ourselves:

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

²⁹ "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.' ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' ³¹ The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these." [SV3]

³² "Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³ To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices." (Mk 12:28-33)

Notes: See Mt 22:34-40; Lk 10:25-29; Jn 15:12,13,17; Th 25:1,2 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: In response to a teacher of the law who asked Jesus which was the most important of the commandments, Jesus answered that the most important one was ...to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. (Mk 12:29-31) When the teacher of the law agreed with Jesus and noted that these two commandments were more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices, Jesus saw that he had answered wisely and told him: You are not far from the kingdom of God. [SV3] (Mk 12:34) Mosaic Law emphasized ritual purity and the atonement of sin through blood sacrifices (see [Index of Selected Provisions of Jewish Law](#) in the Appendices), and most Jews of Jesus's day believed that obedience of Mosaic Law was God's standard of righteousness. Jesus emphasized [love over law](#) as God's standard of righteousness (see [Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous](#)), but he was not the first to teach [mercy, not](#)

sacrifice as God's will. Paul, who was also a teacher of the law, emphasized the priority of love over law when he wrote to the Romans that all the laws ...are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:8-10; see also Ga 5:14; Rm 3:19-28; 7:4-6; Ep 2:14,15). See also laws and love: the new standard higher than the old, worship in spirit and truth, and the law. The first of the two commandments given by Jesus was the *Shema*, which was considered the most important of all commandments (Dt 6:1-9). But even though Jesus was asked which was the single most important commandment of all he did not stop with the *Shema*, but tied the supreme commandment to love God with the lesser commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself. Equating the love of God with loving others was revolutionary, even subversive, since it minimized the importance of obeying the many other laws of the Torah. Moses taught that all of the more than 600 laws of the Torah (see Jewish Laws in the Appendices) must be obeyed, and that obedience would result in God's rewards while disobedience would result in grievous punishments (see Dt 10:12,13; 28:1-68; 29:9-11; 30:15-18; 31:10-13). The commandment to love your neighbor as yourself was part of God's instructions to Moses (see Lv 19:18) and familiar to the Jews of Jesus' day. While the context of Lv 19:18 suggests that neighbor referred to other Hebrews, Lv 19:33,34 extends that love to ...*aliens living with you in your land*. Even so, the commandment to love one's alien neighbor did not prevent Ezra from requiring Jews to divorce their non-Jewish wives and abandon their non-Jewish children for the sake of religious purity. (see Ezra 9,10).

In the greatest commandment the mystical concept of how we relate to God as Spirit and the moral concept of how we relate to other people are both defined by love. These commandments on faith and morality conflate the love of God with the love of one's neighbors, who include the least, the last and the lost—even our enemies (see the last judgment and love for enemies). In Luke's story of the good Samaritan, an apostate Samaritan was portrayed as the neighbor of a wounded Jew. In advocating love for all people Jesus transcended the ethnic limitations of Mosaic Law, which mandated ethnic cleansing of non-Jews from the Holy Land (see Dt 20:16-18 and Joshua 6) and prohibited social relations and intermarriage with non-Jews (see Ezra 9:1-12; 10:10-44 and Nehemiah 13). Jesus advocated sacrificial love for all people, and criticized family loyalties when they were obstacles to loving others (see renouncing family and possessions). Matthew's version of the greatest commandment reported Jesus saying, *All the Law and Prophets hang on these two commandments* (Mt 22:40). In John's Gospel the new command

to love one another was the greatest commandment of that gospel (see also love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace and vine of love). In short, we love God by loving our neighbors, making love *the heart of legitimacy*. It is ironic that the moral imperative to love others is in the form of a command since it is a voluntary matter of the heart and cannot be commanded; but while the transforming power of God's love is not a reward for obedience to holy law, it is reciprocal in nature. The way to experience the unseen kingdom of God is through God's forgiveness and love, and that must be given in order to be received.

The greatest commandment makes sacrificial love the moral imperative of the teachings of Jesus and the *alter ego* of God. According to the Evangelist John, *God is love*, and *Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters are liars* (I John 4:16,20; see also anger and reconciliation).

The meaning of love as taught and exemplified by Jesus and that is co-equal with God is different than the kind of love popularized in contemporary culture. The love in the greatest commandment and the new command is an altruistic and sacrificial love that is directed to others, while love in common parlance most often relates to something that we want to gratify our personal desires and appetites. The love that is from God and that is God is a transforming power that must be given in order to be received, while the popular concept of love is self-centered and is more often the province of Satan than of God. In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus said: *Love your friends like your own soul,[SV3] protect them like the pupil of your eye.[SV4]*(Th 25:1,2) Echoing the Delphic oracle, The Gospel of Thomas has Jesus teach that we must find and know ourselves in order to avoid death and find new spiritual life (Th 111:3). We cannot love others unless we first come to know and love ourselves, even as sinners, and that requires forgiving ourselves just as we are expected to forgive others. (Barnes)

It is a scribe who asked the questions in Mk 12:28-33. It appears that this "certain scribe" was a sincere seeker of God's kingdom, unlike others in the gospel accounts; "both Matthew and Luke make the encounter into an adversarial one." In Mark's account the scribe's response delighted Jesus, who said, *You are not far from the kingdom of God*. "From the scribe's excited loving approval, Jesus can see into his heart... One more step, and he will find that he has been inside the kingdom of God all along." (See Stephen Mitchell, The Gospel of Jesus by Stephen Mitchell, pages 248-249) (Nates)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: A *Common Word* has already established Quranic and hadith parallels with these verses, e.g. *So invoke the Name of thy Lord and devote thyself to Him with a complete devotion* (73:8), and "None of you has faith until you love for your neighbour what you love for yourself" (Bukahri). But we can engage the literature on the various meanings of love of God and love of neighbour in Christianity and Islam, particularly in terms of defining the neighbour. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The greatest commandment is where faith, morality and law intersect in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. For Jews and Muslims, loving and serving God is the supreme commandment of their faith and one repeated throughout their scriptures, while loving one's neighbor is a less important commandment. Jesus conflated the two commandments so that loving God and neighbor are one and the same. He taught that we love God by loving our neighbors as ourselves, and that our neighbors include those of other faiths, or *unbelievers* (see [the parable of the good Samaritan](#)). The nature of the altruistic and sacrificial love taught and exemplified by Jesus can only be directed to people, not to a spiritual God that is itself equated with love (1 Jn 4:16,20); but the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is replete with examples of militant believers equating the love of God with killing unbelievers in the name of God. For ancient Jews it was ethnic cleansing in imposing *the ban* in the promised land (Dt 20:16-20; Joshua 6), while Christians conducted their Crusades and Inquisitions in Medieval times and militant Islamists continue their Jihad in the Mideast and Northern Africa.

The teachings of Jesus make loving others—all others—the moral imperative of the Christian faith and *the heart of legitimacy*, and it is summed up in the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor. As a voluntary matter of the heart loving others cannot be coerced by law, although it is stated as a commandment of God's law in both the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an, and both scriptures teach that obedience to God's law will produce worldly rewards and that disobedience brings God's punishment. Throughout history, fundamentalist Christians and Muslims have equated love of others with the evangelical priority to convert unbelievers and promote their religious laws; and while Jews have not done either they have often separated themselves from those of other religions to maintain their ethnic purity. In the past all three religions have used apostasy and blasphemy laws to promote their institutional forms at the expense of the freedoms of religion and expression, and Islamist regimes continue to do so today. Political freedom and free will in religion require the freedoms of religion and expression, and

providing those fundamental freedoms for our unbelieving neighbors as well as for ourselves is an act of love as well as a necessary balance for the powers of church and state. There is hope that Islam can be interpreted to embrace the fundamental freedoms of religion and expression. A group of Muslim scholars have proposed the greatest commandment as a *common word* of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, and there is authority in the Qur'an to support love of neighbor as a fundamental principle of Islam (see Prince Ghazi's monograph Love in the Holy Qur'an at pp 151-161, www.acommonword.com); but there is also language in the Qur'an that condemns unbelievers to hell, including those who believe Jesus was the son of God (see 2:126, 161; 3:10-12, 113-115; 4:171-172; 5:12-16, 46, 62-69, 72-73, 82-85, 110-118; 9:30; 10:68-70; 43:78-83; 58:22; 60:8-9; see Selected provisions of the Qur'an on belief and unbelief/rewards and punishments in the Appendices). Fundamentalist Christians have a similar problem accepting unbelievers as children of God, and they cite passages in John's Gospel to condemn all those who do not believe that Jesus was God's one and only Son (see Jn 3:16-18 and 14:6 and commentary in faith and eternal life and love, the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace). It is unrealistic to think that religious fundamentalists who believe that God condemns all unbelievers to the ravages of hell can truly respect and love such unbelievers, since it is only a short step from believing that God condemns unbelievers to personally condemning such unbelievers. Until fundamentalist Christians and Muslims can learn to love their *unbelieving* neighbors as themselves and not seek to convert them to their faith, there is little hope that the greatest commandment can truly be a *common word* of faith that will enable religious reconciliation and peace among Jews, Christians and Muslims. (*Barnes*)

As noted in the commentary, "A Common Word has already established Quranic and hadith parallels..." (Qur'an 73:8 and hadith from Bukahri) This is certainly a firm foundation in the compatibility of the faith and spirituality of Christianity and Islam. (*Nates*)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. What is God's will for our relationships with people of other faiths?
2. What does it mean to love God and our neighbors as ourselves?
3. Who are our neighbors?
4. Do most Jews, Christians and Muslims love unbelievers as a *common word* of their faith?

Lesson #4:

*** Civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law**

Jesus was often criticized by the Pharisees for not following Jewish (Mosaic) Law. When criticized for picking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus said:

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.[SV2]
(Mk 2:27)

Jefferson did not cite Mk 2:28, but it is included here since scholars believe it to be part of a couplet likely to have originated with Jesus:

So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.[SV2](Mk 2:28)

In another incident in the synagogue Jesus asked a question of the Pharisees before healing a man on the Sabbath, a violation of Jewish law:

Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?[SV4](Mk 3:4)

Notes: See Mk 3:1-6; Mt 12:1-14; Lk 6:1-5; 13:10-17; Lk 14:1-4; Jn 5:16-18 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Here Jesus is criticized by religious leaders for violating Jewish law restricting behavior on the Sabbath (see the restrictions of Ex 20:8-11, 34:21 and Dt 5:12-14, and more generally, [Selected Provisions of Jewish \(Mosaic\) Law](#) in the Appendices). This was only natural for 1st Century Jews who believed that Mosaic Law defined religious purity or cleanliness and was God's standard of righteousness. As to what was lawful on the Sabbath, Jesus asked a rhetorical question that had an obvious answer, one that put doing good over evil and saving life over killing and that affirmed God's love over law. Like other prophets before him Jesus put [mercy over sacrifice](#) and was critical of Jewish leaders whose [hypocrisy and sanctimony](#) were evident in using Jewish law to avoid acts of justice and compassion (see Isa 56:1-58:14 and [the seven woes](#)). Jesus did not hesitate to violate any Jewish law that prohibited acts of love for others, which Jesus taught as the moral imperative of faith (see [the greatest commandment](#) and [the new command](#)). In Luke's account of the disciples picking grain on the Sabbath, Jesus answered the criticism of the Pharisees by reminding them that David and his companions ate

consecrated bread when they were hungry.[SV2](Lk 6:3,4) And as to healing on the Sabbath (see [authority to perform miracles and power to heal](#)), Jesus told the Pharisees: *If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?*[SV3](Lk 14:5; see also Lk 13:15,16) John reports Jesus telling the Pharisees, *My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I, too, am working.* [SV4](Jn 5:17) This angered the Pharisees, who in their attempt to discredit Jesus, intimidated a blind man who had been healed by Jesus as well as his parents. Jesus later revealed to the man that he had healed him, and then in the presence of the Pharisees Jesus spoke of making the blind see, and those who (thought they could) see, blind (see [bringing sight and blindness](#)). On the law and love, see [individual responsibility and the law, laws and love: new standard higher than the old, and the golden rule](#); and on the law and freedom, see [the truth will make you free, the greatest commandment and the new command](#). Jesus violated Jewish religious law to demonstrate that love for others is a moral imperative that trumps religious laws to the contrary, but Jesus never violated Roman secular or civil laws and made a distinction between (moral) obligations to God and (legal) obligations to Caesar (see [church and state](#)). In the US the "blue laws" that once restricted commercial activities on Sunday have mostly been repealed, but many believers continue to restrict their activities on the Sabbath to keep it holy. Paul confirmed the supremacy of love over law when he wrote the Romans that love of neighbor fulfilled and replaced Jewish law as God's standard of righteousness (see Rm 3:19-28; 7:4-6; 13:8-12; Ga 5:14; Ep 2:14,15), but went on to say that it was God's will that secular rulers and their laws be obeyed. (Rm 13:1-7) By way of contrast, Jesus criticized secular Gentile rulers for *lording it over* their subjects and taught his disciples that to be leaders in God's kingdom they must be *the slave of all* (see [humility: leaders as servants](#)). The concept of *legitimacy* provides a useful paradigm for making the important distinction between our moral obligations to God, which are voluntary, and our mandatory obligation to obey the secular rule of law. This distinction is critical to the freedom of religion and expression in Western libertarian democracies, but it is not prevalent in Islamist cultures where Islamic laws known as *Shariah*, which include blasphemy and apostasy laws, are enforced with harsh punishments. In libertarian democracies the moral supremacy of God's law can be asserted through public debate and elections and ultimately through peaceful civil disobedience without undermining the secular rule of law, as was demonstrated by Dr. Martin Luther King. The freedoms of religion and expression in politics and

free will in religion require that God's standards of behavior be voluntary moral standards of legitimacy rather than obligatory laws, the latter made by elected representatives, not God. The contentious relationship between religion, legitimacy and the law can be seen today in those evolving democratic regimes in the Middle East, especially in Egypt. (Barnes)

Related teaching in the Qur'an:

Qur'an 62:9-10

O you who believe, when the call for prayer is made on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of God, and leave aside [all] commerce. That is better for you, should you know. And when the prayer is finished, disperse in the land and seek God's bounty, and remember God frequently, that perhaps you may be successful.

Related sayings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Ruined are those who insist on hardship in matters of the Faith." He repeated this three times. (Muslim)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Friday congregational prayers are not mandatory (*fard*) for Muslim men, but are tremendously encouraged (*wajib*) according to Islamic law. The Quranic verses above clearly show that Muslims are free to engage in trade and other activities both before and after congregational prayer. According to the *tafsir* of al-Tustari, author of the earliest surviving Sufi commentary on the *Qur'an*, these verses also have a broader meaning referring to any diversion from God, who calls man to intimacy (*munājāt*). (Ansary)

Joint Commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: There seem to be fewer Sabbath day restrictions on Muslims than on Jews, but Jesus taught that any restriction on the Sabbath (as well as other restrictions imposed by Jewish laws) were subject to the moral imperative to love others. Jesus and the Jews of his day lived under Roman rule and were subject to Roman law. By way of contrast, Muhammad, like Moses, brought law to a lawless land in the name of God; and while their holy laws were relevant and legitimate for their time and place, they are neither relevant nor legitimate for modern libertarian democracies. Even so, fundamentalist religious leaders today, like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, advocate strict compliance with holy laws that deny individual freedom and fundamental human rights (see [Selected Provisions of the Qur'an](#) and [Selected Provisions of Jewish \(Mosaic\) Law](#) in Appendices). (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion for Lessons 4-6:

1. Is our free will and individual freedom the will of God?
2. Can free will and individual freedom exist where comprehensive and immutable religious laws are enforced?
3. To what extent do our standards of faith restrict our free will and individual freedom in order to provide for the common good?
4. How does the concept of legitimacy, which includes both voluntary moral standards and obligatory legal standards, help us relate our religious obligations with our civic obligations?
5. How can we assert the moral supremacy of God's law over secular man-made law in our libertarian democracy?

Lesson #5:

* Individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean

In responding to persistent criticism from the Pharisees that Jesus and his disciples were not obeying Jewish purity laws, especially dietary and sanitation restrictions, Jesus challenged those religious laws as standards of righteousness.

¹⁴Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵Nothing outside a man can make him "unclean" by going into him. Rather, it is what comes out of a man that makes him "unclean." [SV2] (Mk 7:14,15)

¹⁷After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. ¹⁸Are you so dull? Don't you see that nothing that enters a man from the outside can make him unclean? ¹⁹For it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach, and then out of his body. [SV3] (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

²⁰He went on: What comes out of a man makes him unclean. ²¹For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. ²³All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean. [SV4] (Mk 7:17-23)

Notes: See Mt 15:10,11,15-20; Th 14:5 (Sources: Mk, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Mosaic Law provided standards of religious purity or cleanliness that separated the righteous from sinners and outcasts based on obedience (see [Selected Provisions of Jewish \(Mosaic\) Law](#) in the Appendices that include dietary laws such as those of Dt 14:3-21, as well as sacred ceremonial and purification laws and sacrificial rites for atonement). Jesus frequently criticized the Pharisees for emphasizing obedience to purity laws as the standard of righteousness. He asserted the primacy of [love over law](#) and chose to associate with those considered impure or unclean like lepers, prostitutes and tax collectors. Jesus taught that spiritual cleanliness had nothing to do with what one ate but what was in one's heart, and he used colorful language to illustrate the point, saying that what goes into one's stomach comes out as excrement (the Aramaic word was more explicit), and that what comes out of one's heart makes one unclean: ²¹For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. ²³All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean. (Mk 7:21-23). The

gospel narrator parenthetically asserts that in saying this Jesus declared all foods clean and thereby debunked the dietary restrictions of Jewish purity laws. There was also a practical reason to disregard dietary laws since itinerant disciples often had to rely on the hospitality of their Gentile hosts: *Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*[SV2](Lk 10:7; see [instructions to the disciples](#)) Jesus emphasized that true righteousness (the equivalent of ritual purity or cleanliness under Jewish law) was not based on compliance with religious laws but on having God's love in one's heart; for example, a man commits adultery when he looks at a woman with adultery (sexual exploitation) in mind (see [adultery and lust](#); also [anger and reconciliation](#)). As to individual responsibility for ancestors' sins, see the seventh of [the seven woes](#) (Mt 23:29-33). Other teachings of Jesus confirm that righteousness is evidenced by acts of sacrificial love such as [forgiveness](#) and [humble service](#), and that God's forgiveness and love is reciprocal nature so that it must be [given in order to be received](#) (see also [faith evidenced by works](#), [faith and works](#), [faith, words and judgment](#), [love over law](#), and [laws and love: the new standard higher than the old](#)). In [the greatest commandment](#), [the golden rule](#) and [the new command](#) Jesus summed up how the Law and the Prophets were fulfilled with a new standard of righteousness based on the voluntary moral standard of forgiveness and sacrificial love rather than by obedience to religious rules and rituals, and that concept of [love over law](#) is at the heart of legitimacy and faith. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (22:46) (7:179)

Have they not travelled in the land so that they may have hearts with which to comprehend, or ears with which to hear? Indeed it is not the eyes that turn blind, but it is the hearts that turn blind within the breasts. (22:46)

And We have indeed urged unto Hell many of the jinn and mankind, having hearts wherewith they do not understand, and having eyes wherewith they do not perceive, and having ears wherewith they do not hear. These, they are like cattle - nay, rather they are further astray. These - they are the heedless. (7:179)

Qur'an 2:172,173

Oh you who believe! Eat of the good things with which We have supplied you, and give thanks to God if you are His worshipers. He has forbidden you what dies of itself, and blood, and swine's flesh, and that over which any other name than that of God has

been invoked. But he who partakes of them by constraint, without lust or willfulness, no sin will be upon him. Surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"There is a lump of flesh in the body that, if it is pure, the whole body is pure, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt." (Bukhari)

"Actions will be judged according to intentions." (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Qur'an and hadith clearly assert the centrality of the heart and intentions (also see the first entry regarding sanctimony, for adherence to Divine Law is insufficient). It is interesting that the heart is not just a faculty of emotion, but an instrument of knowledge according to these teachings. However, there is an important distinction between the spiritual economy of Christianity and Islam with respect to legal issues, since Jesus brings the Way, not the Law, whereas the Prophet of Islam brings the Way (tarigah) as well as the Law (Shari'ah). (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Muhammad, like Moses, taught that God ordained certain dietary laws as standards of religious purity, and Islamic dietary standards were very much like their Jewish predecessors. The Qur'an states, however, that it is not sinful to violate dietary laws when a person *...partakes by constraint, without lust or willfulness*. Jesus went further and refuted dietary laws as standards of righteousness, saying it is not what goes into (and comes out of) the stomach that makes a person unclean, but what goes into (and comes out of) a person's heart, and then listed examples of evil thoughts and actions to illustrate the primacy of love over law. In the Qur'an and hadith the centrality of the heart and intentions is affirmed, which may be described as *emotional intelligence*. "...the Prophet of Islam brings *the Way (tarigah)* as well as *the Law (Shari'ah)*". Just as the Qur'an is for Muslims the fulfillment of God's truth (the Word of God made book), for Christians Jesus is the Word of God made flesh (Jn 1:1-14) whose teachings and example represent the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets (Mt 5:17). In this way, Jesus and Muhammad represent the necessary means of fulfilling the Word of God as found in the Law and Prophets for Christians and Muslims. On [Jewish dietary laws](#) and [dietary laws in the Qur'an](#), see the Appendices. (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Is our righteousness and salvation determined by following laws or by how we voluntarily choose to relate to other people?
2. How important are the "holy" laws in our sacred texts?
3. How did Jesus "fulfill" Jewish (Mosaic) Law?
4. What are the similarities and differences in Jewish and Islamic laws.

(On the relationship between law, free will and political freedom, see those questions under Lesson #4)

Lesson #6:

* Marriage, divorce, and human sexuality

When Jesus was questioned by the Pharisees on divorce and remarriage, issues governed by Jewish law, he sidestepped the legal issue with a moral imperative:

⁵*It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law [that permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce to send his wife away], Jesus replied. ⁶But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. ⁷For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. ¹⁰When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹He answered, Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹²And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.*[SV3](Mk 10:5-12)

Notes: See Mt 5:31,32; 19:3-9; Lk 16:18 (Sources: Mk, Q). The Jefferson Bible includes Matthew's version of the above saying, but Mark's earlier version is used here as the source.

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Jesus never married, and as far as we know he never had an intimate relationship with a woman, although legends abound about Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Even so, Jesus understood human sexuality and its relationship to the family, and when he spoke privately to his disciples he equated divorce with adultery as an immoral act. Jesus explained that Mosaic Law allowed divorce only because Jews were obstinate and had hard hearts (See [Selected Provisions of Jewish \(Mosaic\) Law on family law, marriage and sexual relations](#) in the Appendices; see also Is 50:1 and Jer 3:8). Jesus emphasized the moral imperative of love as a lifelong commitment between those choosing marriage; and while Jesus saw adultery and divorce as morally wrong, they were sins that could be forgiven, as evidenced in his encounter with an adulterous woman (see Jn 8:1-11, [the adulterous woman: justice or mercy](#)). On adultery, Jesus said that a man committed adultery in his heart (where evil acts originate) when he looked at a woman lustfully (see Mt 5:27-30, [adultery and lust](#)). On divorce Jesus reversed his usual more permissive role and advocated a more strict standard than that of Mosaic Law in Mark and Luke (see Lk 16:16-18, [the law](#)), while Matthew reports an exception for marital unfaithfulness (Mt 5:32) and has Jesus give additional advice to the disciples on

their sexuality (see [adultery and lust](#) and [celibacy and sexual preference](#)). Jesus did not debate the fine points of the law with the Pharisees; he addressed only the moral dimension of the law. See [individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean](#), [civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law](#), and [laws and love: the new standard higher than the old](#). On the issue of sex and sexual discrimination, the close relationship of Jesus with females (e.g., Mary, Martha, and the Samaritan woman) is the best evidence of his egalitarian views that were radical for his time. The Gospel of Thomas is even more radical, advocating sexual unity as a precondition for salvation: ⁴*Jesus said to them, When you make the two into one,...*⁵*and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male and the female be female,...*⁷*then you will enter the [the <Father's> domain].[SV4](Th 22:4,5,7; see also Th 106:1; 114)* This vision of a unisex kingdom probably relates to a spiritual domain beyond this world where sex, race, and other human attributes that give rise to discrimination do not exist. Even though Jesus spoke of marriage as a spiritual union sanctified by God, he taught that it did not extend beyond this life into the next (see Mk 12:24-27, [life after death and resurrection](#)). Paul discouraged marriage, believing the *parousia* was imminent, but he nevertheless provided extensive advice to the Corinthians on sex, marriage and divorce (see I Cor 6:12-7:40). Perhaps Paul was thinking of his own sexuality when he wrote to the Romans about the conflicts of sin and asked, "Who will deliver me from this body of death?" and then answers, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rm 7:24,25) (*Barnes*)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (4:35)(2:226-227)(65:1-3)(30:21)

And if you fear a breach between the two, send forth an arbiter from his folk, and an arbiter from her folk, if they desire to set things right, God will grant them success. Surely God is ever Knower, Aware. (4:35)

For those who forswear their women, a wait of four months; if they revert, God is Forgiving, Merciful.

But if they resolve upon divorce; surely God is Hearing, Knowing. (2:226-227)

O Prophet, when you [men] divorce women, divorce them by their prescribed period. And count the prescribed period, and fear God your Lord. Do not expel them from their houses, nor let them go forth, unless they commit a blatant [act of] indecency. And those are God's bounds; and whoever transgresses the bounds of God has verily wronged his soul. You never know: it may be that

God will bring something new to pass afterwards. Then, when they have reached their term, retain them honourably, or separate from them honourably. And call to witness two just men from among yourselves, and bear witness for the sake of God. By this is exhorted whoever believes in God and the Last Day. And whoever fears God, He will make a way out for him; and He will provide for him from whence he never expected. And whoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him. Indeed God fulfils His command. Verily God has ordained for everything a measure. (65:1-3)

And one of his signs is that he created spouses for you from among yourselves that you may find comfort with them, and he put love and compassion between you. (30:21)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"With God, the most detestable of all things permitted is divorce." (Abu Dawud)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Divorce is legally permissible, but greatly discouraged in Islam. Although the legal procedure is relatively simple, divorce rarely occurs because of the great spiritual and social weight against it. This is somewhat the reverse of the situation in the United States today, where divorce is legally complex, but frequently occurs.

Sa'id ibn al-Musayyab, one of the foremost scholars of hadith, Islamic law, and Quranic exegesis in the generation succeeding the Prophet, explains the context of the Quranic verses (2:226-227) as follows: "Forswearing wives was of the harm inflicted on women during the pre-Islamic period. When a man did not want a woman and dislike that any other man to marry her, he would simply swear never to approach her. He would thus leave her neither divorced nor married. Allah therefore set a limited period of four months after which it becomes clear whether the man is the husband or not by revealing (Those who forswear their wives...)." al-Suddi, another important Quranic commentator in the generation following the Prophet, explained the occasion of revelation for 65:1 as follows: "This verse was revealed about 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar who divorced his wife while she was in her menses. The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, ordered him to take her back and keep her until the period of her menses was over and then wait again until she was in her menses. When she became pure, he was free to divorce her provided that he did not sleep with her before that, for this was the waiting period which Allah has commanded to observe."

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Jesus sanctified marriage, but was not himself married. By way of contrast, Muhammad was married more than once. Both Jesus and Muhammad considered marriage between a man and woman as a sacred union, but the Gospel accounts vary on divorce. Mark and Luke have Jesus say that remarriage after divorce is adultery, while Matthew and Muhammad allow divorce subject to religious law. Both Moses and Muhammad provided a body of family law on marriage, divorce and sexual relations (see Appendices for provisions of [Jewish family law](#) and [family law in the Qur'an](#) on marriage, divorce and sexuality). (Barnes)

The Qur'an has a good way of dealing with such a sad and sometimes horrendous happening as divorce in that it portrays God's role as "Forgiving, Merciful." The hadith acknowledges divorce as "the most detestable of all things permitted by God," and in this context, the nature of God is presented as exceedingly benevolent. (Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. How does the love of God and neighbor in the greatest commandment and a *common word* relate to sexual love (compare *agape*, *filius* and *eros*)?
2. Should sexual and marital relations be regulated by God's law, man's law or left to voluntary moral standards?
3. Should we treat sexual preferences as matters of faith, law, or voluntary morality?
4. Should marriage be limited to a male and female?

(On the relationship between law, free will and political freedom, see those questions under Lesson #4)

Lesson #7:

* Lamp on a stand

Jesus often used metaphors with multiple meanings, and one of his favorite was light. After Jesus explained the parable on sowing the seeds of faith to the disciples,

²¹*He said to them: Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don't you put it on a stand?*[SV2] ²²*For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open.* ²³*If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.*[SV3] (Mk 4:21-23)

Notes: See Mt 5:15, 10:26; Lk 8:16,17; 11:33; 12:2,3; Th 33:2,3; 5:2; 6:5,6 (Sources: Mk, Q, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Light is a sign of God's presence, goodness and life in the Bible, while darkness is a sign of evil, sin and death. The teachings of Jesus represent the light of God's word that dispels darkness and reveals the kingdom of God (see Is 5:20, 9:1-2, 58:10; Jn 1:5 and the light within you). The Jesus of John's Gospel said, *I am the light of the world* (Jn 8:12) while Matthew's Jesus called his followers to follow me and be the light of the world (Mt 5:14 in faith and morality). Light and darkness represent *virtues and vices*, and evangelism is about spreading the light of God's love in a dark world. St. Francis said that we should all preach the gospel, but only use words when necessary, and James said that *faith without deeds is dead* (Js 2:26). The supreme virtue of the Christian faith is to love others by seeking reconciliation through forgiveness, humility and serving the least of those rather than friends. (see also the greatest commandment, the new command, the golden rule and faith and works). Vices are ...*evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly* (see clean and unclean), with hypocrisy and sanctimony at the top of the list. Jesus taught that all who do God's will are his spiritual brothers and sisters in the family of God, including those of other religions (see the parable of the good Samaritan). God's will is to reconcile and redeem while Satan's will is to divide and conquer. Whenever Christianity claims to be the one true faith and condemns those of other religions it contradicts the teachings of Jesus and promotes Satan's will (see Jn 3:16-18 and Jn 14:6 discussed in faith and eternal life and the way, the truth and the life). (Barnes)

Related teaching of the Qur'an:

Qur'an 24:35

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The likeness of His Light is as a niche wherein is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star kindled from a Blessed Tree, an olive neither of the east nor of the west, whose oil would almost glow forth [of itself], though no fire touched it. Light upon light. God guides to His Light whom He will. And God strikes similitudes for men; and God is Knower of all things.

Qur'an 27:25

God...brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth and knows what you hide and make manifest.

Qur'an 17:85

Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished away. Surely falsehood is a vanishing thing.

Commentary on the Qur'an: There are many commentaries on this "Light Verse," ranging from philosophers like Ibn Sina to mystics and theologians like al-Ghazzali. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Both Jesus and Muhammad spoke of their teachings as the revelation of God's word and used light as a metaphor for God's will in their teachings and example. Overzealous Christians and Muslims have misunderstood evangelism to mean proclaiming their religion as the only true religion and condemning all others. Jesus and Muhammad taught that God's will is to reconcile and redeem people of all faiths as children of God. Satan's will is to divide and conquer, and Satan uses exclusivist religions to promote hate and violence. [The greatest commandment](#) to love God and neighbor is a common word of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims, and we do not love our unbelieving neighbors by trying to convert them, but by sharing God's reconciling and redeeming love with them as our spiritual kin in the universal [family of God](#). (Barnes)

Suggested Questions for discussion:

1. What are the virtues and vices of the Christian religion?
2. What does it mean to "let your light shine"?
3. Is evangelism that emphasizes one true faith and God's condemnation of all others consistent with God's will?

Lesson #8:

* Riches and salvation

An encounter with a rich young man prompted Jesus to explain the antithetical nature of riches and salvation:

¹⁷As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

¹⁸Why do you call me good? Jesus answered. No one is good-- except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.[SV3](Ex 20:12-16; Dt 5:16-20) ²⁰"Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." ²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. One thing that you lack. Go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.[SV3]

²²At this the man's face fell. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

²³Jesus looked around and said to his disciples:

How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God![SV2]

²⁴The disciples were amazed at his words, but Jesus said again, Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God![SV3] ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.[SV2]

²⁶The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "who then can be saved?"

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said: With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.[SV4](Mk 10:17-27)

Notes: See Mt 19:16-26; 20:16; Lk 12:16-21,33,34; 13:30; 18:18-30; Th 4:2 (Sources: Mk, Q, Th). The Jefferson Bible includes Matthew's version of the above saying (Mt 19:16-31) but Mark's version is included here as the most original.

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Following the above saying Jesus provides words of assurance for those making sacrifices to follow him and warns: *But many who are first will be last, and the last first.*[SV3](Mk 10:31). Strangely, scholars believe that Matthew's version of this *first/last* dichotomy is the most original. (Mt 19:30; see also [envy and equity: the parable of the workers in the vineyard](#) and [humility: leaders as servants](#))

Jesus taught that material wealth can be an obstacle to loving others, making Christian morality and faith more difficult for the rich than the poor (see treasures and the heart). Having money is not in itself a vice; it is the love of money, power, or pride and peer pressure, putting the honor of men ahead of God, even having faith in obedience to holy law as the standard of righteousness; and here the rich man must have believed that his wealth was God's reward for his righteousness in obeying the Law. Idolatry is putting faith in anything ahead of God, and that is the nature of sin. (See 1Ti 6:6-10; 17-19; also selfless service: the cost of discipleship; greed and hoarding possessions; faith, God and money, renouncing family and possessions; shrewdness, stewardship, and the danger of riches). The Beatitudes bless the poor (Luke's version damns the rich); and a child-like faith emphasizes the virtues of humility and innocence. The crux of this story is when Jesus tells the rich man that he loved him but that he lacked one thing: *Go and sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.* (Mk 10:21) Sadly, the rich man walked away; his love of money separated him from the love of God. But compare this story with two other rich men who did not respond the same way: Zacchaeus was a rich man who came to Jesus with a commitment to share his wealth and follow Jesus; and Nicodemus was another rich man who was seeking God's kingdom and was told by Jesus that *...no one could enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.* (Jn 3:5; see also the unseen kingdom of God). (Barnes)

Jesus was not against wealth, but condemned the love of riches, whether this love was in the rich or poor. For some, wealth becomes their God, i.e., the top priority of their lives. The disciples thought that Jesus was being very harsh in this statement. They felt it would be difficult to become followers of Jesus' teachings if they had to give away their fortunes, little or big. The Aramaic text clarifies much confusion surrounding the words, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." (Mk 10:25) "Verse 25 in the Aramaic text reads: 'It is easier for a rope to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' The term "camel" is a mistake. That is because the Aramaic word *gamla* can mean both rope and camel. Needles in the early days were large and made of oak. Women could thread a cord through the eye of a wooden needle." (See Rocco A. Errico and George M. Lamsa, Aramaic Light on the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Nohra Foundation, Smyrna, GA, 2001, at p 58) See also Jer 32:17. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:92) (3:14-15) (4:100) (2:177) (2:106) (7:40)

You will never attain piety until you give of what you love; and whatever you give, God truly knows it. (3:92)

Beautified for mankind is love of lusts - of women, children, stored-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle, and tillage. That is the comfort of the life of this world; but God - with Him is the more excellent abode.

Say: 'Shall I tell you of something better than that? For those that are fearful with their Lord are Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein, and spouses purified, and beatitude from God; and God is Seer, of His servants. (3:14-15)
Whoever emigrates in the way of God will find in the earth many refuges and abundance; whoever goes forth from his house as an emigrant to God and His Messenger, and then death overtakes him, his wage is then incumbent upon God; surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful. (4:100)

He is pious who believes in God and ...who, for the love of God, gives his wealth to his kindred and to the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and to free the captive. (2:177)

To those who reject Our signs and arrogantly turn away from them, the doors of heaven will not be opened, nor will they enter paradise until the camel passes through the eye of the needle. (7:40)

Do you not know that God has power over all things? (2:106)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith 'Umar said to the Prophet, "O Allah's Messenger! You are dearer to me than everything except my ownself." Allah's Messenger said: "No, by Him in Whose Hand my soul is, (you will not have complete faith) until I am dearer to you than your ownself." "Renounce the world and God will love you; renounce what people possess and people will love you." (Forty Hadith of An-Nawawi 31)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quranic verses and hadith clearly show that we must love God and His messengers more than ourselves, including extrinsic goods such as wealth, corresponding to Mk 10:17-27. The occasion of revelation for the last Quranic verse above concerns the death of a man who left his home for Madina to be with the Prophet, but died on the way. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Both Jesus and Muhammad spoke of the need to put God first in all things, and the danger

of the love of riches and worldly power coming between us and God. Sin is allowing the love of anything—riches, power, popularity or anything else—to come between us and the love of God. Repentance is giving up our love for worldly things so that we might receive the transforming power of God's love, and while that is impossible for us alone, it is possible for God. (*Barnes*)

The beautiful words of the Qur'an (3:92) are in direct harmony with the spirit and teaching of Jesus. Qur'an (3:14-15) speaks of God as the "more excellent abode." Jesus said, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my Father's commandments and abide in his love." (John 15:9-10) In other words, abide with me in the more excellent Abode. The Commentary on the Qur'an and hadith harmonize exceptionally well the message of Jesus and Muhammad, that "...we must love God and His messengers..." This is the essence of eternal life. (*Nates*)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. What supreme virtue did the rich man lack?
2. What was the rich man's vice, or sin?
3. Are these issues relevant in our affluent, hedonistic and materialistic culture today?
4. What is the prosperity gospel and why is it so popular?

Lesson #9:

* The widow's mite

As Jesus was watching people making contributions at the synagogue, he commented on a poor widow who contributed the equivalent of a penny (Mk 12:41,42).

⁴³*Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴They all gave out of their wealth, but she, out of her poverty, put in everything--all she had to live on.[SV3](Mk 12:43,44)*

Notes: See Lk 21:1-4; Jn 8:20 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: This is a teaching on sacrificial giving. It is about a total commitment of faith by giving everything to God. The poor widow can be contrasted with the rich man who didn't take the advice of Jesus and give his wealth to the poor and follow Jesus. (see [riches and salvation](#)) Like the rich donors in this story, the rich man undoubtedly gave his tithe to the synagogue treasury, but that didn't match the commitment of the poor widow. The virtue of the poor giving their all should be compared with the vice of [greed and hoarding possessions](#) by the rich (see also [ostentatious giving, Lazarus: insensitivity to suffering, treasures and the heart](#), and [the parable of the talents](#)). This brings to mind the communist credo: *From each according to their ability, to each according to their needs*. The early church practiced communism (see Acts 4:32), but gave it up when the *parousia* didn't come as soon as expected. Luke reports Jesus saying: *From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked*. (Lk 12:48) The story of the poor widow also brings to mind the widow of Zarapath who used her little remaining flour and oil during a famine to make a small cake for Elijah, her son and herself, fully expecting it to be their last meal; but the flour and oil miraculously lasted until the famine ended. (1 Kings 17:7-24) Jesus referred to the story when preaching in his hometown synagogue. (Luke 4:25,26) These stories of sacrificial giving resonate with [the anointing of Jesus](#) and illustrate that a love-gift to God is not limited to money. Because of parallels in other ancient writings, many SV scholars doubt that the story of the widow's mite originated with Jesus; but whatever its origin, it is consistent with the teachings of Jesus. (Barnes)

Here we see clearly the importance and virtue of giving out of what we have. The poor and the rich can be generous, just as the poor and the rich can be greedy and selfish. Our sin is allowing money to be a barrier between us and God, whether we are rich or poor. Regardless of the parallels in other traditions, it is certainly consistent with the agape love teachings of Jesus. Rabbinic tradition defines three levels of charitable giving: There is an interesting statement in: "The highest level is to give someone work by which he can earn his living for himself. The second is to give money anonymously. The lowest level, which is approved of but not accorded much admiration, is to give money and let people know it." (see Stephen Mitchell, The Gospel According to Jesus, p 173) The poor widow incarnates the best of generous giving. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:92)

You will not attain piety until you expend of what you love; and whatever thing you expend, God knows of it.

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: This verse is self-explanatory.

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad emphasized the need for their followers to make a total commitment to God, and also to give generously of their resources in meeting the needs of others. Qur'an (3:92) sounds very much like something Jesus would say. (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Is poverty a virtue and wealth a vice?
2. What is *the danger of riches*?
3. Can riches be used to do God's will?
4. How do we follow John Wesley's advice to *Make all you can, save all you can, and give all you can*?

Lesson #10:

* The Kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed

Jesus used parables to describe the kingdom of God:

³⁰Again he said, What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest seed you plant in the ground. ³²Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds of the air can perch in its shade.[SV2] (Mk 4:30-32)

Notes: See Mt 13:31,32; Lk 13:18,19; Th 20:1-4 (Sources: Mk, Q, Th)

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: The kingdom of God is a mystical or spiritual concept that Jesus used in announcing his ministry and that remained at the heart of his teachings. (see [the coming kingdom of God](#), [the unseen kingdom of God](#) and [the kingdom: the parables of the treasure and the pearl](#)) The [expectations](#) of most Jews in the audience of Jesus were for a warrior-king Messiah who would come in [the end times](#) and overthrow their Roman oppressors and restore the power and glory of ancient Israel. Jesus never sought political power and was critical of those who did (see [humility: leaders as servants](#)). He used the term *kingdom* to represent the spiritual rather than political sovereignty of God (see [church and state](#)), which could be experienced by those who repented and opened their hearts and minds to the transforming power of God's reconciling and redeeming love and mercy (see [Nicodemus: born again of the spirit](#), [Follow me](#), [Selfless service: the cost of discipleship](#), and [Faith and eternal life](#)). And those most receptive to this spiritual kingdom were sinners, not the righteous (see [Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous](#)). The Thomas version of this saying is the simplest and considered the most authentic. When Jesus was asked by the disciples what Heaven's imperial rule was like, ²He said to them: *It's like a mustard seed.* ³<It's> the smallest of all seeds, ⁴but when it falls on prepared soil, it produces a large plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky.[SV1](Th 20:1-4) In this parable Jesus used a mustard seed to depict how the creative power of God could transform something small and insignificant into a dwelling place for many creatures. But since the mustard plant is only a large weed, scholars believe that Jesus may have used it to parody the mighty cedar of Lebanon (see Ez 17:22,23), or the apocalyptic tree (Dt 4:12, 20-22), both of which were familiar

to the Jews as symbols of their long awaited worldly kingdom. Birds were a common expression for Gentiles, and seeds a symbol often used to illustrate the creative power of the word of God, making the kingdom of God available to all people as a matter of [morality and faith](#). (see [tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds](#)). In [sowing the seeds of faith](#), Jesus used a parable to analogize the mystery of growing seeds with the mystery of faith and the kingdom of God. It is surprising that Jefferson included this mystical saying with the moral teachings of Jesus. It may indicate that Jefferson's faith was as deeply spiritual as it was consistent with reason and morality. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (14:24-26)

*Have you not seen how God has struck a similitude?: a goodly saying is as a goodly tree, its root set firm and its shoots are in heaven;
it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord. And God strikes similitudes for mankind, so that they might remember.*

And the similitude of a bad saying is as a bad tree, uprooted from upon the earth, having no stability. (14:24-26)

Qur'an 2:261

The likeness of those who expend their wealth for the cause of God is that of a grain of corn from which grows seven ears, each ear containing a hundred grains.

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith qudsi:

"The whole universe cannot contain Me, but the heart of the believer can contain Me."

Hadith:

"He will not enter hell, who hath faith equal to a single grain of mustard seed in his heart." (Muslim, *TTW*, p. 515)

"In my community are people who will enter Paradise with souls like the souls of birds." (*TTW*, p. 947)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Ibn 'Abbas, the aforementioned cousin of the Prophet, said that he explained the meaning of a "goodly tree" in verses 14:24-26 by saying that a believer's root is in the earth and branch is in heaven, i.e. his works are raised to heaven and accepted. Accordingly, "a goodly saying," i.e. one of sincerity, is as a goodly tree, e.g.

the date palm whose roots are set firm and produces much fruit with little water. Likewise, the root of the works of a believer is the *kalimat al-tawhid* or *shahadah* (*la ilaha illa Allah*). A disbeliever from this point of view is analogous to a colocynth tree, which has no roots at all beneath it, for disbelief and hypocrisy have no survival in the Hereafter. The kingdom of God is clearly the heart, as the *hadith qudsi* attests. The mustard seed of faith in the second *hadith* is what saves. Combining the two, we have a direct correspondence to the meaning of Mark 4:30-32 as explained in the commentary on the teachings of Jesus. The last *hadith* provides an interesting parallel to birds as a common expression for believers. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Both Jesus and Muhammad used metaphors of seeds and plants to illustrate the creative power of God that could produce something wondrous and eternal from something small and insignificant, and that we can all be instruments of God's creative power through acts of love and charity. But Jesus and Muhammad differed on the nature of God's kingdom and power. Jesus used the term *kingdom* to represent God's spiritual rather than political sovereignty (see [church and state](#)) and he never sought political power, while Muhammad sought and exercised political and military power in the name of God. And unlike Jesus, Muhammad taught that God condemned unbelievers to eternal damnation in Hell. Jesus taught that sin brought spiritual bondage in this world, but not the next. (see Rob Bell, Love Wins: A Book about Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived [2011]). Ironically the church embraced Muhammad's concept of Hell, presumably as an incentive to repent and believe in the one true faith. (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Is the kingdom of God a spiritual realm or a worldly kingdom?
2. How do believers submit to both the kingdom of God and to their worldly kingdoms (e.g. loyalty to both God and country)?
3. What does the kingdom of God tell us about Hell, which is the kingdom of Satan?
4. Do we have to wait on the end times and a second coming to experience the eternal peace and joy of (the kingdom of) Heaven or suffer the eternal damnation of Hell?

Lesson #11:

* Humility: leaders as servants

When the disciples were arguing over who was the greatest, Jesus admonished them and told them that the first in God's kingdom must be the last, and servant of all:

If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and servant of all.[SV3](Mk 9:35)

When James and John asked Jesus to grant them positions of honor sitting on his right and left in God's coming kingdom, Jesus told them such positions were not for him to grant.

⁴¹When the ten [other disciples] heard of this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴²Jesus called them together and said, You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³Not so with you. Instead whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all.[SV3](Mk 10:41-44)

Notes: See Mt 18:1-5; 20:24-28; 23:11,12; Lk 9:46-48; 22:24-27; Jn 13:14-16 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: This teaching relates to leadership according to God's standards, not those of the world. The disciples, like most Jews of their day, were expecting God's coming kingdom to be a worldly kingdom that would replace oppressive Roman rule with the power and glory of ancient Israel. The disciples were vying for positions of authority in that coming kingdom, but Jesus admonished them and told them that God's kingdom was not like any worldly kingdom where rulers *lord it over* their subjects to exercise authority over them, but instead one in which leaders were humble servants of all. Unlike Jewish zealots of his day who were seeking to overthrow Roman rule, Jesus was not a political revolutionary but a religious reformer who put love over law as God's standard of righteousness. Jesus taught that God's love and mercy had to be given to be received, making forgiveness, compassion and humble service more important than obedience to Mosaic Law. *The Jefferson Bible* includes Matthew's version of the *first/last* saying (Mt 23:12 rather than Mk 9:35), and Luke's version for the *leader/servant* saying (Lk 22:24-27 rather than Mk 10:41-44); but Markan versions are used here since scholars believe Matthew and Luke relied on Mark's earlier version. A similar *first/last*

saying is in Mk 10:31 (see [riches and salvation](#)), and strangely a *first/last* saying in Mt 20:16 is ranked SV2 while that in Mark is SV3 (see [envy and equity](#)). Matthew's version of the first of the above sayings has Jesus admonishing the Pharisees rather than the disciples: ¹¹*The greatest among you will be your servant.* ¹²*For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.*[SV3](Mt 23:11,12; see [hypocrisy: practice what you preach](#), [sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican](#), [the Beatitudes](#), and [condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes](#)) Luke's version of the second saying elaborates on Mark: ²⁴*Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest.* ²⁵*Jesus said to them, The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors.* ²⁶*But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.* ²⁷*For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.*[SV3](Lk 22:24-27) Jesus avoided politics in his teachings, yet he mocked kings who lord it over their subjects and call themselves Benefactors. In this way Jesus contrasted the power of sacrificial love and humble service in God's sovereign spiritual kingdom over worldly political power. (see [church and state](#)) God calls us to humble service, but not to be humiliated by those we serve. Humility is a virtue, while humiliation a vice. We are called to be servants of all, but only God is our master, not those whom we serve. Humility is a component of sacrificial love, with its antithesis being sanctimony, or pride in one's faith. Jesus used children to illustrate innocence and humility (see [child-like faith](#)), and was especially critical of the Pharisees for their [hypocrisy and sanctimony](#). (See also [selfless service: the cost of discipleship](#), [request for precedence](#), [humility in social matters](#), [pride and peer pressure](#), [envy and equity](#), and [washing the disciples' feet](#)) It is remarkable how our political, business and even religious leaders have so little true humility while they hypocritically describe their pursuit of power in those terms. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (23:1-2)

Indeed prosperous are the believers, those who in their prayers are humble...

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"He who has in his heart faith equal to a single grain of mustard seed will not enter hell, and he who has in his heart as much pride as a grain of mustard seed will not enter paradise."
(Muslim)

"People are like mines of gold and silver. The more excellent of them in the days of ignorance are the more excellent of them in submission to God [to God] when they attain knowledge."
(Hadith Mishkat: Muslim 2:1)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: There are many potential Quranic verses and *hadith* to add to this section, but it depends on which aspect of the Biblical verses we want to emphasize, and I certainly want to be respectful of the apostles! (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: The disciples and most Jews expected their Messiah to be a political revolutionary, but Jesus avoided politics and emphasized the power of humble service in God's kingdom. While Jesus never sought political power, Muhammad was both a political and military leader, but one who emphasized humility and denounced pride. Islam makes no distinction between religion and politics, and like ancient Judaism considers wealth and power as God's rewards for righteousness, as does the so-called *Prosperity Gospel*. Jesus taught that the righteous were rich in the things of God, but not of the world. Of course, there is nothing wrong with being prosperous and powerful if one is humble and motivated by the love of God and neighbor, but is that possible? (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Was Jesus a political revolutionary or a renegade rabbi?
2. Can a person be humble and gain worldly power?
3. What power can reconcile and redeem us as children of God?
4. How do the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad (as well as Moses) differ on faith and worldly power and prosperity?

Lesson #12:

* Church and state: Conflicting concepts of sovereignty

Some Pharisees and Herodians tried to trick Jesus into making a statement that could either be used as evidence of sedition under Roman law or blasphemy under Mosaic Law, by asking him whether they should pay taxes to Caesar.

¹⁵"Should we pay or shouldn't we?"

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. Why are you trying to trap me? Bring me a denarius and let me look at it. ¹⁶They brought the coin and he asked them, Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?[SV4] "Caesar's," they replied.

¹⁷Then Jesus said to them, Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.[SV1](Mk 12:15-17)

Notes: See Mt 22:15-22; Lk 20:19-26; Th 100:4 (Sources: Mk, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: The concept of sovereignty is at the heart of legitimacy and represents the ultimate power and authority over us, a power exercised through coercive laws. Until the 18th century the source of worldly sovereignty was thought to be God, but the Enlightenment introduced the concept of the sovereignty of man in human rights and democratic politics. This saying relates to conflicting concepts of sovereignty (that of Caesar, or man, versus that of God), with some opponents of Jesus trying to trap him into either disobeying Roman law by not paying taxes, or by disobeying Mosaic Law by paying taxes and thereby acknowledging the sovereignty of Caesar over God. Jesus never affirmed or rejected Mosaic Law as God's law, but he asserted the supremacy of love over law; and unlike Jewish zealots of his time Jesus never challenged the legitimacy of Roman rule and law. Jesus implicitly recognized a dual sovereignty of God and man with its implications of conflicting duties, but he never elaborated on which duty prevailed on the issue of taxes, unless it was when Jesus told Peter he could find a coin in the mouth of a fish and then to go and pay their taxes. (Mt 17:25-27[SV4])

This passage is often cited to support the separation of church (religion) and state (government). This was a primary concern of Thomas Jefferson who promoted the freedom of religion and expression which is now protected in the First Amendment to the US Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech..." In Jesus' time there was no separation between religion and government; Jewish

law was comprehensive and pervasive, much like Islamic law today. The teachings of Jesus focused on the moral (voluntary) standards of legitimacy rather than on coercive law; and while the moral values taught by Jesus were as applicable to politics as to private life, his acts of civil disobedience were limited to religious laws as a standard of righteousness (see civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law and laws and love). Jesus never advocated the disobedience of Roman law or political revolution; when he spoke of liberation and freedom (the truth will make you free) he was speaking of spiritual liberation from the bondage of sin and death, not political freedom. In *The Lord's Prayer* (Mt 6:9-13, prayer in secret) Jesus taught his disciples to pray for the spiritual power of God's kingdom to transform the world, but he never challenged the sovereignty of worldly rulers, even though he mocked the way they "larded it over" their subjects. (see leaders as servants) Even though Jesus acknowledged the secular sovereignty of worldly rulers, he never conceded the moral authority of God's sovereignty (see Jesus before Pilate and political authority from God). That dual sovereignty requires making a distinction between our legal obligations to the state and our moral obligations to God. Since the Enlightenment religious laws have been considered voluntary moral standards of legitimacy rather than coercive laws. There is no precedent in the ancient religions for individual *rights*; instead they focused on individual *obligations* to God, which included caring for the needy, or social welfare. The greatest commandment to love God and neighbor is a moral imperative that cannot be enforced by law, but as a dominant principle of faith it opened the door to those individual human rights that originated in natural law rather than religion and were described by Thomas Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence as the inalienable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Those rights reflect the libertarian political values of the Enlightenment and undergird the social contract theory of democratic governance in the West, with laws made by elected representatives rather than by God. But libertarian values can be carried to political extremes. The challenge for people of faith in libertarian democracies is to balance the protection of individual freedom with the need to provide for the common good and social welfare. (*Barnes*)

Jesus had been teaching before the chief priests, scribes and the elders in the temple and here we are told that they sent some Pharisees and Herodians to entrap Jesus. The Pharisees were portrayed as legalistic Jews, who were often hypocritical. What of the Herodians? The following is from Rocco A. Errico and George M. Lamsa, Aramaic Light on the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Noohra Foundation, Smyrna, GA, 2001, p 65:

"The term 'Herodians' refer to those Jews who supported Herod's royal dynasty. Herod himself was an Edomite who became a usurper and took the kingdom from the Hashmonians (Maccabees). Most of the Jewish religious leadership resented and some hated, Herod because they looked upon him as a foreigner. He was a very cruel man, who even put his own sons to death. But many Jews who were employed in the state government under Herod and in the service of the imperial government of Rome openly supported Herod. They did this so they would keep their government positions, but in their hearts they were his enemies, as were other Jews. The teachings of Jesus were so revolutionary that they undermined the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Herodians. These three parties forgot their differences for a while and became united against Jesus. As has been said, 'A common foe unites former enemies'". (See Mt 22:15; Lk 20:20) When Jesus said, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's", he was using extreme irony. For Jesus all things belong to God—all of heart, mind, soul and strength. This raises the question, "What really belongs to Caesar or anyone else in comparison to God?" Of course, there are legal obligations in government. However, absolute obedience is to be given unto God before anyone or anything else. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (4:58-59)

Verily, God commands you to restore trusts. And when you judge between people, that you judge with justice. Excellent is the admonition God gives you. God is ever Hearer, Seer.

O you who believe, obey God, and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. If you should quarrel about anything, refer it to God and the Messenger, if you believe in God and the Last Day; that is better and more excellent in interpretation.

Commentary on the Qur'an: "For the rabbis, there was no distinction between *fas*, God-given laws, and *lex*, human laws, as claimed by the Romans; all laws were seen as expressions of God's Will. Now, this whole understanding of the meaning of law in the Bible [Old Testament] corresponds very much to that of the Quran" (Seyyed Hossin Nasr, *Heart of Islam*, p. 117). (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The Hebrew Bible, the Qur'an and hadith make no distinction between religious and political authority and teach that all laws are expressions of God's will. Jesus debunked religious law as God's standard of righteousness and asserted God's sovereignty as one of love over law, leaving room

for secular political sovereignty. Islam means submission to the sovereignty of God as contained in the Qur'an, and one prominent Islamist cleric has said that *God is the only legislator*. As discussed in the *Introduction*, the Enlightenment introduced a secular libertarian standard of sovereignty that is enshrined in the US Constitution which is a social contract of the governed and the sovereign source of political power and law in our democracy. Even so, it does not preclude the sovereignty of God's moral authority over secular law when it is exercised through political debate, elections and non-violent civil disobedience, as demonstrated by Martin Luther King. By way of contrast, militant Islamists and other fundamentalists believe that God is their sovereign and their holy books are the immutable word of God and God's law, much like a constitution. The conflicting concepts of sovereignty are obvious, and true freedom of religion and expression cannot coexist with religious fundamentalism. While neither Jesus nor Muhammad addressed human rights and democracy, the teachings of Jesus on love over law are more congenial to libertarian values than the legal and moral absolutes of Moses and Muhammad; and there is reason to hope that a *common word* of faith (the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor) can bridge the gap between love and law for Jews, Christians and Muslims. The challenge for religious fundamentalists is to accept individual freedom as God's will, and for libertarian believers it is to balance individual rights with the need to provide for the common good, which has always been an obligation of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. (Barnes) Jesus and the Qur'an agree that in all things we are to "obey God." This is the highest order of obedience. There is some conflict between Jesus and the statement in the commentary on the Qur'an that "all laws were seen as expressions of God's Will." We could cite countless laws which have been contrary to God's Will. It would be most beneficial to consider the remark that "Now, this whole understanding of the meaning of law in the Bible (The Hebrew Bible or Old Testament) corresponds very much to that of the Qur'an" (Seyyed Hossin Nasr, *Heart of Islam* p. 117). It would be difficult to establish that Jesus' teachings agree with this understanding of the meaning of Law. (Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Can we separate our religion (faith) from our politics?
2. Is the sovereignty of man (democracy, human rights and the secular rule of law) consistent with the sovereignty of God?
3. How do we balance individual civil and human rights with providing for the common good of all (public welfare)?

Lesson #13:

* Sowing the seeds of faith: the parable of the sower

Teaching from a boat to a large crowd gathered on the bank of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus used the parable of the sower to illustrate the mystical nature of the word of God, and how like seeds sown on the open ground faith can either wither or grow depending upon how God's word is received, nurtured and shared.

³Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew, and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times.[SV2]

⁹Then Jesus said: He who has ears to hear, let him hear.[SV3]

¹⁰When he was alone, the Twelve and others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹He told them, The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables...[SV4](Mk 4:3-11)

¹³Then Jesus said to them: Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵Some people are like the seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶Others, like the seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸Still others, like the seed sown among thorns, hear the word, ¹⁹but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²⁰Others, like the seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times what was sown.[SV4](Mk 4:13-20)

Notes: See Mt 13:1-9; Lk 8:4-8; Th 9:1-5 (Sources: Mk, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Here Jesus uses the parable as a teaching method to explain the inexplicable way that faith germinates, much as Jesus explained [the kingdom of God in the parable of a mustard seed](#). Jesus again uses seeds to make his

point, an example of mysterious germination and growth well known to his ancient audience. The SV rankings indicate that scholars believe that Jesus told the parable but did not explain it to his disciples (note that the version in Thomas has no explanation); but even if the explanation was that of the gospel writer it was probably correct. Here seeds are a metaphor for the word of God as the source of true faith (see [Jesus predicts his death](#)) just as the mustard seed was a metaphor for the kingdom of God. Parables are not usually intended to be allegories, but instead stories that emphasize one primary point. Here the point is that the word of God can germinate faith like seeds sown on open ground faith, and that faith can either wither or grow; and those seeds of faith that grow can produce an abundant crop. In other teachings, Jesus made it clear that true faith is based on a repentant heart receiving and sharing the transforming power of God's love and mercy (see [the call for repentance](#), [the greatest commandment](#), [the new command](#), and [give and you will receive](#)). On how few choose to accept the word of God as the seed of their faith, or who accept it and then let it wither, see [Jesus came to call sinners, not the righteous](#), [faith for the few: the narrow gate](#), [riches and salvation](#), [bringing sight and blindness](#), [rejection of the capstone](#) and [rejection of Jesus](#). In this and other parables, Jesus used metaphors to make his points in an oblique manner, challenging his audience to think and leaving much to interpretation. According to Mark, Jesus addressed the crowds with parables but later explained everything to his disciples (Mk 4:33,34); this secret revelation of the meanings of parables (the so-called Messianic secret) is unique to Mark (see [the parable of the wicked tenants](#)). The fact that Jesus used parables to teach the mysteries of faith indicates he expected different interpretations, quite unlike Christian religious doctrine which is precise and dogmatic in its explanation of the many mysteries of faith. Jefferson omitted verse 12: *...so that they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven.*[SV4] (Mk 4:12; see also Mt 11:25-27; 13:16,17; Lk 10:21-23) Making a distinction between those who understood the parables and those who did not is typical of the early church but not of Jesus, whose message was simple enough for a child to understand (see [child-like faith](#)). This irritated the Pharisees, who were accustomed to the specificity of their religious rules and made clear distinctions between good and evil. See [seed and harvest](#) and [bringing sight and blindness](#). Parables were useful to illustrate mysterious matters of faith, but were not the best way to clarify moral standards. The

stories of the prodigal son, the good Samaritan and the last judgment are illustrative stories, not parables. In relating faith to exclusivist Christian religious beliefs and doctrines, it is important to note that Jesus, unlike the church, did not make belief in him as the one and only Son of God a requirement of true faith. The message of Jesus was to follow his teachings as the word of God, not to worship him as God in the flesh. In John's Gospel, which is often cited to support exclusivist church doctrine, Jesus is presented as the *Logos*, or Word of God, so that first person references to Jesus are symbolic of the Word of God, not of the historic Jesus as God. In John's Gospel the teachings of Jesus as the Word of God are summarized in the new command to love one another, which is the truth that can make us free. There is no exclusivist belief in the teachings of Jesus unless it is in embracing sacrificial love for others—even unbelievers—as the way, the truth and the life. It is that universal word of God, the sacrificial, compassionate and unconditional love of God and neighbor as taught and exemplified by Jesus, that is the seed of true faith and eternal life. It is a word of faith that transcends the Christian religion and is at the heart of the legitimacy of other religions as well as systems of morality and law. (Barnes)

Related teachings from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (48:29) (3:7) (57:20) (2:26) (29:43) (30:58)

Muhammad is the Messenger of God and those who are with him... their description in the Gospel is as a seed that sends forth its shoot and strengthens it, and it grows stout and rises firmly upon its stalk, delighting the sowers, so that He may enrage the disbelievers by them. God has promised those of them who believe and perform righteous deeds, forgiveness and a great reward. (48:29)

He it is Who revealed to you the Book, wherein are verses [that are] clear, forming the Mother Book, and others allegorical. As for those in whose hearts is deviation, they follow the allegorical part, desiring sedition, and desiring its interpretation, and none knows its interpretation, save God. And those firmly rooted in knowledge say, 'We believe in it; all is from our Lord'; yet none remembers, but people of pith. (3:7) Know that the life of this world is merely play and diversion and glitter, and mutual vainglory in respect of wealth and children; as the likeness of rain whose vegetation the disbelievers admire; [but] then it withers, and you see it turn yellow, then it becomes chaff. And in the Hereafter there is a severe chastisement and forgiveness from God and beatitude; and the life of this world is but the comfort of delusion. (57:20)

God is not ashamed to strike a similitude even of a gnat, or anything above it; as for the believers, they know it is the truth from their Lord; but as for disbelievers, they say, 'What did God desire by this for a similitude?' Thereby, He leads many astray and thereby He guides many; and thereby He leads none astray except the wicked. (2:26)

And such similitudes, We strike them for [the sake of] mankind; but none understands them, except those who know. (29:43)

And verily We have struck for mankind in this Qur'ān every [kind of] similitude. And if you were to bring them a [miraculous] sign, those who disbelieve will certainly say, 'You are nothing but followers of falsehood'. (30:58)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The first verse (48:29) explicitly refers to the Biblical parable in the description of the Prophet and the companions. The middle section of the verse was omitted, since it is not directly relevant in this context (it reads: "... are hard against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. You see them bowing, prostrating [in worship]. They seek bounty from God and beatitude. Their mark from the effect of prostration. That is their description in the Torah...").

The second verse regarding those "in whose hearts is deviation" asserts that they interpret parables in conformity to their evil desires, corresponding to Mk 4:10-12 although Jefferson omitted the last verse.

The third Quranic verse corresponds directly in meaning to Mk 4:19 concerning the need for detachment in the face of our ego's "thirst for the impermanent."

According to Ibn Abbas, the cousin of the Prophet renowned for his exegesis of the Qur'an, the occasion for the revelation of the fourth Quranic verse is that certain Jews laughed at the following Quranic parables, claiming that God would not make them:

Their [the disbelievers] likeness is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire, and when it illumined all about him God took away their light and left them in darkness, unable to see, deaf, dumb, blind, they shall not return. Or as a cloudburst out of the heaven in which is darkness, and thunder, and lightning - they put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, cautious of death; and God encompasses the disbelievers. (2:17-19)

O mankind, a similitude is being struck, so listen to it: truly those on whom you call besides God [idols] will never create a fly even if they rallied together to do so. And if a fly should take away something from them, they would not be able to recover that from it. Feeble is the seeker and the [thing] sought. (22:73)

The remaining verses indicate how God employs many parables throughout the *Qur'an*, to which believers and disbelievers will respond differently.

Although modern scholars may argue that the first verse is evidence of historical borrowing, Muslim scholars maintain that the New Testament is inspired by God, and that the *Qur'an* is the verbatim Word of God, and that both therefore come from the same Source. Accordingly, no prophet of God owes his spiritual knowledge to any human sources. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Both Jesus and Muhammad used parables to teach the mysteries of faith in terms their audiences understood, and parables are by nature subject to different interpretations. There is another level of scriptural authority and interpretation to be considered. Many Christians consider Jesus as the Word of God made flesh and the words of Jesus in the Bible as inerrant and infallible, while other Christians use critical methods of biblical scholarship to determine what Jesus actually said. Most Muslims consider the *Qur'an* as the Word of God made Book and read the *Qur'an* as the inerrant word of God, just as some fundamentalist Jews and Christians read the Bible as the inerrant word of God. These different approaches to scripture can produce quite different interpretations of scriptural authority on matters of faith. Religious fundamentalists are not comfortable with parables since they are subject to different interpretations. But parables usually address mystical rather than moral matters. If [the greatest commandment](#) to love God and one's (unbelieving) neighbor is accepted as a *common word* of faith by most Jews, Christians and Muslims, and is at *the heart of legitimacy* for believers not only in matters of faith but also in morality and law, then the many differences in religious beliefs will no longer be a cause of hatred and violence. (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Is there only one true faith?
2. Can believers in any religion truly love unbelievers?
3. Why do fundamentalist believers have trouble reconciling with those that accept reason in interpreting their beliefs?
4. Can people of different religions embrace a *common word* of faith that can transcend their different beliefs?

Lesson #14:

* Child-like faith

Once when people were bringing children to Jesus, the disciples began turning them away.

¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.[SV2]

¹⁵I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will not enter it.[SV3](Mk 10:14,15)

Notes: See Mt 18:1-4,10,14; 19:13-15; Lk 18:15-17 (Source: Mk). The Jefferson Bible includes Matthew's version of this saying, but Mark's version is used here since it is the source.

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Jesus loved little children, but his ministry was not to them but to adults who had innocent and child-like minds, and that included his disciples whom he often referred to as children. See [accepting children as Jesus, the Beatitudes, born again of the spirit: Nicodemus, faith and eternal life](#), and [humility: leaders as servants](#).

Jesus sternly warned those who would [lead others astray](#) to [cast off their sin](#). In [the Beatitudes](#), Jesus taught that the child-like simplicity of the meek was a virtue, and he compared the [hypocrisy and sanctimony](#) of a sophisticated Pharisees with the humility of a shamed publican. Matthew reports Jesus describing his disciples as little children, saying, ...if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward. (Mt 10:42) Later Jesus said: ²⁵I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.

²⁶Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.[SV3](Mt 11:25,26; Lk 10:21,22; Th 61:3)(Sources: Q, Th). Jesus cited Isaiah to praise simplicity and denigrate sophistication in understanding God's will: ¹⁶But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. ¹⁷For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it.[SV3](Mt 13:16,17; Lk 10:23,24) (Source: Q; compare with Mk 4:12 in [the parable of the sower](#)) Jesus quoted Ps 8:3 to explain why the cheering crowds referred to him as the Son of David: Have you never read, "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise"?[SV4](Mt 21:16) In Mark's story of the rich man (see [riches and salvation](#)), Jesus refers

to his disciples as children. The Gospel of Thomas also reports Jesus using children to symbolize converts in the early church: *These nursing babies are like those who enter the <Father's> domain.*[SV3](Th 22:2). Perhaps the best illustration of the uncorrupted child-like mind required for salvation was in the message of Jesus to Nicodemus that he must be born again of the spirit; the born-again metaphor underscored the need to renounce worldly status and power as a means of repentance before being transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the parable of the sower Jesus used rocky and thorny ground to symbolize worldly distractions that prevented the growth of faith. For his disciples Jesus required the renunciation of family and possessions to eliminate any distractions to their mission, but unlike the austerity exemplified by John the Baptist, Jesus and his followers enjoyed worldly social pleasures, so much so that they were accused of being gluttons and drunkards (see the rejection of Jesus and new standards of morality and faith: new wineskins). (Barnes)

An insight to a child-like faith is found in The Gospel According to Jesus by Stephen Mitchell, who says: "You can't enter the kingdom of God unless you return: To God. To the Garden. To our original self...and become like children." (p 214) In saying this, Mitchell is stressing that to return to (or remain with) God we must be made new in our original and authentic self. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (30:30)

And turn thy face towards the Religion in a pure fashion, in conformity with the primordial Nature (fitrah), in which God hath created men; one must not exchange this creation (this Nature) for another. This is the immutable Religion; but most men know it not. (30:30)

Related teaching of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Every child is born of the nature of purity and submission to God." (Bukhari 23:112)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Returning to our *fitrah*, or our inborn natural disposition, is the key to understanding the relationship between 30:30, the preceding hadith, and Jesus' saying on becoming childlike to enter the kingdom of God from the Islamic point of view. *Fitrah* is derived from the root F-T-R, which has a rich field of meanings, i.e. a "capacity," "disposition," "source of guidance," "seat of consciousness," "inward stance," "source of sense of responsibility," and

"reaction to being moral." *Fitrah* is therefore our innate or primordial human nature which cannot change, and includes the faculty of knowing God, with which He endowed humankind, and whereby we have the inherent capacity or innate disposition to accept the ultimate truth. Given this field of meanings, Martin Lings, perhaps the best translator of the Quran into English (although he did not complete the entire Quran), inserts the following parenthetical notes to explain the verse: *And turn thy face towards the Religion in a pure fashion* (that of a *hanif*, who adheres to the essential and intemporal Religion), *in conformity with the primordial Nature* (*fitrah*), *in which God hath created men; one must not exchange this creation* (this Nature) *for another. This is the immutable Religion; but most men* (the profane ones) *know it not.* Returning to our *fitrah*, our natural constitution covered over by all the complexities of adulthood, therefore helps to understand the connection between becoming childlike and entering the kingdom of God from an Islamic point of view. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Both Jesus and Muhammad used children as a metaphor for the kind of pure and uncorrupted mind required for repentance, in contrast to the complex and corrupted minds of many adults who rejected the will of God. The Qur'an teaches that our primordial Nature (*fitrah*), the one in which we were created, must not be exchanged for another. Sadly, the Qur'an also teaches, "but most men know it not." The "child" becomes a "man", devoid of a vital, living, spiritual relationship with God. This is akin to the "fall" of man in the Christian tradition. The above commentary on the Qur'an and hadith relating to the *fitrah* (our inborn nature) complements the teachings of Jesus on a child-like faith and the corruptions of the world. The treasures of God's realm are often surrendered for the "junk" of greed, self-aggrandizement and irresponsibility. (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Is a child-like faith based on ignorance or knowledge?
2. Can too much knowledge be a detriment to faith?
3. Is it wrong to doubt and use reason to question faith?
4. Does our materialistic culture, affluence and the modern complexities of life corrupt our faith?

Lesson #15:

* Hypocrisy and sanctimony

Jesus exemplified mercy and forgiveness for all sinners, but even he had trouble loving the Pharisees, who used their privileged status as teachers of the law for personal power and prestige.

³⁸As he taught, Jesus said, Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted in the marketplaces, ³⁹and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets.[SV2](Mk 12:38,39)

Notes: See Mt 6:1-6; 23:5-7; Lk 11:37-54; 18:9-14; 20:45-47 (Sources: Mk, Q).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: This saying concludes with a condemnation that Jefferson did not include in his *Bible: They devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished severely.*[SV3](Mk 12:40) The hypocrisy and sanctimony of the teachers of the law in their ostentatious giving and failure to practice what they preached was in direct conflict with the repentance, forgiveness and humble service required of true faith as exemplified by the poor widow in the widow's mite. Jesus continuously criticized the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy and sanctimony, often in strong diatribes difficult to reconcile with his teachings on, mercy, forgiveness and sacrificial love. The strongest condemnation is Matthew's condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes which was directed to those religious leaders who put honor of men ahead of God. The story of the Pharisee and the publican contrasts the hypocritical self-righteousness of the Pharisees with the humility required for salvation, illustrating how pride (sanctimony) can contaminate the faith. Nicodemus was a high-ranking Pharisee who was a member of the ruling council. Unlike the Pharisees who were hostile to Jesus, Nicodemus sought his advice, and Jesus told him that he must be born again of the spirit to experience the kingdom of God. (See humility: leaders as servants, criticizing self before others, and sanctimony and humility) (Barnes)

It is clear that Jesus had problems with any religious leader who used privileged status for personal power and prestige. Of course, we have this same situation today. Here, Jesus singles out scribes for censure after encountering a scribe "not far from the kingdom of God." The continuous criticism of Jesus for

scribes and Pharisees may have been to get them to move from that "not far" distance into the fullness of the kingdom of God. This is consistent with the nature and mission of Jesus to have all of us fully included in the kingdom of God. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (31:18)

And do not turn your cheek disdainfully from people and do not walk upon the earth exultantly. Truly God does not like any swaggering braggart.

Related teachings:

Hadith Qudsi

The first of people against whom judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died a martyr. He will be brought and God will make known to him His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I fought for You until I died a martyr.' He will say: 'You have lied - you did but fight that it might be said [of you]: 'He is courageous.' And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire. [Another] will be a man who has studied [religious] knowledge and has taught it and who used to recite the Qur'an. He will be brought and God will make known to him His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I studied [religious] knowledge and I taught it and I recited the Qur'an for Your sake.' He will say: 'You have lied - you did but study [religious] knowledge that it might be said [of you]: 'He is learned.' And you recited the Qur'an that it might be said [of you]: 'He is a reciter.' And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire. [Another] will be a man whom God had made rich and to whom He had given all kinds of wealth. He will be brought and God will make known to him His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I left no path [un-trodden] in which You like money to be spent without spending in it for Your sake.' He will say: 'You have lied - you did but do so that it might be said [of you]: 'He is open-handed.' And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire."

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith Qudsi: These are self-explanatory. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Jesus and Muhammad both expressed revulsion for hypocrisy, sanctimony and self-serving acts in the name of God. Qur'an (31:18) speaks volumes. The translation by M.H. Shakir emphasizes the import of this text: "And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exulting overmuch; surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster." The "Related teachings: Hadith Qudsi" are extremely clear and powerful. It would be worthwhile to have this read regularly in Christian churches as well as emphasized during prayer time and worship in mosques. Perhaps the pronouncements about deluded martyrs would cause misguided Islamist extremists to reconsider their emphasis on martyrdom. The extreme treatment by both Jesus and Muhammad of hypocrisy and sanctimony should remind us that they are the insidious enemies of true faith, and that only through a humble acknowledgement of our shortcomings and the need for God's power to sustain us can we expect to experience the peace and joy of God's redemptive power. (*Barnes & Nates*)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Are modern religious leaders and believers hypocritical and/or sanctimonious?
2. Do modern religious leaders seek power and prestige and the honor of men ahead of God?
3. What is the proper antidote for hypocrisy and sanctimony?
4. What lesson can Pope Francis teach to Protestant leaders?

Lesson #16:

* Parable of the wicked tenants

Jesus told of wicked tenants of a vineyard killing the owner's son, thinking his inheritance would become theirs (see Mk 12:1-8[SV3] and Th 65:1-7[SV2], in the Notes below).

*⁹What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.[SV4]
(Mk 12:1-9)*

Notes: See Mt 21:33-46; Lk 20:9-19; Th 65:1-7 (Sources: Mk, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: In Mark, Matthew, and Luke this parable is a classic allegory of the Christian story of salvation. The version in Thomas is considered more authentic since it lacks the allegorical overlay: ¹A person owned a vineyard and rented it to some farmers, so they could work it and he could collect its crop from them. ²He sent his slave so the farmers would give him the vineyard's crop. ³They grabbed him and beat him, and almost killed him, and the slave returned and told his master. ⁴His master said, "Perhaps he didn't know them." ⁵He sent another slave, and the farmers beat that one as well. ⁶Then the master sent his son and said, "Perhaps they'll show my son some respect." ⁷Because the farmers knew that he was the heir to the vineyard, they grabbed him and killed him. [SV2] (Th 65:1-7) This teaching was directed to the Pharisees, who were the teachers of the Law who sat in Moses' seat. Many of them were hostile to Jesus for his emphasis on love over law and his criticism of their hypocrisy and sanctimony. Following this parable, Mark has Jesus indict the Pharisees for their rejection of the capstone. For more severe condemnation of the Pharisees, see condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes. Without the allegory format and the capstone provision, the parable sounds like a traditional wisdom saying similar to Aesop's fable of *killing the goose that laid golden eggs*. As with the parable of the sower, the parable alone (Mk 12:1-8; Th 65:1-7) was considered more likely to have originated with Jesus than the explanation that followed (Mk 12:9). (Barnes)

Simply stated, this parable expresses the reality that God has sent many people to get "the fruit of the vineyard"—which is to say that God has provided much for His people—but this generosity has been abused. Some of God's servants were beaten, wounded and killed by the tenants of the vineyard, as was the Beloved Son. The wicked tenants represent those who exploit and abuse what has been given and entrusted to them and who reject

those sent from God for an accounting. The wicked tenants thus brought judgment upon themselves. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (24:39)

And as for those who disbelieve, their works are like a mirage in a plain which the thirsty man supposes to be water until he comes to it and finds it to be nothing, and he finds God there, Who pays him his account in full; and God is swift at reckoning.

Commentary on the Qur'an: There are other Quranic verses and *hadith* which may be relevant here. In particular, there is a verse that was revealed concerning the murder-robbery of a shepherd whom the Prophet appointed to nurse a group of sick men back to health. After they were healed, they killed him and stole his sheep. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: There are parallels in the Qur'an to the wisdom story that underlies this allegory of the Christian story. Killing out of greed and avarice is the worst kind of sin, and brings only sorrow. But since this parable is essentially Christological in nature it is of little relevance to non-Christians, except that the Qur'an considers such Christology blasphemous. The Qur'an asserts that Jesus was just a messenger of God like other prophets and not the Son of God, and denies that Jesus was ever crucified and resurrected (see extensive commentary on the Qur'an under [Jesus on the cross](#)). The Qur'an condemns Christians who believe in the Holy Trinity and that Jesus was the Son of God (see Index of selected provisions from the Qur'an, *Belief, rewards and punishment for Jews and Christians* and *Stories about Jesus*), but it should be noted that some Christians have beliefs about Jesus that are closer to those in the Qur'an than to traditional Christian doctrine on the Holy Trinity. (Barnes & Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Does this parable have any relevance to non-Christians?
2. What does it say to Christians?
3. What does the Qur'an say about Jesus?
4. Are there people today who would kill a messenger of God?

Lesson #17:

* Life after death and resurrection

Some Sadducees posed a question for Jesus that involved seven brothers all of whom married the same woman, each in turn. It was the tradition, if not the law, that a childless widow be married by a surviving brother. The question was whose wife would she be at the resurrection?

²⁴*Jesus replied: Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? ²⁵When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ²⁶Now about the dead rising--have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? ²⁷He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken.*[SV3](Mk 12:24-272)

Notes: See Mt 22:23-33; Lk 20:27-40 (Source: Mk). *The Jefferson Bible* includes Matthew's version of this saying, but the Markan version is included here as the most original.

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: A question to Jesus about the resurrection and life after death was to be expected, but this one was unusual since it came from a Sadducee who didn't believe in the resurrection, as did the Pharisees. Few of the teachings of Jesus related to life after death; their focus was instead on how new spiritual life could liberate us from the bondage of sin and death in this life, not the next (see [born again of the spirit](#) and [faith and eternal life](#)). The answer of Jesus to the loaded question of the Sadducee was in two parts. First, life after death and resurrection would not involve sex and marriage, which resonates with the teaching of Jesus on celibacy in [marriage, divorce and human sexuality](#), so that multiple marriages in this life are not a problem in the next. Second, there is no death in God's kingdom. Resurrection at death is irrelevant to eternal life since it begins when we are [born again of the Spirit](#) in this life and continues into the next. Luke's version of the above story helps explain: *He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.*[SV3](Lk 20:38); see also [the unseen kingdom of God](#) and [faith and eternal life](#). Jesus never described life after death, perhaps because he felt it was more important to focus on life, or perhaps because he didn't know all the details, as when he acknowledged that he didn't know when the [the end times](#) would

come. But his metaphors describing [life after death: many rooms in my Father's house](#) continue to give spiritual comfort to those facing the ultimate mystery of death when we share the promise Jesus made to Martha when he told 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.* (Jn 11:25; see [faith and eternal life](#)) The assurance that Jesus gave to Martha that God would provide victory over death has been validated through the Resurrection and the continuing presence of the Holy Spirit (see [love, the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace](#)). (Barnes)

Jesus was very shrewd in his response to the question from the Sadducees who, as were noted, did not believe in an afterlife. The two part answer was given to those to whom Jesus said, "Are you not in error because you do not know the Scripture or the power of God?" (Mark 12:24). Surely "eternal life was not comparable to this life..." and "there is no death in God." Salvation does begin in this life, and in the quality of life now and forever in the teachings of Jesus. The metaphors used to describe life after death are reassuring and comforting. Jesus is reported to have said, "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms;..." (Jn 14:1-2a). In other words, God has room for everyone! The ultimate mystery of death is given the comfort of a loving home. Also there is the statement that God will provide victory over death by removing its sting. Perhaps Paul has best summarized Jesus teaching on life and death when he wrote, "none of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Rm 14:7-8) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (19:66-67)(2:25)(45:24)(35:9)(3:14-15)(4:57)

And man says, 'When I am dead, shall I then be brought forth alive?'

Does not man then remember that We created him before, when he was nothing? (19:66-67)

And they say, 'There is only our life in this world. We die and we live, and nothing but time destroys us'. Of that they have no knowledge; they are only making conjectures. (45:24)

And it is God Who unleashes the winds and they raise clouds, then We drive them to a dead land, and therewith revive the earth after it has been dead. Such will be the Raising. (35:9)

And give good tidings to those who believe and perform righteous deeds that theirs shall be Gardens underneath which rivers run;

whensoever they are provided with fruits therefrom, they shall say, 'This is what we were provided with before'; they shall be given it in perfect semblance; and there for them shall be spouses purified; therein they shall abide. (2:25)

Beautified for mankind is love of lusts - of women, children, stored-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle, and tillage. That is the comfort of the life of this world; but God - with Him is the more excellent abode.

Say: 'Shall I tell you of something better than that? For those that are fearful with their Lord are Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein, and spouses purified, and beatitude from God; and God is Seer, of His servants. (3:14-15)

And those that believe, and perform righteous deeds, We shall admit them to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide: they shall have therein spouses purified, and We shall admit them to plenteous shade. (4:57)

And when you look there, you will see bliss and a great kingdom. (76:20)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Never mind what God has told you; what He has not told you is even greater." (Muslim)

God said: "I have prepared for My pious servants things which have never been seen by an eye, nor heard by an ear, or (even) imagined by a human being." (Muslim)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The word "paradise" actually comes from the Persian term for "garden" (pardis), which is also the origin of the Arabic word for "paradise" (firdaws). From the Islamic point of view, this is not "simply a sublimation of the experience of a cool garden in the desert heat. ... Rather, every traditional garden here below is the reflection of *firdaws*, and paradise is a spiritual reality for Muslims as well as Christians" (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Heart of Islam, pp. 247-248). Similarly, union between the sexes symbolizes integration in God and reflects a heavenly archetype. But it is a double-edged sword which can either take us towards God or away from Him depending on whether or not we view sexuality in its Divine context. Islam and Christianity therefore take different, but complementary positions on sexuality and its eschatological symbolism. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad affirmed life after death, and neither emphasized resurrection (that was Paul's focus as a Pharisee, and the basis for his doctrine of

atonement), but the Qur'an and hadith provide much more detail of the afterlife, both of heaven and hell, than do the teachings of Jesus. (see [Index of selected provisions from the Qur'an, Belief and unbelief/rewards and punishments](#)) The Qur'an emphasizes righteous deeds and right beliefs as entrance requirements to Paradise, while Jesus emphasized repentance and salvation through God's grace, with good works flowing naturally from one whose heart is full of the love of God. The Qur'an refers to sex and married relationships in heaven, while Jesus taught there would be no marriage in heaven. Perhaps these differing views reflect the differing experiences of Jesus and Muhammad with married life. (Barnes)

The Qur'an has many important mystical expressions regarding life and death, which are also in Jesus' teachings. Paradise as a Garden is a wonderful image of what God's care is like. We see the green of growth in leaves and plants. We marvel at the glory of bursts of color in various flowers. We breathe in the delightful fragrance of fresh air and running water.

Surah 35:9 in the translation of The Qur'an by M.H. Shakir declares refreshingly the reality of hope: "And Allah is He Who sends the winds so they raise a cloud, then We drive it on to a dead country, and therewith We give life to the earth after its death; even so is the quickening." Hadith states, "Never mind what God has told you; what He has not told you is even greater." (Muslim) This could come from the heart and mouth of Jesus as well as Muhammad. It is a wonderful expression of faith and the resulting trust in God in all things and conditions. It is central to both Christianity and Islam. (Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. Why do you think that Jesus emphasized spiritual life in this world and did not teach more on spiritual life after death?
2. Why do you think that Muhammad emphasized the rewards and punishments of heaven (eternal joy in paradise) and hell (eternal misery and suffering) that come with life after death?
3. Is it important to our faith to know what happens to us after death?
4. Can the different views of Jesus and Muhammad on life after death and resurrection be reconciled?

Lesson #18:

* The anointing of Jesus

While the chief priests and scribes were conspiring to arrest Jesus before the Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem, a woman came to where Jesus was staying in Bethany and anointed Jesus with some very costly perfume. Some rebuked her for wasting such expensive perfume (Mk 14:3-5).

⁶Leave her alone, said Jesus. Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.[SV4](Mk 14:6-8)

Notes: See Mt 26:6-13; Lk 7:36-50; Jn 12:1-8 (Sources: Mk, Lk, Jn). Jefferson omitted the concluding verse of the story: *I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.*[SV4](Mk 14:9)

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Anointing was the way ancient Jews ordained their kings and high priests, and that was the way their Messiah would be ordained. The anointing here is a symbolic recognition of Jesus as the long awaited Messiah (the anointed one, or Christ), and it also foretells his death since such perfume was used to prepare bodies for burial (Mk 14:8). The setting is in Bethany two days before Passover, with Jesus having dinner in the home of Simon the Leper, when an unnamed woman with a jar of very expensive perfume appeared and poured the perfume on Jesus' head. There were others at the table who complained: "Why this waste of perfume. It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. And they rebuked her harshly." (Mk 14:4,5) Jesus rebuked them, saying: *Leave her alone....She has done a beautiful thing to me.* (Mk 14:6) The presence of Jesus at a dinner was typical. He enjoyed such social events and did not discourage his disciples and friends from enjoying them (see [new standards of faith and morality: new wineskins, fasting, the rejection of Jesus, and the parable of the wedding feast](#)). But the anointing was not depicted as a pleasurable event but as a solemn gift to God in acknowledgment of the coming crucifixion of His Son. Even though there are four related stories in Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, scholars do not believe that the words attributed to Jesus were his own but were put on his lips by the gospel writers to support early church doctrine that Jesus was the

Messiah and foretelling his crucifixion and resurrection. It isn't characteristic of Jesus to allow a symbolic anointing to take precedence over the needs of the poor and needy, yet he is reported to have done so saying: *You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me.* (Jn 12:8; Mk 14:7) For Luke's account, see [sinners, forgiveness, and love](#) (Lk 7:36-50). John's account has the anointing at a supper hosted by Mary, Martha and Lazarus, probably the same supper at which Martha was chided for being [too busy to hear Jesus](#). In John's version it was Judas Iscariot who complained that the perfume should have been sold and the proceeds distributed to the poor (it is noted parenthetically that Judas was a thief and stole from the common purse), while in Matthew's account, as in Mark, the disciples questioned the anointing (Mt 26:4). In Luke the Pharisees questioned whether Jesus was a prophet (Lk 7:39), claiming the unnamed woman to be a sinner. The story resonates both with [the widow's mite](#) as an example of a generous gift to God in honor of His Son, and with the story of the Samaritan woman to whom Jesus revealed that he was the Messiah. (Jn 4:4-26, see [worship in spirit and truth](#)) The story of the woman anointing Jesus with expensive perfume and the encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan woman both relate to the divine status and [authority of Jesus](#). They have little relevance to the moral teachings of Jesus that are at the heart of legitimacy, but instead relate to mystical matters that are at the heart of Christian church doctrines and professions of faith. (*Barnes*)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"He who has, in his heart, an ant's weight of arrogance will not enter Jannah." Someone said: "A man likes to wear beautiful clothes and shoes?" The Messenger of God said, "God is Beautiful, He loves beauty. Arrogance means ridiculing and rejecting the Truth and despising people."

Commentary on the Hadith: This hadith is one of the foundations of Islamic art. "Like compassion, love, and peace, beauty is seen as a Divine Quality in Islam, one of God's Names being *al-Jamil*, the Beautiful. Furthermore, according to the *hadith* quoted at the beginning of this chapter [an excerpt of the *hadith* above], God loves beauty, meaning that the qualities of beauty and love are intertwined on the Divine plane. And this reality is reflected on the human plane as well by the fact that our soul loves what it perceives as beautiful and sees as beautiful what it loves. Beauty also has the power of radiation and emanation and shares therefore a basic characteristic with

compassion and mercy. Furthermore, beauty brings about collectedness and helps the scattered elements of the soul gather together in a state of calm. Beauty is therefore also related to peace and has a remarkable pacifying power over the soul, a quality that is essential to Islamic spirituality, as reflected so clearly in Islamic art" (SHN, HI, p. 222). (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The anointing of Jesus in anticipation of his crucifixion has no parallels in the Qur'an or hadith. The story has symbolic importance to church doctrine but conflicts with the Qur'an, which considers Jesus a prophet and messenger of God who confirmed the Torah as the word of God, but who was not the Son of God and who was never crucified and resurrected; and the Qur'an condemns as blasphemers Christians who believe that Jesus was the Son of God. (see Index of selected provisions from the Qur'an, *Belief, rewards and punishments for Jews and Christians and stories about Jesus*) Given the mystical, symbolic and ritualistic meaning of [the anointing of Jesus](#) it is strange that Jefferson included this saying in his collection of the moral teachings of Jesus. (Barnes)

In the hadith, "an ant's weight of arrogance" is a significant phrase, as is "God is Beautiful, He loves beauty." All beauty comes from God and returns to God. The Beautiful, *al-Jamil*, is one of God's Names. This hadith speaks eloquently of the nature of God—a beautiful nature represented in the extravagant act of the woman anointing the body of Jesus with expensive perfume in commemoration of his life and in preparation for his death and resurrection. From the Christian perspective, the quality of beauty which is essential to Islamic spirituality, as reflected clearly in Islamic art, is incarnated in the person and work of Jesus. (Nates)

Suggested questions for discussion:

1. What is the religious significance of anointing?
2. Do religious rituals like anointing take priority in the use of resources over helping the poor and needy?
3. How do religious rituals relate to the greatest commandment?
4. Can church doctrines on the divinity of Jesus be reconciled with Islam?

Chapter 2: Introduction to the Gospel of Matthew

The writer of the Gospel of Matthew is unknown, although tradition holds him to be Matthew, the publican called Levi, who was one of the twelve disciples. This was the only gospel written in Hebrew (the others were in Greek), and tradition has it that it was the first of the gospels. Subsequent scholarship on the chronology of the gospels, however, has Matthew following Mark, with most scholars believing Matthew was written about the same time as the Gospel of Luke, sometime after the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in 70 C.E. If so, it is unlikely the writer could have been one of the disciples; more likely he was a second or third generation Christian.

The Gospel of Matthew, like that of Luke, has incorporated sayings from Mark and the Book of Q.¹³ The purpose of Matthew is obvious from its style and content: it was written to convince Jews that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies predicting the Messiah. The plan of Matthew is much more organized and comprehensive than that of Mark, including seven sections beginning with the nativity and ending with the Passion. In between, five discourses legitimize Jesus as the Jewish Messiah: the Beatitudes introduce the great sermon, followed by instructions for the disciples, parables, community relations, and finally, condemnation and judgment.

To prove to his Jewish readers that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah, Matthew prefaced almost everything Jesus said or did with prophetic Old Testament scripture. By stretching Jewish prophecy to fit Jesus, and stretching Jesus to fit the scripture, Matthew sacrificed objectivity and credibility. Material from Mark was modified to emphasize the divinity of Jesus, and liberal references to hell were borrowed from the Old Testament, with weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Matthew also contains the most vituperative condemnations attributed to Jesus. While they are out of character for Jesus, they are consistent with the Old Testament God of law, judgment, and vengeance.

The elaborate plan, neat arrangement, and extensive reference to Old Testament scripture made Matthew the first choice of the early church. Those same factors, however, reflect a bias that detracts from the accuracy of the teachings attributed to Jesus. But Matthew includes more sayings of Jesus than any other gospel, making it perhaps the most important gospel of all.¹⁴

Matthew on Morality

* The Beatitudes

Matthew began the evangelical discourse of Jesus (*The Sermon on the Mount*) with the Beatitudes:

³Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those that mourn,
for they shall be comforted.[SV2]

⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth.[SV4]

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.[SV2]

⁷Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called sons of God.[SV4]

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted
because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you, and
falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

¹²Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,
for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before
you.[SV3](Mt 5:1-12)

Notes: See Lk 6:17, 20-23; Th 54, 68:1; 69:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: The Beatitudes (blessings) are the preamble to the Sermon on the Mount contained in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew. In them Jesus shocked his audience by turning God's order of merit upside-down: In the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) righteousness was equated with worldly success (health, wealth, power, and prosperity), while sin was equated with suffering (afflictions, poverty and misfortune). Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous, and he taught that suffering was not God's will. (see humility: leaders as servants and the Pharisee and the publican) The flip-side of the blessings, the curses, are found only in Luke:

²⁴But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. ²⁵Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how

their fathers treated the false prophets. [SV4](Lk 6:24-26) It can be said that Jesus comforted the afflicted and afflicted the comfortable, but Luke's condemnations are out of character with Jesus, who taught tolerance, forgiveness and do not judge. The condemnations probably originated in the early church, but aside from them, SV scholars believe Luke's shorter version of the Beatitudes (which is similar to sayings in Thomas) is the most original. Jesus speaks of *the poor* (Lk 6:20) rather than *the poor in spirit* (Mt 5:3), and *the hungry* (Lk 6:21) rather than *those who hunger for righteousness* (Mt 5:6). In either event these blessings promise a kingdom not of this world but of the spirit (see the unseen kingdom of God and faith and eternal life). While the Beatitudes are found only in Matthew, Luke, and Thomas, the virtues of humility, repentance, righteousness, mercy, making peace, and personal sacrifice taught in them are essential elements of the sacrificial love taught and exemplified by Jesus (see the greatest command and the new command), and prerequisites of Christian faith and morality (see faith evidenced by works as a tree by its fruit, faith and works, and faith and morality below). The Beatitudes describe the spirit of humility and repentance in the child-like faith that comes to those who are born again of the Spirit. It is the result of the transforming power of God's love that enables leaders to be servants since it must be given in order to be received. The Beatitudes give meaning to the reversed order of merit in God's kingdom: *So The last will be first, and the first will be last.*[SV2](Mt 20:16; see envy and equity: the parable of the workers in the vineyard and riches and salvation). (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 3: ³*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:*
Qur'an (35:15)(28:24)

O men, ye are the poor in relation to God, and He is the Rich, the Praiseworthy. (35:15)
 My Lord, indeed I am in utter need of whatever good You send down to me. (28:24)

Related teachings of Muhammad on verse 3:

Hadith

"Oh God, make me live poor, and make me die poor, and raise me with the poor on the Day of Judgement." 'Aisha, his wife asked, "Why, Oh Messenger of God?" The Prophet (saws) replied, "Because they will enter Paradise before the rich by forty years. Oh 'Aisha, do not let the poor go without giving them at least a date. Oh 'Aisha, love the poor and bring them close to you so

that God will bring you close to Him on the Day of Judgement."
(Abu 'Isa)

"I stood by the gate of Paradise and saw that the majority of those who entered were the poor and wretched. The rich [Muslims] were detained while the people of Hell were ordered to be taken to Hell". (Bukhari)

"The poor of the Muhajireen will enter Paradise forty years ahead of the rich of the Muhajireen."

"The poor of the Muhajireen will enter Paradise five hundred years ahead of the rich of the Muhajireen"

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith on verse 3: Poverty itself does not make one enter heaven or gain proximity to God. But being "poor in spirit," or to feel the love of God and have love for God, as well as being content with whatever He gives us while recognizing our need for what He has for us in heaven, is the spiritual poverty that attains to God. It is interesting to note the discrepancy in number of years by which the poor precede the rich in entering paradise in the hadith above. Qurtubi suggests that the two statements may be reconciled, because the poor are not all alike, and neither are the rich, for both vary in the strength of their faith and achievements. "If we think in terms of the first of the poor and the last of the rich to enter Paradise, then the time-span will be five hundred years, but if we are thinking of the last of the poor and the first of the rich, then the time span is forty years. And God knows best." (Ibn Katheer) (Ansary)

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verses 4-6: ⁴Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the meek,
for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Qur'an (25:63)(28:4-6)(13:28-29)

And the [true] servants of the Compassionate One are those who walk upon the earth modestly, and who, when the ignorant address them, say [words of] peace; (25:63)

Truly Pharaoh had exalted himself in the land and reduced its people into sects, oppressing a group of them, slaughtering their sons, and sparing their women. Indeed he was of those who cause corruption.

And We desired to show favor to those who were oppressed in the land, and to make them exemplars, and make them the inheritors,

and to establish them in the land, and to show Pharaoh and Hāmān and their hosts from them that of which they were apprehensive.. (28:4-6)

Who have believed and whose hearts have rest in the remembrance of God. Verily in the remembrance of God do hearts find rest! Those who believe and do right: Joy is for them, and bliss (their) journey's end. (13:28-29)

Commentary on the Qur'an on verses 4-6: According to many Biblical commentaries, the poor often mourn (and may be poor to begin with!) as a result of oppression and persecution for their beliefs. The suggestion that the poor will inherit the earth and rule over it as compensation is similar to (Q 28:4-6) above explaining how Moses and the Jewish people were ultimately victorious over Pharaoh. (Ansary)

Related teachings of Muhammad on verse 7: ⁷*Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy:*

Hadith

"Those who have mercy will receive the mercy of the Most Merciful. Have mercy on those who are on earth, the One in [the] heavens will have mercy on you." (Tirmidhi)

"Those who have no mercy on other human beings, will not receive the mercy of God." (Bukhari)

"You will not be believers until you are merciful." The companions of the Prophet said, "Oh, Messenger of God, we are all merciful!" He replied, "I don't mean your mercy towards each other only, but towards all people... all people." (Tabarani)

"I swear by God, He, the Almighty does not put His mercy except on a merciful one." The companions said, "Oh, Messenger of God, we are all merciful." He said, "I don't mean your mercy towards each other, but towards all mankind."

"God's mercy will be upon the most merciful of people. So show mercy upon all creatures on earth to gain the mercy of the Creator." (Ahmad)

Commentary on the Hadith on verse 7: These are largely self-explanatory, but are crucial for clarifying the universality of "love of neighbor" in Islam.

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 8: ⁸*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

Qur'an (6:103)(75:22-23)(32:17)

Vision cannot attain Him, but He attains [all] vision. And He is the Subtle, the Aware. (6:103)

Some faces on that day [the Day of Judgment] will be radiant, looking upon their Lord. (75:22-23)

For no soul knows what has been kept hidden for them in the way of joyous sights as a reward for what they used to do. (32:17)

Related teachings of Muhammad on verse 8:

Hadith

The people said, "Oh God's Apostle! Shall we see our Lord on the Day of Resurrection?" He replied, "Do you have any doubt in seeing the full moon on a clear night?" They replied, "No, Oh God's Apostle!" He said, "Do you have any doubt in seeing the sun when there are no clouds?" They replied in the negative. He said, "You will see God in the same way... "

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith on verse 8: The idea of "vision of God" is implicit in the Qur'an and explicit in the hadith, as we see from the verses above. Obviously, this vision does not refer to physical sight, but the "eye of the heart," as we have previously discussed. (Ansary)

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 9: ⁹*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

Qur'an (49:10)

Make peace between your brethren, and fear God, so that you will obtain mercy. (49:10)

Related teachings of Muhammad on verse 9:

Hadith

"You shall not enter Paradise until you have faith. And you will not have faith until you love one another. Shall I tell you of something that if you do it, you will love one another? Spread peace among you." (Muslim)

"Shall I not inform you of a better act than fasting, alms, and prayers? Making peace between one another: enmity and malice tear up heavenly rewards by the roots." (Tirmidhi)

Once the people of Quba fought with each other till they threw stones on each other. When God's Apostle was informed about it, he said, "Let us go to bring about reconciliation between them." (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith on verse 9: The preceding verse and teachings are self-explanatory. (Ansary)

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 10: ¹⁰*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

Qur'an (22:40)(9:79)(2:212)

Those who were expelled from their homes without right, only because they said: 'Our Lord is God.' Were it not for God's causing some people to drive back others, destruction would have befallen the monasteries, and churches, and synagogues, and mosques in which God's Name is mentioned greatly. Assuredly God will help those who help Him. God is truly Strong, Mighty - (22:40)

Those who find fault with the believers who offer alms voluntarily, and such as find nothing [to offer] but their endeavours; and deride them - God [Himself] derides them, and theirs will be a painful chastisement. (9:79)
Decked out fair to the disbelievers is the life of this world; and they deride the believers; but those who fear shall be above them on the Day of Resurrection; and God sustains whomever He will without reckoning. (2:212)

Related teachings of Muhammad on verse 10:

Hadith

"The most excellent jihād is the uttering of truth in the presence of an unjust ruler." (Tirmidhi)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith on verse 10: The Prophet and the early Muslim community were persecuted because of their belief in God and expelled from Mecca, just as earlier prophets were persecuted. Muslim scholars therefore interpret these Biblical verses as having a Quranic parallel and applying universally.

Of course, *jihād* in the *hadith* above must be understood in terms of "striving for the sake of God." This can take multiple forms, the lowest level of which is defense of the Islamic community. Unfortunately, this meaning has eclipsed all the others in the West. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: All of the Beatitudes have parallels in the Qur'an and hadith. The conditions of spiritual poverty and repentance (mourning) and the virtues of meekness, mercy, peacemaking and sacrificial love are all elements of salvation (experiencing heaven or God's kingdom) for both Muslims as well as Christians. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Faith and morality: salt and light**

Jesus made it clear that moral actions were essential to the faith.

¹³You are the salt of the earth.[SV4] But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.[SV2]

¹⁴You are the light of the world.[SV4] A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.[SV2] ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.[SV4](Mt 5:13-16)

Notes: See Mk 4:21; 9:49,50; Lk 8:16; 11:33; 14:34,35; Jn 3:21; 8:12; Th 32; 33:2,3 (Sources: Mk, Q, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Jesus referred to his disciples as the salt of the earth and as the light of the world (as Jesus portrayed himself in John's Gospel). Jesus clearly intended that his followers be action oriented – doers of the word and not hearers only. If his followers lost their moral commitment to share God's love with others they were as useless as tasteless salt or a lamp placed under a bowl – good for nothing and spiritually dead. *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.*(Jas 2:26) The relative importance of faith and works to salvation has been a continuing issue within the Christian faith, but a faith based on the love of God and one's neighbor as mandated by the greatest commandment will produce good works. See faith evidenced by works as a tree by its fruits, faith and works, lamp on a stand, light within you, and the new command. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:25)(2:82)(2:277)(3:57)(4:57)

And give good tidings to those who believe and perform righteous deeds that theirs shall be Gardens underneath which rivers run; whensoever they are provided with fruits therefrom, they shall say, 'This is what we were provided with before'; they shall be given it in perfect semblance; and there for them shall be spouses purified; therein they shall abide. (2:25)

And those who believe and perform righteous deeds - those are the inhabitants of Paradise, therein abiding. (2:82)

Those who believe and perform righteous deeds, and establish the prayer, and pay the alms - their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve. (2:277)

But as for the believers, who do deeds of righteous, He will pay them in full their wages. God loves not the evildoers. (3:57)
And those that believe, and perform righteous deeds, We shall admit them to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide: they shall have therein spouses purified, and We shall admit them to plenteous shade. (4:57)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Let him who is present impart knowledge on him who is absent."
(Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Qur'an contains the phrase "those who believe and perform righteous deeds" 52 times, indicating the direct connection between knowledge and action. Teaching religious sciences is one way of uniting the two, for which there are many *hadith*. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The Qur'an, like the Hebrew Bible and the early Catholic Church, places more emphasis on complying with sacred laws and moral standards as good works than on *faith* in God's grace as the primary means of salvation. For Christians the dichotomy between faith and works is evident in the letters of Paul and the letter of James, and those differences were at the heart of the Christian Reformation. Martin Luther emphasized the primacy of grace over works and had little regard for the Book of James. But since the Reformation even Lutherans have come to believe that true faith is evidenced by good works. The emphasis of Judaism and Islam on obedience to religious rules and rituals as good works and the emphasis of Christianity on matters of belief (or faith) reflects the difference between the deontological religions of Judaism and Islam and the more teleological religion of post-Reformation Christianity. The greatest commandment to love God and neighbor is a *common word* of faith and works for Jews, Christians and Muslims. Loving God is the primary obligation of faith, and loving one's neighbor (including one's *unbelieving* neighbor as illustrated in the story of the good Samaritan) is the foundation of all good works and the way that we love God. Embracing this *common word* of faith and works can help promote religious reconciliation among Jews, Christians and Muslims. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Laws and love: the new standard higher than the old**

According to Matthew, Jesus confirmed the importance of the law and the prophets (the Torah) and spoke of fulfilling them.

¹⁷*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

¹⁸*I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*

¹⁹*Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* ²⁰*For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*[SV4](Mt 5:17-20)

Notes: See Lk 16:17 (Sources: Mt, Q).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Matthew was writing to Jews who believed the Law of Moses was the standard for righteousness (see Dt 11:1,8,9,13-28; 12:1,32; 26:16-19; 27:15-46; 28; 32:45-47). Those laws included the death penalty for blasphemy, which the Sanhedrin claimed justified the execution of Jesus (see Lv 24:16; Dt 13:1-6, Mt 26:25-68 and blasphemy or Word of God). Scholars believe these words were put on the lips of Jesus by Matthew, and they are contradicted by the six antitheses that follow (see Mt 5:21-48: anger and reconciliation; resolving disputes out of court; adultery and lust; integrity; submission and retribution, old and new and love for enemies) as well as by other teachings of Jesus in which he criticized or disobeyed laws that defied reason (e.g. dietary laws, the law of retribution, picking grain and healing on the Sabbath) to illustrate the supremacy of love over law (see also individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean). Jesus did not question the obligation to obey secular laws when asked about paying taxes to Caesar, but he affirmed the higher obligation to God (see church and state) and never taught that obeying Mosaic Law was a standard of righteousness. Jesus emphasized love of God and neighbor in the greatest commandment and the moral imperative to love one another in a new command (see faith and morality and new standards of morality and faith: new wineskins). To illustrate the conflict between obedience to sacred laws and sacrificial love Jesus used the rich young ruler (see riches and salvation) and self-righteous Pharisees who were teachers of the Law (see hypocrisy

and sanctimony, the Pharisee and the publican, and condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes). Luke makes only passing reference to the Law (Lk 16:17), and in John an adulteress is used to illustrate the primacy of the forgiving love of God over harsh laws (see justice or mercy). Even Matthew may have intended to limit the Law as a measure of righteousness with the conditioning words *...until everything is accomplished* (Mt 5:18), referring to Jesus' victory over death (see reference to Paul's letters below). The passage may also reflect the debate in the early church over the extent to which Mosaic Law remained applicable to Christians. The Apostle Paul, himself a Pharisee and expert on the Law, wrestled with the supremacy of love over law in his letter to the Romans (see Rm 2:17-24; 3:19-28; 7:4-6) and concluded: *Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* (Rm 13:10) To the Galatians Paul wrote: *The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself.* (Ga 5:14) And Paul assured the church at Ephesus that the law had been fulfilled in Jesus, who came to unite all who would follow him: *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.* (Ep 2:14,15) Compare this reconciling word of love with the divisive ethnic cleansing mandated by the Law (Dt 20:12-16). Moses taught that total obedience to the Law brought God's blessings, while disobedience of the Law brought God's curses (see Dt 28:1-68). Jesus never questioned the need for secular law (see church and state), but Paul went further and taught that secular rulers should be obeyed as authorities established by God (Rm 13:1-7). While most Jews were looking for a Messiah to overthrow Roman rule and reestablish the supremacy of Jewish Law, Jesus made it clear that he was not seeking political power (see Jesus before Pilate, and liberation). (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 17: ¹⁷*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.*

Qur'an (5:48)(41:43)

Nothing is said to you, except what has already been said to the messengers before you. (41:43)
And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth confirming the Book that was before it and watching over it. So judge between them, according to what God has revealed, and do not follow their whims away from the truth that has come to you. To every one of you, We have appointed a divine law and a way. If

God had willed, He would have made you one community, but that He may try you in what He has given to you. So vie with one another in good works; to God you shall all return, and He will then inform you of that in which you differed. (5:148)

Commentary on the Qur'an on verse 17: Judaism and Christianity respectively emphasize the Law and Way (one dimension absorbs the other in a sense in each tradition). Islam views itself as completing and synthesizing the Abrahamic monotheisms by containing these elements side-by-side. (Frithjof Schuon has an incredible commentary on this in "Concerning the Phenomenon of Muhammadan" in *Dimensions of Islam* which we can draw from in finalizing our commentary.) Accordingly, Islamic philosophy of law is best viewed as a form of virtue ethics, for there is ultimately no dichotomy between the right and the good, unlike secular approaches to philosophical ethics. (Ansary)

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 18: ¹⁸*I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.*

Qur'an (6:115)(18:27)(10:64)

Perfected is the word of your Lord in truthfulness and justice; none can change His words. He is the Hearing, the Knowing. (6:115)

And recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is none who can change His words. And you will not find, besides Him, any refuge. (18:27)

Theirs are good tidings in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. There is no changing the Words of God; that is the supreme triumph. (10:64)

Commentary on the Qur'an on verse 18: All these verses clearly state that God's Word cannot change. In this context, it is essential to distinguish between scripture which is inspired and scripture which is the verbatim Word of God, for the former can change whereas the latter cannot, according to traditional theology. A change in the verbatim Word of God would imply a change in the nature of God Himself from this point of view.

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 19: ¹⁹*Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*

Qur'an (2:181)(7:162)(2:75)(48:15):

Then if anyone changes it after hearing it, the sin shall rest upon those who change it; surely God is Hearing, Knowing.

(2:181)

[T]he evildoers among them substituted a saying other than that which had been said to them. So We sent down upon them terror from the heaven for their evildoing. (7:162)

Are you then so eager that they should believe you, seeing there is a party of them that heard God's word, and then tampered with it, and that, after they had comprehended it knowingly? (2:75)

Commentary on the Qur'an on verse 19: These verses indicate the severe penalty of breaking revealed doctrine/method by changing God's Word. Although (2:81) is outwardly related to bequests, traditional approaches to Quranic interpretation do not limit its meaning to this. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The Qur'an states that Jesus confirmed the Law of the Torah (5:46), but the Gospel accounts indicate that Jesus asserted the supremacy of love over law as God's standard of legitimacy. God does not impose coercive laws on humankind. The greatest commandment is a common word of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is a voluntary moral imperative that allows us freedom to make our own laws so long as they are based on love of God and neighbor, and that requires protecting our neighbors from those who would do them harm. When people of faith eliminate oppressive religious laws like blasphemy and apostasy that negate religious freedom and embrace a common word of love as a standard of legitimacy for all their laws, then religious reconciliation and peace will be possible. (Barnes)

*** Anger and reconciliation**

Jesus put anger in the same moral category as murder:

²¹*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not murder," and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.*

²²*But I say to you anyone who is angry with his brother is subject to judgment.[SV4] Again, anyone who says to his brother, "Raca" [an Aramaic term of contempt similar to moron], is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, "You fool!" will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.[SV3](Mt 5:21-24)*

Notes: (Source: Mt)

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Jesus spoke of the heart as our spiritual center and the source of evil and unclean acts:

²¹*For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, ²²greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, and folly. ²³All these evils come from inside and make a man unclean.*[SV4](Mk 7:21-23; see individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean and faith, words and judgment) Here Jesus speaks of anger corrupting the heart, as evidenced by use of a derogatory term that conveys hatred for another. Even though it is natural to hate our enemies, Jesus taught that we should love our enemies and seek reconciliation with them whenever possible (we don't have to like them to love them). To be reconciled to God we must first seek to be reconciled with others, and that requires dealing with any anger or hostility we have toward others; even an offering at worship should be deferred until after reconciliation. Jesus taught that when it comes to the forgiveness, love and mercy of God, we must give in order to receive). Righteous anger is an oxymoron, but passionate opposition to evil can be confused with anger, as when Jesus was reported to be angry at those doing business in the temple and in his condemnation of religious leaders for their hypocrisy and sanctimony. Jesus avoided anger and was even forgiving of those who crucified him (see forgiveness on the cross). And while Jesus may have condemned religious leaders, for us his message was clear: do not judge. Anger can be produced by fear, and Jesus urged his disciples to overcome their fear with a faith that could bring them God's peace (see Mt 8:26 calming the tempest; Mt 10:28,31, courage: open and fearless speech; Mk 5:36; Lk 9:34; Jn 14:27, 16:33 love, the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace) John's first letter tells us that *God is love* (1 Jn 4:16) and that *There is no fear in love* (1 Jn 4:18). Fear breeds hate, anger and division, the opposite of love, reconciliation and peace. As an antidote for anger Jesus taught that forgiveness and reconciliation can overcome fear and bring peace, first with God and then with each other. ²⁰*If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother* (1 Jn 4:20,21). We love God by loving others as ourselves (see the greatest commandment and a new command), and we cannot love God if we are angry and hate anyone, even ourselves. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

(3:133-134)(42:36-37)(49:11)(17:33)(4:93)(5:32)(5:45)

And vie with one another hastening to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a garden as wide as the heavens and the earth that has been prepared for those who fear.

Who expend in prosperity and adversity, and restrain their rage, and pardon their fellow-men; and God loves those who are virtuous. (3:133-134)

So whatever you have been given is [but] the enjoyment of the life of this world. But what is with God is better and more lasting for those who believe and put their trust in their Lord, and those who avoid grave sins and indecencies and [who], when they are angry, forgive, (42:36-37)

O you who believe, do not let any people deride another people: who may be better than they are; nor let any women deride [other] women who may be better than they are. And do not defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. Evil is the name of immorality after faith! And whoever does not repent, those – they are the evildoers. (49:11)

And do not slay the soul [whose life] God has made inviolable, except with due cause. Whoever is slain wrongfully, We have certainly given his heir, a warrant; but let him not commit excess; for he is supported [by the Law]. (17:33)

And whoever slays a believer deliberately, his requital is Hell, abiding therein, and God is wroth with him and has cursed him, and has prepared for him a mighty chastisement. (4:93)

Because of that, We decreed for the Children of Israel that whoever slays a soul for other than a soul, or for corruption in the land, it shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether; and whoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind. Our messengers have already come to them with clear proofs, but after that many of them still commit excesses in the land. (5:32)

And therein We prescribed for them that a life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth; and for wounds retaliation; but whoever forgoes it out of charity, then that shall be an expiation for him. Whoever does not judge according to what God has revealed, those are the evildoers. (5:45)

Related teachings of Muhammad:Hadith

"Every Monday and Thursday, the gates of Paradise are open. God forgives every bondsman who associates no name in worship with Him except those who quarreled with one another. God says to the angels: Leave them until they reconcile." (Muslim)

A man said to the Prophet, "Counsel me." The Prophet said, "Do not become angry." The man repeated [his request] several times, and he said, "Do not become angry." (Bukhari)

"The strong man is not the good wrestler; the strong man is only he who controls himself when he is angry." (Bukhari)

"Anger is from Satan, and Satan was created from fire. Fire is but extinguished by water, so if one of you gets angry, he should perform ablutions." (Abu Dawud)

"If one of you gets angry, he should be quiet." (Ahmad)

"If one of you gets angry and he is standing, then he should sit down until his anger subsides. If it does not, then he should lie down." (Abu Dawud)

Two men began hurling insults at one another in the presence of the Prophet, each one insulting the other with such anger that his face had turned red. The Prophet said: "I know a word that if one were to say it, what stresses him would go away. If he would but say: 'I seek refuge with God from Satan the accursed'." (Bukhari)

"Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the worst of false tales, and do not look for others' faults, and do not spy on one another, and do not practice *najsh* (deceiving a purchaser through a third party offering a higher price), and do not be jealous of one another, and do not hate one another, and do not desert (stop talking to) one another. And O, God's worshipers! Be brothers!"

According to the Companions, the Prophet exhibited more shyness than a maiden in seclusion. If he saw something that he disliked, we would see it in his face. (Bukhari)

The Companions relate that the Prophet never became angry for anything. However, if the sanctity of God was profaned, then nothing could assuage his anger. (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quranic verses and Prophetic sayings clearly show that an egotistical anger is sinful (as opposed to an impersonal anger, e.g. Jesus throwing the moneylenders out of the Temple). The hadith also contain practical advice on what to do when one is angry, i.e. say "I seek refuge with God from Satan the accursed," or perform

ablutions, or even change one's physical position. In (4:93) "*And whoever slays a believer deliberately, his requital is Hell...*," it is important to note that "believer" is an inclusive generic term that is not opposed to "disbeliever," but to "aggressor." At the time of revelation, the majority of aggressors were disbelievers. Finally, the family of a murder victim can determine whether or not capital punishment is carried out in most cases, and the Quran encourages forgiveness in (5:45) above. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Forgiveness and reconciliation are primary virtues in the teachings of Jesus, but there is little said of them in the Qur'an or hadith. On anger and violence it is clear that neither is justified for Muslims except in response to aggression, and while Jesus never taught that aggression justified violence, St. Augustine and St. Aquinas developed the *Just War Theory* to do just that. By sharing the greatest commandment as a common word of faith, Christians, Jews and Muslims embrace the concept of reconciliation and peace among those of competing religions as illustrated in the story of the good Samaritan that follows Luke's version of the greatest commandment and describes what it means to love one's neighbor. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Resolving disputes out of court: the risks of litigation**

Jesus emphasized the practical as well as the moral dimension of reconciliation (settling out of court):

²⁵*Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.* ²⁶*I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.* [SV2] (Mt 5:25,26)

Notes: See Lk 12:58,59 (Sources: Mt, Q).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Jesus did not condemn going to court, but he taught that every effort should be made to resolve disputes out of court to avoid litigation. There is little place for mercy in the courtroom, and there are few winners (other than lawyers) in litigation. While the judgment of a court formally ends a lawsuit, it doesn't reconcile feuding parties. If anything, costly and protracted litigation tends to exacerbate rather than resolve angry and emotional disputes.

Apparently even in Jesus' day there were too many religious laws and too many religious lawyers looking for litigation to justify themselves. Just as we cannot legislate morality, we cannot litigate our way to love and reconciliation. Then as now, the law has its limits; reliance on the courts to resolve disputes often does more harm than good. See laws and love, anger and reconciliation, justice or mercy, brotherly correction, and prayer in common: the church. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:283)(4:58)(23:8)

And if you are upon a journey, and you do not find a writer, then a pledge in hand. But if one of you trusts another, let him who is trusted, deliver his trust, and let him fear God his Lord. And do not conceal the testimony; whoever conceals it, his heart is sinful; and God knows what you do. (2:283)

Verily, God commands you to restore trusts. And when you judge between people, that you judge with justice. Excellent is the admonition God gives you. God is ever Hearer, Seer. (4:58)

[God says of the believers] And who are keepers of their trusts and covenants. (23:8)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Return the trusts given to you to those who entrusted them to you, and do not betray the one who betrays you." (Tirmidhi)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: It is interesting that Mt 25-26 focus on the worldly consequences of going to court, e.g. the possibility of going to prison, whereas the commentary rightly points out that litigation rarely reconciles feuding parties, emphasizing spiritual consequences. Although Islam has a Divine Law, it too emphasizes the spiritual significance of fulfilling trusts (starting with our covenant with God). One's conscience is usually the best guarantee of fulfilling one's obligations. But legal consequences in this world are very important for those who might otherwise not fulfill their obligations, setting an example for others and providing a deterrent effect. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad encouraged people to resolve their disputes amicably and out of court, but unlike secular Christian legal systems the Qur'an provides numerous religious laws (see Index of selected provisions of the Qur'an on *Morality and law and family law*) that are interpreted by Muslim jurists and enforced by Muslim courts. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Adultery and lust**

Jesus used lust to illustrate that immorality begins with unclean thoughts:

²⁷*You have heard that it was said, "Do not commit adultery."*

²⁸*But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.[SV4] ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your entire body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.[SV3](Mt 5:27-30)*

Notes: See Mk 9:43,45,47; Mt 18:8,9 (Source: Mt, Mk).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: As illustrated in the adulterous woman, the punishment for adultery was death (Dt 22:22). Stoning adulterers and cutting off the hands of thieves remains part of Islamic law. Matthew uses similar language in leading others astray. In the context of lust and adultery the admonition that *...it is better to lose one part of your body than for your entire body to be thrown into hell* might have encouraged castration to prevent sexual temptation (see celibacy and sexual preference); but such self-mutilation (mortification) is inconsistent with other teachings of Jesus which emphasize moral restraint in resisting unhealthy human appetites. Jesus described lust as a matter of the heart that was as sinful as the unlawful act of adultery that came from it (see laws and love and individual responsibility and the law). It is important to understand the distinction between erotic (eros) love and *agape* love. Unlike the Greek, the English language makes no distinction between the two. *Eros* can be selfish, while *agape* is altruistic and unselfish. The teachings of Jesus on adultery and lust highlight the distinction between lust and love, and the natural inclinations borne of human appetites. For further teachings on the dangers of eros love, see marriage, divorce, and human sexuality. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (17:32)

And do not come [anywhere] near fornication/adultery [zina']. It is indeed an indecency and an evil way.

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"You who claim to follow in my footsteps, I swear by God, there is not anything which God so abhors as adultery." (Abu Dawud)

"The adultery of the eye is the lustful look, and the adultery of the tongue is the licentious speech, and the heart desires and yearns, which the parts may or may not put into effect." (Muslim)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The prohibition of adultery (17:32) includes anything that leads to it, including looking. In the hadith, the very term adultery is expanded to a spiritual level (i.e. it's not just a physical act, but the destruction of the purity of one's thinking). (Ansary)

Joint commentary: In Islamic cultures the Qur'an, like Mosaic Law, prohibits lust, fornication and adultery and prohibits women from wearing revealing clothes and other seductive acts (see Index of selected provisions of the Qur'an, *Family law (marriage, divorce and sexuality)*) in contrast to Christian cultures where secular laws relating to marriage, divorce and sexual acts reflect changing social norms. This contrast between Eastern Islamic cultures that require obedience to unyielding religious law and Western libertarian democratic cultures that emphasize individual freedom represents a major obstacle to better interfaith relations. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Integrity: plain talk, no oaths**

Jesus advised against the Jewish custom of making oaths to the Lord (God), recommending plain talk and basic honesty.

³³Again you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, "Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord." ³⁴But I tell you, [SV4] Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷Simply let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No"; anything beyond this comes from the evil one. [SV3] (Mt 5:33-37)

Notes: See Jas 5:12; Dt 23:22-24 (Sources: Mt, James).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: The ancient Jewish custom of making oaths to God allowed a double standard of integrity. It was a sin to break a promise made under such an oath, but not a sin to break a promise not made under oath. Even Hebrew wisdom literature condemned such duplicity (see Prov 11:3). Jesus condemned such legalistic hypocrisy. Using an oath to avoid telling the truth was deceitful and evil. Jesus was especially critical of the hypocrisy and sanctimony of Pharisees who failed to practice what they preached. (see condemnation of religious leaders). James reaffirmed this saying and admonished early Christians of the dangers of the tongue (Jas 1:19,20,26; 3:1-12; 5:12). In another example of the Pharisees interpreting the law to avoid doing the right thing, see God's commands and the traditions of the Pharisees. A saying on integrity that ties into the golden rule is found in Thomas, where Jesus admonishes his disciples: *Don't lie, and don't do what you hate, because all things are disclosed before heaven.*[SV4](Th 6:2) On the importance of *saying what we mean and meaning what we say*, see integrity and hypocrisy: talk is cheap. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (5:89)(2:224-5)(2:42)

God will not take you to task for a slip in your oaths, but He will take you to task for that to which you have pledged oaths; the expiation thereof is the feeding of ten of the needy of the midmost food you feed your families, or the clothing of them, or the setting free of a slave; and whoever does not find the means, then the fasting of three days. That is the expiation of your oaths if you have sworn, but keep your oaths. So, God makes clear to you His signs, so that you might be thankful. (5:89) Do not make God a hindrance in your oaths, to be pious and God-fearing; and to put things right between people; surely God is All-Hearing, Knower.

God will not take you to task for a slip in your oaths; but He will take you to task for what your hearts have earned; and God is Forgiving, Forbearing. (2:224-5)

And do not obscure the truth with falsehood; and do not conceal the truth wittingly. (2:42)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The occasion of revelation (2:224) was an oath that one of the companions, Abd Allah ibn Rawahah, made never to visit, speak, or reconcile with his sister's husband. He said, "I swore by God that I will not do any of these, and it is forbidden for me not to honor my oath." God then revealed this verse according to traditional Islamic sources. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad taught honesty, candor and integrity and condemned hypocrisy. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Submission, retribution, and giving to all who ask**

Jesus often used exaggerated examples (hyperbole) to make a point:

³⁸You have heard that it was said "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth." ³⁹But I tell you,[SV4] do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who asks you,[SV1] and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.[SV2](Mt 5:38-42)

Notes: See Mt 7:12; Lk 6:29-34; Th 95:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: This saying challenged the Old Testament law of *talio*; it was *eye for eye and tooth for tooth* (Ex 21:25; Dt 19:21), justifying limited retribution in kind. Jesus challenged that standard as being inconsistent with God's love and mercy, but not as being unjust. *Turning the other cheek* is familiar language to the Jews (Lamentations 3:30); it should be considered hyperbole in this context, encouraging reconciliation rather than retribution. The new command to love one another does not condone passive submission to those who would harm others, since loving others requires protecting them from harm. Luke reports Jesus advising the disciples to carry swords in their travels, presumably for self-defense (see Lk 22:36-38, cited in instructions to the disciples). Loving others requires hard choices: concern for wrongdoers as well as their victims. Since most violence begins in the heart as anger and hatred, forgiveness and reconciliation can be stronger deterrents to anger and hatred than retribution. But while retribution is not God's will, neither is submission to violence, which would make the protection of human rights meaningless (see love for enemies and the golden rule). Protecting human rights requires laws to define and enforce them, and the use of force when necessary. The contentious issue of how much force is needed to resist aggression is reflected in the evolution of the *Just War Tradition* which dates from the time of St. Augustine and remains the standard of legitimacy for going to war (*jus ad bellum*) and for conducting

war (*jus in bello*). Verses 40-42 continue the hyperbole beyond submission to violence and tell us that we should give all that we have to those who ask for it, even those who attempt to take it. While this should not be taken literally, it is a reminder that we should be merciful and generous, sharing what we have with those in need no matter what the law requires. (see love over law, clean and unclean, laws and love and anger and reconciliation). (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (5:45)(16:126-8)(42:39-43)

And therein We prescribed for them [Children of Israel] that a life for a life, and an eye for an eye, and a nose for a nose, and an ear for an ear, and a tooth for a tooth; and for wounds retaliation; but whoever forgoes it out of charity, then that shall be an expiation for him. Whoever does not judge according to what God has revealed, those are the evildoers. (5:45)

And if you retaliate, retaliate with the like of what you have been made to suffer; and yet if you endure patiently, verily that is better for the patient.

So be patient, and your patience is only by [the help of] God. And do not grieve for them, nor be in distress because of that which they scheme.

Truly God is with those who fear, and those who are virtuous. (16:126-8)

and those who, when they suffer aggression defend themselves: For the requital of an evil deed is an evil deed like it. But whoever pardons and reconciles, his reward will be with God.

Truly He does not like wrongdoers.

And whoever defends himself after he has been wronged, for such, there will be no course [of action] against them.

A course [of action] is only [open] against those who wrong people and seek [to commit] in the earth what is not right. For such there will be a painful chastisement.

But verily he who is patient and forgives – surely that is [true] constancy in [such] affairs. (42:39-43)

Commentary on the Qur'an: Retribution within limits is permissible in Islam, although other options are also available, particularly forgiveness which is greatly encouraged in the Qur'an with the promise of a great reward (here it is useful to recall the Quranic verses and *hadith* related to anger). But nothing in the Qur'an forbids resisting evil or surrendering to it, because this can spread corruption as the commentary on the teaching of Jesus suggests. In fact, not doing one's best to

support the oppressed and defend others' rights is forbidden.
(Ansary)

Joint commentary: The duty to forgive and seek reconciliation with those who would harm us is at the heart of the Christian faith, not by the coercion of sacred law but by the voluntary moral imperative of love (see anger and reconciliation). By sharing the greatest commandment as a common word of faith with Jews and Christians, Muslims also embrace the love of God and neighbor—even love for their enemies. (Barnes & Nates)

* Love for enemies

Following and expanding his teaching on submission and retribution, Jesus emphasized the forgiving nature of love:

⁴³You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemies. ⁴⁴But I tell you:[SV4] Love your enemies[SV1] and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.[SV3] He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸Be perfect, therefore, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.[SV3](Mt 5:43-48)

Notes: See Lk 6:27,28,32-35 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Luke's version is in two separate parts: ²⁷But I tell you who hear me:[SV4] Love your enemies,[SV1] do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.[SV3] ³²If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.[SV2] ³³And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.[SV3] ³⁵But love your enemies,[SV2] do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.[SV3] Then your reward will be great,[SV4] and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.[SV3](Lk 6:27,28;32-35) This teaching contradicts the traditional belief that it's OK to hate and destroy one's enemies if provided in Scripture. (see reference to the ban in Dt 20:12-18 and its application in the

ethnic cleansing of Jericho by Joshua at Jos 6). It makes specific what is implied in the greatest commandment, the new command, and the last judgment: all people are God's creations and equal in His sight. It describes a God of love and mercy who does not reward or punish people through natural or man-made violence (see the Beatitudes and suffering not God's will). To love God we must love our neighbors, and that includes our enemies (see the good Samaritan and anger and reconciliation). This does not mean that we must submit to violence, only that any force used against others must be in self-defense or for the defense of others and limited in scope and duration as provided in the *Just War Tradition*. No one can hate his brother (or his enemy) and love God (see I Jn 4:20,21). God's forgiveness and love must be given in order to be received. We must not only love our friends who return our love, but also our enemies (see serving the least of those rather than friends and pride and peer pressure). Paul affirmed this teaching when he cautioned the Romans against seeking revenge against their enemies, quoting Pr 25:21,22: *If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing so you will heap burning coals on his head.* Paul concluded: *Do not overcome good by evil, but overcome evil with good.* (Rm 12:20-21) (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (23:96)(13:19-26)(28:52-6)(41:34-5)

Repel evil with that which is better. We are Best Aware of that which they allege. (23:96)

Is he who knows that what is revealed to you from your Lord is the truth, like him who is blind? But only people of pith remember;

such as fulfil God's covenant, and do not break the pact;

and such as cement what God has commanded should be cemented, and fear their Lord, and dread an awful reckoning;

such as are patient, desiring their Lord's countenance; and maintain the prayer and expend of that which We have provided them, secretly and openly, and repel evil with good; those, theirs shall be the sequel of the [heavenly] Abode:

Gardens of Eden, which they shall enter along with those who were righteous from among their fathers and their spouses and their descendants; and the angels shall enter to them from every gate.

'Peace be upon you for your patience'. How excellent is the sequel of the [heavenly] Abode!

And those who break God's covenant after pledging it, and sever what God has commanded should be cemented, and work corruption in the earth, theirs shall be the curse, and theirs shall be the

awful abode.

God expands provision for whom He will, and straitens for whomever He will; and they rejoice in the life of this world, yet the life of this world in the Hereafter, is but [a brief] enjoyment. (13:19-26)

Those to whom We gave the Scripture before this, they believe in it.

And, when it is recited to them, they say, 'We believe in it. It is indeed the Truth from our Lord. Lo! [even] before it we had submitted'.

Those will be given their reward twice over for the patience they showed, and they ward off evil with good, and expend of that which We have provided them.

And when they hear vanity, they disregard it and say, 'To us [belong] our deeds and to you [belong] your deeds. Peace to you. We do not desire [friendship with] the ignorant'.

You cannot guide whom you like, but [it is] God [Who] guides whomever He will, and He knows best those who will be guided. (28:52-6)

And they are not equal, the good deed and the evil deed. Repel with that which is better than, behold, he between whom and you there was enmity will be as though he were a dear friend.

But none is granted it, except those who are steadfast; and none is granted it except one [deserving] of a great reward. (41:34-5)

Commentary on the Qur'an: Returning evil with good is a consistent theme in Islamic law, and there are many Quranic verses and events in the life of the Prophet to support it. For example, he gave Abu Sufyan, the leader of the Quraysh army that had been attacking the Muslims in Madina, dates and 500 dinar to distribute to the people of Mecca because of a famine. This set a powerful precedent for later Muslims to communicate even with enemies and help them in times of dire need. Moreover, the Prophet ordered a Muslim merchant who was boycotting the people of Mecca to sell them food, although they were still idol-worshippers. One hadith states, "Do not hate one another and do not be jealous of one another and do not boycott one another, and be servants of God as brethren" (Bukhari). (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Loving one's enemies is an extension of forgiveness, reconciliation and avoiding retaliation (see anger and reconciliation and submission and retribution). Like turning the other cheek to aggression it is hyperbole meant to discourage violence and encourage peacemaking and reconciliation among adversaries. Christianity and Islam incorporate these principles in compatible Just War doctrines. (Barnes & Nates)

* Ostentatious giving

Jesus taught that ostentatious giving was hypocritical and self-righteous:

¹Be careful not to do your acts of righteousness before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. ²So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.[SV4] ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,[SV2] ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.[SV4](Mt 6:1-4)

Notes: See Th 62:2 (Sources: Mt, Th).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Jesus was especially critical of the Pharisees' habit of making a public display of their giving in the synagogue (public piety). In Luke Jesus is reported saying: *You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.*[SV4](Lk 16:15) Like prayer and fasting, Jesus taught that giving to the needy (and therefore to God) was a private matter between the giver and God. Those who gave to impress others were hypocrites. Their giving was not for God but for themselves, so that their reward was the impression they made on others. In the story of the last judgment, those who were rewarded for serving the King (God) didn't even know that they had served him. After the King told his people that those who had fed him, given him something to drink, invited him in as a stranger, clothed him, took care of him when he was sick and visited him in prison would inherit his kingdom, the people then asked when had they done that. The King replied: *"I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."* (Mt 25:31-40) Their acts of righteousness were not seen by men but by God. The aphorism *do not let your left hand know what your right [giving] hand is doing* is thought by most SV scholars to be the authentic words of Jesus. See also widow's mite, prayer in secret, fasting, hypocrisy and sanctimony, practise what you preach, give and you will receive, riches and salvation, pride and peer pressure, condemnation of religious leaders, and serving the least of those instead of friends. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:262-4)(2:271)(2:274)

Those who expend their wealth in the way of God then do not follow up their expenditure with reminder of their generosity and injury, their wage is with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.

Honourable words and forgiveness are better than a voluntary almsgiving followed by injury; and God is Independent, Forbearing.

O you who believe, annul not your voluntary almsgivings with reproach and injury, as one who expends of his substance to show off to men and believes not in God and the Last Day. The likeness of him is as the likeness of a smooth rock on which is soil, and a torrent smites it, and leaves it barren. They have no power over anything that they have earned. God guides not the disbelieving folk. (2:262-4)

If you proclaim your voluntary almsgivings, it is a fine thing; but if you conceal them, and give them to the poor, that is even better for you; and it will absolve you of your evil deeds. God is aware of what you do. (2:271)

Those who expend their wealth night and day, secretly and openly, their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve. (2:274)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith Qudsi

"The first of people against whom judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died a martyr. He will be brought and God will make known to him His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I fought for You until I died a martyr.' He will say: 'You have lied - you did but fight that it might be said [of you]: 'He is courageous.''" And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire. [Another] will be a man who has studied [religious] knowledge and has taught it and who used to recite the Qur'an. He will be brought and God will make known to him His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I studied [religious] knowledge and I taught it and I recited the Qur'an for Your sake.' He will say: 'You have lied - you did but study [religious] knowledge that it might be said [of you]: 'He is learned.''" And you recited the Qur'an that it might be said [of you]: 'He is a reciter.' And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire. [Another] will be a man whom God had made rich and to

whom He had given all kinds of wealth. He will be brought and God will make known to him His favours and he will recognize them. [The Almighty] will say: 'And what did you do about them?' He will say: 'I left no path [un-trodden] in which You like money to be spent without spending in it for Your sake.' He will say: 'You have lied - you did but do so that it might be said [of you]: 'He is open-handed.' ' And so it was said. Then he will be ordered to be dragged along on his face until he is cast into Hell-fire.'

Hadith

"God will cover seven people with His shade on the Day when there will be no shade but His... [including] a man who gives charitable gifts so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given..." (Bukhari)

"Secretive charity extinguishes the wrath of God." (Tabari)

"Beware of the lesser shirk." They asked, "What is the lesser shirk?" He said, "Showing off in good works. God the Almighty will say when recompensing mankind for their deeds, "Go to those to whom you showed off in the world to see how they could recompense you." (Ahmad)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The first Quranic verses above (2:282-4) point out that one must consider the feelings of the poor when giving, suggesting an extrinsic reason why giving secretly is often preferable. Intrinsically, this helps ensure that one has the right intention in seeking reward from God, not people, as Rudy's commentary suggests. Nevertheless, the Qur'an also praises "open" charity if it is done for the sake of God, without which the act is not good *in relation to us* (the *hadith qudsi* above universalizes this to defending the faith and religious scholarship). Indeed, God is *al-Ghani*, the "Rich One," and neither needs our deeds nor worship (He is ultimately the Author of anything good that we do in the first place, so it is astounding that He rewards us for it as well!). In short, hypocrites are wasting their time, wrongly ascribing to themselves what belongs to God, thereby eliminating any reward in the Hereafter. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Like the teachings of Jesus, the Qur'an and hadith not only encourage charity but mandate it as one of the five pillars of faith, and they also condemn self-serving hypocrisy. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Prayer in secret: the Lord's Prayer**

Jesus taught that prayer should be in solitude:

⁵And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.[SV4] ⁶But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.[SV3] Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

⁹This, then, is how you should pray:[SV4]

Our Father[SV1] in heaven,[SV4]

hallowed be your name,

¹⁰your kingdom come,[SV2]

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.[SV4]

¹¹Give us today our daily bread.

¹²Forgive us our debts,

as we also forgive our debtors.[SV2]

¹³And lead us not into temptation,[SV3]

but deliver us from evil.[SV4](Mt 6:5-13)

Notes: See Lk 11:2-4, Th 14:1-3 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: Prayer in public was similar to ostentatious giving and public fasting: a form of public piety which had its own reward (see also hypocrisy and sanctimony). The power of prayer, like regeneration or salvation (see born again of the spirit), is a personal matter of faith that depends both upon an intimate relationship between the individual and God evidenced by acts of love; there is no group plan for salvation. Jesus felt the need for solitude and left the crowds from time to time to pray (see Mk 6:31,32), the last time in the garden of Gethsemane (see the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak). Public worship and common prayer can nurture one's faith, but there is no substitute for the private and intimate relationship with God which is the nature of true prayer. If a person participates in public worship or performs public acts of piety to impress others, it counts for nothing with God (see ostentatious giving and fasting); but communal acts of worship are the essence of the organized church and a legitimate if not necessary part of our spiritual growth (see prayer in common: the church). John Wesley called for a balance

of individual and communal acts of piety (nurture) and mercy (outreach) in defining four categories of discipleship that must be performed regularly: first, acts of individual piety such as prayer; second, acts of communal piety such as worship; and third and fourth, individual acts of mercy and communal acts of mercy. The reciprocal nature of God's love and mercy (they must be given in order to be received) is illustrated by forgiveness as an act of piety and helping those in need as an act of mercy. Matthew's version of the Lord's prayer is thought to be more original than Luke's, and SV scholars consider the following to be the original Q version: *Father, your name be revered. Impose your imperial rule. Provide us with the bread we need for the day. Forgive our debts to the extent we have forgiven those in debt to us.*(see *The Five Gospels*, p 149) (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 5: ⁵*And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.*

Qur'an (4:142)(107:4-6)

Lo! the hypocrites seek to beguile God, but it is He Who beguileth them. When they stand up to worship they perform it languidly and to be seen of men, and are mindful of God but little; (4:142)

*So woe to them who pray,
those who are heedless of their prayers,
those who make a pretence, Assuredly those who fear their Lord in secret, there will be for them forgiveness and a great reward.
(107:4-6)*

Related teaching from the Qur'an on verse 6-8: ⁶*But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. ⁷And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. ⁸Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.*

Qur'an (7:55)(40:19)(27:25)(20:7)(25:6)(14:38)

*(O mankind!) Call upon your Lord humbly and in secret. (7:55)
He knows the treachery of the eyes and what the breasts hide.
(40:19)*

*[He] Who brings forth the hidden in the heavens and the earth,
and He knows what they conceal and what they proclaim. (27:25)*

And should you be loud in your speech, then indeed He knows the secret and [that which is] yet more hidden. (20:7)

Say: 'It has been revealed by Him Who knows the secret of the heavens and the earth. Truly He is ever Forgiving, Merciful'. (25:6)

Our Lord, You know what we hide and what we proclaim. And nothing is hidden from God in the earth or in the heaven. (14:38)

except what God may will; assuredly He knows what is overt and what is hidden. (87:7)

The Quranic analog to the Lord's Prayer: Surat al-Fatiha (1:1-7):

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:

Praise be to God; Lord of all Worlds.

The Compassionate, the Merciful.

Master of the Day of Judgement.

You [alone] we worship, and You [alone] we ask for help.

Guide us to the straight path:

the path of those whom You have favoured, not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath, nor of those who are astray.

(1:1-7)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The initial Quranic verses on praying in secret and God's omniscience are self-explanatory. In addition to the opening chapter of the Qur'an, which Muslims recite every day corresponding to the Lord's Prayer, there are many supplications to commence and conclude the eating of food (and any other licit action), corresponding to *Give us today our daily bread*. Regarding forgiveness of sins, the Qur'an asserts that only God has the power to forgive, for even the saints and prophets must ask His forgiveness for others: *We never sent any Messenger, but that he should be obeyed by the leave of God. If, when they had wronged themselves, they had come to you, and asked forgiveness from God, and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found God Relenting, Merciful (4:64)*. This commentary flows naturally into the next section. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Prayer has different connotations in Islam than in the teachings of Jesus. It is an Islamic duty and pillar of the faith to pray 5 times a day, often in public places. Jesus taught prayer to be an integral part of faith, but did not mandate its frequency and recommended it be kept private. (Barnes & Nates)

* Forgiveness

Following his instructions on the Lord's Prayer, Jesus described the reciprocal nature of forgiveness:

¹⁴*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*[SV3](Mt 6:14,15)

Notes: See Mk 11:25; Lk 6:37 (Sources: Mk, Q).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: This saying reflects the reciprocity of God's love and mercy: *Forgiveness* must be given in order to be received. Forgiveness is an essential element of God's saving grace; it is a prerequisite for our repentance, reconciliation and redemption, the three components of salvation. The greatest commandment tells us that we cannot love God without loving others, and we cannot love others unless we first forgive and love ourselves. If we do not first forgive ourselves and others then we have not repented and there's no room for God's love in our hearts. *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.*(1 John 4:20) Like God's love, His forgiveness must be shared with others when it is received or it is lost. When asked by Peter how many times he must forgive others, Jesus told him that he must forgive others at least 77 times, and then explained in the parable of the unmerciful servant that one who is forgiven but then fails to forgive others loses the benefits of forgiveness. (see also forgiveness, faith, and the power of prayer; forgiveness, love, and sinners; do not judge; the golden rule and the *Prayer of St. Francis* at page 335). (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:134,136)(42:43)

[O you who believe] Who expend in prosperity and adversity, and restrain their rage, and pardon their fellow-men; and God loves those who are virtuous. (3:134)

Those - their requital is forgiveness from their Lord, and Gardens beneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; excellent is the wage of those workers! (3:136)

But verily he who is patient and forgives - surely that is [true] constancy in [such] affairs. (42:43)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Whoever controls his anger at the time when he has the means to act upon it, God will call him before all of mankind on the Day of Resurrection, and will let him choose of the Hur al-'Iyn whoever he wants." (Abu Dawud)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: As mentioned in the previous section, only God can forgive in an ultimate sense. However, the verses in this section refer to the rights we have over others that we can forgive (through God's grace), which is praised and rewarded in the Hereafter. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Forgiveness is an essential element of God's love and the love we must have for others in order to receive the salvic power of God's love and mercy. In sharing the greatest commandment both Christians and Muslims confirm their commitment to forgive others in order to be forgiven, as Christians pray in the Lord's Prayer (see prayer in secret). (Barnes & Nates)

*** Fasting**

For Jesus, fasting was like prayer: it was an act of faith and contrition between the individual and God. His instructions on fasting condemned public displays of piety:

¹⁶*When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.[SV4]*

¹⁷*But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face,[SV3] ¹⁸so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.[SV4](Mt 6:16-18)*

Notes: (Source: Mt).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: The teaching on fasting is similar to that on prayer in secret and ostentatious giving; the message is the same: public piety may impress other people, but not God (see condemnation of religious leaders, hypocrisy and sanctimony and pride and peer pressure). Fasting was a Jewish ritual that Jesus did not observe and may even have discouraged (see new standards of morality: new wineskins). Jesus and his followers were called gluttons and drunkards when compared to

the more austere John the Baptist and other pious Jews who practiced fasting (see the rejection of Jesus). In the Gospel of Thomas Jesus seems to condemn fasting, prayer, and charitable giving: *If you fast, you will bring sin upon yourselves, and if you pray, you will be condemned, and if you give to charity, you will harm your spirits.*[SV4](Th 14:1-3) (Barnes)

Related teachings of Islam:

Hadith Qudsi

"Every deed of the son of Adam is for him except fasting; it is for Me, and only I shall reward for it..."

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"There is he who fasts yet achieves nothing out of his fasting except for hunger." (Ibn Majah)

Commentary on the Hadith: Since all deeds are supposed to be for the sake of God (see notes above for previous references on ostentatious giving and so forth), and only God can reward them, scholars differ regarding the meaning of the phrase, "Fasting is for Me and only I shall reward for it." There are several different explanations as to why fasting is singled out in this manner. One of the most prominent is that other acts of worship are more susceptible to attempts to show off than fasting. For example, al-Qurtubi states that, "Showing off may enter into all good deeds, but no one can see when a person is fasting except God, so God connected it to Himself. Hence, He said in [another] hadith, 'He gives up his desire for My sake.'" Similarly, Ibn al-Jawzi states, "All acts of worship can be seen when done, and they may be contaminated with some element of showing off, unlike fasting. For example, when one is praying or giving charity or making tawwaf, one can be seen by the people, so one might do the action seeking the praise of people." In a remarkable parallel with verse 17 above, Abu Huraira, a companion of the Prophet, suggests that, "When a man observes fasts he ought to anoint himself with oil as usual so that the effects of fasting do not show off." This is one of the etiquettes of fasting, although the Prophet did not say this himself. In short, if one goes out of one's way to let others know that one is fasting, this annuls the most precious reward for the fast. Finally, it is important to note that fasting during Ramadan is less susceptible to showing off, since everybody else is fasting as well. The temptation to show off when fasting outside of Ramadan is therefore greater, although one then has the option of breaking one's fast to avoid

revealing it, e.g. a friend invites you to lunch, and you do not want to hurt their feelings by turning them down. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Jesus condemned public displays of piety in teachings on ostentatious giving, prayer in secret and fasting and emphasized communal acts of love and mercy for others over acts of worship and religious rituals (see faith and morality: salt and light, worship in spirit and truth, the greatest commandment, the good Samaritan, a new command and love for enemies). Muslims put more emphasis on worship and religious rules and rituals such as mandatory giving, prayer and fasting in their Five Pillars of Faith, for which there is no Christian equivalent. Some Christian denominations embrace more sacraments (sacred rituals) and liturgies than others, and Christians often fast during Lent; but Jesus never advocated fasting, while all Muslims fast during the month of Ramadan. For most Christians the commandment to love God in the greatest commandment is satisfied by loving one's neighbor, but for orthodox Jews and Muslims the love of God requires obedience to sacred rules and rituals like fasting. (Barnes & Nates)

*** The light within you**

Jesus used the analogy of the eyes as a means of allowing light to enter the body in describing the soul as a lamp emanating spiritual light.

²²*The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of the light.* ²³*But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great the darkness!*[SV3](Mt 6:22,23)

Notes: See Lk 11:33-36 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of John reflect Gnostic influence with concepts such as light and darkness representing good and evil, and a spark of God's light within us that can light up the dark corners of the world around us: *There is a light within a person of light, and it shines on the whole world. If it does not shine, it is dark.*[SV4](Th 24:3; see faith and morality: salt and light, lamp on a stand, and light of the world) The ancient Jews believed that a person's inner qualities (of light and darkness) were evident in their eyes, and even today we tend to judge people by what we see, or think we see, in their eyes. (Barnes)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"There is in the body a lump of flesh - if it becomes good, the whole body becomes good, and if it becomes bad, the whole body becomes bad. And indeed it is the heart."

Commentary on the Hadith: As previously discussed, the heart referred to here is not the physical heart, but the spiritual center of our being. Accordingly, the heart is not just a faculty of emotion, but an instrument of knowledge. For example, the Qur'an states, *[They] have hearts wherewith they do not understand* (7:179), and a *hadith qudsi* states, "My earth and My heaven contain Me not, but the heart of My faithful servant containeth Me." Hence, the fundamental role of the "eye of the heart" in mystical philosophy and its connection to "spiritual vision," according to which our physical eyes correspond to the multiplicity of the world, and our "eye of the heart" corresponds to the unity of the spiritual realm. Christ's statement concerning the eyes therefore corresponds directly to this hadith on the heart, for vision is the sense most suited to symbolizing the faculty of spiritual knowledge. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Judaism, Christianity and Islam see light as symbolic of goodness and God, with darkness the symbol of evil and Satan. The heart is the symbol of individual spirituality (see treasures and the heart and individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean), and the eye the means through which light and darkness enter the heart. It should be noted that the symbolism of light and darkness and spirit and flesh are central to Gnostic variations of our religions and were often in conflict with orthodox beliefs. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Faith, God, and money**

The conflict between love of worldly things (especially money) and God is a theme often repeated by Jesus:

No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.[SV2](Mt 6:24)

Notes: See Lk 16:13; Th 47:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jefferson did not include the verses on possessions (Mt 6:19-21) which preceded the above

saying, but he did include the Lukan version (see Lk 12:33,34 in treasures and the heart). Thomas is thought to have the most original version: ¹Jesus said, A person cannot mount two horses or bend two bows.[SV4] ²And a slave cannot serve two masters, otherwise that slave will honor the one and offend the other.[SV2](Th 47:1,2) The teachings of Jesus on riches and salvation were radical: the Old Testament considered wealth a blessing from God, evidence that the wealthy were righteous. Jesus turned this notion on its head and taught that the poor were blessed in the Beatitudes, and in Luke's version the rich were cursed. It was a reversal of the traditional order of merit: *Many who are first will be last, and the last will be first* (Mk 10:31, cited in riches and salvation). The greatest commandment taught that we love God by loving our neighbors as ourselves, and that to keep God's love in our hearts (and Satan out) we must share God's love with others (see give and you will receive, return of evil and faith and works). Money by itself is not a problem; in fact, money can solve many problems. It is the love of money that is a problem (I Tim 6:10). We cannot love both money and God, and what we choose to love is a matter of life and death. (see also the widow's mite, humility: leaders as servants; the last judgment; shrewdness, stewardship and the danger of riches, greed and hoarding possessions, pride and peer pressure, and renouncing family and possessions). (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (33:4)(9:34)(47:12)(77:45-46)

God has not placed two hearts inside any man. (33:4)

And those who hoard up gold and silver, and do not expend them in the way of God - give them tidings of a painful chastisement. (9:34)

God will surely admit those who believe and perform righteous deeds into gardens underneath which rivers flow. As for those who disbelieve, they take their enjoyment and eat as the cattle eat; and the Fire will be their habitation. (47:12)

Woe to the deniers on that day!

'Eat and enjoy for a little. Indeed you are guilty!' (77:45-46)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Let the slave of Dinar and Dirham (gold and silver coinage) and luxurious clothes perish, for he is pleased if these things are given to him, and if not, he is displeased!"

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses and hadith are self-explanatory and correspond directly to the Biblical verses above. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad make it clear that faith is about our priorities—what we love most in life. We have to make choices; we cannot love the pleasures and treasures of the world and love God at the same time. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Do not worry**

Jesus advised his disciples and others not to worry about their personal needs--God would take care of them.

²⁵Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they. ²⁷Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

²⁸And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹Yet I tell you not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

³⁰If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?[SV2] ³¹So do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'[SV3] ³²For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.[SV4](Mt 6:25-34)

Notes: See Lk 12:22-31; Th 36 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jesus was not concerned with the day-to-day needs of food, clothing, or shelter, which he assured his followers would be provided to them (see instructions to the disciples); he saw worldly concerns, from worries about daily needs to the desire for a comfortable future, as distractions to more important matters of faith and morality (see greed and hoarding possessions and treasures and the heart). The version in Thomas version is the shortest: ¹*Do not fret from morning to evening, and from evening to morning,*

*[about your food--about what you are going to eat, or about your clothing--] what you are going to wear. [²You're much better than the lilies, which neither card nor spin.][SV2](Th 36:1,2) Clothes were an obstacle to faith in Thomas (see Th 21:4; 37:2; see also, a new invitation). In the context of selfless service and the cost of discipleship, Jesus asked, *What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?*[SV3](Mk 8:36) Jesus addressed another kind of worry with Mary and Martha: Martha had become too busy to hear Jesus, and was unduly critical of her sister, Mary, who was listening to Jesus. The Serenity Prayer puts worry and responsibility in proper perspective: *God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to distinguish the one from the other. Amen.* (Barnes)*

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (29:60)(65:3)(72:13)

And how many an animal there is that does not bear its own provision. Yet God provides for it, and for you. And He is the Hearer, the Knower. (29:60)

[A]nd He will provide for him [who fears God] from whence he never expected. And whoever puts his trust in God, He will suffice him. Indeed God fulfils His command. Verily God has ordained for everything a measure. (65:3)

For whoever believes in his Lord shall fear neither loss nor oppression. (72:13)

Lo! God, with Him lies knowledge of the Hour; and He sends down the rain, and He knows what is in the wombs. And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow, and no soul knows in what land it will die. Truly God is Knower, Aware. (31:34)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"If you trusted in God as you should, He would sustain you even as He sustains the birds, which in the morning go forth hungry, and return in the evening filled." [Tirmidhi, Ahmad]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quranic verses and hadith correspond exactly to these Biblical teachings. It is interesting to note that E.F. Schumacher, one of the leading Christian thinkers of the last century, offered the following commentary on Mt 6:33, which accords nicely with the Islamic perspective as well as the commentary on Jesus:

There has never been a time, in any society in any part of the world, without its sages and teachers to challenge materialism and plead for a different order of priorities. The languages have differed, the symbols have varied, yet the message has always been the same: "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God, and all these things [the material things which you also need] shall be *added* unto you." They shall be added, we are told, here on earth where we need them, not simply in an after-life beyond our imagination. Today, however, this message reaches us not solely from the sages and saints but from the actual course of physical events. It speaks to us in the language of terrorism, genocide, breakdown, pollution, exhaustion. We live, it seems, in a unique period of convergence. It is becoming apparent that there is not only a promise but also a threat in those astonishing words about the kingdom of God - the threat that "unless you seek first the kingdom, these other things, which you also need, will cease to be available to you." (*Small is Beautiful*, Harper & Row 1989, pp. 248-249) (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Schumacher's commentary captures the universal truth of these sayings: True and eternal peace and security come only with trust in God, not in seeking the world's provisions. (Barnes & Nates)

* Do not judge

Jesus admonished his disciples not to judge others:

¹*Do not judge, or you too will be judged.* ²*For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged,[SV4] and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.[SV3](Mt 7:1,2)*

Notes: See Lk 6:36-38; Mk 4:24; Jn 12:47,48 (Sources: Q, Mk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The Lukan version of this saying in give and you shall receive elaborates on the reciprocal nature of God's love: to be kept, God's love must be given away; or, *what goes around, comes around*. Judgment, or condemnation, is the opposite of forgiveness and love, but is likewise reciprocal. We judge ourselves in how we treat others: *For the measure you use, it will be measured to you.* (Lk 36:38) For those who believe that Christianity is the one true religion and that God condemns all others to eternal damnation, it is but

a small step from believing that God condemns unbelievers to personally condemning unbelievers. For the Pharisees, compliance with the Law was the standard for righteousness, and judgment was based on obedience. In the greatest command, Jesus taught the rule of love over law and mercy, not justice for those accused of violating religious law (see mercy or justice: the adulterous woman). On such moral and religious issues (as distinguished from secular legal issues), Jesus urged tolerance, forgiveness and mercy, leaving judgment to God (see church and state and laws and love): ⁴⁷*As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.* ⁴⁸*There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him on the last day.*[SV4](Jn 12:47,48). The relationship between tolerance and judgment was illustrated by Jesus in the passage that followed the above saying with the contrasting metaphors of a speck and plank in the eye (see the Lukan version in criticizing self before others). Tolerance, forgiveness, and mercy are elements of the love of God which must be given in order to be received, and the foundation of the golden rule. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (95:7-8)

*So what makes you deny thereafter the Judgement?
Is not God the fairest of all judges?*

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"If somebody accuses another of disbelief or calls him the enemy of God, such an accusation will revert to him (the accuser) if the accused is innocent."

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The hadith above clearly shows that falsely condemning another person is extremely serious, since it "boomerangs" upon the accuser, so to speak. It is therefore best to let God judge His rights on the Day of Judgement. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: This is one of the most important teachings in interfaith relations. We should never judge others based on their religion, even though it is tempting for those who believe theirs is the one true faith. To condemn those of other faiths in the name of God is to condemn oneself. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Effective prayer**

Jesus taught that the power of prayer was unlimited:

⁷*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened unto you.* ⁸*For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

⁹*Which of you, if his son asks for bread, would give him a stone?*

¹⁰*Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake?* ¹¹*If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!*[SV2](Mt 7:7-11)

Notes: See Lk 11:9-13; Jn 15-7; Th 2:1-4; 92:1; 94:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This teaching is obvious hyperbole, as when Jesus told a man seeking an exorcism for his son that, *Everything is possible for him who believes* (Mk 9:23), and when Jesus told his disciples that they could move mountains if they had faith as small as a mustard seed (Mt 17:20 and Mk 11:22-25; see the power of prayer and power over evil). These sayings assume that we will ask, seek or pray for the right thing. John's Gospel reports Jesus promising to grant whatever his disciples wish so long as *...you remain in me and my word remain in you...* (Jn 15:7 in the way, the truth, and the life and the vine of love) The above sayings from Thomas confirm that those who seek will find, each in a different context (none of which is prayer). All of these sayings require that we actively seek the power of God on our journey of faith. See prayer in common, prayer in secret and persistence in prayer. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:186)(40:60)

And when My servants question you concerning Me, I am near; I answer the call of the caller when he calls to Me; so let them respond to Me, and let them believe in Me that they might go aright. (2:186)

And your Lord has said, "Call on Me and I will respond to you..." (40:60)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"God has declared: I am close to the thought that My servant has of Me, and I am with him wherever He recollects Me. If he

remembers Me in himself, I remember him in Myself, and if he remembers Me in a gathering, I remember him better than those in the gathering do, and if he approaches Me by as much as one hand's length, I approach him by a cubit... If he takes a step towards Me, I run towards him." (Ibn Hanbal)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Qur'anic commentators suggest that the phrase "*so let them respond (yastajībū) to Me*" as opposed to "*so let them call (yad'ū) Me*" in (2:186) implies an important distinction of making the request/call with sincerity and confidence that God will respond. This is because God Almighty has explicitly promised that He will answer anyone who calls Him. Likewise, "*And let them believe in Me*" means to believe in God's power to fulfill one's hopes and answer one's prayers. Finally, this will be in whatever manner is best for him/her. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Some believe that God answers all prayers and intervenes to alter natural processes and events, as in healing, while others doubt such miracles but believe that God dispenses spiritual power upon request—a healing spirit and peace greater than any worldly or natural power. How God responds to our prayerful requests will remain a great mystery. (Barnes & Nates)

* The Golden Rule

Jesus summed up Christian morality in the golden rule:

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,[SV3] for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.[SV4]
(Mt 7:12)

Notes: See Lk 6:31; Th 6:3 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Some scholars believe that the golden rule originated with Rabbi Hillel, a contemporary of Jesus, who is said to have summed up the Torah: *What you hate, don't do to another. That's the law in a nutshell; everything else is commentary.* (The Five Gospels, p 156). Jesus restated Hillel's summary in positive terms, testing the legitimacy of the religious rules and rituals of the Old Testament. *The golden rule complements the greatest commandment*, since loving one's neighbor as yourself is what you would have others do to you. Unlike the Old Testament version in Leviticus, Jesus taught that our neighbors included those we would rather avoid, even those of other religions. (see the good Samaritan) With

Jesus there was no ethnic justification for intolerance, prejudice, bigotry, or hatred in the name of God. To love God we must love the least of those around us (see the last judgment), do not judge, practice tolerance and forgiveness, and even love our enemies. God's forgiveness and love is reciprocal so that it must be given in order to be received. The Gospel of Thomas reports ²*Jesus said, Don't lie,* ³*and don't do what you hate,* ⁴*because all things are disclosed in heaven.*[SV4](Th 6:2-4) The SV scholars did not give the golden rule a high rating since it was not unique to Jesus or surprising, criteria they used to determine which sayings originated with Jesus. But scholars have acknowledged that Jesus often cited familiar passages and made them unique by stripping them of their ethnic limitations and giving them a universal application. For that reason *the golden rule* was a prototype for Kant's *categorical imperative*. While scholarly opinion is divided on whether Jesus taught *the golden rule*, it is an excellent summary of his teachings on legitimacy as the standard of morality and law even if it did not originate with Jesus. See the new command, love and laws, love over law, the law, humility: leaders must be servants; anger and retribution, tolerance and judgment, and love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace. (Barnes)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

A man came to the Messenger of God, and said, "O Prophet! Give me permission to commit adultery." The Companions jumped up to take care of the questioner, but the Prophet said "Leave him." The Prophet asked, "Would you like this to be done to your sister?" "No," the man replied. "To your daughter?" the Prophet asked. "No," the man replied. The Prophet asked about such and such female relatives, and the answer to all was, "No." The Prophet then said, "Hate what God hates, and love for your brother what you love for yourself." (Sunan al-Kubra al-Bayhaqi)

"None of you will have faith till he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." (Bukhari)

Commentary on Hadith: The first hadith above concludes with a very interesting juxtaposition between hating "what God hates" and loving "for your brother what you love for yourself," which I think is worth meditating over. It is also worth pointing out again that the word "brother" in each hadith has two meanings, one with respect to religion and another with respect to humanity, i.e. it is inclusive of both Muslims and non-Muslims. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The golden rule, like the greatest commandment, is a standard of legitimacy that can be embraced by those of any religion, and even by those of no religion, since it does not mention God. It is an ancient statement of a universal standard of legitimacy that has been confirmed by Kant's *categorical imperative*. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Faith for the few: the narrow gate**

Jesus was looking for just a few good men (or women):

¹³*Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*[SV3](Mt 7:13,14)

Notes: See Lk 13:24; Jn 10:9,10 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The Lukan version is considered more authentic: *Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.*[SV2](Lk 13:24) And in a new invitation, Jesus said, *...many are invited, but few are chosen.*[SV4](Mt 22:14) This saying confirms that following Jesus will never be popular, even if Christianity is the most popular religion in the world. The narrow way is one of sacrificial love and is contrasted with the broad and popular way that involves love for things of the world. In the teachings of Jesus love meant satisfying the needs of others; in today's world love means getting what we want for ourselves. An unconditional commitment to discipleship was simple but not easy; the ways of the world that led through the wide gate were far more attractive, easy and popular than the ways of God taught and exemplified by Jesus (see the cost of discipleship, the true disciple, renouncing family and possessions, pride and peer pressure, riches and salvation, and born again of the spirit). At the same time, Jesus referred to his yoke as easy and his burden light (see rest for the weary and love, the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace), and preached to the masses, not just the privileged few. The Gospel of John also used a gate as a metaphor for Jesus, but without negative connotations: *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*[SV4](Jn 10:9,10; see the good shepherd) The teachings of Jesus on salvation for the few does not relate to belief in the exclusivist doctrines of the church, but to a

commitment to discipleship, which is following the teachings and example of Jesus. (Barnes)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Paradise is surrounded by hardships, and Hell-Fire is surrounded by temptations." (Muslim)

Commentary on Hadith: Commentators on this hadith suggest that the path to paradise is surrounded by "work," whether inner or outer, and can be tiring, particularly if one is doing one's best. The path to hell, however, is tempting with desires that can seduce one into a path that does not lead to anything except regret and sadness in this life and the hereafter. Commentators suggest that although the paradisaal path appears to be "hard and narrow" with much work, once one enters it, one finds it "wide and easy." They relate this to the knowledge that one has been rescued in both this life and the Hereafter. It is also interesting that both the Divine Law and esoteric way in Islam have the symbolism of road connected to them. That is to say, the term Shari'ah is derived from the Arabic root road, implying the big road to God, whereas the term tariqah means path, implying a narrow way. (Ansary)

Joint Commentary: Jesus taught that the road to God's kingdom was narrow and only a few would travel it, and Muhammad spoke of the hardships associated with Islam; but through aggressive appeals to the masses Christianity and Islam have become the two most popular religions in the world. Their popularity is evidence that they have abandoned their egalitarian principles and in their competition for popularity and worldly power they have fostered fear, hatred and violence in the name of God. There is a major difference between Jesus and Muhammad on this point: while Muhammad spoke of hardships, he did not, like Jesus, suggest that only a few would embrace Islam as a true faith. Perhaps this was because Muhammad, like Moses but unlike Jesus, was concerned with governing and saw no distinction between religion and politics (see church and state), and no distinction between God's law and man's secular law. (see civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law, individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean and Laws and love: the new standard higher than the old) In nominally Christian democracies like the US in which elected officials must win a majority of votes, it is hard to imagine a political leader as a servant, although many claim to be such. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Faith evidenced by works as a tree by its fruit**

Jesus warned of false prophets who said one thing and did another. Their fruit was the best evidence of their faith:

¹⁵Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.[SV4] ¹⁶By their fruit you will recognize them.[SV3] Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles?[SV2] ¹⁷Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.[SV3] ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.[SV4] ²⁰Thus by their fruit you will recognize them.[SV3](Mt 7:15-20)

Notes: See Mt 12:33-35; Lk 6:43-45; Th 45:1-4 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This teaching describes the relationship between faith and morality: faith is evidenced more by actions than words (see talk is cheap); and Luke's version is more explicit in relating a person's acts to what is in that person's heart. (Lk 6:43-45; see also, individual responsibility and the law) Different teachings on the light of God's love in a lamp on a stand and the light of the world make the same point: God's love is light in a world of darkness (Jn 1:4-5). And James 2:14-26 provides a strong correlation between faith and works, concluding that faith without works is dead. But the judgmental passage on cutting down unproductive trees is inconsistent with other teachings of Jesus that emphasize God's forgiveness and mercy (see do not judge), and it is not found in the Lukan version of this saying. In Mt 12:33-35 Jesus used the same metaphor of a tree and its fruit to criticize the Pharisees with judgmental language typical of Matthew (see condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes) but that is inconsistent with other teachings of Jesus that emphasize love and forgiveness. (see faith, words, and judgment and the vine of love). (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (6:93)(14:24-27)(7:58)

And who does greater evil than he who invents lies against God, or who says, 'It is revealed to me', when nothing has been revealed to him or he who says, 'I will reveal the like of what God has revealed'?; If you could only see when the evildoers are in the agonies of death and the angels extend their hands, 'Give up your souls! Today you shall be requited with the chastisement of humiliation because you used to say about God other than the

truth, and that you used to scorn His signs'. (6:93)

Have you not seen how God has struck a similitude?: a goodly saying is as a goodly tree, its root set firm and its shoots are in heaven; it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord. And God strikes similitudes for mankind, so that they might remember.

And the similitude of a bad saying is as a bad tree, uprooted from upon the earth, having no stability.

God confirms those who believe by a firm saying in the life of this world and in the Hereafter; and God sends astray the evildoers; and God does what He will. (14:24-27)

As for the good land, its vegetation comes forth by permission of its Lord. While as for the bad, it comes forth only miserably. Even so, We dispense the signs for a people who are thankful. (7:58)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"In the last times men will come forth who will fraudulently use religion for worldly ends and wear sheepskins in public to display meekness. They will have soft tongues sweeter than sugar, but their hearts will be hearts of wolves. God Almighty will say, 'Are they trying to deceive Me, or do they dare to rise up against Me? I swear by Myself that I will send such afflictions upon them, which will leave the intelligent among them confounded.'"

(Tirmidhi)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Christians often take Christ's warning of false prophets to be a warning against the Prophet of Islam. But the truth is the opposite from the Islamic point of view, since Muslims believe the Prophet confirmed what Jesus and other prophets said, and that the Qur'an confirms what was revealed in other scriptures, such as the New Testament, Torah, and Psalms. In fact, all prophets warned their people against those who pretend to be prophets, just as they warned against those who pretend to be religious, but exploit the spiritual needs of others to gain power, fame, and money. Both the Qur'an and Bible raise the question of "good fruit," and it is the Muslim and Christian saints of history who may provide the clearest proof of the sacred origin of these traditions. In any regard, *A Common Word* addresses the question of whether or not Christianity is necessarily against Muslims by quoting the following Biblical verses:

He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters abroad. (Mt 12:30)
For he who is not against us is on our side. (Mk 9:40)
... for he who is not against us is on our side. (Lk 9:50)

"According to the *Blessed Theophylact's Explanation of the New Testament*, these statements are not contradictions because the first statement (in the actual Greek text of the New Testament) refers to demons, whereas the second and third statements refer to people who recognised Jesus, but were not Christians. Muslims recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, not in the same way Christians do (but Christians themselves anyway have never all agreed with each other on Jesus Christ's nature), but in the following way: *the Messiah Jesus son of Mary is a Messenger of God and His Word which he cast unto Mary and a Spirit from Him.... (Al-Nisa', 4:171)*. We therefore invite Christians to consider Muslims *not against* and thus *with them*, in accordance with Jesus Christ's (u) words here." (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Just who is a false prophet? It depends upon the definition of a true prophet, and that varies, not only between Jews, Christians and Muslims, but within each of these religions. The virtue of a *common word* is that it acknowledges love of God and neighbour to be at the foundation of our faith and a litmus test for the true prophet. That means those who assert the supremacy of one religion over others and use fear, hate and violence to promote their religion are false prophets. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Faith and works: parable of the wise and foolish builders**

Jesus likened faith and works to a rock foundation:

²⁴*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock.*
²⁵*The rain came down, the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against the house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation upon the rock.* ²⁶*But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.* ²⁷*The rain came, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat upon the house, and it fell with a great crash.[SV4] (Mt 7:24-27)*

Notes: See Lk 6:47-49 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Here a rock foundation represents the strength of a faith that puts the word of God into practice, compared to the vulnerability of a weak faith that does not do so and which is represented by a foundation of sand. Jesus questioned the weakness (or irrelevance) of faith in his own church (synagogue): *Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say?* [SV3](Lk 6:46) Jesus was emphatic that his teachings on love be made a condition of discipleship through daily practice (see the new command and vine of love). The greatest commandment teaches that we love God by loving others, and that we receive the love of God by sharing it with others (see give and you will receive). While good works are not the means to faith, they are the best evidence of it. There can be no real faith in Jesus and certainly no discipleship without a manifestation of that faith through works of loving kindness and sacrificial love. *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.* (see James 2:14-26 cited in faith evidenced by works as a tree by its fruit). And while altruistic works are morally good even without Christian faith, only works of faith can provide the solid foundation that can save us from the storms of life and troubles of the world--even the dark powers of sin and death (see love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). The forgiving love demonstrated by the father in the parable of the prodigal son illustrates the relationship between *faith and works*. Our salvation is achieved through faith and God's grace, not through good works; but good works are evidence of faith, and there cannot be true faith without good works. See also faith and morality, hypocrisy and sanctimony, hypocrisy: practise what you preach, condemnation of religious leaders; envy and equity: parable of the workers in the vineyard, sowing the seeds of faith, and the last judgment. SV scholars believe the origin of the above passage is from Israelite and Judean rabbinic lore rather than from Jesus, hence the SV4 rating; but whether it originated with Jesus or not, it is consistent with his teachings. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (9:109-110)(2:264-266)

Is he who founded his building upon fear of God and beatitude better, or he who founded his building upon the brink of a bank that is crumbling, so that it toppled with him into the fire of Hell? And God guides not the evildoing folk.

The buildings which they have built will never cease to be a misgiving in their hearts unless their hearts are cut to pieces; and God is Knower, Wise. (9:109-110)

O you who believe, annul not your voluntary almsgivings with reproach and injury, as one who expends of his substance to show off to men and believes not in God and the Last Day. The likeness of him is as the likeness of a smooth rock on which is soil, and a torrent smites it, and leaves it barren. They have no power over anything that they have earned. God guides not the disbelieving folk.

But the likeness of those who expend their wealth, seeking God's good pleasure, and to confirm themselves is as the likeness of a garden upon a hill; a torrent smites it and it yields its produce twofold; if no torrent smites it, then dew, and God sees what you do.

Would any of you wish to have a garden of date-palms and vines, with rivers flowing beneath it, for him there is in it all manner of fruit, then old age smites him, and he has seed, but they are weak; then a whirlwind with fire smites it, and it is consumed. So, God makes clear the signs to you, so that you might reflect. (2:264-266)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The Qur'an has several verses closely corresponding to Mt 7:24-27. They distinguish between those who do good seeking God's satisfaction, and those who merely wish to show-off. The first gains paradise, whereas the fruit of the second is wiped out by a "whirlwind with fire" through pride and hurting others' feelings. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The relationship between *faith* and *works* has always been fraught with theological controversy. In Judaism and Islam, good works (compliance with God's law) seem to equate to righteousness, while in Christianity the requirements of faith and grace to salvation sometimes minimize the importance of good works. It seems, however, from the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad that good works based on love for others are not only evidence of true faith, but that there cannot be true faith without good works. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Instructions to the disciples**

Jesus instructed his disciples to travel light and live off the land as they went from town to town spreading the Gospel:

⁵...Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. ⁶Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.[SV4]

⁹Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts;[SV4] ¹⁰take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff;[SV2] for the worker is worth his keep.

¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. ¹²As you enter the home, give it your greeting.[SV4] ¹³If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it;[SV3] if it is not, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that home or town. ¹⁵I tell you the truth, it will be more bearable for Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town. ¹⁶I am sending you out like sheep among wolves.

Therefore[SV4] be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.[SV2] ¹⁷Be on your guard against men; they will hand you over to the local councils and flog you in their synagogues.

¹⁸On my account you will be brought before governors and kings as witnesses to them and to the Gentiles.[SV4](Mt 10:5,6,9-18)

²³When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.[SV4](Mt 10:23)

Notes: See Mk 6:8-11; Lk 9:1-6; 10:1-12; 22:35-38; Th 14:4 (Sources: Q, Mk, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The prohibition against proselytizing Gentiles and Samaritans is unique to Matthew and out of character for Jesus. *The New Interpreter's Bible* (NIB) commentary joins the SV in not considering these to be the words of Jesus, since "...he would not have forbidden his disciples to initiate a Gentile mission to which they were in no way inclined anyway." (NIB, Vol. VIII, p 256) Two verses are omitted from *The Jefferson Bible*: ⁷As you go preach the message: "The kingdom of God is near." ⁸Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.[SV4](Mt 10:7,8; for Mt 10:19-22,24,25 see faith and persecution) The positive thrust of the instructions is do not worry, trusting in God to provide all things needed. In sharing the Gospel, persistence is not advocated for those who resist

it. Jesus tells his disciples to leave and *shake the dust off their feet*.... The above instructions reflect the itinerant lifestyle of a 1st century Jewish rabbi intent upon announcing in many villages the in-breaking kingdom of God (see Mk 1:38; Lk 4:43), and his followers were his family (see family of God and the cost of discipleship). The Gospel of Thomas reports Jesus saying, *Be passersby.*[SV3](Th 42). Luke reports Jesus saying, *Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay his head.*[SV2](Lk 9:57; see unconditional commitment to discipleship). Matthew emphasizes the disciples as workers for the final harvest, a missionary purpose that scholars believe originated in the early church, not with Jesus (see leaders in short supply). Living on hospitality made compliance with Jewish dietary laws impossible, and Luke's gospel does not restrict the disciples to Jewish neighborhoods: *Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house* [SV2](Lk 10:7) The Gospel of Thomas makes the same point: *When you go into any region and walk about in the countryside, when people take you in, eat what they serve you...*[SV2](Th 14:4; see individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean and do not worry). Tolerance was a practical necessity, and the golden rule an application of enlightened self-interest. Once, Jesus rebuked the disciples for asking him to call down fire from heaven to burn up a Samaritan village that had rejected them (Lk 9:51-56). Luke reports Jesus commissioning seventy-two disciples (Lk 10:1-12), and later asking them: ³⁵*When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything? "Nothing," they answered. ³⁶He said to them, But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one....³⁸The disciples said, "See Lord, here are two swords." That is enough, he replied.*[SV4](Lk 22:35-36,38) The requirement for a sword refutes the concept of passive resistance that may be implied in submission and retribution; but Jesus later reprimanded a disciple for using a sword (Lk 22:51). (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (24:61)(24:27)

But when you enter houses, bid peace to yourselves with a salutation from God, blessed and good. So God clarifies the signs for you that perhaps you might comprehend. (24:61)

O you who believe, do not enter houses other than your houses until you have [first] asked permission and greeted their

occupants. That is better for you that perhaps you might remember. (24:27)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Wearing gold and silk is permitted for the women of my community and prohibited for the men." (Ahmad)

"Do not wear silk or silk brocade, and do not drink in vessels of gold and silver, and do not eat in bowls made of them; for they are for them [disbelievers] in this life and for us in the next." (Bukhari)

"Beware the discernment of the true believer, for he sees by the light of God."

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Many Muslim scholars believe that Mt 10:5-6 were the actual words of Jesus, the inverse of the above commentary on the teachings of Jesus, since Christianity does not have a Divine Law. Although Muslim scholars are not unanimous on this issue, this view implies that the message of Jesus is not universal, and that only the message of Muhammad as the last messenger is universal, e.g. Say: '*O mankind, I am the Messenger of God to you all, [the Messenger] of Him to Whom belongs the kingdom of the heavens and of the earth...*' (7:158). Regarding the references to gold and silver, they are not prohibited in Islam for decoration, unless combined with pride or in violation of the rights of the poor with respect to zakat. As the hadith indicates, the wearing of gold and silver is only prohibited for men, whereas eating and drinking out of gold and silver plates and cups is forbidden for all Muslims. *O Children of Adam! Don your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but do not be excessive; He truly does not love those who are excessive.* (7:31) Regarding food, drink, and other provisions for the road, these are required on pilgrimage and other travels. *The Pilgrimage is in months well-known; whoever undertakes the duty of Pilgrimage during them, then no lewdness, nor wickedness, or disputing in the Pilgrimage. Whatever good you do, God knows it. And take provision. But the best provision is piety; and fear you Me, O people of pith!* (2:197). This is particularly important, since the Qur'an also states: *It is the duty of people towards God to make the pilgrimage to the House, if he is able to make his way there.* (3:97.) When the companions asked the Prophet what "able" means in this verse, he replied, "Provisions and transportation." Accordingly, many Muslim scholars have a difficult time understanding the Biblical verses in Mt 10:9-10,

other than viewing it as a form of asceticism. The key to reconciling these apparent contradictions may be that Islam is based on equilibrium for the whole of society, while Christianity is a way for the spiritual elite (keeping in mind that Islam also has a spiritual way, and Christianity became the religion of an empire). Finally, we may wish to discuss whether or not verses 15-18 are somewhat analogous to (60:8-9): *God does not forbid you in regard to those who did not wage war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes, that you should treat them kindly and deal with them justly. Assuredly God loves the just. God only forbids you in regard to those who waged war against you on account of religion and expelled you from your homes and supported [others] in your expulsion, that you should make friends with them. And whoever makes friends with them, those – they are the wrongdoers.* (Ansary)

Joint commentary: It would be a mistake to think that Jesus limited his message to Jews, although he obviously focused upon them since he was a rabbi and his teachings sought to reform Judaism. What made Jesus unique as a rabbi and his teachings universal is that his message to those in his audience, which included Gentiles and Samaritans, was a message of sacrificial love for all people rather than an ethnocentric message for Jews alone that emphasized compliance with Mosaic Law. And Jesus, unlike Muhammad, had no political aspirations; his objective was to teach the word of God and prepare people for a new and unexpected (spiritual) kingdom of God. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Courage: open and fearless speech**

Jesus encouraged his disciples to speak out on what they knew to be right, even in the face of persecution.

²⁶*So do not be afraid of them.[SV4] There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.[SV2]* ²⁷*What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs.*

²⁸*Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.[SV4]* ²⁹*Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father.* ³⁰*And even the hairs of your head are all numbered.* ³¹*So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.[SV2]* (Mt 10:26-31)

Notes: See Mk 4:22; 13:10,11; Lk 12:1-7; 8:17; Th 5:2; 6:5,6; 33:1 (Sources Q, Mk, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The above continues the instructions to the disciples, further developing the theme, do not worry. Fear is the big brother of worry and the enemy of faith. (see Jesus calming the tempest) That goes back to the Old Testament, as in Psalm 23 (*I will fear no evil, for thou art with me...*) In the Epistle of John, God is love, and fear is the enemy of love. (I Jn 4:16-20) As for disclosing what has been hidden, Luke's version is in the context of a lamp on a stand (Lk 8:17), and Thomas uses the same context in Th 33:1. Thomas also reports Jesus saying, *Know what is in front of your face, and what is hidden from you will be disclosed to you.*[SV3](Th 5:1) This emphasizes the unseen kingdom of God: a spiritual, not a worldly, kingdom available to all who are born again of the spirit. The Gospel of John develops the concept of truth as the foundation of faith (see the truth will make you free and the way, the truth, and the life). Jesus admonished the disciples not to fear mortal men who could only take their lives, but to fear God (Dt 6:13), who could consign their souls to Hell (on whether there is a hell, see end note 27); he might also have been referring to Satan, prince of the world, who could corrupt their souls (see faith and persecution). (Barnes) Many biblical interpreters believe that Jesus is referring to God. Some others scholars do not. Some think that Jesus is speaking of the enemies of truth, those opposed to the gospel of the kingdom. The disciples were proclaiming the truth that God's kingdom was a present reality. Jesus taught his followers not to fear the death of the body, for it is not the essence of life. It is interesting to note that "hell" refers to "mental suffering, inner torment." Jesus taught that God is a good and loving parent and therefore is not the creator of hell. In a sense we create our own hell. (See *Aramaic Light on the Gospel of Matthew* by R.A. Errico/Geo. M. Lamsa, page 158) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:175)(27:25)(15:94)(9:13)(33:37)(33:39)(5:44)(2:150)(16:79)(67:19)(58:6)(72:28)(36:12)

That is only Satan making fear his friends, therefore do not fear them; but fear Me, if you are believers. (3:175)

[God] brings forth the hidden in the heavens and the earth, and He knows what they conceal and what they proclaim. (27:25)

So proclaim what you have been commanded, and turn away from the idolaters. (15:94)

Will you not fight a people who broke their oaths and intended to expel the Messenger - initiating against you first? **Are you afraid of them? God is more worthy of your fear if you are believers.** [emphasis added] (9:13)

- [those] who deliver the Messages of God and fear Him, and fear no one except Him. And God suffices as Reckoner. (33:39)

Surely We revealed the Torah, wherein is guidance, and light by which the prophets, who had submitted, judged for those of Jewry, as did the rabbis, and the priests, according to that which they were bidden to observe of God's Scripture and were witnesses to. **So do not fear men, but fear Me, and do not sell My signs for a small price.** Whoever does not judge according to what God has revealed - such are the disbelievers. [emphasis added] (5:44)

From whatever place you issue, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque; and wherever you may be, turn your faces towards it, so that there be not any argument from the people against you; excepting the evildoers among them; **and do not fear them, but fear Me; and that I may perfect My grace upon you, and that you may be guided.** [emphasis added] (2:150)

Or have they not seen the birds above them spreading their wings and closing? Nothing sustains them, except the Compassionate One. Indeed He is Seer of all things. (67:19)

The day when God will raise them all together, He will then inform them of what they did. God has kept count of it, while they forgot it. And God is Witness to all things. (58:6)

so that He may know that they have conveyed the Messages of their Lord, and He encompasses all that is with them and keeps count of all things'. (72:28)

Truly it is We Who bring the dead to life, and record what they have sent ahead and their vestiges. And everything We have numbered in a clear register. (36:12)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The first several verses above relate to "the fear of God" as "the beginning of wisdom," as we see in all the Abrahamic traditions. According to al-Ghazzali, the difference between the fear of God and fear of any of His

creatures is that the latter makes you run away from it, whereas the former makes you run towards Him. The last four verses either employ the symbolism of birds and/or emphasize God's knowledge and "count" of all things, analogous to Mt 10:29-31. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There is consensus in the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad that the faithful must speak God's truth without fear, and consensus in the Hebrew Bible and Qur'an that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom* (Ps 11:10). But Jesus repeatedly tells his disciples, *Do not be afraid*, and in 1 Jn 4:16-18 *God is love*, and *There is no fear in love*. We know that people fear those of other religions, and that fear gives rise to suspicion, hate and even violence. While the fear of God is righteous, the fear of others is not. We must fear God but in matters of faith we should be fearless of others. (Barnes) The word "fear" in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament) and the New Testament does not so much mean being "afraid of" as it means "in awe of." Before God's Holiness and Parity, we stand in amazement, but as children of God we are not to be afraid, but awe-struck. God is awesome, but we are made in God's Image. (See R. Otto, *The Idea of Holy* and S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*.) (Nates)

*** Rest for the weary**

In contrast to the onerous burden of the cross, Jesus also spoke of the peace that came with salvation.

²⁸*Come to me, all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* ²⁹*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* ³⁰*For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*[SV4](Mt 11:28-30)

Notes: See Th 90:1,2 (Sources: Mt, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The teachings of Jesus were a source of comfort for those dispossessed and oppressed in body or spirit, liberating them from pain and suffering (see The Beatitudes and love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). This is in contrast to the demands that Jesus made upon his disciples, who were required to leave everything, take up their cross and follow him (Mt 10:37-39, 16:24-26; see selfless service: the cost of discipleship). Jesus was a source of comfort for some and discomfort for others. He blessed the poor

and downtrodden and cursed the rich and powerful (see Luke's version of the Beatitudes). He condemned religious leaders for their hypocrisy and sanctimony and all who put the honor of men ahead of God (see treasures and the heart, renouncing family and possessions and faith and persecution). Jesus acknowledged that his radical teachings would bring dissension, not peace to families, but for all who put their faith in Jesus as the word of God there was a peace that passed all understanding (Jn 14:27; 16:33; Php 4:7). The contrasting themes of discipleship are found in *A Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition: Put me to doing, put me to suffering, Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee. Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing. I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.* (UMH p 607) (Barnes)

In Mt 11:28-30 "to give rest" has a double meaning of relief from fruitless labor and of permanent satisfaction. This relates to "resting in God." The word *eirene* (peace) in classical Greek is primarily negative, denoting absence or end of war. This war could be with God, ourselves and others. Peace can be thought of as being at harmony with God, ourselves and others. When Jesus prayed that his followers would first be one with God, as he was, he was referring to such harmony. (Jn 17:11) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (4:28)(2:185)(94:6)(65:7)(65:4)

God desires to lighten things for you; for man was created weak. (4:28)

God desires ease for you, and desires not hardship for you. (2:185)

Truly with hardship comes ease. (94:6)

God will assuredly bring about ease after hardship. (65:7)

And whoever fears God, He will make matters ease for him. (65:4)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith:

"Religion is very easy, and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extremists, but try to be near to perfection and receive the good tidings that you will be rewarded; and gain strength by offering the prayers in the mornings, afternoons and during the last hours of the nights." (Bukhari)

"Make things easy for the people, and do not make it difficult for them, and make them calm (with glad tidings) and do not repulse (them)." (Bukhari)

"Do those deeds which you can do easily, as God will not get tired [of giving rewards] till you get bored and tired [of performing good deeds] ... and the most beloved deed to God is the one which is done regularly even if it is little." (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These verses and hadith are largely self-explanatory. Accordingly, one of the best things we can do is to simply be consistent in our religious practice, no matter how small the action may be. The Quranic verses also remind us that with every contraction/hardship comes expansion/ease. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: The primary and sometimes uncomfortable duty of sacrificial love for disciples contrasts with the rest given to those who are weary and burdened. Bearing a cross contrasts with an easy yoke and a light burden. Discipleship can be both a cross to bear and an easy yoke, depending upon circumstances and conditions known only to us and to God. (Barnes)
Hardship and ease are cousins of faith. In the teachings of Muhammad, we are advised to "try to be near to perfection..." In the New Testament, we are told that Jesus, while expounding on love for enemies, said, "You must be perfect—just as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Mt 5:48) (Nates)

*** Faith, words, and judgment**

Jesus used the metaphor of a tree and its fruit to illustrate how the Pharisees would be held accountable:

³³Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.[SV3] ³⁴You brood of vipers, how can you who are evil say anything good? For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks.[SV4] ³⁵The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.[SV3] ³⁶But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. ³⁷For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.[SV4](Mt 12:33-37)

Notes: See Mt 7:16-20; Lk 6:43-45; Th 45:1-4 (Sources: Q, Th, Mt).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: In this passage Jesus used the same tree/fruit metaphor to represent good and evil as in faith evidenced by works, as a tree by its fruit. He was responding to those Pharisees who had attributed the miracles of Jesus to Satan (see miracles: work of Satan or God?, blasphemies and blasphemies or word of God). It was one thing for the Pharisees to criticize him, but unforgiveable for them to speak against the Holy Spirit that was responsible for the miracles: *Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come.*[SV4](Mt 12:32; cited in blasphemies) While talk is cheap, what comes out of the mouth is evidence of what is in the heart (see clean and unclean); sanctimonious and hypocritical religious leaders who refer to the work of the Holy Spirit as the work of Satan will be held accountable on judgment day. They will be acquitted or condemned by their words as evidence of what was in their hearts. The teaching on anger and reconciliation also addresses the dangers of the tongue, as does the letter of James (James 1:19,20,26; 3:1-12). The judgmental theme of verses 36,37 is typical of Matthew but out of character for Jesus (see do not judge), accounting for the SV4 rating. (Barnes) *O brood of poisonous snakes, how can you speak good things when you are bad?* Words and deeds come from the heart—the innermost being of a person. From a good heart comes good words and works. From a bad heart come bad words and works. Careless or idle words in this section mean rash or reckless. These remarks create disputes and quarrels. In this passage, the men who blasphemed against God's healing power would be held responsible for their reckless remarks. In essence, they condemned themselves. Our speech must have nothing that would do damage to another. We have to answer for our own speech. (See *Aramaic Light on the Gospel of Matthew*, by R.A. Errico/Geo. M. Lamsa, pages 184-186)(Nates)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"The similitude of good company and that of bad company is that of the owner of musk and of the one (iron-smith) blowing bellows, and the owner of musk would either offer you free of charge or you would buy it from him or you would smell its pleasant odor, and so far as one who blows the bellows is concerned, he would either burn your clothes or you shall have to smell its repugnant smell." (Muslim)

Commentary on the Hadith: The preceding hadith suggests a profound relationship between actions, which includes speech, and the substance of our being. As Seyyed Hossein Nasr, perhaps the leading Islamic studies scholar in the West, points out:

It is essential to remember that the reality of the human state cannot be exhausted by any of its outward projections. A particular human action or behavior as well as thought always reflect a state of being, and its study can lead to a certain kind of knowledge of the state of being of the agent provided there is already an awareness of the whole to which the fragment can be related. Fragmented knowledge of human behavior is related to human nature in the same way that waves are related to the sea.¹

Since Islam is based on Word made Book, and the recitation of the five daily canonical prayers corresponds to the Eucharist in Christianity, the question of what we say and its relation to our inner state is particularly crucial. With respect to the Qur'an in relation to the Prophet himself, it is important to note that the Qur'an states:

he does not utter a word but that there is beside him a watcher, [who is] ready. (50:18)
And had he fabricated any lies against Us,
We would have assuredly seized him by the Right Hand,
then We would have assuredly severed his life-artery,
and not one of you could have defended him. (69:44-47) (Ansari)

Joint Commentary: Jesus and Muhammad agreed that faith was based on what was in one's heart, and that what was in one's heart was reflected in one's words and actions. Jesus emphasized sacrificial love as the principle of faith that should control one's words and actions, while Muhammad, like Moses, relied more on religious rules to determine legitimacy. Despite their differences, the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor is a *common word* of faith for Christians and Muslims. (Barnes) Islam is based on Word made Book, only in Arabic. The Qur'an states that if the Prophet told lies about Allah, the most Gracious, the most Merciful, then Muhammad would be treated extremely severely. But Allah must have known that out of this good man's heart would come only the good words he had been given. (Nates)

¹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islam and the Plight of Modern Man*, p. 6.

*** Tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds**

Jesus used a parable to describe the nature of judgment. He compared the kingdom of heaven to a man who sowed good seed in his field. During the night his enemy sowed weeds in the field. When weeds began to appear among the wheat, the servants asked the owner why the weeds appeared when only good seed had been sown, and the owner explained it was the work of the enemy. When the servants asked if they should pull up the weeds, the owner said,

²⁹No, because while you are pulling up the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. ³⁰Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First, collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.[SV3](Mt 13:24-30)

Then Jesus explained the parable:

³⁷The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸The field is the world, and the good seeds stand for the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, ³⁹and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. ⁴⁰As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be in the end of the age. ⁴¹The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴²They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.[SV4] He who has ears, let him hear.[SV3](Mt 13:37-43)

Notes: See Th 57:1-4 (Sources: Mt, Th)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This is only the second parable explained by Jesus. The SV4 rating indicates that scholars believe this explanation (vs 37-43), like the first, did not originate with Jesus (see sowing the seeds of faith: the parable of the sower), a conclusion supported by Th 57:1-4 which does not include an explanation. Harvest is a frequent metaphor for the last judgment and end times (see seed and harvest, leaders in short supply, and instructions to the disciples). In a related passage, Jesus is reported to have said, *Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.*[SV3](Mt 15:13). While Matthew emphasizes God's judgment, this passage emphasizes that we do not judge. When we sit in moral judgment of others, we violate essential elements of God's

love: tolerance, mercy and forgiveness (see anger and reconciliation and faith and eternal life). They represent the essence of God's love for us, but they must be given in order to be received. As to God's judgment of throwing those who sin and do evil into the fiery furnace of hell,²⁷ see insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus, and the last judgment. This parable is not so much about God's judgment as it is a caution for us to be tolerant and not to judge others. (Barnes) In the parable of the wheat and the weeds, there is more than tolerance and judgment. Some of this could be because of the difference between the modern Western mindset and that of the ancient Oriental mindset. A parable is not to be analyzed but experienced and discerned. Also, many of us would wonder why Thomas Jefferson included Matthew 13:37-43 in his selection of the moral teachings of Jesus. Would Jesus really have emphasized such punishment for people? Many of us would agree that "Jesus would have agreed with the twentieth-century Jewish mystic Rav Kook: 'It is our right to hate an evil man for his actions, but because his deepest self is the image of God, it is our duty to honor him with love.'" (See *The Gospel According to Jesus* by Stephen Mitchell, pages 153-154) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (13:17)(3:55-57)

He sends down water from the sky, whereat the valleys flow according to their measure, and the flood carries a scum that swells, and from that which they smelt in the fire, desiring ornaments or ware; [there rises] a scum the like of it. Thus, God points out truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it passes away as dross, while that which is of use to mankind, lingers in the earth. Thus, God strikes similitudes. (13:17)

When God said, 'O Jesus, I am gathering you, and raising you to Me, and I am cleansing you of those who disbelieved, and I am setting those who follow you above those who disbelieved until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me shall be your return, and I will decide between you, as to what you were at variance about. As for the disbelievers, I will chastise them with a terrible chastisement in this world and the Hereafter; they shall have no helpers.

But as for the believers, who do deeds of righteous, He will pay them in full their wages. God loves not the evildoers. (3:55-57)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"The example of guidance and knowledge with which God has sent me is like abundant rain falling on the earth, some of which was

fertile soil that absorbed rain water and brought forth vegetation and grass in abundance. (And) another portion of it was hard and held the rain water and God benefited the people with it and they utilized it for drinking, making their animals drink from it and for irrigation of the land for cultivation. (And) a portion of it was barren which could neither hold the water nor bring forth vegetation. The first is the example of the person who comprehends God's religion and gets benefit (from the knowledge) which God has revealed through me. The last example is that of a person who does not care for it and does not take God's guidance revealed through me (he is like that barren land.)" (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The passing "scum" in (13:17) and the "rain falling on different types of soil" in the hadith above are analogous to the Biblical parable of the weeds in the sense that all distinguish the good as what is abiding and evil as that which is perishing. The Qur'an also corroborates the Biblical parable of the weeds in that (3:55) asserts that God raises Jesus to Himself, "*cleansing you [Jesus] of those who disbelieved, and I am setting those who follow you above those who disbelieved until the Day of Resurrection,*" asserting in other verses that, "*The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of God, neither would the angels who are nigh The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of God, neither would the angels who are nigh. Whoever disdains to worship Him, and waxes proud, He will assuredly muster them to Him, all of them.*" (4:172) Regarding esoteric vs. exoteric interpretations of hell, Frithjof Schuon provides the following interesting commentary, which I think is worth quoting at length for purposes of discussion:

The notion of an eternal hell, after having for many centuries stimulated fear of God and efforts towards virtue, has today rather the opposite effect and contributes to making the doctrine of the hereafter seem improbable; and, by a strange paradox, in a period which is one of contrasts and compensations, and at the same time generally speaking as refractory as possible to pure metaphysics, only the esoterism of gnosis is in a position to render intelligible the very precariously held positions of exoterism and to satisfy certain needs of causality. Now the problem of divine punishment... can be summed up in two questions: first, is it possible for man who is responsible and free to oppose the Absolute either directly or indirectly, even if only in an illusory sense? Certainly he can, since the individual essence can be

impregnated with any cosmic quality and there are consequently states that are "possibilities of impossibility."² And the second question is this: can exoteric truth, for instance in regard to hell, be total truth? Certainly not, since it is determined – in a certain sense by definition – by a particular moral interest, or by particular reasons of psychological opportuneness. The absence of various compensating shades of expression in certain religious teachings can be explained in this way; the eschatologies relating to these religious perspectives are of course not anti-metaphysical, but they are "non-metaphysical" and anthropocentric,³ and so much is this the case that in the context of these teachings certain truths appear "immoral" or at least ill-sounding; it is therefore not possible for them to discern in infernal states aspects that are more or less positive, or the converse in paradisaal states. By this allusion we do not mean to say that there is symmetry between Mercy and Rigor – the former has priority over the latter⁴ – but rather that the relationship Heaven-hell corresponds by metaphysical necessity to what is expressed in the Far Eastern symbolism of the *yin-yang*, in which the black portion includes a white point and the white portion a black point; if then there are compensations in *gehenna* because nothing in existence can be absolute and the divine

² "And they say: The Fire will not touch us save for a certain number of days. Say: Have ye received a covenant from *Allāh* – truly *Allāh* will not break His covenant – or tell ye concerning *Allāh* that which ye know not? Nay, but whosoever hath done evil and his sin surroundeth him; such are the rightful owners of the Fire; they will abide therein" (*khālidūn*). (Quran, II, 80-81). Here the whole emphasis is on the proposition: ". . . and his sin surroundeth him" (*wa ahātāt bihi khatī 'atuhu*), which indicates the essential, and so "mortal" character of the transgression. This passage is a reply to men who believed, not that hell as such is metaphysically limited, but that the duration of the punishment is equal to that of the sin.

³ Theologians are not in principle unaware that the "eternity" of hell – the case of paradise is somewhat different – is not on the same level as that of God and could not be identical with it; but this subtlety remains for them without consequences. If, in the Semitic Scriptures, exoterism is predicated by such ideas as creation *ex nihilo* and a survival both individual and eternal, the exoteric tendency likewise appears in Hindu and Buddhist Scriptures – though in a different fashion – in the sense that these texts appear to place on earth those phases of transmigration which are neither celestial nor infernal; in the climate of Hinduism, exoterism – always averse to subtle explanations – is reduced to the simplicity of the symbols. Certainly one eschatology may be more complete than another, but none could be absolutely adequate by reason of the very limitation of human and earthly imagination.

⁴ There is asymmetry between the celestial and infernal states because the former are eminently nearer to pure Being than the latter; their "eternity" is thus on any reckoning different from that of the hells.

Mercy penetrates everywhere,⁵ there must also be in Paradise, not indeed sufferings, but shadows bearing an inverse testimony to the same principle of compensation and signifying that Paradise is not God, as also that there is a link between all existences. Now this principle of compensation is esoteric – to make a dogma of it would be wholly contrary to the spirit of alternativism so characteristic of Western exoterism – and indeed we find Sufic writings giving expression to views remarkable for their shades of meaning: Jili, Ibn `Arabi and others admit an aspect of enjoyment in the infernal state for, if on the one hand the man who has been reprovved suffers from being cut off from the Sovereign Good and, as Avicenna emphasizes, from deprivation of his earthly body although the passions subsist, on the other hand he remembers God, according to Jalal ad-Din Rumi, and "nothing is sweeter than the remembrance of *Allāh*." Indeed in hell the wicked and the proud know that God is real, whereas on earth they either took no account of this or were always able to bring themselves to doubt it; thus something is changed in them by the mere fact of their death and this something is indescribable from the point of view of earthly life. "The dead alone know the worth of life," say the Moslems. Here it is perhaps as well to recall that those in hell would be ipso facto delivered if they had the supreme knowledge – whose potentiality they certainly possess – so that even in hell they hold the key to their liberation. (*Understanding Islam*, "The Qur'an," ch. 2) (*Ansari*)

Joint commentary: The Qur'an and hadith seem more concerned with God's final judgment and the places where souls are consigned than do the teachings of Jesus, which are more concerned with moral imperatives on how to live, such as do not judge, than with describing the afterlife. For Jesus, salvation came in this life, not the next. He spoke little of heaven and hell as places of eternal blessings or damnation, so that theological

⁵ Al-Ghazzali relates in his *Durrat al-fākhirah* that one man, when plunged into the fire, cried out more loudly than all the others: "And he was taken out all burned. And God said to him: Why did you cry out more loudly than all the other people in the fire? He replied: Lord, Thou hast judged me, but I have not lost faith in Thy mercy . . . And God said: Who despaireth of the mercy of his Lord save those who are astray? (Quran, XV, 56) Go in peace, I have pardoned you." From a Catholic point of view, this would refer to purgatory. Buddhism knows of Bodhisattvas, such as Kshitigarbha, who give relief to the damned with celestial dew or bring them other alleviations, and this is an indication that there are angelic functions of mercy which reach even to hell.

descriptions of heaven and hell are speculative at best.

(Barnes)

In the Qur'an (3:55-57) it is stated that "God loves not the evildoers." It does not say, at least not in English, that God loves the doer but not the evil. The questions about heaven-hell are raised in some of these selections. This is a needed consideration, whether we approach it from the philosophical or religious point of view. We may examine this with the profundity of scholars or the simple faith of a trusting soul. Only God has the final answers. We need to wait upon further inquiry and/or revelation. (Nates)

*** The kingdom: the parables of the treasure and the pearl**

Following the parable of the weeds, Jesus taught two more parables on the kingdom of heaven:

⁴⁴*The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold everything he had and bought that field.*

⁴⁵*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls; ⁴⁶when he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it.*[SV2](Mt 13:44-46)

Notes: See Th 109:1-3; 76:1,2 (Sources: Mt, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: One interpretation of the above parables is that both the treasure and the pearl represent those of us who are lost and found and reconciled to God through Jesus. Another interpretation is the reverse: the kingdom of heaven, or salvation, is the treasure and pearl, and when found all else is forsaken for it. The latter interpretation is supported by teachings on renouncing family and possessions and the cost of discipleship. The former interpretation, which analogizes humankind with a treasure and pearls, implies too much goodness in human nature; but it is consistent with other references to the kingdom that indicate the world is the domain of Satan and that only a few will have the strength of faith to enter the kingdom (see the parable of the weeds, the parable of the net and faith is for the few: the narrow gate). Jesus used other metaphors for faith in parables on the kingdom: see the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the yeast. Both the parable of the treasure and the pearl involve deception, which is reminiscent of the crafty steward in shrewdness, stewardship, and the danger of riches. The version in Th 109:1-3 has the finder of the treasure lending money at

interest, a prohibited activity. Employing dubious or exaggerated behavior to illustrate principles of morality and faith is considered by SV scholars to be typical of Jesus. Such teachings on the kingdom are mystical matters of faith rather than moral teachings. Scholars agree that Jesus taught of an in-breaking kingdom of God, and most believe that he was speaking of a spiritual kingdom here and now—an unseen kingdom of God—rather than a coming apocalyptic kingdom on earth as envisioned by John, or of a *Parousia* in which Paul and other early Christians thought Jesus would return in their lifetimes to initiate God's kingdom on earth. (Barnes)

A treasure in a field, a pearl of great worth and price...these are the symbols of the kingdom of God. Since we are not used to being in a "kingdom", we can better call it the *reign* of God or even, being in a right relationship with God. Jesus said the first and most important commandment is to love God as God loves us, with everything and unconditionally. And the second is to love others as we love ourselves. We may have to work for and search for the "kingdom of God", but paradoxically it is the gift of God. It holds for us peace, justice and tranquility. We have to give our all to receive God's all—His grace, compassion and mercy. As we give all to retain God's all, we are blessed and become thankful in our journey of life. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (9:111)(35:29)(61:10-12)

Indeed God has purchased from the believers their lives and their possessions, so that theirs will be [the reward of] Paradise: they shall fight in the way of God and they shall kill and be killed; that is a promise which is binding upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Qur'ān; and who fulfils his covenant better than God? Rejoice then in this bargain of yours which you have made, for that is the supreme triumph. (9:111)

Indeed those who recite the Book of God and observe prayer, and expend of what We have provided them secretly and openly, anticipate a commerce that will never be ruined, (35:29)

O you who believe, shall I show you a commerce that will deliver you from a painful chastisement?

You should believe in God and His Messenger and struggle for the cause of God with your possessions and your lives. That is better for you, should you know. He will [then] forgive you your sins and admit you into gardens underneath which rivers flow and pleasant dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. That is the supreme triumph. (61:10-12)

He gives wisdom to whomever He will, and he who is given wisdom, has been given much good; yet none remembers, but the people of pith. (2:269)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These verses provide a Quranic analog to the Biblical verses employing the metaphor of trade. It is important to note that some Islamic commentators explain that sacrificing our "possessions" and "lives" in the aforementioned verses mean sacrificing our "desires" and "soul," respectively, from an esoteric point of view, consistent with the Prophet's hadith on the hierarchy of levels of meaning in the Qur'an. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: However the concepts of salvation and damnation are expressed, there seems to be a consensus in Christianity and Islam that salvation is a desirous, wondrous, and eternal state that begins in this life and continues into the next, while the alternative is not to be desired. (Barnes) In the Qur'an, 61:10-12, we hear of those who "believe in God and His Messenger and struggle for the cause of God with your possessions and your lives." Those who do this are in the reign or rule of God. The last sentence of this section says it so well: "This is the supreme triumph." The verses mentioned here "provide a Quranic analog to the Biblical verses employing the metaphor of trade." Another way to state this is to "practice the presence of God" as Brother Lawrence did. This is to live in the realization that God is always with us and for us. This is to have God constantly rule within us and in all places and happenings. (Nates)

*** The parable of the net**

Following the parables of the weeds and the treasure and the pearl, Jesus used a net to symbolize the kingdom of heaven.

⁴⁷Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. ⁴⁸When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on shore. Then they sat down and collected the fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.

⁴⁹This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.[SV4](Mt 13:47-50)

Notes: See Th 8:1-3 (Sources: Mt, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Like its predecessors on the kingdom of God, this is a parable on the mystical dimension of faith—specifically, what it takes to enter the kingdom of heaven (salvation or judgment)—rather than a lesson on morality. For other parables on the kingdom of heaven and judgment, see the unseen kingdom of God, tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds, the kingdom: the parables of the treasure and the pearl, a new invitation: parable of the wedding banquet, be ready: parable of the ten virgins, insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus, and the last judgment. In the above parable, Matthew reports Jesus speaking to the Jews in the language of the Old Testament God of judgment and vengeance, separating the good from the evil. The wicked are destined for Hell,²⁷ with its weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. Such judgment is a trademark of Matthew but is not consistent with the teachings of Jesus on love and mercy. The Gospel of Thomas includes a parable about an empty jar that, like this parable, relates to the kingdom with an empty/full theme: *¹The [Father's] imperial rule is like a woman carrying a [jar] full of meal. ²While she was walking along [a] distant road, the handle of the jar broke and the meal spilled behind her [along] the road. ³She didn't know it; she hadn't noticed a problem. ⁴When she reached her house, she put the jar down and discovered that it was empty.*[SV2](Th 97:1-4) Note that the Thomas parable reverses the empty/full metaphor: the empty jar represents the kingdom. Because the ending is unexpected and the kingdom is portrayed as unnoticed or modest, SV scholars believe that Jesus spoke these words (see also the Kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed). Such an unexpected and unnoticed kingdom is consistent with the unseen kingdom of God reported by Luke: it is a spiritual kingdom here and now and within us, waiting to be discovered by anyone who seeks it, rather than an apocalyptic worldly kingdom coming in the end times. (Barnes)

This is a very confusing parable, especially given the mission, teachings and nature of Jesus. Basically, he does not teach that even those who initially reject God are “thrown away.” He pictures God as One who patiently waits for those who have wandered away. The story of the waiting Father (see the parable of the prodigal son), is a dramatic revelation of the nature of God as experienced and taught by Jesus. In another place, Jesus is quoted as saying when asked by some Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, “...the kingdom of God is within you.” (see the unseen kingdom of God, Luke 17:21) And it is reported that Jesus told his disciples, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom.” (Luke 13:32) This is an important passage in the

Gospel of Thomas which says, "Jesus said, 'If your teachers say to you, "Look the kingdom is in heaven, then the birds will get there before you. But the kingdom is within you, and it is outside you. If you know yourselves, then you will be known; and you will know that you are the sons of the living Father.'" (Thomas, 3) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (39:71-73)

And those who disbelieve will be driven to Hell in troops until, when they reach it, its gates are opened and its keepers will say to them, 'Did there not come to you [any] messengers from among yourselves, reciting to you the signs of your Lord, and warning you of the encounter of this day of yours?' They will say, 'Yes, indeed; but the word of chastisement against the disbelievers has been fulfilled'.

It will be said, 'Enter the gates of Hell to abide therein. For evil [indeed] is the abode of the arrogant!'

And those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in troops, until, when they reach it, and its gates are opened and its keepers will say to them, 'Peace be to you! You are good! So enter it to abide [therein]'. (39:71-73)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These verses are self-explanatory and reinforce the preceding discussion regarding final judgment, although not based on the parable of the net. However, the Frithjof Schuon uses the analogy of a "Divine net" for the Qur'an itself, which I include here for purposes of discussion:

Like the world, the Quran is at the same time one and multiple. The world is a multiplicity which disperses and divides; the Quran is a multiplicity which draws together and leads to Unity. The multiplicity of the holy Book – the diversity of its words, aphorisms, images and stories – fills the soul and then absorbs it and imperceptibly transposes it into the climate of serenity and immutability by a sort of "divine ruse."⁶ The soul, which is accustomed to the flux of phenomena, yields to this flux without resistance; it lives in phenomena and is by them divided and dispersed – even more than that, it actually becomes what it thinks and does. The revealed Discourse has the virtue of accepting this tendency while reversing its movement thanks to the celestial nature of the content and the language, so that the fishes of the soul swim without distrust and with their habitual rhythm into the

⁶ In the sense of the Sanskrit term *upāya*.

divine net [emphasis added].⁷ To the degree that it can bear it, the mind must be infused with a consciousness of the metaphysical contrast between "substance" and "accidents"; a mind thus regenerated keeps its thoughts first of all on God and thinks all things in Him. In other words, through the mosaic of passages, phrases and words, God extinguishes the agitation of the mind by Himself taking on the appearance of mental agitation. The Quran is like an image of everything the human brain can think and feel, and it is by this means that God exhausts human disquiet, infusing into the believer silence, serenity and peace. (*Understanding Islam*, "The Qur'an," ch.2) (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There seems to be consensus between Jesus and Muhammad on a divine gathering of those saved and those lost on judgment day, but the nature of that judgment must remain a mystery. There has long been division among Christians as to the nature of salvation and judgment: Whether one is saved by grace, faith or works and whether God condemns anyone to eternal damnation.²⁷ The Reformation did not resolve those issues so they remain points of continuing controversy. (Barnes)

The analogy of the Qur'an as a "Divine net" is outstanding. The regenerated mind is thought of first of all, as being focused on God and thinking all things in Him. As an "image of everything the human brain can think and feel". The Qur'an is seen as a means by which "God exhausts human disquiet, infusing into the believer, silence, serenity and peace." This is a meaningful representation of the Kingdom of God, in which God reigns with grace, compassion and mercy. (Nates)

* The old and new

When he finished with his parables, Jesus asked his disciples if they understood, and they answered in the affirmative. He then concluded his parabolic discourse:

⁵²*Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.*[SV4](Mt 13:51,52)

Notes: (Source: Mt)

⁷ This is true of every sacred Scripture and is notably true of Bible history: the vicissitudes of Israel are those of the soul seeking its Lord. In Christianity this function of "transforming magic" appertains especially to the Psalms.

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This uncorroborated simile on old and new treasures likely reflects the bias of Matthew to reconcile the Old Testament God of law and judgment with the new and radical God of love and mercy introduced by Jesus. While Jesus never emphasized Mosaic Law, he never refuted the need for law. Instead Jesus emphasized the supremacy of love over law and questioned sacred rules and rituals that conflicted with the moral imperative to love others (see civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law and individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean). Even the teachings of Jesus reported in Matthew are difficult to reconcile with a vengeful God who favored a chosen people with a Promise Land, and whose penchant for violence and harsh judgment justified human misery and suffering. The difficulty of reconciling the two is expressed in new standards of morality and faith: new wineskins. The Pharisees were teachers of Mosaic Law and most were not able to reconcile that holy Law with the teachings of Jesus (see the rejection of Jesus). And in spite of his bias, Matthew reported Jesus teaching the supremacy of love over law in *the Sermon on the Mount*: See laws and love: new standard higher than the old, anger and reconciliation, resolving disputes out of court, adultery and lust, integrity, submission and retribution, and love for enemies. Did the disciples truly understand the parables of Jesus? Events leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection indicate that they did not. Like most other Jews, they were apparently expecting Jesus to be a Messiah who would initiate a worldly kingdom that never happened. (Barnes)

The author of Matthew was a conservative minded Jew. The one who wrote these lines was seeking to bring the value of the old and the freshness of the new out of Scripture. Jesus came not to do away with the old but to fulfill the intent of God. This intent was accomplished as Jesus brought forth the "grace and truth" of God. (Nates)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

The Prophet asked the Companions if he had conveyed God's message to them. They replied, "Yes." He then said, "O God! Be witness. So it is incumbent upon those who are present to convey it (this message) to those who are absent, because the informed one might comprehend it better than the present audience, who will convey it to him." (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Hadith: Jesus and Muhammad ask their disciples somewhat different questions, with Jesus focusing on whether or not the apostles understood the message, and Muhammad

focusing on whether or not the companions received the message as such with the possibility that others may understand aspects of it better than the companions who were present. But in both cases, there is a responsibility to accurately convey the message to others. Regarding the consistency between "old and new treasures," other sections of the book deal with the theological similarities and differences within the Abrahamic traditions. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: Christians must understand the *old* (the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament) to understand the *new* (the teachings and example of Jesus), since the teachings of Jesus to his ancient audience were in the language and idiom of the *old*. There are related interfaith issues with modern Jews, Christians and Muslims. The Qur'an includes stories about Moses, other Jewish prophets and Jesus, and asserts that it is the final, inerrant and infallible word of God (see *Index of selected provisions of the Qur'an* in the Appendices). That is a problem since there are major differences between the accounts in the Qur'an of Moses and other prophets and those accounts in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament), as well major differences between the stories of Jesus in the Qur'an and the teachings of Jesus reported in the Gospel accounts. In addition, most Jews and Christians do not believe that their holy scriptures are the inerrant and infallible word of God. The result is that there are major differences in what Jews, Christians and Muslims believe to be the word of God; but one thing they can agree on is that the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor is a *common word* of faith. This common word of love for God and neighbor blurs the conflict between Jews and Muslims with their focus on holy laws and Christians who have their focus on God's love and mercy as their ultimate standards of legitimacy. While the original purpose of the holy laws of both Moses and Muhammad was to promote the love of God and neighbor, changing times have rendered those ancient laws inadequate. Most modern Jews and Christians now embrace libertarian human rights and secular laws made and enforced by elected officials as their standard of legitimacy, while most Muslims and a minority of fundamentalist Jews and Christians remain committed to their ancient holy laws. This represents a conflict between old and new concepts of legitimacy with practical and religious implications. (Barnes)

Jesus dealt with the old and new treasures of God. Muhammad asked his Companions if he conveyed God's Message. With their "Yes" came the privilege of accurately conveying the message to others. The "old and new treasures" both have a place in the lives of those who are consecrated to God. (Nates)

*** Leading others astray**

Jesus was especially critical of conduct if it caused others to sin.

⁷Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come! [SV4] ⁸If your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands and two feet and be thrown into eternal fire. ⁹And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to live with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell. [SV3] (Mt 18:7-9)

Notes: See Mk 9:43-47; Mt 5:29,30; Lk 17:1 (Source: Q, Mk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The Markan version, thought to have been adapted by Matthew and Luke, begins with a reference to children: *And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck. [SV4] (Mk 9:43)* (see casting off sin) Children were used as symbols of the innocent and uncorrupted, as well as converts to the early church (see accepting children as Jesus and child-like faith). Like Mark, Matthew reported Jesus being protective of children: *See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. [SV4] (Mt 18:10).* Following the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus was reported to have said, *In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost. [SV4] (Mt 18:14).* But just as children were symbolic of the innocent, so references to cutting off limbs and gouging out eyes should not be taken literally, even though under Mosaic Law a thief often had his hand cut off. Some Muslim nations continue to enforce Islamic laws that call for the same punishment. But limbs don't cause sin; they are merely instruments of the mind and heart where sin originates (see clean and unclean), and sin can be purged only through repentance coupled with God's forgiving grace, faith and self-discipline. Even with its obvious symbolism this passage may have encouraged mortification (injuring oneself to prove one's faith) which was prevalent in the early Christian church. If this passage were spoken by Jesus it was hyperbole and not intended to be taken literally. Mortification is inconsistent with loving oneself, which is a precondition to the greatest

commandment to love God and neighbor and with discipleship. Jesus' teachings begin with love for oneself, and then love for others, as in the golden rule. Likewise, forgiveness must begin with forgiving oneself, and then others. We cannot love and forgive others if we hate (and harm) ourselves, just as we cannot love God and hate or harm others (see give in order to receive and 1 Jn 4:19-21). But using mortification as a metaphor sounds like something Jesus would have done, especially if his audience understood that the body part purged related to a sin, as the eye relates to lust (see adultery and lust). Most SV scholars believe the passage referred to cleansing the early church of apostasy (Paul used the body as a symbol of the church and the limbs as its members). This would have been out of character for Jesus since he chose to relate to sinners and apostate Samaritans (see worship in spirit and truth) and purging them was inconsistent with the virtues of tolerance, mercy, and forgiveness taught by Jesus (see tolerance and judgment). If the metaphor referred to purging the early church of undesirables it did not originate with Jesus. (Barnes) It is clearly stated that causing other people to sin will entail serious punishment. It could have been hyperbole by Jesus or even edited into Jesus' sayings. However, we realize from actual life that causing others to sin does bring harm, both physical and spiritual, to us. In biblical times and lands, children were not treated as well as they are in the West. Today we still have abuse of children, but usually only by the cruelest people imaginable. The severe statement by Jesus in Mark 9:43 regarding tying a large millstone around the neck of anyone who harms a child is relevant today, not in actuality but in true attitude. Some scholars have suggested that "little ones" could refer to recent converts who began to follow Jesus. In essence, anyone who puts a stumbling block in the path of one of these "little ones" will have a great price to pay. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (16:25)(29:12-13)(24:24)(41:20-22)

That they may bear their burdens complete on the Day of Resurrection and also of the burdens of those whom they lead astray without any knowledge. How evil is the burden they bear. (16:25)

And those who disbelieve say to those who believe, 'Follow our path and we will bear [responsibility for] your sins'. But they will not [be able to] bear anything of their sins. Truly they are liars.

And they shall certainly bear their [own] burdens and other burdens along with their [own] burdens, and on the Day of

Resurrection they shall surely be questioned concerning what they used to invent. (29:12-13)

on the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet shall testify against them concerning what they used to do. (24:24)

...until, when they reach it, their hearing and their eyes and their skins will bear witness against them concerning what they used to do.

And they will say to their skins, 'Why did you bear witness against us?' They will say, 'God made us speak', Who gave speech to all things. And He created you the first time, and to Him you will be returned.

And you did not use to conceal yourselves, lest your hearing or your eyes or your skins should bear witness against you; but you thought that God did not know most of what you did. (41:20-22)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"All the children of Adam sin. And the best of those who sin are those who repent." (Ibn Majah)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The above Qur'anic verses are self-explanatory, indicating the seriousness of leading others astray and how even our body parts have a relationship with God independent of us, thereby testifying against us on the Day of Judgment. Although sin is ubiquitous in our fallen state, the hadith highlights the role of repentance. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There is consensus that leading others astray can be a grave sin, but debate over what that meant. Jesus would likely have meant astray from God's love, not any mystical religious belief, as the standard of true faith. (Barnes)
From the Qur'an we hear of the seriousness of leading others astray. Our "body parts" as well as our soul will suffer because of such dastardly behavior. The Hadith statement, "All the children of Adam sin. And the best of those who sin are those who repent" (Ibn Najah), is reminiscent of a writing of Paul in Romans 3:23, "...for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." The J.B. Phillips Translation states it in a somewhat different way: "...everyone has sinned; everyone falls short of the beauty of God's plan." In this, the emphasis is not only that everyone sinned but that God truly wants everyone to realize God's glory which is to fulfill "the beauty of God's plan." God wants all people to go from sin, to repentance, to God's beautiful glory. (Nates)

* Brotherly correction

Jesus provided practical advice for resolving conflicts in the church:

¹⁵*If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.* ¹⁶*But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.* ¹⁷*If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or tax collector.[SV4]*
(Mt 18:15-17)

Notes: See Mt 16:19; Lk 17:3,4 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This passage has been used by the church to justify purging or excommunicating members, but because the church was not created until after the crucifixion and Resurrection, the saying was likely created in the early church and was not that of Jesus. The teachings of Jesus emphasize forgiveness and reconciliation in resolving disputes (see anger and reconciliation). The standards in the above passage have their roots in the Old Testament where more than one witness was required to sustain a conviction (see Dt 19:15). Some scholars consider Mt 18:18-20 (see prayer in common: the church) a continuation of the above authority given to the early church, but they are not included in *The Jefferson Bible*. They relate to either the power of prayer or church administration, and like the above passage are out of character with Jesus since he emphasized the forgiveness of sinners rather than correcting them. The Lukan version of the above saying represents what Jesus would have likely said on the subject of brotherly correction within the early church: ³*So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him.* ⁴*If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, "I repent," forgive him.[SV4]*(Lk 17:3,4). Since Jesus chose to relate to sinners it is not likely he would have expelled them from a synagogue or church, but would have forgiven them and encouraged them to repent and return. See anger and reconciliation, leading others astray, forgiveness, give and you will receive, Jesus came for sinners, not the righteous, do not judge, tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds, criticizing self before others, and

resolving disputes out of court: the risks of litigation. While Jesus gave specific instructions to the disciples, he never emphasized religious rules and made it clear that his mission, unlike that of other rabbis, was not to arbitrate disputes. When asked by a man to require his brother to share his inheritance, Jesus rebuked him saying, *Man, who appointed me a judge or arbiter between you?*[SV3](Lk 12:14) Jesus emphasized resolving disputes out of court. (Barnes)

Perhaps this is good counsel on solving conflicts, or sins (broken relationships; wrongs). There is a sound logic in going to the perpetrator of the wrong first, then to a few others and then to a larger group. If we were to treat someone who would not be reconciled, like a "pagan or tax collector", then you would not be treating him or her in the same manner as Jesus treated them. We need to remember that Jesus was called a "friend of publicans and sinners." (Matt. 11:19; Luke 7:34) An interesting point is that the Aramaic text of verse 17 is "tell it to the congregation" instead of "tell it to the church," as translated in the KJV and the RSV. The New English Bible uses the word "congregation" and the Jerusalem Bible uses "community." "Eta in Aramaic means 'group assembly, gathering, congregation' that was composed of elders and town counselors who generally arbitrate disputes, settle quarrels, and pass judgment on legal matters." (See *Aramaic Light on the Gospel of Matthew* by R.A. Errico/Geo. M. Lamsa, page 234) In many places of the Middle East long years ago and even somewhat today, people were and are governed by a group of elders. Note that Moses chose elders to act as judges. So there was no organized "church" as we think of it today. The word "church" came later to describe the followers of Jesus. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (49:9)

If two parties of believers quarrel, make peace between them. And if one party wrongs the other, oppose the party that did the wrong until they return to the precepts of God. If they return, make peace between them justly. Surely God loves the equitable.

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

When the Prophet was informed of anything of a certain man, he would not say: "What is the matter with so and so that he says?" But he would say: "What is the matter with the people that they say such and such?" (Ahmed)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Reconciling/correcting others as gently as possible, e.g. privately rather than

publicly if possible, is clearly important in the Quran and hadith. In the context of Mt 18:17, however, Muslim scholars point out that there is no central authority corresponding to the Church in Islam, i.e. no Islamic institution has the authority to enforce belief or obedience in this way. Muslim scholars cite the example of the Prophet who knew the identity of the hypocrites of Medina, but did not force them to believe or be sincere or obedient. In fact, if one declares the *shahadah*, or testimony of faith, believing in God, the prophets, the scriptures, the hereafter and the Day of Judgment, even just once, Muslims are forbidden to accuse him/her of infidelity, whether on an individual or institutional level. Such an accusation would, in fact, be punishable in and of itself. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: The church was not created until after the death of Jesus, and, unlike Paul, Jesus was not concerned with religious rules and emphasized forgiveness rather than expelling sinful members. Of course, all institutional religions, including the church, have rules governing members. (Barnes) Qur'an 49:9 seems to speak more benevolently of reconciliation than does the passage attributed to Jesus. It is questionable that this passage is authentically from Jesus. It is good to note that, "Reconciling or correcting others as gently as possible"..." is clearly important in the Qur'an and hadith. (See Commentary above.) In Islam there is "no central authority corresponding to the Church..." (See above) Today there are Church laws and rules which are decided upon by officials. But the question of breaking the law of God in Jesus is not settled by Church counsels, but in the hearts of believers. (Nates)

*** Forgiveness: the parable of the unmerciful servant**

When Peter asked Jesus how many times he was required to forgive his brother, suggesting as many as seven times, Jesus answered,

I tell you not seven times. but seventy-seven times.
[SV4](Mt 18:22)

Jesus then told the parable of a king who forgave a servant his debts after the servant begged for mercy and forgiveness; but the same servant then refused to forgive one who owed him a lesser debt. When the king heard about the unforgiving servant he admonished him:

³²"You wicked servant," he said, "I cancelled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" ³⁴In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all that he owed.[SV2]

³⁵This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.[SV4](Mt 18:23-35)

Notes: (Source: Mt)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This parable follows the teachings on brotherly correction and prayer in common: the church and it emphasizes individual forgiveness rather than referring disputes to the church for resolution. Like other parables followed by explanations, the parable itself is considered more likely to have been said by Jesus than its explanation (see the parable of the sower). The parable illustrates how mercy and forgiveness, like other attributes of the love of God, must be given in order to be received and how there is no limit on either giving or receiving forgiveness. On the other hand, if we fail to forgive others we cannot receive God's forgiveness and condemn ourselves to the bondage of sin and death, and we are reminded of that every time we pray the Lord's Prayer. See anger and reconciliation; tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds; forgiveness; forgiveness, faith, and the power of prayer; forgiveness, love, and sinners; forgiveness on the cross; give and you will receive; brotherly correction, and the golden rule. (Barnes)

Jesus was teaching that our obligation to forgive others has no limit. God does not count how many times we are forgiven, and God rejoices every time we seek forgiveness. Most of this section, especially verse 35, is not considered to be from Jesus. (Note the SV) Verse 35 is likely a scribe's addition and interpretation. In actuality, we are told in 1 John 4:19, "We love because he (God) first loved us." So, we can forgive because we have first been forgiven. Love has no end. Neither does forgiveness. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (24:22)(2:237)

Let them forgive and excuse. Do you not love that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving, Merciful. (24:22)

...yet that you should remit is nearer to piety. Forget not kindness between you; surely God sees what you do. (2:237)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"The angels took away the soul of a person who had lived among people who were before you. They (the angels) said, 'Did you do anything good?' He said, 'No.' They said, 'Try to recall.' He said, 'I used to lend to people and order my servants to give respite to one in straitened circumstances and give allowance to the solvent.' God, the Exalted and Majestic, said (to the angels), 'You should ignore (his failings).'" (Muslim)

"Two men came before God on the Day of Judgment. One of them who had been wronged [by the other] said, 'O God, give me my right from him.' God unfurled palaces and fields of gold and silver. The man was wondering and asked, 'O God, which prophet is this for? Which martyr is this for?' God said to him, 'This is for those who gave the price.' The man said, 'Who has [can afford] the price of this?' God said to him, 'You have the price.' The man said, 'What is the price, my God?' God replied, 'Forgiving your brother.' He immediately said, 'I forgive my brother.' And God said to him, 'Take the hand of your brother and enter paradise with him.'" (Hakim)

A man came to the Prophet and asked, "Apostle of God! How often shall I forgive a servant?" He gave no reply, so the man repeated what he had said, but he still kept silence. When he asked a third time, the the Prophet replied, "Forgive him seventy times daily." (Abu Dawud)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses and hadith are self-explanatory, reinforcing the preceding commentary that mercy should also be given in order to be received. (Ansari)

Joint Commentary: There is consensus that forgiving others is a requirement of our own forgiveness and salvation; and since we cannot receive the forgiveness of God unless we forgive others, when we refuse to forgive others we condemn ourselves. (Barnes) There are many parallels of forgiveness from the teachings of Jesus, the Qur'an and Hadith. Perhaps there is a paradoxical truth that we must first experience the love of God before we can love and that "mercy should also be given in order to be received." (See above.) Is it a both/and, and not an either/or? (Nates)

* Celibacy and sexual preference

After Jesus addressed the subject of marriage, divorce, and human sexuality, the disciples concluded it would be better not to marry. Jesus then said,

¹¹*Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given.[SV4]* ¹²*For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven.[SV2]* *The one who can accept this should accept it.[SV4](Mt 19:11,12).*

Notes: (Source: Mt)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: In this passage Jesus again challenges the accepted social order of Judaism, which segregated and devalued eunuchs along with the poor, tax collectors, prostitutes, and women. The true Israel—the elite of God's chosen people—were the priests, Levites, and full-blooded male Judeans capable of fathering children. Although Jesus never addressed the subject of abnormal sexuality directly, this teaching comes close when it refers to eunuchs born that way (assuming homosexuality is genetic). Like homosexuals, eunuchs did not have natural sexual preferences but were never condemned by Jesus, who here appears to have favored them because of their celibacy. As for Jesus and his sexuality, the gospel narratives indicate that he was never married but enjoyed social events and experienced close and perhaps intimate relations with both men and women. Jesus and his followers were accused of being gluttons and drunkards when compared to the more austere John the Baptist (see the rejection of Jesus and fasting), but never of sexual promiscuity or deviancy. While Jesus recommended austerity in his instructions to the disciples, he never discouraged attending parties, feasts, and wedding festivals, where he once reportedly changed water into wine (see Jn 2:1-11, cited in miracles: the work of Satan or God?); and Jesus used the feast as a metaphor for moral behavior in his parables (e.g. a new invitation: parable of the wedding feast), while he condemned adultery and lust. One parable could be read as having ironic sexual implications (see be ready: parable of the ten virgins). (Barnes)

This is a very puzzling portion of Scripture. The SV4 is given to verse eleven. Verse twelve is SV2 and the last part of verse twelve is SV4. Why would Jesus go from pronouncements on marriage and divorce, to those regarding eunuchs? Eunuchs are thought of as those who are sexually impotent. The disciples wanted to know if it were better not to marry (Note that women

were not considered). Jesus does not answer the disciples directly. After saying that some eunuchs are born that way, some are made that way by other men, and some choose to be that way because of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus tells the disciples: *The one who can accept this should accept it.* Two of the three types cannot control their fate, but the third can, and Jesus recommends it to the disciples who can accept it. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (30:21)(51:49)(57:27)

And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you might find peace by their side, and He ordained between you affection and mercy. Surely in that there are signs for a people who reflect. (30:21)

And of all things We created pairs that perhaps you might remember. (51:49)

Then We sent to follow in their footsteps Our messengers, and We sent to follow, Jesus son of Mary, and We gave him the Gospel, and We placed in the hearts of those who followed him kindness and mercy. But [as for] monasticism, they invented it – We had not prescribed it for them – only seeking God's beatitude. Yet they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave those of them who believed their reward; but many of them are immoral. (57:27)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

One [Muslim] man said, "I will offer the prayer throughout the night forever." The other said, "I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast." The third said, "I will keep away from the women and will not marry forever." God's Apostle came to them and said, "Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By God, I am more submissive to God and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep and I also marry women. So he who does not follow my tradition in religion, is not from me [not one of my followers]."

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Qur'an and hadith make it clear that monasticism as a social institution does not exist within Islam. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Islam includes all the premises of a contemplative asceticism, since Islam extols poverty, fasting, solitude and silence. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: It appears that Islam like Judaism promotes heterosexual marriage and does not accept celibacy in the service of faith (monasticism), or tolerate sexual preferences that deviate from the norm of heterosexuality. This highlights the contrast between the singleness, if not celibacy, of Jesus compared to the married Muhammad. (Barnes)

It seems to be clear in the Qur'an that God created mates, or pairs, as the way for us to live. The related words about "monasteries" seem to indicate that we are not to live isolated (monastic) lives, even in a unisex religious community, but should live in male-female pairs. The important aspect of a monastery is to be lived out in our individual (married) lives-- "since Islam extols poverty, fasting, solitude and silence." In Christian Scriptures and in Islamic Qur'an and Hadith, the deeper questions of celibacy and sexual conditions do not seem to explicitly receive much attention. (Nates)

*** Envy and equity: parable of the workers in the vineyard**

Jesus used a parable about wages to illustrate the nature of God's grace and the kingdom of heaven. The story begins in the morning with the owner of a vineyard agreeing to pay workers a silver coin for a day's work picking grapes. Later during the day additional workers were hired and told they would be paid what was right. At the end of the day those last hired were paid the same as the first hired: one silver coin. Predictably, the first hired complained that they had been treated unfairly since they had worked the entire day and were paid the same as those who had worked only one hour. The owner answered:

¹³"Friend, I am not being unfair to you. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the man who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don't I have the right to do what I want to with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?"[SV1] ¹⁶So the last will be first, and the first will be last.[SV2](Mt 20:1-16)

Notes: On this parable there are no parallels (Source: Mt); but on last/first, see Mk 9:35; 10:31,43,44; Mt 19:30; 23:11,12; Lk 13:30; Th 4:2,3 (Source: Mk, Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The parable teaches that salvation (gaining entrance to the kingdom of God) is not earned like wages for work, but is a gift of the Father's unfailing grace. It ends with the *last/first* dichotomy, a common theme also found in humility: leaders as servants, riches and

salvation, and hypocrisy: practice what you preach. The story has two dimensions: first, life is not fair (see suffering not God's will and the Beatitudes) and neither is God's grace fair or equitable in the worldly sense. The spiritual rewards of the unseen kingdom of heaven are a gift of God; salvation is not a reward for works but a gift of God's grace for the repentant (see faith and works). Jesus contrasted sanctimony and humility and illustrated the relationship between repentance and the grace of God in the parables of the Pharisee and the publican and the prodigal son (the expectations of the Pharisee and the older son were like those who worked the entire day); and Jesus described the mystical power of God's grace to Nicodemus as being born again of the Spirit and producing a child-like faith. The nature of grace was also illustrated in forgiveness on the cross: as he was dying Jesus assured a criminal being crucified with him that he would join him in paradise, receiving the same reward as those who had lived righteous lives. While the Jews considered themselves the chosen people and were the first to know of Jesus (the first hired in the above parable), they would not receive preferential treatment over Gentiles and pagans who later accepted the teachings of Jesus as the Word of God (those hired later in the day; see a new invitation). The unexpected results of the parable, with the first and last being reversed, convinced SV scholars that it originated with Jesus, even though it is found only in Matthew. Strangely, the version in Mt 20:16 is considered more authentic than the others, even the earlier version in Mark (see humility: leaders as servants). (Barnes) It is good to note that the scholars gave this section of Scripture a SV1 and SV2. This reflects the mission, nature and work of Jesus. The parable is a well told story. Envy has no place among God's people. God not only has the right, but the righteousness to give, as determined by grace, love, compassion and mercy. There is real equity for all. God's gifts are not determined by our length or depth of belief or service. God's goodness goes beyond our ability to really comprehend or appreciate. There is a depth to this parable which Matthew interpreted allegorically. In the midst of this, time, space and holiness are presented to all regardless of the restrictions we want to impose. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:25)

But how will it be when We gather them for a day of which there is no doubt, and every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned, and they, shall not be wronged? (3:25)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"We (Muslims) are the last (religious community to come in the world) but (will be) the foremost (on the Day of Resurrection)." (Bukhari)

"Your example and the example of the people of the two Scriptures (i.e. Jews and Christians) is like the example of a man who employed some laborers and asked them, 'Who will work for me from morning till midday for one Qirat?' The Jews accepted and carried out the work. He then asked, 'Who will work for me from midday up to the 'Asr prayer (afternoon) for one Qirat?' The Christians accepted and fulfilled the work. He then said, 'Who will work for me from the 'As till sunset for two Qirats?' You, Muslims have accepted the offer. The Jews and the Christians got angry and said, 'Why should we work more and get lesser wages?' (God) said, 'Have I withheld part of your right?' They replied in the negative. He said, 'It is My Blessing, I bestow upon whomever I wish.'" (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: It is interesting to note how some Muslim scholars have considered the theme of "the last being the first" in the context of Islam being the final revelation. Some claim that this principle also applies within each religion, in the sense that proximity to the Origin implies a higher degree of rigor, and distance from the Origin implies a compensating grace. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: It is interesting that there is a hadith almost identical to Jesus' parable of the workers in the vineyard, so that both Christianity and Islam share the idea that God grants His gift of salvation or grace by different standards than those of the world. It is also interesting and understandable that Muslims would use the logic of the parable to equate themselves with the last hired. But the logic of the parable is clear: there will be no preference given to those workers at the end of the day; all are treated equally. (Barnes) It is good to hear in Qur'an 3:25 that "...they shall not be wronged." We may take exception to the Hadith which in part says, "We (Muslims) are the last... (will be) the foremost (on the Day of Resurrection)." (Bukhari) [See above] In the equity of our Gracious God, Most Compassionate, Most Merciful, there will be no first or last, which are human designations. All shall be together in blessedness and joy. There is no hierarchy in the Kingdom of God. God is Supreme and loving. His will is that all shall be together as one. The "ground" will be level for all.

All shall rejoice as those who are made and will be sustained by the Glorious One of All Existence. (Nates)

*** Integrity and hypocrisy: talk is cheap**

Jesus once asked the Pharisees the following question:

²⁸What do you think?[SV4] There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, "Son, go and work today in the vineyard." ²⁹"I will not," he answered, but later he changed his mind and went. ³⁰Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, "I will, sir," but did not go. ³¹Which of the two did what his father wanted? "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.[SV3] (Mt 21:28-31)

Notes: (Source: Mt)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The next verse completes the above pericope and helps explain the parable: *For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.* [SV4](Mt 21:32) This is a parable/allegory in which the second son represents Jewish religious leaders who had said Yes to God but then failed to recognize the authority of John the Baptist and Jesus, while the tax collectors had first said No, but later repented and did God's will. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican it was the humble publican, not the sanctimonious Pharisee, who repented and was justified: *For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.* (Lk 18:14) Jesus cited Isaiah in condemning hypocrisy and sanctimony: *These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me* (see God's commands and the traditions of the Pharisees and practice what you preach), and expressed frustration with those who called him Lord but failed to follow his teachings (see Lk 6:46 cited in faith and works and the true disciple). The parable is another illustration of Jesus' last/first dichotomy (see humility: leaders as servants, riches and salvation and envy and equity). There is another possible meaning to the parable. Both sons shame their father by failing to do what they said they would do, creating an irony characteristic of the teachings of Jesus in which undesirable characters are used to illustrate virtues (see the untrustworthy servant in the parable of the shrewd manager, Samaritans who

were detested by the Jews in the parable of the good Samaritan and living water, and faith of the Roman centurion in the authority of Jesus). While most SV scholars do not believe this saying originated with Jesus, the parable sounds like the way Jesus would teach the virtues of candor and that *talk is cheap and actions speak louder than words* (see integrity: plain talk, no oaths). Even if actions speak louder than words, for the ancient Jews careless words had significant consequences. Earlier Jesus said, *But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.* (Mt 12:36,37; see faith, words and judgment; also, clean and unclean). The letter of James also emphasizes the importance of words and the dangers of the tongue. (James 1:19,20,26; 3:1-12) But James also emphasizes the importance of good works: *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.* (James 2:26) (Barnes) Jesus in his teaching is emphasizing doing above pronouncement. He places emphasis on doing rather than empty or pleasing words. Jesus taught that the kingdom was based on a life full of good actions and not creedal beliefs. Note: Matt. 7:21-23. Not "sayers" but "doers" of the will of God are part of the kingdom. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:222)(25:70)(4:142)(9:67)

Truly, God loves those who repent, and He loves those who cleanse themselves. (2:222)

...except for him who repents, and believes, and acts righteously, for such, God will replace their evil deeds with good deeds, for God is ever Forgiving, Merciful. (25:70)

The hypocrites seek to trick God, but He is tricking them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up lazily and to be seen by people, and they do not remember God save a little. (4:142)

The hypocrites, both men and women, are of one another; they enjoin indecency, and forbid decency; and they withhold their hands shut; they have forgotten God, so He has forgotten them. Truly the hypocrites, they are the wicked. (9:67)

Commentary on the Qur'an: Repentance is obviously essential in Islam and other Abrahamic traditions, as the case of the first son in this Biblical passage suggests. The first Quranic verse above indicates that God loves those who repent, and other

verses assert that God has promised to accept sincere repentance, e.g. *And your Lord has said, 'Call on Me and I will respond to you'* (4:60). The second Quranic verse above suggests that God even changes the evil deeds into good ones upon repentance, as if one had never sinned. This is the opposite of hypocrisy, which takes one to the lowest depths of hell according to the Quran. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There is consensus that in matters of faith and human relationships *talk is cheap* and actions speak louder than words; and no matter how sinful our past in words or acts, repentance is always acceptable to God, while sanctimony and hypocrisy are detestable in the sight of God. (Barnes)
Both deeds and words can be good. Repentance can mean doing and speaking the way of God. (Nates)

*** A new invitation: parable of the wedding feast**

In the parable of the wedding banquet a king sent his servants to invite his special friends to his son's wedding feast. But none were interested and went about their business; some even captured the servants bringing the invitation and killed them. The king was furious and sent his army to kill the murderers and burn their city.

⁸*Then he said to his servants, "The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. ⁹Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you can find."* ¹⁰*So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests.*

¹¹*But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. ¹²"Friend," he asked, "how did you get in here without wedding clothes?" The man was speechless.*

¹³*Then the king told the attendants, "Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." [SV3]*

¹⁴*For many are invited, but few are chosen." [SV4]*
(Mt 22:1-14)

Notes: See Lk 14:15-24; Th 64:1-12 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Both the Lukan and Thomas versions of the basic parable (Mt 22:1-10) were considered by SV scholars to be more original, except for the last lines on faith

for the few: ²¹...Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. ²²"Sir," the servant said, "what you have ordered has been done, but there is still room." ²³Then the master told his servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.[SV2] ²⁴"I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.[SV4](Lk 14:21-24) Luke emphasizes the theme of inviting the poor, crippled, and lame in serving the least of those instead of friends (Lk 14:13). The Thomas version is simpler, but its conclusion caused it to fall short of a SV1 designation: ¹¹The master said to his slave, "Go out on the streets and bring back whomever you find to have dinner." [SV2] ¹²Buyers and merchants [will] not enter the places of my Father.[SV4](Th 64:11,12) In the basic parable the Jews as the chosen people were sent the first invitations to the banquet but rejected them, and the Gentiles were then invited to take their place. Matthew added an enigmatic passage to the basic parable regarding severe consequences for any who wore inappropriate dress to the banquet (Mt 22:11-14). This probably related to the early church symbolically using a change of clothes to represent conversion to Christianity (see NIB, Vol VIII p 418). Clearly this was not to be taken literally, since Jesus advocated simple dress in his instructions to the disciples and urged his followers not to be concerned about clothing in do not worry. The Gospel of Thomas went further and reported that Jesus advocated wearing no clothes at all (Th 37:2,3), but that should be taken as hyperbole or metaphor. Jesus did, however, mock the fancy dress of Pharisees and Gentile leaders (see hypocrisy: practise what you preach and praise for John the Baptist). Those who were punished for inappropriate dress in the parable could be those who joined the early church and turned out to be unfit according to then prevailing standards of membership; such a view was not characteristic of Jesus, especially the judgmental language, but was typical of Matthew (see tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds and the last judgment). Even with their differences, all versions of the parable share the same message: those privileged insiders who reject the teachings of Jesus as the word of God will not be invited to the heavenly banquet (see bringing sight and blindness, humility: leaders as servants, riches and salvation, envy and equity: parable of the workers in the vineyard, and hypocrisy (below), which illustrates the *last/first* inversion, an aphorism applicable here). On the theme of *...many are invited but few are chosen* (vs 14), see faith for the few. (Barnes) The image of the wedding garments can be confusing. Here are some comments which give some clarity: "...in Matthew's context

the wedding garment must symbolize '[doing] the will of my Father in heaven' (7:21), having 'a righteousness [that] exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees' (5:20), producing 'the fruits of the kingdom' (21:43). All are expressions to identify the consistency between speech and life, words and deeds that is appropriate for those who call Jesus 'Lord.' The garment represents authentic discipleship, and the parable prods the audience to self-criticism lest they find themselves among the bad, who are finally judged." (see Texts for Preaching, Year A, Walter Brueggemann et al., Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, pp.523-524) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (5:70-71)

And We made a covenant with the Children of Israel, and We sent messengers to them. Every time a messenger came to them with what their souls did not desire; some they denied, and some they slay.

And they thought there would be no trial; and so they were wilfully blind and deaf. Then God relented to them, then they were wilfully blind and deaf, many of them; and God sees what they do. (5:70-71)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These Quranic verses indicate the failure of members of the Children of Israel to fulfill their covenant with God analogous to the first invited guests in the Biblical parable. However, other Quranic verses suggest that some members of the same community fulfill their covenant extremely well, for example: *And among the people of Moses there is a community who guide by the truth and act justly according to it (7:159)*. This is particularly important to recall before reading the critical verses in the next section. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: This variation on the theme of judgment seems to reflect the animosity of early Christians to those Jews who rejected Jesus. It seems ancillary to the teachings of Jesus and Muhammad, except to illustrate that the invitation to God's heavenly banquet (salvation) is open to all, not a privileged few, and those who think they have an exclusive invitation by virtue of their religion are mistaken. (Barnes & Nates)

*** Hypocrisy: practice what you preach**

Jesus acknowledged the authority (and responsibility) of the scribes and Pharisees as teachers of the law of Moses, then condemned them for their hypocrisy and vanity.

²The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat.

³So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practise what they preach.

⁴They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move a finger to move them.[SV4]

⁵Everything they do is for men to see. They make their phylacteries* wide and the tassels on their garment long; ⁶they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; ⁷they love to be greeted in the marketplace and to have men call them "Rabbi." [SV2] ⁸But you are not to be called "Rabbi," for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹And do not call anyone on earth "father" [master], for you have only one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰Nor are you to be called "teacher," for you have one Teacher, the Christ.

¹¹The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹²For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.[SV3](Mt 23:2-12)

* phylacteries are small boxes containing Scripture verses worn on forehead and arm.

Notes: See Mk 9:35; 12:38-40; Lk 9:48; 11:37-54; 14:11; 18:14 (Sources: Q, Mk, Mt).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This is the preamble to the seven woes, the most scathing condemnation of religious leaders by Jesus (Mt 23:13-36). This saying ends with the exalted being humbled and the humbled being exalted, a reversal of the world's order of merit (the last/first dichotomy) which is a theme repeated throughout the gospels (see humility: leaders as servants; riches and salvation; envy and equity: parable of the workers in the vineyard; the Beatitudes and a new invitation). Jesus may have been sarcastic when he said that all should obey the Pharisees' interpretation of Mosaic Law; it allowed him to contrast what they practiced with what they preached. Matthew emphasized compliance with the Law but subordinated it to the teachings and example of Jesus which fulfilled the law but in some cases refuted it (see the six antitheses of Mt 5:21-48) based on the higher standard of love over law (see laws and love: the new standard higher than the old; anger and reconciliation; adultery and lust; integrity:

plain talk, no oaths; submission and retribution and giving to all who ask; love for enemies; civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law, and individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean). Jesus also criticized the Pharisees and teachers of the law for their vanity and hypocrisy (see the seven woes below, humility and sanctimony: the Pharisee and the publican; hypocrisy and sanctimony; submission and retribution, bringing sight and blindness; pride and peer pressure: honor of men ahead of God, and faith, words and judgment. (Barnes)

This teaching centers around 23:8-11. The reader or hearer is the one being addressed. The bad folk are not simply the Pharisees or Scribes, they represent all of us who want to be exalted, to be "number one". We are called to live out the truth of God in Jesus. The "world" has an order of merit, where we want to be honored by position or name or title. Jesus says there is only one Master (God) and all the rest of us are kin...brothers and sisters. There is only one Father, who is God. There is only one Teacher, who is the Christ. There is only one Family, which is composed of all people God has made. The greatest among us is not the "winner" but the servant. And we live out our lives of servanthood, not to be the greatest, but to be true to God Who has made and is making us and to be true to the life of love for which we were made. All of this is at the core of living out the teachings of Jesus. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (61:2-3)(4:142)(5:62-63)

O you who believe, why do you say what you do not do?

It is greatly loathsome to God that you say what you do not do. (61:2-3)

The hypocrites seek to trick God, but He is tricking them. When they stand up to pray, they stand up lazily and to be seen by people, and they do not remember God save a little. (4:142)

And you see many of them vying in sin and enmity, and their consuming of unlawful gain; evil is that which they have been committing.

Why do the rabbis and the priests not forbid them from uttering sin and consuming unlawful gain? Evil is what they have been doing. (5:62-63)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Charity does not in any way decrease the wealth, and the servant who forgives, God adds to his respect, and the one who

shows humility, God elevates him in the estimation (of the people)." (Muslim)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These verses and hadith are generally self-explanatory and correspond directly to the Biblical verses above. From the Islamic perspective certain elements of Jewish law are the result of prior transgressions. For example, the Qur'an asserts: *And because of the evil-doing of some of those of Jewry, We have forbidden them certain good things that were lawful for them, and because of their barring from God's way, many. And because of their taking usury when they had been forbidden it, and their consuming people's wealth through falsehood, and We have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful chastisement* (4:160-161); and those who follow the Messenger, the uninstructed Prophet, whom they will find inscribed in their Torah and Gospel, enjoining them to decency and forbidding them indecency, making lawful for them the good things, and making unlawful for them the vile things, and relieving them of their burden, and the shackles that they used to bear. Then those who believe in him and honor him, and help him, and follow the light that has been revealed with him - they are the ones who will prosper' (7:157). In a sense, both Islam and Christianity universalize Jewish monotheism while relaxing elements of Jewish law (of course, Christianity does this more than Islam). In this regard, it is also significant that the Prophet said "Both in this world and in the Hereafter, I am the nearest of all the people to Jesus, the son of Mary." The prophets are paternal brothers; their mothers are different, but their religion is one" (Bukhari); and, "I am most akin to Jesus Christ among the whole of mankind, and all the Prophets are of different mothers but belong to one religion and no Prophet was raised between me and Jesus" (Muslim). (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There will always be debate as to how much of Jewish law (the Torah) Christians are supposed to follow since Jesus did not teach Mosaic Law and even refuted some of it, and he criticized and condemned teachers of the Law for their hypocrisy and sanctimony. Christianity emphasizes forgiveness, love and mercy rather than holy law as its guiding principles of legitimacy, while Judaism and Islam rely on sacred laws as their standards of righteousness and legitimacy. (Barnes)
Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all centered upon service exhibited in reverence, honor and love (as this may be interpreted) to our Gracious God and love for all people, which is caring for their well-being in every ways possible. (Nates)

*** Condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes**

After the above criticism of the Scribes and Pharisees for their hypocrisy, Matthew reports Jesus making a scathing, seven-fold indictment of those teachers of the law and Pharisees.

The first indictment was for blocking the way of those Jews who would have followed Jesus:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.[SV3](Mt 23:13)

Notes: See Lk 11:52; Th 39:1,2; 102 (Sources: Q, Th)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Each of the seven woes, or indictments, begins with the same preface: *Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!* The SV interpretation is even stronger: *Damn you!* The seven woes reflect the enmity between the early church and the Pharisees when Matthew's Gospel was written sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. During the life of Jesus many Pharisees were opposed to his ministry and Jesus criticized them for their hypocrisy and sanctimony, but the level of acrimony was nowhere near that represented here. While this doesn't help us understand what Jesus had to say it does help us understand why the early church, made up mostly of Jews, was engaged in a sectarian conflict with other Jews. Here the Pharisees, who represented the majority of Jews and opposed the teachings of Jesus with their emphasis on the Law as God's standard of righteousness, are seen as opposing God's kingdom. Verse 14 is omitted from the SV and relegated to a footnote in the NIV: *You devour widows' houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Therefore you will be punished more severely.* (Barnes)

The second indictment related to a corrupt evangelism:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.[SV4](Mt 23:15; no parallels)

The third indictment related to oaths in the synagogue:

¹⁶*Woe to you, blind guides! You say, "If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of*

the temple, he is bound by his oath." ¹⁷You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold or the temple that makes the gold sacred? ¹⁸You also say, "If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath." ¹⁹You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? ²⁰Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. ²¹And he who swears by the temple swears by it and the one who dwells in it. ²²And he who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.[SV4](Mt 23:16-22)

Notes: (Source: Mt)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The second woe reflects the extreme enmity between the early church (those Jews who believed Jesus to be their Messiah) and the rest of the Jews who rejected Jesus with its reference to them as *sons of hell* (see similar anti-Semitic terms in Jn 8:42-44 cited in the truth will make you free). It should also be noted that the Jews have never competed with the church for converts.

The third woe has to do with oaths and swearing. Unlike integrity: plain talk, no oaths, this saying does not discourage swearing by God; that and its strident tone indicate it was not said by Jesus. (Barnes)

The fourth indictment is for complying with the letter of the law while ignoring its spirit--justice, mercy and faithfulness. For this Jesus used a colorful aphorism:

²³Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices--mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the most important matters of the law--justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ²⁴You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.[SV3](Mt 23:23,24)

Notes: See Lk 11:42 (Sources: Q, Mt).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Again, the accusation is one of hypocrisy and sanctimony. According to the prophet Micah the spirit of the Law was consistent with agape love, requiring Jews to ...do justice and love kindness [mercy], and walk humbly with your God. (Mi 6:8). Likewise Rabbi Hillel, a contemporary of Jesus, concluded that the golden rule (stated in the negative) was the best summary of the Law. The hyperbole of the gnat and camel is reminiscent of the camel passing through the eye of a needle (see riches and salvation) and the sawdust and

plank in the eye (see criticizing self before others). But Jesus said it best in the greatest commandment and the new command, in which the rule of love was asserted over the rule of law (see laws and love: the new standard higher than the old; civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law; love of enemies, and individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean). (Barnes)

In the fifth and sixth indictments the Pharisees were accused of being full of greed, self-indulgent, self-righteous and hypocritical:

²⁵Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside will also be clean.[SV3] ²⁷...You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. ²⁸In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.[SV4](Mt 23:25-28)

Notes: See Lk 11:39-41,44; Th 89:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The Thomas version is considered more authentic because of its lesser invective: ¹Jesus said, *Why do you wash the outside of the cup?* ²Don't you understand that the one who made the inside is also the one who made the outside?[SV2](Th 89:1,2) The metaphor of the inside and outside of the cup relates to clean and unclean, hypocrisy: practice what you preach and hypocrisy and sanctimony; it brings to mind the Pharisee and the publican. (Barnes)

The seventh indictment accused the Pharisees and their forefathers of building tombs for the prophets while persecuting the righteous, likening them to snakes:

²⁹ Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. ³⁰ And you say, "If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets. ³¹So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. ³²Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers. ³³You snakes! you brood of vipers! how will you escape being condemned to hell?[SV4](Mt 23:29-33)

Notes: See Lk 11:47-52 (Source: Q)

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The accusation of murdering the prophets has been used by the church to blame Jews for the crucifixion. Even if an ethnic group is responsible for a past injustice (e.g. white Southerners for the evils of slavery), their descendants are not morally responsible for the acts of their ancestors (compare Ez 18:1-4,20 with Lm 5:7; see also individual responsibility). The Gospel of John reports Jesus condemning Jews as sons of the devil (see Jn 8:44 in the truth will make you free); such anti-Semitic language contradicts the tolerance at the heart of the teachings of Jesus and his forgiveness on the cross.

In summary, the entire diatribe against the teachers of the law and Pharisees in Mt 23:1-33 exudes unmitigated anger and judgment that reflect sectarian conflict between the early church and other Jews following 70 A.D.; but they conflict with the teachings and example of Jesus and for that reason should not be the teachings of Jesus. Condemnation is a typical Old Testament theme of Matthew (see the last judgment) but not of Jesus (see do not judge). The language in the seven woes reflects the hostility that developed between the early Christian church and Jewish leaders after 70 C.E., so that it is probably an exaggerated version of something taken from the Book of Q, which was available to Matthew. Old Testament prophets such as Isaiah attributed an earlier destruction of the Temple in 587/586 B.C. to the pride and arrogance of the Israelites, so that it was only natural to interpret the destruction of 70 C.E. in the same way, and then put that prophecy on the lips of Jesus (see end times). While Jesus criticized religious leaders for their hypocrisy and sanctimony on numerous occasions, the angry tone of damnation in the seven woes contradicts the fundamental teachings of Jesus on the nature of sacrificial love, which emphasize tolerance, mercy, forgiveness—even loving your enemy. Why would Thomas Jefferson include the seven woes in his collection of the moral sayings of Jesus? Perhaps because Jefferson and the Founding Fathers felt the same kind of enmity toward established religion (the Church of England) in their Revolutionary times (see end note #2). As for the contemporary relevance of the above condemnations of religious leaders, there are fundamentalist Christian leaders today, who are as deserving of condemnation for their hypocrisy and sanctimony as the ancient Pharisees. Many subordinate the teachings of Jesus on forgiveness, love and mercy to an inerrant Bible with inflexible religious rules and rituals enforced by a vengeful God, and they condemn those of other religions in the name of God. If it is God's will to reconcile and redeem all people in the family of

God and Satan's will to divide and conquer through fear, hate and violence, then there are many religious leaders today doing more to help Satan than God. Satan has always done a wonderful imitation of God, and some of his best work has been done in the synagogue, church and mosque. History confirms that religion has given God a bad name. (see power over evil). (Barnes)

After these extensive and insightful comments on Matthew 23:13-36, there is little else which needs to be said. Perhaps it would be of benefit to hear from some others who honored Jesus and his teaching. William Blake, Poet: "There is not one moral virtue that Jesus inculcated but Plato and Cicero did inculcate before him. What then did Christ inculcate? Forgiveness of sins. This alone is the gospel and this is the life immortality brought to light by Jesus, even the covenant of Jehovah, which is this: if you forgive one another your trespasses, so shall Jehovah forgive you, that he himself may dwell among you." Leo Tolstoy: "The true Christian is very simple, clear, and obvious to all, as Jesus said. But it is simple and accessible only when man is freed from that falsehood in which we were all educated, and which is passed off upon us as God's truth." (see The Gospel According to Jesus by Stephen Mitchell, Harper Perennial, pp. 283-284; page 287) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:87)(2:91)(3:183)(6:26)

And We gave Moses the Scripture, and after him We sent successive messengers, and We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs, and We confirmed him with the Holy Spirit, and whenever there came to you a messenger, with what your souls did not desire, you became arrogant; and some, you called liars, and some you slay? (2:87)

And when it was said to them, 'Believe in what God has revealed, they said, 'We believe in what was revealed to us', and they disbelieve in what is beyond that; yet it is the truth, confirming what is with them. Say: 'Why then were you slaying the prophets of God formerly, if you were believers?' (2:91)

Those same who said, 'God has already made covenant with us that we should not believe in any messenger until he bring us an offering to be devoured by fire': 'messengers have come to you before me with clear proofs, and with that which you said. Why did you slay them, then, if you are truthful?' (3:183)

And they forbid it [Revelation] and keep away from it; and it is only themselves they destroy, but they do not perceive. (6:26)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

God's Apostle met 'Umar bin Al-Khattab while the latter was going with a group of camel-riders, and he was swearing by his father. The Prophet said, "Lo! God forbids you to swear by your fathers, so whoever has to take an oath, he should swear by God or keep quiet." (Bukhari)

A man came and said, "O God's Apostle! By God, I keep away from the morning prayer only because So and so prolongs the prayer when he leads us in it." The narrator said, "I never saw God's Apostle more furious in giving advice than he was at that time. He then said, "Some of you make people dislike good deeds (the prayer). So whoever among you leads the people in prayer should shorten it because among them are the weak, the old and the needy." (Bukhari)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses highlight the hypocrisy of certain Jewish religious leaders, and the first hadith is also consistent with the Biblical verses that one should only swear by God. The second hadith regarding prayers suggests that a religious leader should make any ritual as convenient as possible for the people. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: For Jews, Christians and Muslims who share a *common word* of faith to love God and our neighbors, with our neighbors including those of other faiths, there is good reason to condemn modern religious leaders who promote fear, hate and violence in the name of God. Unfortunately there remain many Jews, Christians and Muslims who follow such religious leaders and mistake Satan's will for God's will. (Barnes)
This is the Gospel of God for the people of God! (Nates)

*** End times: the eschatological discourse**

In Jerusalem Jesus questioned his disciples on the coming destruction of Jerusalem and end times:

Do you see all these things? I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.[SV3](Mt 24:2; see also Mk 13:1-4; Lk 19:41-44; 21:5-7; Source: Mk)

¹⁶Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. ¹⁹How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now--and never to be equaled again.[SV4](Mt 24:16-21; see also Mk 13:14-23; Lk 21:20-24; Source: Mk)

Immediately after the distress of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.[SV4](Mt 24:29; Is 13:10; 34:4; see also Mk 13:24-27; Lk 21:25-27; Source: Mk)

³²Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: as soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.[SV3](Mt 24:32,33; see also Mk 13:28-32; Lk 21:29-33; Source: Mk)

³⁶No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.[SV3] ³⁷As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and given in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.[SV4] ⁴⁰Two men will be in a field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.[SV3] ⁴²Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³But understand this: if the owner of the house had known what time the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁴So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.[SV4](Mt 24:36-44; see also Mk 13:32,35; Lk 12:39,40; 17:26,27-32,34-36; Th 21:5-7; 61:1; 103; Sources: Q, Th)

⁴⁵Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸But suppose that servant is wicked and says to

himself, "My master is staying away a long time," ⁴⁹and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹He will cut him to pieces and assign him to a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.[SV4](Mt 24:45-51; see also Lk 12:42-48; 17:37 Source: Q)

Notes: See references and sources cited above.

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jefferson did not include Mt 24:3-15, 22-28,30,31,34 and 35 in his *Bible*, but they are provided herein to complete Matthew's account of the end times: When asked by his disciples when the end of the age would come, Jesus answered: ⁴Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵For many will come in my name, claiming, "I am the Christ," and will deceive many. ⁶You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸All these are the beginning of birth pains. ⁹Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹²Because of the increase in wickedness, the love of most people will grow cold, ¹³but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. ¹⁵So when you see standing in the holy place "the abomination that causes desolation," spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand--[SV4](Mt 24:3-15; see also Mk 13:5-13; Lk 21:8-19; Dan 11:31). ²²If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.[SV4] ²³At that time if anyone says to you, "Look, here is the Christ!" or, "There he is!" do not believe it.[SV3] ²⁴For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect--if that were possible. ²⁵See, I have told you ahead of time. ²⁶So if anyone tells you, "There he is, out in the desert," do not go out; or "Here he is, in the inner rooms," do not believe it.[SV4] ²⁷For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.[SV3](Mt 24:22-28; also Lk 17:23,24,37). ³⁰At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man

coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

³¹And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.[SV4](Mt 24:30,31). ³⁴I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.[SV4](Mt 24:34,35). Matthew's version of the end times was based on the so-called *little apocalypse* found in Mark 13 and the Book of Q (see references above). Some of the descriptions of the end times sound hauntingly like contemporary events, but Jesus warned against speculating on timing in Mt 24:36. Since we can never know when the end times will come, we must always be ready, helping others prepare themselves as well (see also watch and pray, Christian stewardship, and the last judgment). Matthew's understanding of the parables on the kingdom of God, or heaven (see the kingdom: parables of the treasure and the pearl, the parable of the net, and the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed) was of an apocalyptic end to worldly imperial rule and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth, one that would restore the power and glory of ancient Israel. It was a concept embraced by many in the early Christian church, including Paul, who were all expecting the end times in their lifetime. History has proved them wrong leaving it to theologians to speculate on the meaning of end times: whether it was a prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., a later second coming of Jesus Christ, or the inevitable end of life (see faith and eternal life; life after death: many rooms in my Father's house). As Jesus indicated to Pilot (see Jesus before Pilot), the unseen kingdom of heaven was not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom--a euphemism for salvation--which was elaborated in the Gospel of John (see born again of the spirit: Nicodemus, worship in spirit and truth, and love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). Scripture from the end times are traditionally read on the first Sunday of Advent, signifying the dark ending that precedes the coming of Jesus Christ as the light of the world and the new beginning of God's kingdom. The unity of all believers in John's Gospel, the Book of Revelation (Rev 22:12,13) and the Gospel of Thomas support the concept of a unity of spirit in our beginning (Alpha) and our end (Omega). When asked by the disciples how their end would come, Jesus said: ²*Have you found the beginning, then, that you are looking for the end? You see, the end will be where the beginning is.* ³*Congratulations to the one who stands at the beginning: that one will know the end and will not taste death.*[SV4](Th 18:1-3; see also Th 3; 51; 113) Both the Gospels of Thomas and John emphasize a spiritualism described as incipient Gnosticism in *The Five Gospels* (see pp

500, 501); like John, Thomas reported that the Holy Spirit (the unseen kingdom of God) could be found within each of us (see Th 1; 85:2; 91:4; 111:2). Whatever interpretation is given to the eschatological discourse and the second coming, it is clearly more a mystical matter of faith than of morality. (Barnes)

The "end times" issues are confusing and usually controversial. There are many who even question whether Jesus spoke much or at all about "end times." The renowned scholars of the Jesus Seminar doubt that Jesus spoke about these issues as indicated by the ratings of SV3 and SV4 with most of these sayings. Other Biblical scholars call these sayings into question or consider them metaphorical or mystical. Rocco A. Errico and George M. Lamsa, authors of the most helpful book, Aramaic Light on the Gospel of Matthew, have a significant chapter on the above passages. They write, "'The end of the world' refers to the reconstitution of the world in accordance with the highest ethical ideals that the Hebrew prophets had predicted. Jesus knew this could only come about through an inner revolution that was to take place within every human soul." (Page 293) They also note that the supposed sayings of Jesus in Matthew 24 refer to two major events: (1) The destruction of the temple, which was a historic matter which took place in 70 C.E, destroyed by Titus; The destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem which happened when Emperor Hadrian uprooted Jerusalem from its foundations and build a new city calling it Elia Heliopolis. (2) "The final and glorious triumph of the messianic kingdom at the very end of all things." (Page 293) Of course, this is a faith statement based on trust and hope. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (7:187)(17:3-7)(43:61-66)(22:1-2)

They will question you about the Hour when it shall come to pass. Say: 'The knowledge of it is only with my Lord. He alone shall reveal it at its proper time. It weighs heavily in the heavens and the earth. It will not come on you save all of a sudden'. They will question you, as if you were preoccupied with it. Say: 'Knowledge of it is only with God, but most people do not know'. (7:187)

[They were] descendants of those whom We carried with Noah. Indeed he was a grateful servant.

And We decreed to the Children of Israel in the Scripture: 'You shall indeed work corruption in the land, twice and you shall indeed become great tyrants'.

So when the time for the first of the two [prophecies] came, We roused against you servants of Ours of great might, who ransacked [your] habitations, and it was a promise fulfilled.

Then We gave you back the turn, [to prevail] over them, and We aided you with children and wealth, and made you greater in number.

'If you are virtuous, you are being virtuous to your own souls, and if you do evil, it is for them'. So when the time for the other [prophecy] comes, that they might ravage you, and that they might enter the Temple, just as they entered it, the first time, and that they might destroy all that they conquered, utterly. (17:3-7)

And indeed he is a portent of the Hour so do not doubt it but: 'Follow me. This is a straight path'.

And do not let Satan bar you. Indeed he is a manifest enemy of yours.

And when Jesus came with the clear signs, he said, 'Verily I have brought you wisdom, and [I have come] to make clear to you some of what you are at variance over. So fear God and obey me. Assuredly God is my Lord and your Lord; so worship Him – that is a straight path'.

But the factions differed among themselves. So woe to those who do wrong from the chastisement of a painful day.

Are they awaiting anything, but that Hour should come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware? (43:61-66)

O mankind, fear your Lord. Surely the earthquake of the Hour [of Doom] is a tremendous thing.

On the day when you behold it, every nursing female will neglect her suckling, and every pregnant female will deliver her burden, and you will see mankind [as though] drunk, yet they will not be drunk, but God's chastisement is severe. (22:1-2)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Time will pass rapidly, good deeds will decrease, miserliness will be thrown (in the hearts of the people) afflictions will appear and there will be much 'Al-Harj.'" They said, "O God's Apostle! What is 'Al-Harj?'" He said, "Killing! Killing!" (Bukhari)

"Near the establishment of the Hour, there will be the days of Al-Harj (killing), and the religious knowledge will be taken away (vanish, i.e. by the death of religious scholars) and general ignorance will spread." (Bukhari)

"The Hour will not be established (1) till two big groups fight each other whereupon there will be a great number of casualties

on both sides and they will be following one and the same religious doctrine, (2) till about thirty Dajjals (liars) appear, and each one of them will claim that he is God's Apostle, (3) till the religious knowledge is taken away (by the death of religious scholars), (4) earthquakes will increase in number, (5) time will pass quickly, (6) afflictions will appear, (7) Al-Harj, (i.e., killing) will increase, (8) wealth will be in abundance -- so abundant that a wealthy person will worry lest nobody should accept his zakat, and whenever he will present it to someone, that person (to whom it will be offered) will say, 'I am not in need of it,' (9) till the people compete with one another in constructing high buildings, (10) till a man when passing by a grave of someone will say, 'Would that I were in his place,' (11) and till the sun rises from the West. So when the sun will rise and the people will see it (rising from the West) they will all believe but that will be the time when: *On the day that one of your Lord's signs comes it shall not benefit a soul to believe if it had not believed theretofore or earned in its belief some good* (6:158). And the Hour will be established while two men spreading a garment in front of them but they will not be able to sell it, nor fold it up; and the Hour will be established when a man has milked his she-camel and has taken away the milk but he will not be able to drink it; and the Hour will be established before a man repairing a tank (for his livestock) is able to water (his animals) in it; and the Hour will be established when a person has raised a morsel (of food) to his mouth but will not be able to eat it."

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The first Quranic verse asserting that "knowledge of the Hour" belongs to God alone, and that the Hour will come suddenly are consistent with the end of the last hadith and with Mt 24:36 above. The next set of Quranic verses refers first to Noah, paralleling Mt 24:37, and then turns to the Children of Israel, providing very interesting parallels of Biblical accounts of the first destruction of the Temple and prophesying a state of oppression *by* (not of) the Children of Israel in the end times. The third set of Quranic verses refers to Jesus' own assertion of the coming of the Hour. The hadith also point out the violence and moral decay of the end times. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: Islam has its own eschatological discourse on *the end times* which is quite similar to that in the New Testament, and surprisingly, Muslims expect Jesus to return at the end times to usher in the new age. Unfortunately those similarities don't overcome the differences in interpretation of God's will for Muslims and Christians in this age. For radical

fundamentalists of both faiths, the two religions must compete—often violently—for supremacy until the end times. (Barnes) Christians and Muslims do trust in, believe in and rely on One Beneficent God, Who was in the past, is in the present and will be in the future. We share and differ in the signs and symbols of the future. We can all leave the "how" to God. (Nates)

*** Be ready: parable of the ten virgins**

In the following parable Jesus likened the kingdom of heaven to ten maidens waiting to meet a bridegroom. Five of the maidens were wise: they had oil in their lamps so that they were prepared for the arrival of the bridegroom whether he arrived day or night; the other five were not prepared for a night visit since they had no oil in their lamps. The bridegroom arrived at midnight and was met by the wise maidens with lighted lamps. The unprepared women were off looking for oil, and when they returned the door was closed. When they knocked on the door and asked to be allowed to join the party, the bridegroom replied:

¹²"I tell you the truth, I don't know you." [SV3] ¹³Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. [SV4] (Mt 25:1-13)

Notes: See Mt 24:42; Mk 13:33,35; Lk 12:35-46; 13:25; 21:34-36 (Sources: Mt, Mk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jesus liked weddings: his first miracle was at a wedding when he turned water to wine (Jn 2:1-11) and he used the wedding as a metaphor for the kingdom, as above and in a new invitation: parable of the wedding banquet. Luke's version (see expectations) involves men rather than virgins. In another parable of Luke a prosperous farmer motivated by greed and hoarding possessions was unprepared for the end of life when called by God. The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew has been interpreted differently in various translations: *The Jerusalem Bible* refers to ten bridesmaids who were to meet the bridegroom and the bride; the NIV (above) refers to ten virgins who were waiting to meet the bridegroom, with no mention of a bride; the SV refers to ten maidens, and like the NIV does not mention a bride. Five bridesmaids and a bridegroom behind closed doors at midnight--without a bride--seem an unorthodox and perhaps scandalous wedding party (see celibacy and sexual preference). The parable may be a parody on social customs, but its message is to be ready. Those who have accepted Jesus will be ready to join him when he arrives on

judgment day; for those who have rejected him, it may be too late. This saying like many others in Matthew seems directed to the Pharisees and separates the blessed from the cursed—the sheep from the goats (see the last judgment). Jesus urged his disciples to watch and pray and to be morally and spiritually prepared for the unexpected end times. While SV scholars do not believe this parable originated with Jesus, they may have overlooked the possible parody that was typical of Jesus. See also the unseen kingdom of God, the kingdom: parables of the treasure and the pearl, the parable of the net, and the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed. (Barnes)

The purpose of the parable of the ten bridesmaids is found in the admonition of the bridegroom to, "Keep awake..." (25:13 NRSV) The background for this can be found in the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus spoke to the crowds: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Matt. 7:21 NRSV) What ultimately matters is doing the Father's will. In watching we are to keep alert. "Watching means seizing the day, loving God and loving neighbors in each moment, not a passive or speculative stance that soon despairs of a delayed return." (Walter Brueggemann, et. al., Texts for Preaching, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, page 561) "When Jesus calls on his disciples to keep watch, he is calling on them to take the reality of God so seriously that they can come to terms with its sudden appearance at any moment within their own lives, precisely because they know that this reality will one day come unboundedly in the kingdom of God." (Edward Schweizer, The Good News according to Matthew; John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1975, page 468) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (57:12-13)

The day when you will see the believing men and believing women with their light shining forth before them and on their right: 'Good tidings for you on this day: Gardens underneath which rivers flow, wherein you will abide. That is the great success'. The day when the hypocrites, men and women, will say to those who believe, 'Look at us that we may glean something of your light!' It will be said: 'Step back and seek light!' Then there will be set up between them a wall with a gate, the inner side of which contains mercy, and the outer side of which faces toward the chastisement. (57:12-13)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Work for your future as if you are going to live forever, but work for your afterlife as if you are going to die tomorrow."
(Tirmidhi)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: This hadith nicely corresponds to the Biblical lesson to "always be ready." The Quranic verse also employs the symbolism of light in the Biblical parable to illustrate the regret of hypocrites on the Day of Judgment. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There will always be differences among believers as to the meaning of the end times and a last judgment, but there is consensus that we should always be ready for that eventuality by faithful living. (Barnes)
Isaiah said, "I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding his face from the house of Jacob, and I will hope in him." Isaiah 8:17. Now we know that all who wait for the Lord also need to have preparation, alertness and oil in their lamps. (Nates)

*** Christian stewardship: the parable of the talents**

In this parable Jesus told of a man traveling abroad who left each of three servants different sums of money (talents), to each according to his ability. The first two put their money to work; the third, who received the least, was afraid of his master and buried his money. When the master returned he asked for an accounting from each servant. After hearing that the first two had earned a good return on the money, he told them:

²¹*Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.[SV2] Come and share your master's happiness![SV4] (Mt 25:14-21)*

When the third servant expressed fear of his master's harsh judgment and told him he had buried what had been given him to ensure he could return it, the master said:

²⁶*You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? ²⁷Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents.[SV2] ²⁹For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what*

he has will be taken from him.[SV3] ³⁰And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.[SV4](Mt 25:22-30)

Notes: See Mt 13:12; Mk 4:24,25; Lk 8:18; 12:47,48; 19:11-27; Th 41:1,2 (Sources: Q, Mk, Th).

Commentary of the teachings of Jesus: The above parable should not be taken literally to mean that making money is a virtue—earning interest was prohibited by Jewish law. While the return on the talents is symbolic of good stewardship, here it is not of money but of what God gives us. Money is a metaphor for love, which must be given in order to be received. The point of the parable is that when God entrusts us with his love, if we don't use it, we lose it. The parable is part of the eschatological discourse and has a message similar to the last judgment, which follows. It may have been directed to the Pharisees, sitting in Moses seat, who were supposed to be stewards of the faith; but they violated their stewardship by corrupting (burying) the spirit of the law when they rejected Jesus as the word of God (see condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes and rejection of the capstone). Jesus used several parables to illustrate the need to be ready for judgment, one of which illustrates the expectations of stewardship. As to wealth and possessions, Jesus made it clear they can be more of a curse than a blessing (see Luke's Beatitudes). And in another parable Jesus commends both a crafty (untrustworthy) steward and those who are trustworthy with worldly wealth to illustrate that wealth is only as good as the good it does (see shrewdness, stewardship and the danger of riches; on the dangers of wealth and greed, see riches and salvation, greed and hoarding possessions, treasures and the heart and the rich man and Lazarus). For himself and his disciples, Jesus required a renunciation of family and possessions; but for most a vow of poverty was not required, only good stewardship of possessions (see Zacchaeus, whose commitment to give half his possessions to the poor pleased Jesus). At the end of the above parable there is a surprising reversal: the one talent is taken and given to the one who had ten talents. The Markan version is considered the most authentic): *Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.[SV2](Mk 4:25)* If taken literally this contradicts the last/first aphorism in humility: leaders and servants, selfless service: the cost of discipleship, hypocrisy: practice what you preach, sanctimony and humility, and the Beatitudes. And Thomas provides an even more paradoxical saying: *Let one who has become wealthy*

*reign[SV4], and let one who has power renounce it.[SV3](Th 81:1,2) If said by Jesus, it had to be a satirical comment on the inequities of the world (see envy and equity), to be contrasted with the spiritual last/first inversion of the unseen kingdom of God. But if the subject of the parable is God's love, then losing what was entrusted to a servant but not used makes sense. If God fills a person's heart with love and that love is not shared with others, then it is lost (see the return of evil); but if God's love is shared with others, then it is replenished many times over. Luke's gospel uses grain as a metaphor for God's love to make the same point: *Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.* (Lk 6:38; see give and you will receive) Jesus often used hyperbole and surprising metaphors to illustrate God's love, which by nature is unlike any worldly possessions—the more we give away, the more we receive. This centrality of love cannot be overemphasized since *God is love* (see I Jn 4:8,16). (Barnes)*

Christian stewardship grows out of what we have received and what we do with what we have. The beginning is experienced as expressed in 1 John 4:19, "We love because he (God) first love us." The paradox is that we cannot genuinely love without having known the love of God and without loving others. Our wealth is measured not by what we have but by what we give away. This is not only our money, our material possessions, but it is God's love, forgiveness, attention, time and energy entrusted to us. These all are the "talents" of our lives. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:187-188)(2:245)(2:261-262)

And when God made covenant with those who had been given the Scripture, 'You shall expound it to people, and not conceal it'. But they rejected it behind their backs, and bought with it a small price; how evil is what they have bought! Do not reckon that those who rejoice in what they have brought, and who love to be praised for what they have not done - do not reckon them secure from the chastisement; there shall be a painful chastisement for them. (3:187-188)

Who is he that will lend God a loan that is good, and He will multiply it for him manifold? God straitens and enlarges; and to Him you shall be returned. (2:245)

The likeness of those who expend their wealth in the way of God is as the likeness of a grain of corn that sprouts seven ears,

in every ear a hundred grains; so God multiplies for whom He will; God is Embracing, Knowing.

Those who expend their wealth in the way of God then do not follow up their expenditure with reminder of their generosity and injury, their wage is with their Lord, and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve. (2:261-262)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The first Quranic verses correspond to the commentary that those who violate their stewardship as "keepers of the faith" shall be severely punished. The second set of verses correspond to the commentary that money can be a curse or a blessing, highlighting the conditions for the latter. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: Money is a common metaphor to illustrate stewardship for matters of faith, and there is consensus that love of God and neighbor is the coin of true faith. (Barnes) Stewardship is at the center of the lives of Jews, Christians and Muslims. It is the very life blood which courses from God to us to others. All of us can sing the chorus, "We give Thee but Thine own, Whatever the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, A Trust, O Lord, from Thee." (William W. How and Joseph Barnby) (Nates)

*** The last judgment**

The eschatological discourse concludes with Jesus' allegory of the last judgment:

³¹*When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.*

³⁴*Then the King will say to those on his right, "Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."*

³⁷*Then the righteous will answer him, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?*

³⁸*When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing*

clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?

⁴⁰The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

⁴¹Then he will say to those on his left, "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me."

⁴⁴They will answer, "Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?" ⁴⁵He will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

⁴⁶Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.[SV4](Mt 25:31-46).

Notes: (Source: Mt).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: In this allegory (it is not a parable), Matthew reports Jesus describing *the last judgment* using the simile of sheep and goats. While its apocalyptic and judgmental tone are characteristic of Matthew and not Jesus, the example provided of how we serve God--by serving *the least of those in our midst*--is one of the best illustrations of the greatest commandment, the new command, humility: leaders as servants, serving the least of those instead of friends, loving your neighbor, and the golden rule. While the judgment theme is not characteristic of Jesus, it is noteworthy that neither religious beliefs nor compliance with religious rules and rituals were a factor in the last judgment. Despite its SV4 rating, *loving the least of those* sounds like something that Jesus would have said, even though he would not likely have related it to a final judgment. A similar moral with its negative consequences is provided in the story of the rich man and Lazarus: insensitivity to suffering. (Barnes) Food, water, clothes, visits to the sick and those in prison...these are the stuff which fills the voids of existence and life. They are at the center of love for others. There is more, such as worship and prayer. This may be SV4 as the early church spoke for Jesus as best they could. It is said of that early church, "Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any

had need." Acts 2:43-45. Evidently, the early Christians had no homeless people, they had no hungry children, they visited those who were sick or in prison. Was this about a final judgment or the judgment which is always now? The great theologian Paul Tillich in The Eternal Now maintained that the eternal is always now. Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God as being in us, as being at hand and as yet to come. Could judgment be the same? In 1 John 4:16b-17, we read, "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world." (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (56:8-9)

*Those of the right [hand] – what of those of the right [hand]?
And those of the left [hand] – what of those of the left [hand]?
(56:8-9)*

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Verily, God, the Exalted and Glorious, would say on the Day of Resurrection: 'O son of Adam, I was sick but you did not visit Me.' He would say: 'O my Lord; how could I visit Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?' Thereupon He would say: 'Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine was sick but you did not visit him and were you not aware of this that if you had visited him, you would have found Me by him? O son of Adam, I asked food from you but you did not feed Me.' He would say: 'My Lord, how could I feed Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?' He said: 'Didn't you know that such and such servant of Mine asked food from you but you did not feed him, and were you not aware that if you had fed him you would have found him by My side?' (The Lord would again say:) 'O son of Adam, I asked drink from you but you did not provide Me.' He would say: 'My Lord, how could I provide Thee whereas Thou art the Lord of the worlds?' Thereupon He would say: 'Such and such of servant of Mine asked you for a drink but you did not provide him, and had you provided him drink you would have found him near Me.'

"Whoever alleviates the lot of a needy person, God will alleviate his lot in this world and the next." (Forty Hadith of Nawawi)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The symbolism of the "companions of the right hand" and "companions of the left hand" for those destined for heaven and hell, respectively, is invoked

by both the Qur'an and Bible, as the verses above demonstrate. The hadith above corresponds very closely to Mt 25:35-40 and is self-explanatory. As previously discussed in the parable of the sower, modern scholars may argue that this hadith is evidence of historical borrowing. However, Muslim scholars maintain that both Jesus and Muhammad are inspired, and that the sayings are similar because both come from the same Source. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The Qur'an speaks of judgment based on belief as well as good works (see *Selected provisions of the Qur'an, Belief and Unbelief/rewards and punishments*). Exclusivist views of judgment in which true believers experience eternal bliss while unbelievers suffer eternal damnation is the bane of modern religion. If the love of God and the unbelieving neighbor is accepted as a *common word* of faith for most Jews, Christians and Muslims, interfaith reconciliation is possible. (Barnes & Nates)

*** The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak**

In Gethsemane Jesus had his most difficult hours before the cross. After the passover meal Jesus told the disciples,

This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.[SV4](Mt 26:31; Zc 13:7)

Peter protested and told Jesus he would never lose faith in him (Mt 26:33), and he and the other disciples took an oath that they would die before they would disown him (Mt 26:35).

³⁶*Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, Sit here while I go over there to pray. ³⁷He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled.*

³⁸*Then he said to them, My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.*

³⁹*Going a little farther he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.*

⁴⁰*Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour? He asked Peter, ⁴¹Watch[SV4] and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.[SV3] The spirit is willing but the body is weak.*

⁴²*He went away a second time and prayed, My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away until I drink it, may your will be done.[SV4]*

⁴³When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

⁴⁵Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.[SV4](Mt 26:36-45)

Notes: See Mt 26:58; 69-75; Mk 14:26-42; Lk 22:31-46; Jn 12:27; 13:36-38 (Sources: Mk, Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: As he approached the cross Matthew reports Jesus sorrowful and troubled. Facing execution caused feelings in Jesus that were close to despair. Jefferson excluded Jesus telling Peter that he would deny him three times (Mt 26:34). Jesus wanted the support of his closest friends in his hour of need, and when he asked them to watch and pray with him the disciples failed the test to be ready and went to sleep. Jesus was left to pray alone so that none of the disciples could have heard him. The above passage not only illustrates the weakness of the flesh but also the power of the Spirit, accessible through prayer, which helps us endure the troubles of the world—even facing death. This is a recurring theme in John (see born again of the spirit: Nicodemus, faith and eternal life, love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace and Jesus predicts his death). Although omitted by Jefferson, the passage ends with Jesus saying to his sleepy disciples, *Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer.*[SV4](Mt 26:46) (Barnes)

This is a most touching time of prayer. How Jesus must have felt so alone, even abandoned by his followers. Then, as he prays, he experiences his closest friends going to sleep on him. As a young man, Jesus was suffering in body, mind and spirit. He did not want to die. He prayed to avoid the dreaded execution by the authorities. He prayed in simplicity and agony. Yet in his profound anxiety, he said, "Nevertheless, not what I want, but what you want." Did God really want Jesus to die? Evidently God wanted him to complete the mission for which he was born. This took courage beyond imagination and determination beyond comprehension. The flesh may have been weak but the spirit was willing. Then Jesus said to his sleeping friends, "Get up, let us be going." He set his face to go to Jerusalem. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:52-57)

And when Jesus sensed their (the Children of Israel) disbelief, he said, 'Who will be my helpers unto God?' The disciples said, 'We will be helpers of God; we believe in God; witness that we

have submitted.

Lord, we believe in what You have revealed, and we follow the Messenger; inscribe us therefore with those who bear witness'. And they schemed; and God schemed; and God is the best of schemers.

When God said, 'O Jesus, I am gathering you, and raising you to Me, and I am cleansing you of those who disbelieved, and I am setting those who follow you above those who disbelieved until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me shall be your return, and I will decide between you, as to what you were at variance about. As for the disbelievers, I will chastise them with a terrible chastisement in this world and the Hereafter; they shall have no helpers.

But as for the believers, who do deeds of righteous, He will pay them in full their wages. God loves not the evildoers. (3:52-57)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These Quranic verses clearly indicate a plot against Jesus. In the first verse, there are several reasons for taking the pronoun "they" to refer to the Children of Israel. First, the preceding verses refer to them. Second, another verse (61:14) discusses the same event and explicitly criticizes those Jews who disbelieved Jesus: *O you who believe, be helpers of God, just as said Jesus son of Mary to the disciples, 'Who will be my helpers unto God?' The disciples said, 'We will be God's helpers!' So a group of the Children of Israel believed, while a group disbelieved. Then We strengthened those who believed against their enemy, and so they became the triumphant.*

Verse 3:55 also indicates that God raised Jesus to Himself bodily, reaffirming the conclusion of the Biblical account. Islamic doctrine also agrees with Christian doctrine that Jesus suffered, but differs on what happened between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, so to speak, as we shall see in the last entry in for the Gospel of Matthew. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There is consensus that some Jewish religious leaders were involved in a plot to eliminate Jesus, and that those who chose to follow Jesus were blessed while those who rejected him were not. While the Qur'an states that God raised Jesus to Himself it denies that Jesus was crucified and resurrected according to Christian accounts, and condemns as blasphemy the belief that Jesus was resurrected as the son of God. (see *Selected provisions of the Qur'an, Belief, rewards and punishments for Jews and Christians*). (Barnes & Nates)

*** The arrest of Jesus**

Jesus had not finished speaking to his sleepy disciples in Gethsemane when Judas arrived with a group of men armed with swords and clubs. Judas went straight to Jesus and betrayed him with a kiss, a prearranged sign to identify Jesus so that he could be arrested. Jesus said,

Friend, do what you came for.[SV4](Mt 26:50)

When the armed men stepped forward and seized Jesus, one of the disciples, probably Peter, drew his sword and cut off the ear of the servant to the high priest. Jesus said,

Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.[SV4](Mt 26:52)

⁵⁵*At that time Jesus said to the crowd, Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then the disciples deserted him and fled.[SV4](Mt 26:55,56)*

Notes: See Mk 14:43-52; Lk 22:47-53; Jn 18:1-11 (Sources: Mk, Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: John reports Jesus confronting the crowd and asking who they were looking for. When they answered "Jesus of Nazareth," Jesus said, *I am he*, at which time the crowd drew back and fell to the ground. Then Jesus asked the same question, received the same answer, and said again, *I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, let these men go.[SV4](Jn 18:4-8)* After the incident with Peter's sword, Jesus explained why self-defense was inappropriate: ⁵³*Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?[SV4](Mt 26:53,54)* Then when Jesus addressed the crowd and made it clear he would not resist arrest, his confused disciples deserted him. They were understandably confused and in a panic over how to deal with an unruly mob without the use of force. In Luke's version of instructions to the disciples, Jesus told them to carry swords, presumably for self-defense. (Lk 22:35-36,38) *The Jefferson Bible* includes Mt 26:57,75; 27:3-8;13,15-23,26,27,29-31,39-43, all of which is narrative describing the events leading to the

crucifixion. Part of that narrative (Mt 27:40) refers to a statement attributed to Jesus that he would destroy the temple and build it back in three days. Mark reports a witness against Jesus saying "*We heard him say, 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'*"[SV3](Mk 14:58) On the predicted destruction of the temple see end times: the eschatological discourse; on the trial of Jesus see Jesus before the Sanhedrin. See also Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification. (Barnes)

"Greetings, Rabbi!" What a greeting from Judas, even after kissing him as a false token of affection. What kind of man was Judas? Was he a pathetic pretender? Was he a religious, political zealot who violently disagreed with Jesus but would not admit it? He took the path of pretense and betrayal. The nobility of Jesus shines through even in the midst of all of this disgusting behavior. The Spirit of God was upon him even as it was as he began his public ministry. Matthew 26:56b tells us, "Then all the disciples deserted him and fled." All of them; not one remained at his side. What tragedy. The so-called disciples *deserted him and fled*. This must have brought to Jesus more pain and agony than did the nails and the spear he was soon destined to endure. The drama is played out, in blood and tears. (Nates)

Commentary on the Qur'an: There are no Quranic verses corresponding to this Biblical passage on Jesus' arrest. The only possible parallel concerns Mt 26:52 on living and dying by the sword, i.e. *And whatever affliction may befall you is on account of what your [own] hands have earned*. (42:30). But this is tangential to the focus of the Biblical passage. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There is no prohibition against using the sword in the Qur'an or hadith. In fact, fighting for God is a virtue (see *Selected provisions of the Qur'an, The Law of War and morality of violence*). The conflicting passages on the sword in Matthew and Luke reflect the debate among Christians incorporated in the *Just War Tradition* over whether and when the use of lethal force is justifiable. (Barnes)

If God weeps, then God must have wept over the betrayal of Jesus and the desertion of so-called disciples, even as Jesus wept over the city of Jerusalem. (See Luke 19:41) Perhaps God weeps over all the rejected spiritual leaders who were sent on Godly missions that were abandoned "...because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God." (Luke 19:44c) (Nates)

* Jesus on the cross

Jesus was nailed to the cross at approximately nine A.M. (the third hour), and a darkness came over the land from noon until three P.M. (the ninth hour), when Jesus cried out in a loud voice,

Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?[SV4](Mt 27:46; Ps 22:1)

Notes: See Mk 15:34; Lk 23:46; Jn 19:28,30 (Source: Ps).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The above words are in the language actually spoken by Jesus. They are among the few Aramaic words recorded in the gospels, and are taken from Psalm 22: *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*[SV4] But when taken as a whole that Psalm provides a message of victory, not defeat. Each of the gospel accounts reports different sayings of Jesus on the cross. The Gospel of John records Jesus telling Mary, his mother, *Dear woman, here is your son*; and then telling the disciple John, *Here is your mother.*[SV4](Jn 19:26,27) After saying *I am thirsty* and given vinegar wine from a sponge on a hyssop branch, John reports Jesus' last words to be, *It is finished*, after which he bowed his head and gave up the spirit.[SV4](Jn 19:26-29) Luke reports words of forgiveness on the cross and the last words of Christ: *Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*[SV4](Lk 23:46) *The Jefferson Bible* includes Mt 27:47-50,55,56,60, all narrative describing the aftermath of the crucifixion. Jefferson does not include what Matthew attributes to Jesus following the crucifixion: the words of assurance given to the two Marys (Mt 28:9,10) and *the great commission* given to the disciples by the risen Christ. (Mt 28:18-20) (*Barnes*)

The excellent book, Aramaic Light on the Gospel of Matthew by Rocco A. Errico and George M. Lamsa has much enlightening and intriguing information on the Gospel of Matthew. The section on "Jesus' Triumphant Cry" is especially helpful in understanding the meaning on Jesus' last words from the cross. "...the King James Version of the gospel presents Jesus' cry as a question. This implies that Jesus did not understand what was happening to him. It also seems that Jesus felt that God had forsaken him. However, we may understand Jesus' Aramaic cry as a declaration instead of a question: 'el,'el l'mana shwsqthani: O God! O God! To what [a purpose] You have kept me!' Jesus cried out with a deep knowingness of his reason for having lived and for dying. His cry was a victorious one. God did not abandon him. A terse and literal rendering of this cry would be 'O,God! O God! To what (a purpose) You have left me!' "Left" in this context does

not mean 'forsaken or abandoned.' It refers to 'remaining to fulfill an end or a destiny.' (pages 346-347) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (4:157-158)

And for their saying, 'We slew the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God'. And yet they did not slay him nor did they crucify him, but he was given the resemblance. And those who disagree concerning him are surely in doubt regarding him. They do not have any knowledge of him, only the pursuit of conjecture; and they did not slay him for certain. Nay, God raised him up to Him. God is ever Mighty, Wise. (4:157-158)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These Quranic verses appear to directly contradict the Biblical passage. There are several interpretations of these Quranic verses, of which we will highlight three. The first is the "substitution theory," and some commentators even suggest that Judas involuntarily became Jesus' lookalike and was crucified. However, there is no Quranic basis for such a suggestion, which is obviously speculative. A second interpretation is that Jesus' body was crucified, but that his Spirit was not. However, this runs against the literal meaning of the Quranic verse that *they did not slay him nor did they crucify him*. Moreover, it is problematic from a Christian theological perspective (certainly the Eastern Orthodox view) that both the human and the Divine natures of Jesus participated in his death and resurrection. The third view put forward by scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr maintains that this event:

...is the one irreducible 'fact' separating Christianity and Islam, a fact which is in reality placed there providentially to prevent a mingling of the two religions. All the other doctrines, such as the question of the nature of Christ or the Trinity, can be understood metaphysically in such a way as to harmonize the two perspectives. The question of the death of Jesus is, however, the "fact" that resists any interpretation which would be common to the Christian and Islamic descriptions of the event. It could be said that this event was greater than any single description of it. (Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Life and Thought*, pp.209-210)

He accordingly invokes an analogy from quantum mechanics, maintaining that an event of this magnitude should be understood from multiple points of view, much as light can be understood as

both a wave and a particle, suggesting that *both* the Quranic and Biblical accounts are correct.⁸

Frithjof Schuon ultimately traces these and other differences to differences in spiritual anthropology and the audiences each religion was intended to address (given the importance of the topic, I include the following lengthy quote):

To sum up: Islam confronts what is immutable in God with what is permanent in man. For exoteric Christianity, man is a *a priori* will, or more exactly, he is will corrupted; clearly the intelligence is not denied, but it is taken into consideration only as an aspect of will; man is will and in man will is intelligent; when the will is corrupted, so also is the intelligence corrupted in the sense that in no way could it set the will to rights. Therefore a divine intervention is needed: the sacrament. In the case of Islam, where man is considered as the intelligence and intelligence comes "before" will, it is the content or direction of the intelligence which has sacramental efficacy: whoever accepts that the Transcendent Absolute alone is absolute and transcendent, and draws from this its consequences for the will, is saved. The Testimony of Faith – the *Shahādah* – determines the intelligence, and the Islamic Law – the *Sharī'ah* – determines the will; in Islamic esoterism – the *Tarīqah* – there are the initiatic graces which have the value of keys and but serve to actualize our "supernatural nature." Once again, our salvation, its texture and its course are prefigured by our theomorphism: since we are transcendent intelligence and free will, it is this intelligence and this will, or it is transcendence and freedom, which will save us; God does no more than fill the receptacles man had emptied but not destroyed; to destroy them is not in man's power. ...

All the positions described above are founded on the dogmas or, in a deeper sense, on the metaphysical perspectives which they express, that is to say, on a certain "point of view" as to the subject and on a certain "aspect" as to the object. Seeing that Christianity is founded on the divinity of an earthly phenomenon – it is not in himself that Christ is earthly but insofar as he moves in space and time – Christianity is forced as a consequence to introduce relativity into the Absolute, or rather to consider the Absolute at a relative level, that of the

⁸ He first suggested this analogy in response to Hans Kung, and both papers were subsequently published in a single volume along with other responses.

Trinity;⁹ since a particular "relative" is considered as absolute, the Absolute must have something of the relative, and since the Incarnation is a fact of the Divine Mercy or Love, God must be envisaged at the outset in this aspect and man in the corresponding aspect of will and affection; and the spiritual path must equally be a reality of love. The Christian emphasis on the will is linked to the Christian conception of the Absolute and this conception in turn is as if determined by the "historicity" of God, if the expression be permissible.

Analogously, seeing that Islam is founded on the absoluteness of God, it is as a consequence obliged – since by its form it is a Semitic dogmatism¹⁰ – to exclude terrestriality from the Absolute and so must deny, at least on the level of words, the divinity of Christ; it is not obliged to deny, in a secondary manner, that the relative is in God – for it inevitably admits the divine attributes, otherwise it would be denying the totality of God and all possibility of connection between God and the world; but it has to deny any directly divine character outside the sole Principle. The Sufis are the first to recognize that nothing can stand outside the supreme Reality, for to say that Unity excludes everything amounts to saying that from another point of view – that of the reality of the world – it includes everything; but this truth is not susceptible of dogmatic formulation, though it is logically included in *lā ilāha illā 'Llāh*.

When the Quran affirms that the Messiah is not God it means he is not "a god" other than God, or that he is not God *qua* the earthly Messiah;¹¹ and when the Quran rejects the dogma of the Trinity it means there is no triad in "God as such," that is, in the Absolute, which is beyond all

⁹ To speak of distinction is to speak of relativity. The very term "trinitarian relationships" proves that the point of view adopted--providentially and necessarily--is situated at the metaphysical level proper to all *bhakti*. Gnosis goes beyond this plane in attributing absoluteness to the Godhead in the Eckhartian sense, or to the Father when the Trinity is envisaged "vertically," in which case the Son corresponds to Being--the first relativity "in the Absolute"--and the Holy Spirit to Act.

¹⁰ Dogmatism is characterized by the fact that it attributes an absolute scope and an exclusive sense to a particular point of view or aspect. In pure metaphysics all conceptual antinomies are resolved in the total truth, something which must not be confused with a leveling out of real oppositions by denying them.

¹¹ In Christian terms: human nature is not divine nature. If Islam insists on this, as it does, in a given way and not in another, that is because of its particular angle of vision.

distinctions. Finally, when the Quran appears to deny the death of Christ, it can be understood to mean that in reality Jesus vanquished death, whereas the Jews believed they had killed the Christ in his very essence;¹² here the truth of the symbol prevails over the truth of the fact in the sense that a spiritual negation takes the form of a material negation;¹³ but, from another angle, by this negation, or apparent negation, Islam eliminates the way of Christ insofar as it itself is concerned, and it is logical that it should do so since its own way is different and it has no need to claim those means of grace which are proper to Christianity.

On the plane of total truth, which includes all possible points of view, aspects and modes, any recourse to reason alone is evidently useless; consequently it is vain to adduce against some dogma of a foreign religion that an error denounced by reason cannot become a truth on another level, for that is to forget that the reason works in an indirect way, or by reflections, and that its axioms are inadequate to the extent that it trespasses on the ground of pure intellect. Reason is formal by its nature and formalistic in its operations; it proceeds by coagulations, by alternatives and by exclusions – or, it can be said, by partial truths. It is not, like pure intellect, formless and fluid light; true, it derives its implacability, or its validity in general, from the intellect, but it touches on essences only through drawing conclusions, not by direct vision; it is indispensable for verbal formulation but it

¹² The Quran says (II, 149): "Say not of those that have been slain in the way of God that they are dead; say that they are living, though ye are not aware of it." See also the author's *Gnosis*, Perennial Books, 1990, the chapter "The Sense of the Absolute in Religions," p. 15, note 1.

¹³ The same remark applies to Christianity as when, for instance, the saints of the Old Testament--even Enoch, Abraham, Moses and Elias--are held to have remained shut out from Heaven until the descent into hell of Christ; however, before that descent, Christ appeared between Moses and Elias in the light of the Transfiguration, and in a parable mentioned "the bosom of Abraham"; clearly these facts are capable of various interpretations, but the Christian concepts are nonetheless incompatible with the Jewish tradition. What justifies them is their spiritual symbolism and thus their truth: salvation must of necessity come through the Logos which, though manifested in time in a particular form, is beyond the limitations of a temporal condition. Let us also note the seeming contradiction between Saint John the Baptist denying that he was Elias and Christ affirming the contrary: had this contradiction, which is resolved by the difference in the relationship envisaged, been between one religion and another, it would have been exploited to the utmost on the pretext that "God cannot contradict Himself."

does not involve immediate knowledge. (Frithjof Schuon, *Understanding Islam*, excerpts from ch.1) (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There is no consensus between Christianity and Islam on the death of Jesus or what happened afterward, but given the mystical nature of that death and resurrection, the proliferation of different understandings—even differences within each religion—should not be a major obstacle to better ecumenical and interfaith relations. Frithjof Schuon finds esoteric common ground in the *Logos*, or the word of God. (see note 13 above, and the new command to love one another in John's Gospel) Ultimately, all interpretations of the crucifixion and resurrection are esoteric and speculative, but exclusivist beliefs derived from those great mysteries are inconsistent with the teachings and example of Jesus as the *Logos* (see faith and eternal life and the way, the truth and the life). In the final analysis, better interfaith relations between Christians and Muslims doesn't depend upon either accepting the mystical beliefs of the other but upon embracing the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor, including one's unbelieving neighbor, as a *common word* of faith. In our time and place, that love requires believers to promote human rights, beginning with the freedom of religion and expression, with all coercive laws made by democratic processes, leaving temporal judgment to secular authorities and final judgment to God, and God alone. (Barnes) As has been stated there is no direct correlation between the acceptance of the death of Jesus among Christians and Muslims. This does not deter the cooperation among both groups as we recognize as a *common word* of love of God and love of neighbor. The call of Jesus is central in the lives of Christians. His invitation was, "Follow me." Clearly, this means his lifestyle and his teachings. Along with this, there have been a great mass of theologies around Jesus, his birth, life, being, death and resurrection. Some of these have been refuted as heretical, others as rarified attempts to clarify the mysteries of God, and others which maintain they have the "true beliefs". This has led to the organization of vast numbers of Christians with varying points of view. The death of Jesus is universally accepted among Christians, but the meaning of that death varies greatly among Christian communions. Muslims believe that Jesus did not die, but was assumed by God into the presence of God. This is a theological juncture in our faiths. (Nates)

Chapter 3: Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

The Gospel according to Luke was written in the same period as Matthew, between 83 and 90 A.D.; and Luke, like Matthew, used Mark as well as the more primitive and undiscovered Q gospel as major sources. It is thought that Luke accompanied Paul on his travels and that he also wrote Acts (of the Apostles). Like Paul, Luke was not writing to Jews but to Gentiles. The different audiences account for inconsistencies in various teachings shared by Luke with Mark and Matthew (Luke is generally more accurate in reporting Mark than Matthew), as well as in narratives on the nativity and the resurrection.¹⁵

Luke omits certain sayings found in Mark and Matthew that are exclusively Jewish. This could have been intentional or an indication they were not found in more primitive and therefore reliable sources used by Luke. These omissions should not be overlooked, but more important are sayings of Jesus found only in Luke. Stories about Mary and Martha, the good shepherd, the lost sheep, the prodigal son, and the Pharisee and the publican are unique to Luke and have messages on both morality and faith that are as relevant today as they were 2,000 years ago.

Luke's gospel is characterized by its emphasis on austerity. In Luke, Jesus makes unyielding demands on those who would be his disciples: they must subordinate or renounce anything on earth that would come between them and the love of God--a love that each must give in order to receive. Many of the teachings of Jesus reported in Luke deal with the relationship between earthly treasures and the heart; the most demanding is the teaching on renouncing family and possessions.

But if Luke's message seems harsh, it can also be warm and reassuring. Its uniqueness has been attributed to the "attractive personality of its author which shines through all his work."¹⁶ In the Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels, of which Luke is the last, the editors of *The Jerusalem Bible* picture Luke's gospel as the warmest and most human of the Synoptics:

"The originality of Luke is not in his key ideas (they are identical with those of Mark and Matthew) but in his religious mentality which, apart from slight traces of Paul's influence, is overwhelmingly distinctive of Luke's personal temperament. Luke, in Dante's phrase, is the *Scriba mansuetudinus Christi*, the faithful recorder of Christ's lovingkindness."¹⁷

Luke on Morality

* Follow me

When Jesus called Levi (Matthew), the tax collector, his message was clear and unequivocal:

Follow me.[SV4](Lk 5:27)

Notes: See Mk 1:17; 2:13,14; 10:21; Mt 4:19; 8:22; 9:9; 19:21; Lk 14:27; 18:22; Jn 1:43 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: When Levi (Matthew) heard the call, he left everything and followed Jesus (Lk 5:28). All of the gospel accounts have Jesus call his disciples in much the same way as did other rabbis of his day. But after the resurrection the church put more emphasis on worshipping Jesus as Christ rather than on following him, as evidenced in the letters of Paul, although Jesus never suggested that he be worshipped. Robin R. Meyers has written of this irony in *Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshipping Christ and Following Jesus* (HarperOne, 2009). This misplaced emphasis may be explained as the cost of discipleship. Following Jesus is more difficult than worshipping him and is not popular, as Jesus noted when he described discipleship as faith for the few: the narrow gate. Jesus taught we must give in order to receive God's love for the least, the last and the lost—even to love your enemy. That kind of sacrificial love can be uncomfortable and even painful; that's why Jesus described it as taking up a cross. On the other hand, professing belief in mystical church doctrines that guarantee eternal life is not so difficult or costly, and has been described as *cheap grace* (Bonhoeffer). Jesus never promoted any religion, not even his own. He did emphasize belief, but it was belief in his teachings as God's word, not in any religious doctrines, rules or rituals (see the authority of Jesus and faith and eternal life); on discipleship see unconditional commitment to discipleship, call to discipleship, renouncing family and possessions, and from doubt to belief: Nathanael. (Barnes)

The call which Jesus gave to Levi does seem to be a simple thing..."Follow me." However, verse 28 goes to the depth of that call: "And he got up, left everything, and followed him." This is not so simple or easy. As has been correctly stated, the call of Jesus to follow him, over the years became an invitation to believe in him. Following and believing are both important. However, as Robin R. Myers pointed out in *Saving Jesus from The*

Church, chapter two, "Faith As Being, Not Belief" is the emphasis of Jesus. We need to be careful not to drift into a "moralistic" attitude or lifestyle, for Jesus made it clear that our doing is based on trust in and reliance on God, who through grace provides what we need to do God's will. Paul said this well in the Letter to the Philippians 2:13: "...for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Meister Eckhart said: 'The seed of God is in us...God seeds grow into God'." In his metaphor, as in Rilke's, there is no conflict between those absurd categories 'faith' and 'works.'" (Page 141, *The Gospel According to Jesus* by Stephen Mitchell.) "Everything is grace, but unless we prepare for grace, we will never know it has come." (Page 142, *ibid*) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:31-32)(4:64)(3:132)(33:21)(24:54)(33:71)(4:13)

Say: 'If you love God, follow me, and God will love you, and forgive you your sins; God is Forgiving, Merciful.

Say: 'Obey God, and the Messenger'. But if they turn their backs, God loves not the disbelievers. (3:31-32)

We never sent any Messenger, but that he should be obeyed by the leave of God. (4:64)

And obey God and the Messenger, so that you may find mercy. (3:132)

Verily there is for you a good example in the Messenger of God for whoever hopes for [the encounter with] God and the Last Day, and remembers God often. (33:21)

Say: 'Obey God, and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, [know that] he is only responsible for that with which he has been charged, and you are responsible for that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided. And the Messenger's duty is only to convey [the Message] clearly'. (24:54)

He [God] will rectify your deeds for you and will forgive you your sins. And whoever obeys God and His Messenger has verily achieved a great success. (33:71)

Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will admit him to Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein; that is the great triumph. (4:13)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The first verse above commands the Prophet to tell the people, "Follow me," identical to Jesus' command. The second verse suggests that God instructs all His messengers to issue this command. The remaining verses indicate the mercy, forgiveness, and reward that flow from following the supreme example of God's messengers. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The teachings of Jesus and Muhammad urge their followers to follow the word of God: Jesus as *the Word of God made flesh* and the Qur'an as *the Word of God made book*. Both taught their followers to worship only God, not any person who brought the word of God; but in their competitive zeal both Christianity and Islam have often emphasized belief in theirs as the one true religion and the worship of holy things and people rather than following the moral imperative to love God and neighbor—including one's unbelieving neighbor. (Barnes)
In Islam the imperative is to "obey God and obey the Messenger", since the Messenger was the transmitter of the Word of God, the Qur'an. In the Christian faith, God is to be loved with all one's heart, mind and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves, which is to follow Jesus as the incarnation of the Word of God even as he followed God. In both instances, the moral imperative flows from our relationship to the central heart of our faith. In both Islam and Christianity, the clear and vital statement of the "Commentary on the Qur'an" is to be observed. In both, we need to rely on the enabling spiritual strength of God in order to do the will of God. (Nates)

*** Give and you will receive**

Jesus taught that we receive from God what we give to others:

³⁶*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.[SV3] Do not judge, and you will not be judged. ³⁷Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.[SV4] Forgive and you will be forgiven.[SV2] ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap.[SV4] For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.[SV3](Lk 6:36-38)*

Notes: See Mt 7:1,2;6:14,15; Mk 4:24;11:25 (Sources: Q, Mk, Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This is the Lukan version of do not judge; Mark's original version is: *With the measure you use, it will be measured unto you--and even more.[SV3](Mk*

4:24) The golden rule (Lk 6:31) requires that we treat others as we expect them to treat us, and Jesus goes on to say that we can expect the same treatment from God that we give to others. The unique nature of God's love, which includes tolerance, mercy and forgiveness, requires that it be *given in order to be received*. That is the reciprocal nature of God's forgiveness and love. It cannot be kept to oneself; like perishable fruit it spoils if not given away to others. God's love and mercy in all of its forms must be given to be received. The reciprocal quality of God's forgiveness is illustrated in the parable of the unforgiving debtor and affirmed for each of us in the Lord's Prayer (see prayer in secret); and it is beautifully expressed in *The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi* (see the *Rest of the story*). This teaching affirms that God depends upon us to be instruments of His forgiveness, love and mercy and that we are reconciled with God and humankind in the sharing of God's forgiveness, love and mercy with others. In the parable of the last judgment this reciprocity is extended to judgment. We serve God by serving *the least of those* among us. See also ostentatious giving, riches and salvation, the parable of the unmerciful servant, criticizing self before others, the greatest commandment, and anger and reconciliation. (*Barnes*)

How in this world can we be as merciful as our gracious God is merciful? If this were not possible would Jesus have said it, if he in fact did say it? Some think it may have been a reflection by the Church on what Jesus did say. The beautiful phrases of this section of Scripture wash over us like a refreshing stream. Some meaning of it is well expressed in the above comments. One of the very best expositions of Luke 6:36-38 is in a sermon by Meister Eckhart entitled *BE COMPASSIONATE AS YOUR CREATOR IN HEAVEN IS COMPASSIONATE*. (See pages 317-328, *Breakthrough: Meister Eckhart's Creation Spirituality in New Translation*, Introduction and Commentaries by Matthew Fox, Doubleday, New York, 1980) (*Nates*)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (64:14)(2:279)(23:96)(36:54)(12:64)

And if you pardon, and overlook [such enmity] and forgive, then assuredly God is Forgiving, Merciful. (64:14)

Wrong not, and you will not be wronged. (2:279)

Ward off with that which is better the evil [act]. (23:96)

So today no soul shall be wronged in any way, and you shall not be requited, except what you used to do. (36:54)

Of those who show compassion, God is the most compassionate.
(12:64)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These Quranic verses parallel the Biblical verses quite closely and are largely self-explanatory. However, the last verse referring to God as "the most compassionate" of those who show compassion requires a remark. Quranic commentators maintain that the comparative construction within the verse carries an implicit command for us to be compassionate as well (the same applies to other Divine Qualities in other verses using this construction). All human virtues are ultimately reflections of Divine Names and Qualities from this point of view. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad emphasized the reciprocal nature of God's forgiveness, love and mercy—as well as judgment. We can expect to be treated by God as we treat his creations—if not in this world, then in the next. (Barnes)
Here we encounter a magnificent paradox. We cannot love until we experience the gracious love, compassion and mercy of God and we cannot know God's gracious Self until we love others. (Note the above Commentary on the Qur'an and 1 John 4:19 "...we love him (God), because he first loved us...") and many other references in 1 John especially chapters 3 and 4) (Nates)

*** Criticizing self before others: the blind leading the blind**

Jesus taught that we should be more concerned with acknowledging and correcting our own shortcomings and sins than identifying and correcting those of others. He posed a parabolic question:

³⁹*Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?[SV3]* ⁴⁰*A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.[SV4]* ⁴¹*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?* ⁴²*How can you say to your brother, "Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.[SV2](Lk 6:39-42)*

Notes: See Mt 7:3-5; 10:24,25; 15:14; Jn 13:16; 15:20; Th 34; Th 26:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This is Luke's version of Mt 7:3-5, a corollary to do not judge, with its central message of tolerance; Lk 6:41,42 logically follows Lk 6:37 with its related theme of forgiveness (see give and you will receive), another element central to *agape* love. Jesus provided a dramatic example of tolerance and mercy when he confronted a crowd about to stone an adulterous woman and suggested that the person without guilt should cast the first stone (see mercy or justice: the adulterous woman). Luke mixes the instructions of Jesus to his disciples with admonitions to the Pharisees on hypocrisy and sanctimony. The teachings of Jesus were of love over law, and the Pharisees were blind to this message because of their obsession with the law as a standard of righteousness. Thomas records a separate and shorter teaching: *If a blind person leads a blind person, both of them will fall into a hole.*[SV3](Th 34), and *¹You see the sliver in your friend's eye, but you don't see the timber in your own eye. ²When you take the timber out of your own eye, then you will see well enough to remove the sliver from your friend's eye.*[SV2](Th 26:1,2) Who are these blind guides? Luke reports Jesus referring to his disciples as the *blind leading the blind*, while Matthew has Jesus using the same language to describe the Pharisees. Sight is a metaphor for true faith in these teachings, while blindness is the lack of true faith. We should focus on our own faith and "seeing" with it properly before we criticize or condemn others for a faulty faith. See bringing sight and blindness, the light within you and tolerance and judgment. (Barnes)

In the parable of this passage, Jesus is telling of "blind" who try to lead the "blind". The "student" cannot "teach" until they follow and become the "teacher". The disciples are the "blind students" who are not following the sighted teacher. Jesus is stressing that all of us must take the "mass" out of our own eye before we attempt to remove the "speck" from the eyes of others. God is the only Judge who pronounces judgment with tolerance, grace and love. When we experience the love of God and love God, then we can begin to love ourselves and others, as God would have us do. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (6:50)(11:24)(16:76)(6:144)(6:144)(49:11-12)(2:44)(3:188)(61:3)

Say: 'Is the blind man equal to the seeing man? Will you not then reflect?' (6:50)

The likeness of the two parties is as the blind and the deaf and the one who sees and the one who hears are they equal in likeness? Will you not then remember? (11:24)

And God strikes a similitude [of] two men, one of whom is dumb [from birth], having no power over anything, and who is a liability to his master: wherever he directs him, he does not bring any good. Is he equal to one who enjoins justice and follows a path that is straight? (16:76)

Then who, does greater evil than he who invents a lie against God, that he may lead mankind astray without any knowledge? Truly God does not guide evildoing folk'. (6:144)

O you who believe, do not let any people deride another people: who may be better than they are; nor let any women deride [other] women who may be better than they are. And do not defame one another, nor insult one another by nicknames. Evil is the name of immorality after faith! And whoever does not repent, those – they are the evildoers.

O you who believe, shun much suspicion. Indeed some suspicions are sins. And do not spy, nor backbite one another. Would any of you love to eat the flesh of his brother dead? You would abhor it. And fear God; assuredly God is Relenting, Merciful. (49:11-12)

Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book? Do you not understand? (2:44)

Do not reckon that those who rejoice in what they have brought, and who love to be praised for what they have not done – do not reckon them secure from the chastisement; there shall be a painful chastisement for them. (3:188)

It is greatly loathsome to God that you say what you do not do. (61:3)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The first two verses above refer to blindness (and deafness), paralleling the analogy in Lk 6:39. The third verse illustrates the inequality between those who are spiritually blind and those who can see, whereas the fourth verse indicates the consequences of leading others astray (both fall "into a pit" to use the Biblical phrase). The fifth verse emphasizes the need for self-criticism and avoiding backbiting with the shocking analogy of eating the flesh of one's dead brother. The last three verses warn against hypocrisy, paralleling Lk 6:41-42. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad used the imagery of sight and blindness to illustrate true and false faith, and both emphasized self-criticism rather than criticizing and condemning others on matters of faith. (Barnes)

How refreshing it is to see some of the same images used to confront the same evils which plague all of humankind. We end up comparing ourselves with others, mostly the weaker ones, rather than to the life to which God calls us all. It is a powerful sentence from the Qur'an which says, "Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves, while you recite the Book?" (2:44) For a Muslim to urge others to seek piety while not doing so even while reciting the Holy Qur'an is as terrible as it would be for a Christian to do the same while singing, "Oh, how I love Jesus..." (Nates)

*** Sinners, forgiveness, and love**

Jesus was a dinner guest of a Pharisee named Simon when a woman with a sinful reputation began weeping at his feet, wiping away her tears with her hair, and then she kissed his feet and anointed them with expensive perfume. When Simon questioned Jesus about allowing this sinful woman to touch him, Jesus responded with a parabolic question:

⁴¹*Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²Neither had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?[SV4](Lk 7:41,42)*

When Simon replied that the one who had the bigger debt canceled would love him more, Jesus told him he was correct. Jesus then compared the compassionate acts of the woman to the restrained hospitality of Simon, and concluded:

⁴⁷*Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven--for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.[SV4](Lk 7:47)*

Notes: See Mk 14:3-9; Mt 26:6-13; Jn 12:1-8 (Sources: Lk, Mk, Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jesus gravitated toward sinners rather than the righteous because he knew they were in greater need of forgiveness and that when forgiven they would be more likely to share God's mercy and forgiveness with others. The parable of the unmerciful servant illustrates what happens when forgiveness is not reciprocated (see also give and you will

receive). Jesus' favoritism for sinners is evident in Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous; the Beatitudes; worship in spirit and in truth; justice or mercy: the adulterous woman, and the Pharisee and the publican. Forgiving those who have hurt us is an essential element of love and a prerequisite for loving God and being forgiven by God (see I Jn 4:19-21), but this story is about Jesus forgiving a sinful woman whose sin was not against him but God. The other Jews present believed that such sin could only be forgiven by God in accordance with their religious rules and rituals, and that sin was the cause of suffering so that forgiveness would alleviate and heal suffering (see power to forgive sins). The act of forgiveness by Jesus was another radical and subversive act that offended religious Jews. Jesus taught and demonstrated that forgiveness was an act of God's love that the repentant could bestow on each other in the name of God, as Christians do regularly in the Eucharist (communion) liturgy. The reciprocal nature of love and forgiveness is reflected in the relationship between faith and works: God's love produces salvation and when shared produces good works. Both forgiveness and faith are gifts of God's grace and cannot be earned through works, but faith is evidenced by works as a tree by its fruit, and the sharing of the fruit of the Spirit (God's forgiveness and love) produces even more fruit. The parable of the Pharisee and the publican illustrates justification by faith, contrasting humility and sanctimony. *The Jefferson Bible* contains Lk 7:36-46; Lk 7:47 is included here to complete the pericope. For another account of the same or a similar event, see the anointing of Jesus. (*Barnes*) In this episode involving Jesus, Simon the Pharisee and a woman who was considered a sinner, we see played out the story of love, forgiveness and redemption. Jesus was not even given the hospitality given to many guests. Then he was given much respect and responses of honor. When Simon questioned his welcoming this woman of the streets, he told him a story of two men who had known forgiveness and love. (Luke 7:42 is a SV4, and is not in *The Jefferson Bible* but is in the spirit of Jesus) In the end Jesus says to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." (Luke 7:48) To the Pharisees only God could forgive sin. Out of a heart of love, Jesus pronounces God's love on her. "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." (Luke 7:50b) Surely, those who are forgiven much love much. (*Nates*)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (25:68-72)(2:160)(7:153)(16:119)
and [those] who do not call on another god along with God, nor slay the soul which God has forbidden, except with due cause,

and who do not commit fornication - for whoever does that shall meet with retribution; doubled will be the chastisement for him on the Day of Resurrection and he will abide therein abased; except for him who repents, and believes, and acts righteously, for such, God will replace their evil deeds with good deeds, for God is ever Forgiving, Merciful. And whoever repents and acts righteously, indeed turns to God with due repentance; and those who do not give false testimony, and, when they come across senseless talk, they pass by with dignity; (25:68-72)

Except those that repent, and make amends, and show clearly - them I shall turn [relenting; I am the Relenting, the Merciful. (2:160)

But those who commit evil deeds and repent thereafter and believe - indeed your Lord thereafter is truly Forgiving, Merciful'. (7:153)

Then indeed your Lord - to those who did evil out of ignorance, and then repented after that and made amends - indeed your Lord after that is Forgiving, Merciful. (16:119)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith Qudsi

"He who comes with goodness, there are in store for him ten like those and even more than those: 'And he who comes with vice,' it is only for that that he is called to account. I even forgive him (as I like) and he who draws close to Me by the span of a palm I draw close to him by the cubit, and he who draws close to Me by the cubit I draw close to him by the space (covered) by two hands, and he who walks towards Me I rush towards him, and he who meets Me in the state that his sins fill the earth, but not associating anything with Me, I would meet Him with the same (vastness) of pardon (on My behalf)."

Hadith

A man asked the Prophet about the Hour (i.e. Day of Judgment) saying, "When will the Hour be?" The Prophet said, "What have you prepared for it?" The man said, "Nothing, except that I love Allah and His Apostle." The Prophet said, "You will be with those whom you love." We had never been so glad as we were on hearing that saying of the Prophet (i.e., "You will be with those whom you love.") Therefore, I love the Prophet, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and I hope that I will be with them

because of my love for them though my deeds are not similar to theirs.

"God is more pleased with the repentance of a servant as he turns towards Him for repentance than this that one amongst you is upon the camel in a waterless desert and there is upon (that camel) his provision of food and drink also and it is lost by him, and he having lost all hope (to get that) lies down in the shadow and is disappointed about his camel and there he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of his nose string and then out of boundless joy says: 'O Lord, Thou art my servant and I am Thine Lord. He commits this mistake out of extreme delight.'"

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quranic verses above regarding forgiveness and repentance are critical for Muslims, particularly the verse stating that *"God will replace their evil deeds with good deeds, for God is ever Forgiving, Merciful."* (That's mind-boggling!) The hadith qudsi also indicates a relationship of reciprocal love between God and man, and the first hadith regarding being "with those whom you love" parallels Jesus' sayings in these verses. The last hadith regarding repentance and the story of the lost camel presupposes an understanding of how crucial a camel would be in a waterless desert. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad taught of the corrosive and debilitating effect of sin on the human spirit (and body) and the salvic power of forgiveness of sin, and both taught of a God who freely forgave sin for all who were repentant and faithfully strove to love both God and neighbor, unlike 1st century Judaism that emphasized religious rules and rituals to purge sin and restore purity. (Barnes)

Here we hear of God who is Love...mind-boggling indeed!

C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* of this awesome aspect of God: "The command 'Be ye perfect' is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. He said (in the Bible) that we were 'gods' and He is going to make good His words. If we let Him—for we can prevent Him, if we choose—He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, dazzling, radiant, immortal creatures, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to Him perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness." (Macmillan, 1952, p.174) (Nates)

*** Unconditional commitment to discipleship**

While walking along the road, a man said to Jesus, "Master, I will follow you wherever you go;" Jesus replied:

⁵⁸*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.[SV2]*

⁵⁹*He said to another man, Follow me.[SV2] But the man replied, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."* ⁶⁰*Jesus said to him, Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.[SV2]*

⁶¹*Still another said, "I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family."*

⁶²*Jesus replied: No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.[SV4]*
(Lk 9:57-62)

Notes: See Mt 8:18-22; Th 86:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: At the beginning of his ministry Jesus chose an itinerant ministry. As the *Son of Man* (or *Son of Adam*) Jesus became a homeless prophet who was in the world but not of the world, and he expected his disciples to embrace the same unencumbered lifestyle. That was the cost of discipleship and a cross to bear, but the unconditional commitment of discipleship freed his disciples of the burdens and distractions of the world that could be obstacles to entering the kingdom of God (see riches and salvation and Zacchaeus: money and salvation). The man who said that he wished to bury his father before leaving home to follow Jesus may well have meant that he wished only to delay that mission until he had fulfilled his duties to his parents. But Jesus taught a universal love for all people: the least, the last and the lost—even one's enemies, and knew that that family loyalty often blinded Jews to caring about those beyond their family. Such favoritism was unacceptable for disciples (see renouncing family and possessions, love for enemies, call to discipleship, cost of discipleship, do not worry, faith for the few and faith and persecution). Note that follow me is rated SV2 in Lk 9:59 but was rated SV4 in Lk 5:27. The low rating given to the aphorism about *looking back* (Lk 9:61,62) reflects the belief that it was created by Luke and not Jesus, a view supported by the lack of corroboration (compare with Lk 9:58,60 which is corroborated in other gospels and rated SV2). (Barnes)
Without doubt, an unconditional commitment to follow Jesus is at the heart of his call to be his disciples. It is to be

"homeless", having the right priorities and being forward looking. The very useful book, *Aramaic Light on the Gospels of Mark and Luke* by R.A. Errico/G.M. Lamsa, have some interesting things to say about, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (vs. 62) "Some men, while plowing, stop their oxen and turn to look backwards. They want to see how much of the ground is already plowed. This is done to determine how long it will take to complete the work... They are anxious to finish their job, regardless of how it is done, so they may leave the field and go home. They are not interested in their work but merely in the wages." (Page 166) Jesus wants people who are committed to their calling and not simply doing it for what they will get out of it. "Jesus' disciples were not to look behind and count the few converts. This would discourage them. The work of the gospel of the kingdom might progress slowly, but it was to be done thoroughly so that the fields might produce rich crops. Besides, the field for the work of the kingdom was so large that the labor would continue forever." (Page 166) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (47:31)(9:24)(3:14)

And We will assuredly try you until We know those of you who struggle [for God's cause] and those who are steadfast, and We will appraise your record. (47:31)

Say: 'If your fathers, and your sons, and your brothers, and your wives, and your clan, and the possessions which you have acquired, and merchandise for which you fear there may be no sale, and dwellings which you love, are dearer to you than God and His Messenger and struggling in His way, then wait until God brings about His command. And God does not guide the wicked folk'. (9:24)

Beautified for mankind is love of lusts - of women, children, stored-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle, and tillage. That is the comfort of the life of this world; but God - with Him is the more excellent abode. (3:14)

Commentary on the Qur'an: These verses clearly indicate that life is a test and a struggle, but that the love of God is paramount, and that all other loves must be integrated into the love of God. Loving something outside its Divine context is like loving the effect without loving the cause, in which case this love becomes bad for us, although the object of the love is good. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad made following God's word an unconditional commitment of faith. Those who put any worldly obligations ahead of those to God were not suitable to promote the faith or enter the kingdom of God. (Barnes)
The Qur'an speaks clearly that persons, places and things, other than God, can bring temporary satisfaction and meaning. However, "That is the comfort of the life of this world; but God - with Him is the more excellent abode." (3:14) We rejoice in the spiritual insight, "that the love of God is paramount, and that all other loves must be integrated into the love of God." Only when the love of God is our unconditional commitment do we realize the importance of and enter into the ecstasy of these loves which are integrated into our love of God. (Nates)

*** Loving your neighbor: the parable of the good Samaritan**

Following the greatest commandment, a Pharisee, in order to justify himself, asked Jesus, *Who is my neighbor?*

³⁰In reply Jesus said: A Man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. ³¹A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. ³²So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. ³³But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity upon him. ³⁴He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. ³⁵The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. "Look after him," he said, "and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you have." [SV1]

³⁶Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? [SV4]

³⁷The expert on the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, Go and do likewise. [SV4](Lk. 10:30-37)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Even though this story is found only in Luke's Gospel, most scholars believe that it originated with Jesus, except for the beginning and concluding portions relating it to the golden rule. Whether Jesus made the connection or whether Luke did it for him, the moral of the

story is obvious, given its relationship to other teachings of Jesus (see the new command, the last judgment and love for enemies). It is a critical addendum to the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor as a *common word* of faith since it defines our neighbor to include unbelievers and disbelievers, which is an essential requirement for interfaith reconciliation. It makes the same point as the story of the last judgment: We love God by loving *the least of those* among us and those undesirables we would rather avoid. We cannot love God in the abstract or through worship, or just by loving our family and friends. To love God we must relate to *all* whose lives we touch, or could touch. The story was radical in Jesus' day but not today. The term *good Samaritan* has come to mean anyone who stops to help a person in need; then it referred to a person (a Samaritan) who was detested by the person he stopped to help (a Jew). To make the story relevant today we might call it *the parable of the good Muslim*. The story illustrated that loving your neighbor means loving your enemy. To emphasize that point Jesus often crossed the formidable ethnic barrier between Jews and Samaritans, as when he healed a Samaritan leper (see power to heal) and confronted the Samaritan woman by the well (see living water and worship in spirit and truth). The story of the good Samaritan makes Luke's version of the greatest commandment the best example of a *common word* for Jews, Christians and Muslims. (Barnes)

Of course, this story of the Samaritan who did a good thing was in response to the question of a lawyer who encountered Jesus and wanted to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus' reply to him was, "What is written in the law? (Luke 10:26) the lawyer's response was a combination of Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18b. Pressing the situation further, the lawyer asked, "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29) Then Jesus told a story of a man who was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, a distance of about seventeen miles, and was accosted by robbers, robbed, beaten and left for half dead. He was probably an Israelite, for Jericho was a town of priests and Levites. Perhaps we should not be too hard on the priest and Levite who passed by the man. In Israel the dead were considered unclean and therefore untouchable (Numbers 19:11). Then a man who was a Samaritan came by. The Jews and the Samaritans were not in good relations because of historic and religious reasons. We are not told that the traveling Samaritan knew that the man was an Israelite, if he was. He was a man in distress and needed some help. The Samaritan showed mercy to him as we are told in the story. He is usually given the title "good" though Jesus did not call him good. Jesus did ask the lawyer, "'Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the

hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'" (Luke 10:36-37) This might be compared to a story in World War II of a Jew being beaten by robbers and left for dead, while a Rabbi and a Jewish man passed him by, and then a Nazi came and showed mercy to him. Naturally, the point of Jesus' story is that one who shows mercy, regardless of background and circumstances, is my neighbor. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:114)(5:48)

They believe in God and in the Last Day, enjoining decency and forbidding indecency, vying with one another in good works; those are of the righteous. (3:114)

And We have revealed to you the Book with the truth confirming the Book that was before it and watching over it. So judge between them, according to what God has revealed, and do not follow their whims away from the truth that has come to you. To every one of you, We have appointed a divine law and a way. If God had willed, He would have made you one community, but that He may try you in what He has given to you. So vie with one another in good works; to God you shall all return, and He will then inform you of that in which you differed. (5:48)

Commentary on the Qur'an: This section is reminiscent of previous sections concerning love of God and love of neighbor. Rather than repeating that here, I thought it would be appropriate to highlight the interfaith element of the parable by citing Quranic verses indicating that those of all faiths must "vie with one another in good works," not through anything else. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: The greatest commandment to love God and neighbor is recognized to be a *common word* of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims, and Luke's version of the greatest commandment with its story of the good Samaritan makes it the best model for interfaith reconciliation by defining one's neighbor as an unbeliever or disbeliever who would otherwise be condemned to eternal damnation for his/her beliefs. (Barnes) To try to outdo others in deeds of mercy is perhaps a worthy goal of all who call upon the name of God and seek to always do God's will. Another way to say this is that we all are created to live constantly in attitudes and actions of care, compassion and justice toward all humankind. (Nates)

*** Too busy to hear Jesus: Mary and Martha**

The sisters Mary and Martha have a prominent role in Luke's gospel. In one incident, the industrious Martha complained to Jesus about her sister listening to Jesus rather than helping her prepare supper. When Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to help her with the meal, Jesus said:

⁴¹*Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things,*
⁴²*but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.*[SV4](Lk 10:41,42)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The SV commentary describes this passage as a fabrication by Luke intended to complement the story of the good Samaritan, which illustrates the second requirement of the greatest commandment, to love your neighbor as yourself. In this story Mary exemplifies the first requirement, to love God by listening to the word of God, while Martha is distracted by everyday worldly concerns. This saying is more mystical than moral in that it emphasizes listening to Jesus as the word of God rather than any moral act of that word. The setting was probably the same supper referred to in Jn 12:1-8: Martha was with Mary and Lazarus during the anointing of Jesus. In his instructions to the disciples Jesus made the same point: do not worry. Jesus not only helped his male disciples understand the priorities of discipleship, he did the same for Mary and Martha as well as with a Samaritan woman in living water and worship in spirit and truth. He even saved an adulterous woman from stoning. While this saying is mystical, it relates to morality in that all truly moral acts must be grounded in and motivated by the word of God. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (29:45)(2:152)(13:28)(63:9)

And the remembrance of God is surely greater. (29:45)

O you who believe, do not let your possessions and your children divert you from the remembrance of God. [63:9]

So remember Me, I will remember you. [2:152]

Behold in the Remembrance of God do hearts find satisfaction.
(13-28)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Shall I not tell you the best of your deeds, those that give you the highest rank with God on the Day of Rising, and those that are the purest with your King, and are better for you than giving gold and silver, and better for you than meeting your enemy and striking each other's necks?" They [the Companions] said, "Of Course." He said, "Dhikr of God." In another version, a companion asks, "Messenger of God, [greater] than the one who fights in the way of God?" He said, "Even if he struck the kuffar and the mushriks with his sword until it broke and it was colored with blood, yet the one who remembers God would be better than him in rank." [Ahmad, Tirmidhi]

"One hour's meditation on the work of the Creator is better than seventy years of prayer."

"For everything there is a polish, and the polish for the heart is *dhikrullah* (remembrance of God)." [Bukhari]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses and hadith suggest the pre-eminence of contemplation over action in spiritual realization, reaffirming the superiority of the "way of Mary" based on love and knowledge over the "way of Martha" based on action/service. From another point of view, no opposition between action and contemplation exists in the sense that the contemplation of God is the highest form of action. We can also understand these Biblical verses in terms of the opposition between worldly distractions and the greatest commandment. The following Quranic verses could then be cited: *And whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We will enhance for him his harvest; and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We will give him of it; but in the Hereafter he will have no share (42:20); God strikes a similitude: a man shared by several [masters], quarrelling, and a man belonging exclusively to one man. Are the two equal in comparison? Praise be to God! Nay, but most of them do not know (39:29). Whoever desires the reward of this world, then God has the reward of this world and of the Hereafter; God is ever Hearer, Seer (4:134);* Regardless of the perspective one chooses, detachment from the fruits of action is a necessary condition for action to be spiritually meaningful. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: To experience the peace of God and to grow in faith we must hear the word of God, and too often we are too busy to hear that word. For Christians that word is in the teachings and example of Jesus Christ; for Muslims it is in the

Qur'an and Sunna. Both Christians and Muslims must hear and meditate on that word to experience new spiritual life. (Barnes) We can understand these Lukan verses in terms of the opposition between worldly distractions and the greatest commandment. The following Quranic verses could then be cited: *And whoever desires the harvest of the Hereafter, We will enhance for him his harvest; and whoever desires the harvest of this world, We will give him of it; but in the Hereafter he will have no share (42:20); God strikes a similitude: a man shared by several [masters], quarrelling, and a man belonging exclusively to one man. Are the two equal in comparison? Praise be to God! Nay, but most of them do not know (39:29). Whoever desires the reward of this world, then God has the reward of this world and of the Hereafter; God is ever Hearer, Seer (4:134);* Regardless of the perspective one chooses, detachment from the fruits of action is a necessary condition for action to be spiritually meaningful. This is a beautiful story perhaps told by Jesus. In reality it tells of two persons who wanted to do their very best for God and others. In this domestic scene Jesus does not bring harsh judgment on either person. He points to the better way, which is to be centered on God and the other. In a sense, there is no priority and superior position, but the insight that the fullness of life is found in being "lost in wonder, love and praise." Years ago, I had the honor and privilege of attending a lecture series given by the excellent Biblical scholar and teacher, Walter Brueggemann. In one of the lectures, "Alienation and Rage: The Odd Invitation to Communion," he remarked, "Only doxological people can engage in justice." To me, this emphasized that we must be mutually centered in God and others in order to really do the work of God, which is compassion and justice. Is not this what the sayings of Jesus and the vital principles of the Qur'an and the Hadith reveal to us? (Nates)

*** Persistence**

Luke reports the following parable about an importunate man who went to a friend in the middle of the night to borrow bread:

I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness [or persistence] he will get up and give him as much as he needs.[SV2](Lk 11:8)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The SV commentary notes that a plea for bread from a neighbor risked shame, but that prevailing customs made it even more shameful for the sleepy neighbor to deny such a request. The man was given bread not because he was a friend, but because it was needed and it would have brought shame to deny the request. The above parable follows Luke's version of instructions on the *Lord's Prayer* (see Matthew's version in praying in secret: the Lord's Prayer) and is followed by, *So I say to you, ask and it will be given to you....*(Lk 11:9) The need for persistence in prayer was illustrated in a similar parable involving a widow harassing a judge until she got what she wanted. Persistence in prayer is a virtue but persistence in proselytizing is not; when dealing with rejection of his teachings, Jesus told his disciples to move on, shaking the dust from their sandals. (Barnes)

We have heard, "Blessed are the meek...", but here we see another side of the page. It appears that the bold are also blessed. Of course, this is not haughtiness but determination. There is virtue in not giving up when the situation seems most difficult. Jesus knew that his disciples would face many obstacles as they went out to spread the Good News of God. He did not want them to cave in when all else around them was crumbling. The spirit of holy boldness would give them strength when they felt weakness coming on them. This is a lesson in faith and trust in facing the trials of life. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (40:60)(2:186)(2:153-157)(3:200)(16:42)(11:115) (16:127)
And your Lord has said, 'Call on Me and I will respond to you.'
 (40:60)

O you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer; surely God is with the patient.
Surely We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and diminution of goods and lives; yet give good tidings to the patient;
those who, when they are struck by an affliction, say, 'Surely we belong to God, and to Him we will return'.
Upon those rest blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those - they are the truly guided. (2:153-157)

And when My servants question you concerning Me, I am near; I answer the call of the caller when he calls to Me. (2:186)

O you who believe, be patient and vie in patience, be steadfast; fear God so that you will prosper. (3:200)

[The believers are] those who persevere in patience, and put their trust on their Lord. (16:42)

And be patient, for indeed God does not waste the wage of those who are virtuous. (11:115)

So be patient, and your patience is only by [the help of] God. (16:127)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"You will be responded to as long as you are not hasty (meaning that you give up supplication)." It was asked, "O Messenger of God, what does it mean to be hasty?" The Prophet (peace be upon him) responded, "A worshipper says, 'I have prayed and prayed, and I don't yet see that it will be accepted'; so he gives up hope of being answered, and leaves supplication (du'a)." [Bukhari, Muslim]

"Indeed God is Shy and Beneficent. He is Shy when His servant raises his hands to Him (in supplication) to return them empty." [Ahmad, Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi]

"There is no Muslim who does not offer any supplication in which there is no sin or severing of family ties but God will give him one of three things in return: either He will answer his supplication sooner, or he will store it up for him in the Hereafter, or He will divert an equivalent evil away from him because of it." The Companions said, "We will say a lot of supplications." The Prophet (peace be upon Him) said: "God is more generous." [Ahmad]

"Supplication is worship." [Abu Dawud, Tirmidhi]

"Make supplication to God in a state that you are certain that your supplication will be responded to, and know that God does not respond to a supplication that originates from a negligent, inattentive heart." [Tirmidhi]

"Anyone who likes God to answer him/her at the time of adversity and hardship, then let him/her increase in making supplication in time of ease." [Tirmidhi]

Hadith Qudsi

"God, may He be exalted, says: 'I am as My slave thinks I am.'" [Bukhari, Muslim]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The preceding Quranic verses and hadith are fully consistent with the Biblical injunction, "Ask and it will be given to you." The concluding hadith qudsi highlights the importance of confidence in God, whose nature it is to want to save us. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: Christians and Muslims alike are required to be persistent in their supplications and acts of mercy. Just as we expect God to be there when we need him, God expects us to be knocking on the door, asking and seeking and then sharing the transforming power of God's forgiveness, love and mercy at all times. That is the only way to salvation. The alternative is to remain in the bondage of sin and death. (Barnes)

This interesting parable tells of a man who comes seeking bread for a friend. He goes to another friend at midnight to ask for some bread. Jesus says the awakened friend may not give him what he asks for, even as a friend, but out of respect for his boldness he will do so. Bold friendship is honored. Jesus indicates that we are to ask of God whatever we need to care for others. There is a remark attributed to Muhammad which says, "All (human) creatures are God's children, and those dearest to God are the ones who treat His children kindly." ---Hadith of Baihaqui. (Nates)

*** Greed and hoarding possessions**

When Jesus was asked by a man to make his brother share his inheritance with him (in accordance with Jewish law), Jesus quickly disabused the man of any notion that he would be a judge of such matters, and addressed the issue of greed:

¹⁴*Man, who appointed me a judge or arbiter between you?[SV3]*

¹⁵*Then he said to them, Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.[SV4](Lk 12:14,15)*

Then Jesus told the crowd a parable about a rich man who spent his energy and resources storing up grain and goods to provide for his own security, so that he could say to himself: Take life easy; eat, drink, and be merry.

²⁰*But God said to him, You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?[SV2]* ²¹*This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.[SV4](Lk 12:14-15,20-21)*

Notes: See Th 72:1-3; 63:1-3 (Sources: Th, Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This is another teaching against wealth that characterizes Luke's Gospel. The Gospel of Thomas reports a shorter version of the saying that makes the same point: ¹*There was a rich person who had a great deal of money.* ²*He said, "I shall invest my money so that I may sow, reap, plant, and fill my storehouses with produce, that I may lack nothing."* ³*These were the things he was thinking in his heart, but that very night he died.*[SV2] ⁴*Anyone with two ears had better listen.*[SV4](Th 63:1-3) Thomas later reports Jesus giving the following advice: *Let one who has found the world, and has become wealthy, renounce the world.*[SV4](Th 110) In his instructions to the disciples, Jesus told his disciples not to worry about their needs, that God would provide. Jesus emphasized the importance of faith, not worldly possessions, to eternal security (see love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). Instead of hoarding possessions, giving them away is more productive (see give and you will receive, serving the least of those rather than friends and shrewdness, stewardship and the danger of riches). Selfless service, or sacrificial love, is a virtue that runs through all of Jesus' teachings, with greed its opposite. I Timothy reports: *For the love of money is the root of all evil.*(I Tim 6:10) The rich young man exemplified the danger of riches when he would not leave his possessions to follow Jesus. (see riches and salvation) Jesus once asked, *What good is it for a man to gain the world and forfeit his soul?*[SV3](Mk 8:36; see selfless service: the cost of discipleship). The same point is made in the Gospel of John with a paradox: *The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*[SV3](Jn 12:25) This reflects the Gnostic dichotomy or duality of the flesh and the spirit found in the gospels of John and Thomas (see the unseen kingdom of God, born of the spirit: Nicodemus and Th 110, above). While wealth was often regarded as a sign of God's favor in the Old Testament, the idea of wealth as an impediment to righteousness can also be found in Hebrew wisdom literature (see Prov 11:4). On greed and concern for security, see do not worry; faith, God, and money, and treasures and the heart, below. (Barnes)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (29:64)(10:24-25)(18:32-45)(47:38)(3:14-15)(74:11-16)
*And the life of this world is nothing but diversion and play.
But surely the Abode of the Hereafter is indeed the [true] Life,
if they only knew. (29:64)*

The likeness of the life of this world is only as water, which We send down from the heaven, then the plants of the earth mingle with it, whereof mankind eat, and cattle [eat] until, when the earth has taken on its ornaments, and has adorned itself, and its inhabitants think that they are masters of it, Our command comes upon it by night or day, and We make it as reaped corn, as though the previous day it had not flourished. Thus do We detail the signs for a people who reflect. And God summons to the Abode of Peace, and He guides whomever He wills to a straight path. (10:24-25)

And strike for them a similitude: two men to one of whom We had assigned two gardens of vines, and We had surrounded them with date-palms and had set between them [a field of] crops. Each of the two gardens yielded its produce without stinting anything thereof. And We caused a stream to gush forth therein. And he had fruit and he said to his companion, as he conversed with him: 'I have more wealth than you and am stronger in respect of men'.

And he entered his garden having wronged himself. He said, 'I do not think that [all] this will ever perish.

Moreover, I do not think that the Hour will ever come; and [even] if I am indeed returned to my Lord, I shall surely find better than this as a resort'.

His companion said to him, as he conversed with him: 'Do you disbelieve in Him Who created you of dust, then of a drop of fluid, then fashioned you a man?

But lo He [is] God, my Lord, and I do not ascribe any partner to my Lord.

And if only when you entered your garden, you had said, "What God has willed. There is no power except in God". If you see me as less than you in wealth and children, maybe my Lord will give me [something] better than your garden and unleash upon it bolts from the heaven so that it becomes a bare plain;

or [maybe] its water will sink [deep] down so that you have no means of acquiring it'.

And his fruit was beset, and so he began to wring his hands because of what he had spent on it, as it lay fallen on its trellises, saying, 'O I wish I had not ascribed any partner to my Lord!'

But there was no party to help him, besides God, nor could he help himself.

There, [all] protection belongs to God, the True. He is better at rewarding, and best in consequence.

And strike for them the similitude of the life of this world as

water which We send down out from the heaven, and the vegetation of the earth mingles with it, and it then becomes chaff, scattered by the winds. And God is Omnipotent over all things. (18:32-45)

Lo! there you are those who are being called to expend in the way of God; yet among you there are those who are niggardly; and whoever is niggardly is niggardly only to his own soul. For God is the Independent One, while you are the needy. And if you turn away, He will replace you with another people, and they will not be the likes of you. (47:38)

Beautified for mankind is love of lusts - of women, children, stored-up heaps of gold and silver, horses of mark, cattle, and tillage. That is the comfort of the life of this world; but God - with Him is the more excellent abode.

Say: 'Shall I tell you of something better than that? For those that are fearful with their Lord are Gardens underneath which rivers flow, abiding therein, and spouses purified, and beatitude from God; and God is Seer, of His servants. (3:14-15)

Leave Me [to deal] with him whom I created lonely, and [then] assigned him ample means, and sons present [by his side], and facilitated for him greatly. Still he is eager that I should give [him] more. Nay! He is indeed stubborn to Our signs. (74:11-16)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Richness does not lie in the abundance of (worldly) goods but richness is the richness of the soul." [Bukhari, Muslim]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses and hadith are largely self-explanatory and consistent with Biblical injunctions against greed and worldliness. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: It is a clear moral imperative for Christians and Muslims to avoid greed and practice charity. Life is short and eternal life forever; there is no security in hoarding possessions when others are in need. Lasting security for the soul comes with sharing what we have with others. (Barnes)
As has been stated, the teachings of Jesus and the heart of the Qur'an are strenuously against greed and worldliness. (Note: "worldliness" is not related to the created world. It is a "world" organized and operated against the plans and patterns of

God.) The word covet in the Hebrew Bible is in essence the same as the word greed used by Jesus. Greed comes about because of a lack of faith in the benevolence of God. Can greed make us safe and secure? Greediness ends in grief. Keeping kills. Giving heals. Systemic greed in our world and society violates the intent and interests of Yahweh. As Jesus begins his ministry at Nazareth he reads from the scroll what we now call Isaiah 42. Then he proclaims the mission of his ministry, which in part is "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:19) This is taken from Leviticus 25, which is about Jubilee. This has to do with the forgiveness of debts and the redistribution of land. God is to reign supreme, not greed. Greed is pervasive in our world, but it is not normative, for neither God nor Jesus accepted it. (Nates)

*** Treasures and the heart**

Jesus advised his disciples just as he advised the rich young man to divest themselves of all worldly treasures that might distract them from God's heavenly treasures:

³³*Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.* ³⁴*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*[SV3](Lk 12:33,34)

Notes: See Mt 6:19-21; Th 76:3 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The above passage underscores the previous message on greed and hoarding possessions; faith is a matter of the heart, and when our heart is set on worldly treasures and security it is closed to the heavenly treasure of God's love. The Gospel of Thomas provides a short version of Mt 6:19-21: *Seek the treasure that is unfailing, that is enduring, where no moth comes to eat and no worm destroys.*[SV3](Th 76:3) Jesus used the heart as a metaphor for faith, which is in whatever we value or treasure most in life. As for worldly needs and security, Jesus urged his disciples not to worry about their future, but to trust in God to provide all necessary things (see do not worry). This is typical of Luke, who places more emphasis on austerity and humility and the danger of riches and worldly power than the other gospels (Lk 3:11; 6:30; 7:5; 11:15; 11:48; 12:33,34; 14:14; 16:9; 18:22; 19:8); but in the story of Zacchaeus Luke illustrates that money isn't inherently evil and doesn't

preclude salvation. See riches and salvation; shrewdness, stewardship and the danger of riches; renouncing family and possessions and faith, God, and money. (Barnes)

Jesus is pointing out that we need to evaluate where we place our treasure or treasures. First, we must realize what our treasure is. Is it our faith and trust in the grace of God? Is it reliance on others and their influence? Is it on our wealth, our money, which we think will buy us all that we want in life? Who or what we treasure most in life will determine where our "heart", the very center of our life, our existence, our soul, will be. Then all people must ask, "What will it profit a person to gain the whole world and lose their own life (soul)?" (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (16:96)(28:60)(73:30)(2:110)(62:11)(2:276)(34:39)(57:18)
That which is with you will come to an end, but that which is with God remains. And He shall surely pay those who were patient, their reward according to the best of what they used to do. (16:96)

And whatever things you have been given are [only] the [short-lived] enjoyment of the life of this world and an ornament thereof; and what is with God is better and more lasting. Will you not understand? (28:60)

[A]nd pay alms and lend God a goodly loan. For whatever good you send ahead for [the sake of] your souls, you will find that, with God, it will be better and greater in terms of reward. (73:20)

And perform the prayer, and pay the alms; whatever good you shall offer for your own souls, you shall find it with God; assuredly God sees what you do. (2:110)

But when they sight some [opportunity for] business or a diversion, they scatter off towards it, and leave you standing. Say: 'That which is with God is better than diversion and commerce. And God is the best of providers'. (62:11)

God effaces usury, but He augments voluntary almsgivings with interest. God loves not any guilty ingrate. (2:276)

Say: 'My Lord extends provision for whomever He will of His servants, and restricts [it] for him, and whatever thing you may expend, He will replace it. And He is the best of providers'. (34:39)

Indeed men who give voluntary alms and women who give voluntary alms and [those of them] who have lent God a goodly loan, it will be multiplied for them and they will have a generous reward. (57:18)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

The Prophet had slaughtered a sheep and distributed major portions of its meat. Then he asked [Aisha], "Is there anything left?" She replied, "Nothing, except the shoulder." Thereupon he said, "All of it is left except its shoulder." [Tirmidhi]

"God Almighty said: 'O son of Adam spend, and I will spend on you.'" [Bukhari and Muslim]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The first hadith regarding the shoulder of lamb illustrates some of the lessons in the preceding Quranic verses, i.e. what we give for the sake of God is everlasting, whereas what we "keep" for ourselves is transitory. The context of revelation for [9:79] is also of interest here, according to which Abu Mas'ud, a Companion of the Prophet, said: "When the verses of charity [9:79] were revealed, we used to work as porters. A man came and distributed objects of charity in abundance. And they [the people] said, 'He is showing off.' And another man came and gave a sa [a small measure of food grains]; they said, 'God is not in need of this small amount of charity.' And then the Divine Inspiration came, *Those who find fault with the believers who offer alms voluntarily, and such as find nothing [to offer] but their endeavours; and deride them - God [Himself] derides them, and theirs will be a painful chastisement [9:79].*" [Bukhari] (In this context, it is worth noting the distinction between *zakat*, the required minimum 2.5% of savings held over one year, and *sadaqah*, voluntary alms.) (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Christians and Muslims must put the love of God's treasures of forgiveness, love, mercy and peace ahead of the love of worldly treasures. Our hearts reflect our faith, and our faith is in what we love or treasure most in life, and we cannot love both God and worldly treasures. God's love is forever, while worldly treasures are passing things. (Barnes) "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Luke 12:34). Many times this verse, and in turn its essential meaning, have been misquoted and misrepresented. Many times people say, "Where your heart is, there will your treasure be also." Perhaps they think that what they feel strongly about will be their most valuable possession or experience.

In the Hebrew Scriptures there are several words which can be translated heart or mind. The word *leb* is the one used for heart. The others represent mind and soul. The word *leb* is generally used in the New Testament to stand for heart. The treasures of our lives are those persons or things which we value the most. So, who or what we value the most is where our hearts are. Our "values" could be family, money, land, objects, etc. Our "whole heart" is the full and undivided attention and devotion which we give to our "treasures". "The presence of God's rule is the only justifiable reason for a carefree attitude toward life's necessities and a willingness to share one's possessions with the poor." (See page 467 A Lectionary Commentary Based on the NRSV-YEAR C) Perhaps Christians and Muslims are in agreement with Jesus when he said, "Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." (Luke 12:32) As we live in God's kingdom, our heart will surely be where our treasure is. (Nates)

*** Expectations**

Like the other gospels, Luke reports Jesus teaching on the need to be ready for the coming kingdom:

³⁵Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, ³⁶like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. ³⁹But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.[SV3]

⁴⁰You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.[SV4](Lk 12:35-40)

⁴¹Peter asked, "Lord are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?"

⁴²The Lord answered, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and

get drunk. ⁴⁶The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

⁴⁷That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.[SV4](Lk 12:35-48).

Notes: See Mt 24:42-51; 25:1-13; Th 21:5-7; 103 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Luke provides a male version of the parable of the ten virgins to illustrate the need to be ready for the coming kingdom, and the judgment that will follow. It takes into account those who do not know better, reserving the most severe punishment for those who have rejected Jesus (see bringing sight and blindness). The comparison of Jesus' return with a thief coming at night and the story of the faithful and wise manager are both found in end times: the eschatological discourse (see Mt 24:43-51 as well as Th 21:5-7). Thomas even uses the metaphor of rebels planning an attack to illustrate the need to be prepared for the coming kingdom (or death). The parable of the talents illustrates that in the final judgment all are not held to the same standard, but each is expected to make the most of his or her gifts, abilities or talents. For an ironic variation on stewardship, see shrewdness, stewardship and the danger of riches. The above teaching is similar to other teachings in the gospels on judgment, most of which are considered to be the creation of the early church rather than of Jesus (see the kingdom: parables of the treasure and the pearl, the parable of the net, and the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed). Most scholars believe that Jesus taught an unseen kingdom of God in the here and now rather than of an earthly kingdom initiated with an apocalyptic second coming or *parousia* followed by God's final judgment. Jesus described the kingdom of heaven as a spiritual kingdom distinguished from an earthly kingdom (see Jesus before Pilate). It was a kingdom that could be entered only by being born again of the spirit, which was an act of grace, not works; faith and eternal life were the elements of salvation. (Barnes) Preparation is the essence of much of our living. To run a race we must train and be ready for our chosen objective, whether it is to run a sprint or even a marathon. To have a certain

vocation, we must study, practice and often have a mentor. The question then comes, are we prepared for what may come in life. Are we prepared in body, mind and spirit? This is the question Jesus puts before us. Are we prepared for the coming of the kingdom of God? It may be today. It may be many years from now. Also, Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God as a present reality as well as something to come upon the scene of history. The key is to be ultimately ready for whatever may come for it may come when we least expect it. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (6:165)

He has raised some of you above others by various grades, that He may test you with the gifts He has given you. (6:165)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The preceding Quranic verse corresponds to the last sentence of Luke 12:48. It is useful to note that some Muslim scholars interpret the verses preceding 12:48 as referring to the Prophet of Islam, whom they believe Christians should watch for vigilantly, citing Quranic verses such as: *And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! Lo! I am the messenger of Allah unto you, confirming that which was (revealed) before me in the Torah, and bringing good tidings of a messenger who cometh after me, whose name is the Praised One (61:6).* This is based on the distinction between Paraclete and Periclete, the former meaning "Praised One," corresponding to the meaning of the Prophet's name. Such scholars note that no other prophet came between Muhammad and Jesus (also see preceding commentary on the Gospel of Matthew on the global message of Islam and the Muslim belief that Muhammad was sent to all people). (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Whether the coming of God's kingdom is through a second coming of Jesus to establish a worldly kingdom (*parousia*) or a heavenly kingdom that comes with salvation and is perfected in death, it is the subject of much and varied speculation among Christians and Muslims. Surprisingly, most Muslims believe that there will be a second coming of Jesus in the end times, while Christians are split on whether Jesus will return in an apocalyptic second coming or in a more spiritual coming for each of us. In either event, whether the end times refers to a second worldly coming or our death, we can never know when it is coming so that we need to be ready at all times for our ultimate confrontation with God. (Barnes)

In the ancient oriental East the place of the servant was of great importance to the master. Some were more gifted than

others but all were expected to function in accord with the will of the master. The servants were to be ready upon the return of the master regardless of the hour. Then, people ate when hungry and not by a clock. The servants were to have food ready when the master wanted it. As children of God, as reflected in Jesus and Mohammad, we are the beloved servants of God, ready to do God's will whenever it needs to be done. The "kingdom" of God is the reign of God. It is constant. It is here and yet to come. We are to be ready to function in accordance with the reign of God at the break of day and through the darkness of night. It is a forever readiness. (Nates)

*** Dissension, not peace**

Jesus knew that his teachings would create tension.

⁴⁹*I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! [SV3]* ⁵⁰*But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed! [SV4]* ⁵¹*Do you think that I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.* ⁵²*From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.* ⁵³*They will be divided father against son, and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law. [SV3] (Lk 12:49-53)*

Notes: See Mk 10:35-40; Mt 10:21, 34-37; Th 10; 16:1-4 (Sources: Mk, Lk, Th, Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Earlier, Luke reports John the Baptist speaking of Jesus coming to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire (Lk 3:16), and in the above passage Jesus relates fire to the in-breaking kingdom in the future tense. Thomas has Jesus use the present tense for an existing but unseen kingdom of God: *I have cast fire upon the world, and look, I'm guarding it until it blazes. [SV2] (Th 10).* Fire or light is the usual Biblical sign of divine presence, or theophany, as in the burning bush; and in the Pentecost it is, as here, a metaphor for the coming kingdom. (Acts 2:3) The problem here is that Jesus spoke of bringing division rather than peace, but it was not the kind of division promoted by Satan. It was a necessary disruption of the religious *status quo* to remove the obstacles to God's reconciliation and peace. The teachings of Jesus on love over law created hostility from the teachers of the law and divisiveness in families split on

who spoke the word of God. When Jesus criticized the rich and powerful and advocated a reversal of the order of merit in God's kingdom (the *first/last* reversal) it brought division, but it opened the way to God's new kingdom of reconciliation and peace. The radical teachings of Jesus challenged Jewish religious and social norms based on Mosaic Law that legitimized wealth and power as God's rewards for righteousness and established family and ethnic preferences (see the Beatitudes, the Law, individual responsibility and the law, the greatest commandment, the story of the good Samaritan, unconditional commitment to discipleship, the cost of discipleship, renouncing family and possessions, love your enemy and the family of God). The idea of a God who loved all people and expected us to forgive and love our enemies was a threat to traditional religious and family values, and it caused suspicion, hate, and division among the Jews, especially those religious leaders who had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. (see faith and persecution, pride and peer pressure and love over law). It resulted in the rejection of Jesus and his later crucifixion. While division and conflict were the first reaction to the radical message of sacrificial love taught and exemplified by Jesus, that love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace have since brought rest for the weary and the reconciliation of adversaries. Ironically, when the church gained political power it ignored the radical demands of sacrificial love, especially the tolerance of religious diversity, and initiated its own holy wars and persecutions. Today religion remains a root cause of contemporary conflict, and efforts to protect human rights in ethnic and religious conflicts confirm that loving others still causes dissension. Jesus taught his followers the risks of sharing God's unconditional love and of faith and morality that required hard choices—choices that often caused dissension rather than harmony among friends and family. Promoting sacrificial love in a cruel world can be painful. The above family conflict scenario is generational, pitting ancient children and in-laws against parents; but it could just as well represent modern generational value conflicts, though most are not religious. (Barnes)

Jesus's teaching on the topic above was clear but not simple. The above Commentary goes into this passage quite thoroughly and thoughtfully. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (29:8)(4:135)

And We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents, but if they urge you to ascribe to Me as partner that of which you do not

have any knowledge, then do not obey them. To Me will be your return whereat I will inform you of what you used to do. (29:8)

O you who believe, be upright in justice; witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves; or parents and kinsmen, whether the person be rich or poor; God is closer to the two. So do not follow any whim, lest you swerve, for if you twist, or refrain, surely God is ever aware of what you do. (4:135)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"O my God make me love You, make me love those who love You, make me love all things that bring me closer to loving You. O my God, make me love You, and Your angels, and Your prophets, and all of Your creation. O my God, make my love for You dearer to me than myself, and my family, and my wealth, and my children, and from cool, pure water to the thirsty." (supplication of Prophet)

"All mankind is from Adam and Eve, an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab has any superiority over an Arab; also a white has no superiority over black nor a black has any superiority over white except by piety and good action."
[Bukhari, excerpt of farewell sermon]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Although the preceding verses of the Qur'an are self-explanatory, it is particularly interesting to note the circumstances of revelation for the first. According to al-Wahidi, the earliest scholar of the contexts and occasions of the Revelation of the Qur'an, this verse "was revealed about Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas. When the latter embraced Islam, his mother Hamnah said to him: 'O Sa'd, I heard that you have renounced your old religion. By Allah, I will not take shelter under any roof to protect me from the sun and wind, nor will I eat or drink, until you disbelieve in Muhammad and revert to your old religion'. Sa'd was the dearest of her sons to her, but he refused to do as she wanted. For three days, his mother did not eat, drink or take shelter under the shade until it was feared that she may perish. At that point, Sa'd went to the Prophet, God bless him and give him peace, and complained to him. God, exalted is He, revealed as a response this verse as well as the verse in Surah Luqman [31:14] and the verse in Surah al-Ahqaf [46:15]." The supplication of the Prophet above is clearly consistent with this, and the excerpt of his farewell sermon indicates that ethnic loyalties are superfluous. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: The Qur'an and Hadith contain many references to the inevitable conflict within families and among friends over religious differences, and it is only natural that new and radical views will conflict with more traditional beliefs. Even today among exclusivist Christian and Muslim fundamentalists, the idea that we should love God and one's *unbelieving* neighbor in the greatest commandment creates animosity and division since fundamentalists believe that those who do not share their beliefs are condemned by God to eternal damnation. (Barnes)

* Interpreting the times

Jesus said to the crowd:

⁵⁴When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, "It's going to rain," and it does. ⁵⁵And when the south wind blows, you say, "It's going to be hot," and it is. ⁵⁶Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time?[SV3](Lk 12:54-56)

Notes: See Lk 11:29-32; Mt 16:2,3; Th 91:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This saying was in response to the continued demand of Jewish leaders that Jesus send them a sign from heaven proving his authority, even after his many miracles (see miracles: work of Satan or God?). Following the above admonition, Jesus said, *Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?* followed by Luke's version of resolving disputes out of court (Lk 12:57-59). See also end times. The signs that Jesus was the word of God were clear, but Jewish religious leaders either chose to ignore them or were blind and deaf to them because their hearts were closed (see condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes, hypocrisy and sanctimony, criticizing self before others: blind leading the blind, and judgment: bringing sight and blindness). Jesus said that only those who have the mind of a child can enter the kingdom of heaven (see child-like faith). (Barnes)

From ancient times the weather has always been forecast. Of course, in Jesus' day there were no meteorologist instruments. Some predictions for hot weather came during the cold days of December, even as cold days of winter were predicted in the hot summer time. Forecasters were usually illiterate men or women who had made a study of the conditions of weather. Their methods were secrets which were usually handed down orally from one generation to another. Jesus chastised the people for not

trying to discern and understand the situation of their days. He told them that changes had to come if lasting peace was to be. This was economic, social, political and religious change. The Jews were to share their religion with the Gentiles. Change was coming for those who followed Jesus. Many were not willing to change. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (27:60-64)(21:21-22)(32:2-3)(4:166)(29:48)(9:64) (8:32-34)(4:174-175)(2:159-160)(4:145-146)(11:3)

Or He Who created the heavens and the earth, and sends down for you water from the heaven, whereby We cause to grow splendid gardens whose trees you could never cause to grow? Is there a god with God? Nay, but they are a people who ascribe equals [to Him].

Or He Who made the earth an abode [of stability] and made rivers [to flow] throughout it and set firm mountains for it, and set an isthmus between the two seas. Is there a god with God? Nay, but most of them have no knowledge.

Or He Who answers the desperate one when he calls to Him and Who removes [his] distress and makes you successors in the earth. Is there a god with God? Little do you remember.

Or He Who guides you in the darkness of the land and the sea and Who sends forth the winds as harbingers of His mercy. Is there a god with God? Exalted be God [high] above what they associate [with Him].

Or He Who originates creation then brings it back again, and Who provides for you from the heaven and [from] the earth. Is there a god with God? Say: 'Produce your proof if you are truthful'. (27:60-64)

Or have they chosen gods from the earth who resurrect? Had there been in [either of] them gods other than God, the two would have surely deteriorated. So glory be to God the Lord of the Throne, above what they ascribe. (21:21-22)

The revelation of the Book, whereof there is no doubt from the Lord of the Worlds.

Or do they say: 'He has invented it'? Nay, but it is the truth from your Lord, that you may warn a people to whom no warner came before you that perhaps they may find [right] guidance. (32:2-3)

But God bears witness with what He has revealed to you; He has revealed it through His knowledge; and the angels also bear witness; and God suffices as a Witness. (4:166)

And you did not use to recite before this any [other] Book, nor did you write it with your right hand, for then those who follow falsehood would have had doubts. (29:48)

The hypocrites are cautious, lest a sūra should be revealed to them, informing them of what is in their [the hypocrites'] hearts. Say: 'Keep mocking! God will bring out that of which you are fearful. (9:64)

And when they said, 'O God! If this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down stones upon us from the heaven, or bring on us a painful chastisement'.

But God was not about to chastise them, while you were among them, nor was God about to chastise them while they sought forgiveness.

But what [plea] have they now, that God should not chastise them when they bar from the Sacred Mosque, though they are not its guardians? Its only [rightful] guardians are the God-fearing, but most of them do not know. (8:32-34)

O people, a proof has now come to you from your Lord, and We have revealed to you a manifest light.

As for those who believe in God, and hold fast to Him, He will surely admit them to mercy from Him, and bounty, and He will guide them to Him by a straight path. (4:174-175)

Those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We have revealed after We have shown them clearly in the Scripture - they shall be cursed by God and by the cursers, Except those that repent, and make amends, and show clearly - them I shall turn [relenting; I am the Relenting, the Merciful. (2:159-160)

Verily, the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of the Fire; and you will never find a helper for them.

Save those who repent, and make amends, and hold fast to God and make their religion purely God's; those are with the believers; and God will certainly give the believers a great wage. (4:145-146)

And [bidding you]: 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord, then repent to Him, and He will give you fair enjoyment until a time appointed, and He will give every person of merit, [the due for] his merit. But if you turn away, I fear for you the chastisement of an awful day. (11:3)

Commentary on the Qur'an: Only God can speak like this according to Muslims, for if it were from other than God, how could it go unchallenged? Therefore, the idol worshippers who are condemned most severely in the Quran are those who are resisting the revelation out of pride, not ignorance, corresponding to the Jewish leaders who were demanding more proof when proof was already given. In this regard, it is also important to note that the impact of the Quran as the Word made Book upon Arabic speakers is incomparable to its translations. (Ansary)

Joint Commentary: As there were for Jesus and Muhammad, there have been and will continue to be revelations of God for those with hearts and minds open to them, while those whose hearts and minds are closed are blind and deaf to them. Even so, the blind skeptics often ask for signs from God, and then ignore the most powerful sign of all: God's universal reconciling and redeeming love. So it was for Jewish leaders during the time of Jesus and so it is for many devout people today who believe that God favors their religion and condemns all others. (Barnes)

Interpreting the times can be a most difficult undertaking. Jesus said that people of his day could interpret the signs of the weather. From earliest days the weather has been forecast. Without modern day instruments they observed the signs around them, used the knowledge of the past and their own discernment to speak of the coming conditions. With this kind of information, the people could prepare for the coming months and even years. They could be ready for what was likely to come. Jesus asked the people why they could "not discern (interpret) the present time" as they did the weather. He wanted them to understand as much as possible the present and future days. He indicated that the poor and oppressed must be relieved if a lasting peace and harmonious life was to be manifest among them. To interpret this with any significant accuracy the people must use their spiritual discernment and intellectual capacity. In other words, they needed to use their intuition and their thoughtfulness. In the Islamic community it appears that the interpretation of the present times is based upon what is revealed in the Qur'an. There is to be "no god other than God." Muslims and Christian would agree on this. However, there is a variance among these peoples of God as to the place and activity of the human spirit and intelligence. (Nates)

*** Suffering not God's will**

When Jesus was told that Pilate had mixed the blood of Galileans with that used in sacrifices, he responded:

²*Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way?* ³*I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will perish.* ⁴*Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them—do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem?* ⁵*I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will perish.*[SV4](Lk 13:2-5)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Contrary to the Old Testament, Jesus taught that while trouble and suffering are inevitable, God does not cause them: *He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain upon the righteous and the unrighteous.* (Mt 5:45; see love for enemies) While God does not cause our troubles, he enables us to overcome them. In John's Gospel the final words of Jesus to the disciples were: *In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.* (Jn 16:33) When asked if blindness was punishment for sin, Jesus said those who suffered were not punished but blessed (see Jesus came for sinners and the Beatitudes). Jesus also made it clear that suffering is a likely cost of discipleship. But there is a contradiction here that is less than comforting. While Jesus taught that suffering was not God's will, he then said that those who did not repent would perish. In this context perish likely meant to suffer spiritual death as a result of sin, a judgment that we bring upon ourselves (see faith and eternal life), and one that can be avoided through God's forgiveness. Many scholars believe that these words were put on the lips of Jesus and that they alluded to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. (see end times and Jerusalem lamented). (Barnes)

Jesus told the people that they were going the wrong way. Their destination was not the way they were going. They needed to change their direction, that is "to repent". Like people today, people then did not want to change their ways. They were bound to their traditions, customs and religious practices. Jesus cited a historic happening to try and get the attention of the people. This did work, but his message and invitations were rejected by most of the people. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:155-157)(2:214)(21:35)(2:177)(22:42-45)

Surely We will try you with something of fear and hunger, and diminution of goods and lives; yet give good tidings to the patient;

those who, when they are struck by an affliction, say, 'Surely we belong to God, and to Him we will return'.

Upon those rest blessings and mercy from their Lord, and those - they are the truly guided. (2:155-157)

Or did you suppose that you should enter Paradise without there having come upon you the like of those who passed away before you? They were afflicted by misery and hardship and were so convulsed that the Messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When will God's help come?' Ah, but surely God's help is nigh. (2:214)

Every soul shall taste death, and We will try you with ill and good as an ordeal. And then unto Us you shall be brought back. (21:35)

[T]hose who endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship, and peril are the ones who are truthful, and these are the ones who are fearful. (2:177)

And if they deny you, the people of Noah denied before them, and 'ād, and Thamūd, as well as the people of Abraham, and the people of Lot, and the inhabitants of Midian, and Moses was also denied. And I granted the disbelievers respite, then I seized them, and how [terrible] was My abhorrence! How many a town I have destroyed, while it was doing wrong, but now it lies fallen down on its roofs, and a neglected well, and a lofty palace. (22:42-45)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"A woman came to the Prophet, peace be upon him, and said: 'I suffer from epileptic fits, and because of these, (at times) my body becomes uncovered. Would you invoke God, the Exalted One, to cure me of this disease?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, said: 'If you wish, you can be patient and you will attain Paradise (for this suffering). But if you prefer, I will pray to God, the Exalted, to cure you of it?' The woman said: 'I will be patient,' then added: 'I become uncovered (when I have fits), so invoke God for me that I do not become uncovered.' So the

Prophet, peace be upon him, prayed for her." [Fiqh-us-Sunnah, volume 4, #1a]

"Know that victory comes with patience, relief with distress and ease with hardship." [Ahmad]

"When you visit the sick, or the dead then say good, because the angels say 'Ameen' to whatever you say." [Muslim]

"When a Muslim visits his sick Muslim brother in the morning, seventy thousand angels make dua [supplication] for his forgiveness till the evening. And when he visits him in the evening, seventy thousand angels make dua for his forgiveness till the morning, and he will be granted a garden for it in Jannah." [at-Tirmidhi, Abu Dawud]

"When you visit a sick person, then tell him to make dua (supplication) for you, because his duas are (accepted readily) like the duas of the Angels." [Ibn Maajah]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The preceding Quranic verses and hadith suggest that suffering tests our faith and corrects our unbelief. As Hasan al-Basri, the renowned seventh century Sufi and scholar, taught, "Do not detest the misfortunes that befall you, for what you detest may be the cause of your salvation and what you like may be the cause of your ruin." Suffering can therefore be a manifestation of God's mercy, not just His wrath (on the question of theodicy, see the previous commentary in Mark). (Ansary)

Joint commentary: As evident by the common expression, *It's God's will*, many continue to believe the Old Testament dictum that God causes everything to happen and punishes sinners with trouble and suffering. The logical explanation for suffering is therefore sin. Jesus taught otherwise, even as he acknowledged that we would all experience trouble and suffering. Whatever the cause, trouble and suffering happen to the best of people, and while we can question the cause we can be sure that through faith and the grace of God we can endure and overcome any trouble and suffering that comes our way. (Barnes)

Suffering has been a great problem for most people through the ages. Does God cause suffering, even a God of love and benevolence? If God does not cause suffering, then why does God not prevent this suffering? Did not Jesus and Muhammad both seek to alleviate suffering, pain, sickness and injury? We read majestic stories about both of them as they brought healing, comfort and aid. The above Scriptures and sayings deal with the

eternal questions about suffering and the role of God in all these situations. However, they give no final answers. Perhaps we discern some clues but there are no satisfying solutions to these questions regarding many horrendous situations. In the dark shadows through which we view much of life there is no complete clarity or resolution regarding the suffering of many for much of life. Of course, there is the place of choice in which we embrace suffering rather than be untrue or disobedient to the God of all creation, life and inspiration. We understand and accept this. However, beyond this, we wander in the vast mystery of suffering which may seem to nullify the omnipotence of a benevolent, merciful and loving God. (Nates)

*** Patience with sinners**

Jesus told of a man whose fig tree had not produced fruit for three years. He told his steward to cut it down so that it would not take up space in the vineyard. The steward appealed to the owner for mercy:

"Sir," the man replied, "leave it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it bears fruit next year, fine! If not, then cut it down."[SV2](Lk 13:6-9)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The fig tree, a major source of food, was also a popular metaphor for Israel. Mark and Matthew provide an account of Jesus cursing a barren fig tree: *May no one ever eat fruit from you again.*[SV4](Mk 11:12-14; Mt 21:18,19) Such a harsh saying, even toward a tree, seems out of character for Jesus. Luke's parable of a barren fig tree is more characteristic of Jesus, who taught do not judge, tolerance and forgiveness. It illustrates that we should always be patient with those who do not immediately respond to the word of God, and be willing to nurture them with God's mercy. The parable is unique in that it employs a servant advising a master on patience and mercy, a reversal of the usual roles. Jesus often used such metaphors as crops, trees, and fruit to teach lessons on faith and morality (see faith evidenced by works, as a tree by its fruit and the parable of the weeds). (Barnes) Jesus was usually a patient man. He spoke of the patience of God in the dealing with stubborn human beings. So in this story, there is seen the patient side of Jesus as he taught and ministered. However, it is not everlasting, for that was not for the betterment of the people. Some things must come to an end

for many people to see with clarity the futility of their faith and lives. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (14:24-27)(16:61)(35:45)(10:11)

Have you not seen how God has struck a similitude?: a goodly saying is as a goodly tree, its root set firm and its shoots are in heaven;

it gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord. And God strikes similitudes for mankind, so that they might remember.

And the similitude of a bad saying is as a bad tree, uprooted from upon the earth, having no stability.

God confirms those who believe by a firm saying in the life of this world and in the Hereafter; and God sends astray the evildoers; and God does what He will. (14:24-27)

And if God were to take mankind to task for their wrongdoing, He would not leave upon it any living being; but He gives them respite until an appointed term; and when their term comes they will not defer by a single hour nor advance. (16:61)

Were God to take mankind to task for what they have acquired, He would not leave on its surface a single creature. But He reprieves them to an appointed term. And when their term comes – then truly [they will know that] God is ever Seer of His servants. (35:45)

And if God should hasten for mankind evil as they would hasten good, their term [of life] would already have been concluded for them. (10:11)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

*"No one shows more patience upon hearing abuse than God."
[Bukhari, Muslim]*

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Al-Sabur, the Patient, is one of the Divine Names according to Islam. The verses above highlight the discrepancy between what God gives us and what we deserve, a concrete manifestation of God's patience. The above hadith also reminds us of Meister Eckhart's saying, "The more they blaspheme, the more they praise God." (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Jesus and Muhammad both emphasized God's patience, mercy and forgiveness over judgment. (Barnes)

A hallmark of the Christian faith and Islam, is that both clearly proclaim the patience of God with all people. God was abundantly patient with a grumbling Israel as they wandered in the wilderness for many years. As a fig tree may stand as a metaphor for Israel and the Jewish faith, so we hear Jesus referring to giving the tree another chance to produce good fruit. Jesus was long suffering toward sinners reflecting the long suffering quality of God the Father. In the Hadith quoted above, Muhammad is said to have written that God is exceedingly patient even when facing the abuse of disobedience. Peter, who was so close to Jesus, wrote, "The Lord is not slow with his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) (Nates)

*** Humility in social matters**

While dining with a prominent Pharisee, Jesus told the following parable concerning humility and social protocol at a wedding feast:

⁸*When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. ⁹If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, "Give this man your seat." Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. ¹⁰But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, "Friend, move up to a better place." [SV4] Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. ¹¹For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. [SV3] (Lk 14:8-11)*

Notes: See Mt 23:12; Lk 18:14 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Humility is one of the primary virtues of Christian morality, and Jesus advocated humility in all things, to the point of reversing the world's order of merit as he did in the Beatitudes. The advice given in the parable was thinly-veiled criticism of the self-righteous Pharisees' habit of taking places of honor (see practice what you preach; humility: leaders as servants; condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes, and sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican). Pride is a sin because it ranks us above others, and it is a venal sin for religious leaders since it is a form of hypocrisy and sanctimony. Jesus used the

metaphor of manners to teach other moral lessons (see a new invitation: parable of the wedding banquet and serving the least of those instead of friends, below). The SV scholars reversed their usual opinion on the authenticity of the above parable and its interpretive conclusion, considering the conclusion more likely to have originated with Jesus than the parable itself. The parable has its origin in Jewish wisdom literature (e.g. Prov 25:6,7), and the concluding passage that God humbles the proud and exalts the humble is also a common theme of Hebrew wisdom (see Prov 11:2 and Ps 18:27); but, as evidenced by many of the teachings of Jesus on the *first/last* dichotomy, the reversal of the world's order of merit is central to the teachings of Jesus on the kingdom of God. (Barnes)

This is a familiar theme with Jesus, that the first shall be last and the last shall be first, and that the one who exalts himself shall be humbled and the one who humbles himself shall be exalted. Once again, Jesus shows that the ways of God are not the ways of man. Two thousand years later, civilization has not learned this lesson. When all else fails, we shall have to come to our senses and realize the validity of these statements. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (25:63)(22:34)(57:20)(35:15)

And the [true] servants of the Compassionate One are those who walk upon the earth in humility. (25:63)

Give good news to the humble-hearted. (22:34)

O mankind! You are the ones who are in need of God. And God, He is the Independent, the Praised. (35:15)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

A man came to the Prophet and said: "O Messenger of God, direct me to an act which, if I do it, [will cause] God to love me and people to love me." He said, "Renounce the world and God will love you; renounce what people possess and people will love you." [Ibn Majah; also included in *Forty Hadith of al-Nawawi*, #31]

"Wealth does not decrease because of charity, and God increases His slave in honor when he forgives others. And no one humbles himself before God but God will raise him (in status)." [Muslim]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quranic verses above are self-explanatory, with the final verse regarding our need for God denying any ontological basis for pride. The final hadith regarding humility before God and the raising of one's status has been interpreted by Muslim scholars in various ways. Some maintain that the increased status applies to this world, whereas others maintain that it applies to the Hereafter. Still others maintain that it applies to both. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Pride—ranking ourselves above others—is a vice for Christians and Muslims, while humility is a supreme virtue. And sanctimony is a form of pride among the devout that is especially objectionable to God. (Barnes)

Humility is a key quality and virtue of any person in a vital, right relationship with God and other people in all the highest religions of the world. Both Christianity and Islam see humility as a necessary characteristic of anyone who rightly stands before God. With Jesus humility is not only at the heart of social conduct, but is central in his teachings on the kingdom of God, which is both here now and yet to come. Genuine humility is necessary in the fulfillment of the greatest commandments as noted by Jesus. In addition, this means that humility is essential to a *common word* of love of God and neighbor as embraced by Christians and Muslims. Basically, sincere humility permeates that common word of love because God is clearly above all persons who respond in obedience and all persons are equal before God Who to love is life, health and blessedness. (Nates)

*** Serving the least of those instead of friends**

In continuing his teaching on social etiquette to the Pharisees, Jesus told his dinner host:

¹²*When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid.* ¹³*But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,* ¹⁴*and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.*[SV4](Lk 14:12-14)

Notes: Source: Lk.

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The above teaching precedes Luke's version of the parable of the wedding feast, which includes a new invitation. Here, as in his earlier

teaching on humility in social matters, Jesus used manners as a metaphor for morality to remind those around him that sharing God's love required reaching beyond their circle of family and friends. He emphasized that for us to receive God's love we must love the unlovable along with our friends and relatives who are expected to return the favor (see give and you will receive and submission, retribution and giving to those who ask). Jesus emphasized that we do not serve God when we do good for those from whom we expect something in return; it is only when we love our enemies and serve the least of those around us from whom we expect nothing in return that we have served and loved God (see give and you will receive; submission, retribution and giving to all who ask; the greatest commandment, loving your neighbor: the parable of the good Samaritan, the last judgment, Insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus, Zacchaeus: money and salvation and renouncing family and possessions). SV scholars believe that Luke created the above dialogue to express his own interests, but it is something that Jesus could have said even if he did not. (Barnes)

Here we have another wonderful story from Jesus on the most important things in life. He calls us to care for the needy and not the greedy. They will bless us. Not with gifts, gold or prominence, but with that which really matters in this life and the next. The graces of God often come through relationships with other human beings. The smile of an infant or the brightness of an aged person can be our most precious gifts. The small things become big and the big things become small. Such is the way of God. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (76:8-12)(2:271)(9:60)

And they give food, despite [their] love of it to the needy, and the orphan, and the prisoner.

'We feed you only for the sake of God. We do not desire any reward from you, nor any thanks.

Indeed we fear from our Lord a day of frowning, calamitous'.

God has therefore shielded them from the evil of that day, and has granted them radiancy and joy.

And He has rewarded them for their patience with a Garden and silk... (76:8-12)

If you proclaim your voluntary almsgivings, it is a fine thing; but if you conceal them, and give them to the poor, that is even better for you; and it will absolve you of your evil deeds. God is aware of what you do. (2:271)

The voluntary almsgivings are only for the poor and the needy, and those who work with them, and those whose hearts are to be reconciled, and for slaves, and for the debtors, for the way of God, and for the traveller - a duty imposed by God. And God is Knower, Wise. (9:60)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"The worst food is the food of the marriage banquet to which the rich are invited and from which the poor are left out. And he who rejects an invitation disobeys God and His Messenger."

[Bukhari]

"Let him who believes in God and the Last Day be generous to his neighbor, and let him who believes in God and the Last Day be generous to his guest." [Bukhari and Muslim - also in Forty hadith of Nawawi #15]

"Whoever alleviates the lot of a needy person, God will alleviate his lot in this world and the next." [Muslim - also in Forty hadith of Nawawi #36]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses and hadith clearly correspond to the teachings of Jesus in this section, emphasizing charity to the poor and needy without attachment to the worldly consequences of action. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Selfless charity was taught by both Jesus and Muhammad to be at the heart of the faith, and true charity has its focus on the needy and expects nothing in return. (Barnes) As has been noted, the SV scholars think that this section of Scripture is more the words of Luke than of Jesus. This may be but they surely are in accord with the basic teachings of Jesus. The phrase "...repaid at the resurrection of the righteous..." may reflect Luke more than Jesus, who continually taught that the kingdom of God is here now and is yet to come. The statements about social etiquette and "manners as a metaphor for morality" point to *agape* love and are interesting insights which make these words come alive to many. In the context of the heart of Christianity and Islam, we do not give and serve in order to be repaid but to live in gratitude to God and to love others. We are urged to honor God and care for others not from fear of retribution but out of thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. God gives all and we are to give to the least of these as our brothers and sisters. This is the least and the most we can do. We are called to care for the unlovable and the unloved not because they deserve it but because they need it. We can

all agree that the cited Quranic verses and hadith clearly are in harmony with the teachings of Jesus. (Nates)

*** Effective planning**

Jesus used the following examples to help the disciples understand why planning was necessary for them to complete their mission:

²⁸Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? ²⁹For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, ³⁰saying, "This fellow began to build and was not able to finish."
³¹Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.[SV4](Lk 14:28-32)

Notes: See Mt 11:12; Th 98:1-3 (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jesus used the example of a tower builder and a warrior king to emphasize the need for both realistic mission objectives and effective planning to ensure mission success. Ironically, for the unconditional commitment to discipleship Jesus required his followers to abandon worldly plans and resources rather than take them along, renouncing family and possessions as the cost of discipleship. The Gospel of Thomas provides a strange example of the need for practice as a part of effective planning: ¹*The Father's imperial rule is like a person who wanted to kill someone powerful.*
²*While still at home he drew his sword and thrust it into the wall to find out whether his hand would go in.* ³*Then he killed the powerful one.*[SV2](Th 98:1-3) While the example is violent and therefore surprising (even more so than that of the warrior king), the lesson is mundane: plan ahead to ensure mission success. But the mission of discipleship is unlike any worldly undertaking. It requires no extensive planning or material resources, only a commitment of repentance, faith and a willingness to trust in God and stay the course. (Barnes)
Trust in God and plan for the next event, the next obstacle and the next years. It has been said, "God will do for us all the things we cannot do for ourselves, but God will not do one thing for us which we can do for ourselves." The wisdom and the ways

of God are often beyond our understanding. Yet, God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (4:71)(4:102)(8:60)

O you who believe, take your precautions, then move forward in companies, or move forward all together. (4:71)

When you are among them, and you stand to lead them in prayer, let a party of them stand with you, and let them take their weapons. Then when they have performed their prostrations, let them be behind you, and let another party who have not prayed come and pray with you, taking their precautions and their weapons. The disbelievers wish that you should be heedless of your weapons and your baggage that they may descend upon you all at once. You are not at fault, if rain bothers you, or if you are sick, to lay aside your weapons. But take your precautions; God has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating chastisement. (4:102)

Make ready for them whatever force you can and of horses tethered that thereby you may dismay the enemy of God and your enemy, and others besides them, whom you know not: God knows them. And whatever thing you expend in the way of God shall be repaid to you in full, and you will not be wronged. (8:60)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"For your worldly affairs, construct your plans based on the assumption that you are going to live forever, and as for the work reserved for the Hereafter, construct your plans based on the assumption that you are going to die tomorrow."

One day God's Messenger noticed a Bedouin leaving his camel without tying it. He asked the Bedouin, "Why don't you tie down your camel?" The Bedouin answered, "I placed my trust in God." At that, the Prophet said, "Tie your camel and place your trust in Allah." [Tirmidhi]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quranic verses above concern the need for preparation for self-defense (selected to correspond to the military example in the Biblical verses), and it is important to be aware of the context of revelation to avoid misunderstanding. For example, the last verse concerns the need for a deterrent fear with an aim towards peace, not war. The final hadith also highlights the need to prepare to

the extent that we can, but leave the consequences in the hands of God. This once again affirms the need for action on one hand combined with detachment from the fruit of action on the other. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Jesus used the need for effective planning to illustrate the preparation needed for discipleship, and with his typical irony he used planning a war to illustrate the need for planning and the commitment needed for a mission that leads to peace. Here Jesus sounds like Muhammad in dealing with practical issues of worldly leadership. Too many devout people ignore practical problems and rely on faith to accomplish all things. The hadith story about Muhammad and the Bedouin who left his camel untied based on faith is especially instructive. Muhammad made it clear that faith and trust in Allah is no substitute for good judgment and common sense. (Barnes)

Counting the cost of our mission or goal is to embrace unconditional commitment. It is vital to achievement. For Jesus it is part of a call to discipleship with him and God. This means we are to "...plan ahead to ensure mission success." With confidence in God and in what God can do in us, we are to "count the cost" and plan. The Qur'an indicates that we are to believe and take precautions and then move forward together. The New Testament states that believers are "members one of another." It has been said that we are to believe and work as if everything depends on us, for it does. In addition, we are to believe and work as if everything depends on God, for it does. The Prophet, in the Hadith, is said to have picturesquely stated, "Tie your camel and place your trust in Allah." The Hadith "...highlights the need to prepare to the extent that we can, but leave the consequences in the hands of God." This is Common Ground between Christianity and Islam. (Nates)

*** Lost and found: parables of the lost sheep and coin**

In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus said:

⁴Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me, I have found my lost sheep." [SV2]

⁷I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. [SV4]

⁸Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it. ⁹And when she finds it she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, "Rejoice with me, I have found the coin." [SV2] ¹⁰In the same way, I tell you, there will be much rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents. [SV4] (Lk 15:4-10)

Notes: See Mt 18:12-14; Th 107:3 (Sources: Q, Th for the parable of the lost sheep; there are no parallels for the lost coin).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The above parables about the lost sheep and lost coin are metaphorical versions of the more literal parable of the prodigal son that follows them. The teachings demonstrate that Jesus came to save sinners—those who stray from the fold—rather than for the righteous who remain in the religious mainstream. They also illustrate that God sees us as members of the universal family of God and not as members of separate and competing flocks. The parable of the lost sheep was directed to the Pharisees and scribes who, in their hypocrisy and sanctimony had been complaining about Jesus associating with sinners. When Jesus referred to the righteous, it was probably to the self-righteous Pharisees (see sanctimony and humility: the parable of the Pharisee and the publican). Jesus taught that God did not favor any family or religious group, much less a chosen people, but considered all people, including sinners, to be sheep of God's flock. Jesus taught that we must give in order to receive the love of God by loving others (see the greatest commandment, the new command, the last judgment and the golden rule), even loving our enemies. Jesus' advice to renounce family and possessions and to serve the least of those rather than friends indicated that loyalties to family and friends (including churches and social groups) could be obstacles to loving those beyond these groups, and therefore

obstacles to loving God (see pride and peer pressure and treasures and the heart). As with other stories the allegorical narratives are considered more authentic than the explanations. See the good shepherd and the kingdom: the parables of the treasure and the pearl. (Barnes)

In the period of Jesus, the near Easterners used to consider the number one hundred as the highest and most prized number. Most of the shepherds then were simple and illiterate. For them and others to own a hundred sheep was to be able to provide for a family and lead a fairly comfortable life. To lose one sheep and fall below a hundred sheep was to lose income, status and esteem. Therefore, Jesus used that number to illustrate this meaningful parable. The "lost" are important to God for the favorable number for God is "everyone". God, in Jesus, is seeking to reach all the "lost". (A side note: Perhaps the churches of today spend more time and energy on taking care of the "righteous" than on seeking and reaching the "lost". It is good to care for them, but perhaps the churches of today have confused their priorities.) A "sinner" is one out of relationship with God, one who does not worship and obey God. We all fall into that category sometimes. We are to lead a life of total reverence and obedience to God. We are all also children of God and beloved of God. It is easier to care for the "saints" of God than it is to witness to and serve the "sinners". God loves all of us equally according to the core beliefs of the Christian faith. This is most difficult for us to duplicate, but this is what Jesus urges us to do. Who are the "lost sheep"? We need to know. Where are the "lost sheep"? We need to be there. There is where we find Jesus. The meaning of the lost coin is the same as that of the hundred sheep. It is vitally important to reach everyone for God. In the Near East a necklace of coins could have been a family heirloom for a woman. To lose one and then find it is a time of great rejoicing. So it is in the kingdom of God when another person enters. God's kingdom is all inclusive and excludes no one. (Nates)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"God is more pleased with the repentance of a believing servant than of a person who set out on a journey with a provision of food and drink on the back of his camel. He went on until he came to a waterless desert and he felt like sleeping. So he got down under the shade of a tree and was overcome by sleep and his camel ran away. As he got up he tried to see (the camel) standing upon a mound, but did not find it. He then got upon the other mound, but could not see anything. He then climbed

upon the third mound but did not see anything until he came back to the place where he had been previously. And as he was sitting (in utter disappointment) there came to him the camel, till that (camel) placed its nostril in his hand. God is more pleased with the repentance of His servant than the person who found (his lost camel) in this very state." Bukhari

Commentary on the Hadith: Other sections and commentaries (as well as the next entry on the parable of the prodigal son) make the importance of repentance in Islam very clear. But the hadith above illustrates God's pleasure with our repentance as well (the example of finding one's camel laden with provisions in a waterless desert is extremely concrete for Arabs at that time, as well as many Arabs today, and corresponds nicely to the lost sheep or lost to the lost sheep). This hadith on the lost camel was also mentioned under **sinners, forgiveness, and love** and is included here because of its correspondence to the lost sheep. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad understood that God loved finding those who were lost even more than counting the faithful, and that's not always easy for the faithful to understand (See the parable of the prodigal son below). (Barnes) Both the Christian faith and Islam acknowledge the crucial importance of repentance. People are prone to go the wrong direction and need to turn and go the right direction, which is repentance. Among all peoples, there are the lost and the found. As in a family, with a lost child, the wandering one needs the greater attention. However, in seeking the lost we are never to neglect tending those who are not lost. Naturally, the sick need care more than the well. This is not to neglect providing wellness care for those who are healthy so that they will continue to be healthy. (Nates)

*** Sibling rivalry: parable of the prodigal son**

In this parable a father forgave his younger son who had left home and squandered his inheritance, but then repented and returned home in shame. The older son who had remained faithful resented the reinstatement of his younger brother in the family, but the father told his older son:

³¹*My son, the father said, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.* ³²*But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again, he was lost and is found.*[SV2](Lk 15:31,32)

Notes: Source: Lk.

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The parable of the prodigal son illustrates the unconditional nature of God's love and forgiveness, and that salvation is a matter of grace and cannot be earned (see faith and works). It emphasizes familial love in contrast to renouncing family and possessions and dissension, not peace, and the virtue of reconciliation. It follows two other parables with a similar message of redemption: lost and found: parables of the lost sheep and lost coin. But it also reveals that the forgiveness of sinners can create the indignation of the righteous, as it did in the older brother (see envy and equity: parable of the workers in the vineyard). The Old Testament story of Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27-33) is a better example of brotherly love. Jacob deceived his father in order to receive his older brother Esau's inheritance and then fled the homeplace. Sometime later Jacob returned expecting Esau to condemn him for his deception, but Esau welcomed Jacob with open arms. This story is as much about the righteous and wronged forgiving sinners as it is about God forgiving sinners (Jesus came for sinners; forgiveness; forgiveness, love and sinners; the power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness; the family of God; envy and equity: parable of the vineyard workers; anger and reconciliation and justice or mercy). (*Barnes*)

The parable Jesus told which we read about in Luke 15:11-32(SV2) is one of the most moving, poignant touching stories ever told. It is really not told to be understood so much as it is to be experienced. It is often called "The Parable of the Prodigal Son". [Note: Jesus never gave titles to his parables] It is better entitled "The Parable of the Waiting Father" or even "The Parable of the Two Brothers." People usually think of "prodigal" as wasteful, which is one thought about this word. A better definition for "prodigal" is extravagant. The waiting Father was extremely extravagant, in his forgiveness, grace, love, joy and acceptance. This is clearly seen in his response to his younger son and his elder son. An understanding and appreciation of a Semitic Near Eastern family, Father, Mother, sons and daughters, even open up to great depths and grasp of this wonderful parable. It is all about the nature of God. Can we ever truly comprehend the unconditional nature of God's love and its profundity? Do we realize that every time we say "Our Father..." as Jesus taught in a model prayer, that it is an affirmation that we are all children of God? Perhaps we can experience the indignation of the elder brother when he heard of the homecoming of his "sinner" brother. As one of the "righteous", Jesus came to call and redeem "sinners". He said, "Follow me!" Jesus called

all to be among the really righteous who call, invite, and receive "sinners" to believe and behave as the "children of God", who in fact they are. [Note: See below, "Muslim-Hadith, The best of sinners are those who repent."] Jesus calls all, the best and the worse of "sinners", to accept the Gospel and follow him. Maybe the younger and elder finally did in the end. The waiting Father did all along. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (39:53)(7:31)(6:141)(4:29)(17:26-29)(11:90)

Say [that God declares]: 'O My servants who have been prodigal against their own souls, do not despair of God's mercy. Truly God forgives all sins. Truly He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (39:53)

O Children of Adam! Don your adornment at every place of worship, and eat and drink, but do not be excessive; He truly does not love those who are excessive. (7:31)

And He it is Who produces gardens, trellised and untrellised, and palm-trees, and crops diverse in flavour, and olives, and pomegranates, alike and unlike. Eat of the fruit thereof when it ripens, and pay the due thereof on the day of its harvest, and do not be prodigal. Truly, God does not love the prodigal. (6:141)

O you who believe, consume not your goods between you wrongly, except it be trading through mutual agreement. And kill not yourselves. Surely God is ever Merciful to you. (4:29)

And give the kinsman his due, and the needy and the traveller [as well]; and do not squander. Indeed squanderers are brothers of devils, and the Devil was ever ungrateful to his Lord. But if you [have to] overlook them, seeking mercy from your Lord, [a mercy] which you expect [in the future], then speak to them gentle words. And do not keep your hand chained to your neck, nor open it completely, or you will sit blameworthy and denuded. (17:26-29)

And ask forgiveness of your Lord, then repent to Him. Truly my Lord is Merciful, Affectionate. (11:90)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"The best of sinners are those who repent." [Muslim]

"God spreads out His hand at night to accept the repentance of the one who sinned during the day, and He spreads out His hand by day to accept the repentance of the one who sinned during the night, (and that will continue) until the sun rises from the west." [Muslim]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses and hadith indicate that although prodigality is against God's will, it is never too late to repent and we should never despair of His Mercy. Interestingly, verse 39:53 connects both points, suggesting that we are prodigal with respect to our own souls when we commit **any** sin. Classical Quranic commentators such as Tustari have stated on the basis of this verse that "it is part of my religion that I do not disown the sinners among the nation of Muḥammad (saws), nor the wicked, the murderers, the adulterers or the thieves, for truly, the extent of the generosity, bounty, and beneficence that God, Exalted is He, shows, especially to the nation of Muḥammad (saws), cannot be fathomed." This commentary provides a nice analogue to the Biblical verses above. [Quranic verses such as 39:53 have already appeared in other entries, but the commentary by Tustari is especially appropriate here.]

The context of revelation of 17:29 above also indicates that prodigality is only one of two extremes to avoid, for as the Prophet "was sitting with his Companions, a boy came to him and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, my mother asks you for a gown.' The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, did not have any gown except the one he was wearing, and so he said to the boy: 'Things turn up from time to time, so come back to us another time.' He went to his mother and informed her but she said to him: 'Tell him that my mother asks you for the gown you are wearing.' The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, went inside his house, took off his gown and gave it to the boy and remained there naked. When Bilal called for the prayer, people waited for the Prophet, Allah bless him and give, to emerge and lead them in prayer but he did not come out. The Companions became worried. One of them entered in on him and found him naked. Allah, glorious and exalted is He, then revealed (And let not thy hand be chained to thy neck nor open it with a complete opening)" (al-Wahidi). Related verses indicating that God desires to be merciful to us and knows our weakness are (4:27-28): *And God desires to turn [forgivingly] towards you, but those who follow their passions, desire that you deviate with a terrible deviation. God desires to lighten things for you; for man was created weak. Finally, regarding jealousy over worldly differences, verse 43:42 states: Is it they who apportion the mercy of your Lord? We have apportioned*

among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and raised some of them above others by degrees, so that some of them may take others in service, and the mercy of your Lord is better than what they amass. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: Human decadence and God's forgiving mercy is a major theme of both Jesus and Muhammad, and as is the (sinful) indignation of the righteous for such forgiveness. (Barnes) God (Allah) forgives all sins when they are confessed. "Despair not of the Mercy of Allah: verily, Allah forgives all sins. Truly He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Qur'an, Surah 39:53) God desires to forgivingly turn toward all. God knows our weaknesses and wants to be merciful to all of us. (Nates)

*** The parable of the Shrewd Manager: shrewdness, stewardship, and the danger of riches**

In the parable of the crafty steward (or shrewd manager), Jesus spoke to the Pharisees of a dishonest steward, who, when he heard he was likely to lose his job, began arbitrarily reducing the obligations of his master's debtors in order to gain their favor. According to Luke, the steward compromised his master's accounts to provide for his own security, fully expecting to lose his job. Upon discovering this conflict of interest, however, the master reacted in an unusual way:

⁸*The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly.[SV1] For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.[SV4](Lk 16:8,9)*

But, paradoxically, after Jesus seemed to commend the dishonest manager Jesus spoke of the need for honest stewardship and condemned the dishonesty of the crafty steward:

¹⁰*Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?*

¹²*And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?[SV4](Lk 16:10-12)*

After addressing the stewardship of wealth, Jesus then spoke of the danger of riches:

No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.[SV2](Lk 16:13)

When the Pharisees, who loved their money, began to sneer at these teachings, Jesus said:

You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.[SV4](Lk 16:15)

Notes: See Mt 6:24; 19:17; 25:21; Th 47:1,2 (Sources: Lk, Th, Q; there are no parallels for the parable of the shrewd manager).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This parable is considered authentic by SV scholars, but should not be taken literally to justify betraying a trust to serve one's personal interests. In an earlier story on faithful and unfaithful servants Jesus made it clear that faithful service and integrity were expected of all his followers: *Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns* (Lk 12:42,43; see expectations and end times). And in the teaching which followed on Christian stewardship, and in other teachings of Jesus on integrity (see talk is cheap and plain talk, no oaths) and selfless service, there was never tolerance for dishonesty. On occasion Jesus went beyond hyperbole and used surprising, if not outlandish, examples that were not intended to be taken literally but that helped make a point (see submission and retribution, renouncing family and possessions and effective planning). Here Jesus used irony to ridicule the Pharisees for their useless sanctimony in not sharing the riches of God's love with their people. The crafty steward who gave away his master's wealth was a *person of the world* in contrast to the Pharisees who were *the people of the light* entrusted with God's riches. The crafty steward may have been corrupt, but at least he was shrewd in dealing with his own kind (giving others money to provide for his own security after he was fired), while Jewish religious leaders were both corrupt and foolish in not dispensing the riches of God's kingdom, and forfeited their spiritual security as a result. The story makes a similar point to that of the rich fool whose greed in hoarding his possessions denied others sustenance and gained him nothing. Here not only

the shrewd manager but the master's debtors benefited from his unauthorized canceling of his master's debts. It is the kind of unexpected irony that characterized the teachings of Jesus; and here, as in the parable of the talents, it is likely that money was ironically a metaphor for the love of God (ironic since wealth is so often an obstacle to God's love). If the master's accounts were metaphors for God's love, then it was a virtue and not a vice for the shrewd manager to give them away (see give in order to receive). When Jesus used worldly measures of success in his parables, they were often parodies or veiled criticism of religious leaders who taught that wealth, power and popularity were God's rewards for righteousness, as when Jesus said he came to save sinners, not the righteous. (Barnes)

This parable can be most confusing. It is called the parable of the "shrewd manager", the "crafty steward", "unjust steward" and the "dishonest manager." Each one indicates a different slant in the interpretation of the parable. Verses eight and nine, both SV-4, seem to call for shrewdness in dealing with people which the "children of light" do not have and a call to "make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth." It is difficult to imagine that Jesus said these. He is also reported to have said, "You cannot serve God and wealth" (mammon; money). This is spoken about by Jesus more than once. The Pharisees wanted to justify themselves in all that they did. However, Jesus said "...God knows your heart." [SV-4, Luke 16:15). Others knew the words of the Pharisees but God knew their hearts...the very center of their real lives and intentions. The parable contains truth of the realities of life and may be an authentic teaching from Jesus. Even so it is not to be taken literally. The ancient, oriental mind of that section of the Middle East could handle this type of story better than the western, rationalistic mind of the present culture of the west. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (4:58)(2:188)(4:135)(33:4)(3:154)(4:107)

Verily, God commands you to restore trusts. And when you judge between people, that you judge with justice. Excellent is the admonition God gives you. God is ever Hearer, Seer. (4:58)

Consume not your goods between you in deception, and proffer them to the judges, that you may consume a portion of other people's goods in sin while you are aware. (2:188)

O you who believe, be upright in justice; witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves; or parents and kinsmen, whether the person be rich or poor; God is closer to the two. So

do not follow any whim, lest you swerve, for if you twist, or refrain, surely God is ever aware of what you do. (4:135)

God has not placed two hearts inside any man. (33:4)

... and God knows what is in the breasts. (3:154)

And do not dispute on behalf of those who betray themselves; surely God loves not one who is treacherous and sinful. (4:107)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"A slave of God will remain standing on the Day of Judgment till he is questioned about (four things) his life on earth and how he spent it, and about his knowledge and how he utilized it, and his wealth and how he acquired it and in what way did he spend it, and about his body and how he wore it out." [Tirmidhi]

"God the Almighty is good and accepts only that which is good."
[Muslim]

"Injustice will appear as darkness on the Day of Rising."
[Bukhari]

"Let the slave of Dinar and Dirham and Khamisa (i.e. money and luxurious clothes) perish for he is pleased if these things are given to him, and if not, he is displeased!" [Bukhari]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quran and hadith make it clear that deceit and betrayal are unacceptable, regardless of whether the injured party is rich or poor, corresponding to the steward taking advantage of his wealthy master. The circumstances of revelation of 4:135 illustrate this particularly well: "A poor man and a rich man went to him [the Prophet] to settle a dispute. He was inclined to judge in favor of the poor man because he thought that a poor man cannot wrong a rich person. But Allah, exalted is He, wanted to establish justice regarding the poor and rich alike. He said: (O ye who believe! Be ye staunch in justice) up to His words (whether (the case be of) a rich man or a poor man, for Allah is nearer unto both (than ye are)...)" [al-Wahidi]. Likewise, equality and justice between Muslims and non-Muslims is highlighted in the context of revelation of verse 4:107 which was revealed along with seven other verses. Al-Wahidi relates, "One man from the Helpers [al-Ansar - a very distant relation we hope!] by the name of Tu'mah ibn Ubayriq, from Banu Zafar ibn al-Harith, stole armour from his neighbour who was called Qatadah ibn al-Nu'man.

The armour was in a sack of ground wheat. When he took the armour, the ground wheat was strewn about from a hole in the sack. Traces of ground wheat were left in his house. Tu'mah then took the armour and hid it with a Jew by the name of Zayd ibn al-Samin. When people looked for the armour in the house of Tu'mah, they could not find it. He swore to them by Allah that he did not take the armour or have any knowledge about it. The owners of the armour said: 'No indeed, by Allah he entered our house and took it. We followed him until he entered his house and, therein, we saw traces of wheat'. When he swore by Allah that he did not steal it, they left him and followed the trail of ground wheat which led them to the house of the Jewish man. When they took him, he said that it was Tu'mah ibn Ubayriq who had left the armour with him, and some Jewish people testified that this was the case. Banu Zafar, the clan of Tu'mah, said: 'Let us go to the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace'. They [members of the tribe of the thief] spoke to the Prophet, Allah bless him and give him peace, and requested him to argue in favour of their man, saying: 'If you do not do so, our man will be doomed and exposed and the Jew will come out of this as an innocent man'. The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, was on the verge of doing as he was requested – for his heart was with them – and punish the Jew when Allah, exalted is He, revealed:

Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the truth so that you may judge between people by that which God has shown you. And do not be a disputant for traitors. And pray for forgiveness from God; surely God is ever Forgiving, Merciful.

And do not dispute on behalf of those who betray themselves; surely God loves not one who is treacherous and sinful. They hide themselves from people, but they do not hide themselves from God; for He is with them while they plot at night with discourse displeasing to Him. God is ever Encompassing of what they do.

Ah! There you are you have contested on their behalf in the life of this world; but who will contest against God on their behalf on the Day of Resurrection, or who will be a guardian for them. Whoever does evil, or wrongs himself, and then prays for God's forgiveness, he shall find God is Forgiving, Merciful.

And whoever commits a sin commits it against himself only; and God is ever Knower, Wise.

And whoever commits a mistake or a sin, and then casts it upon the innocent, he has thereby burdened himself with calumny and a manifest sin. (4:105-112)

Finally, verse 33:4 corresponds to the Biblical verse indicating that we have one only heart, with all this implies for pursuing the "one thing needful." (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Muhammad did not use irony and hyperbole as did Jesus, so there is no analogous teaching of Muhammad using shrewdness or dishonesty as a metaphor for doing God's will. But this does not diminish the point of the story, assuming the master's accounts were an ironic metaphor for God's love: When we receive the transforming power of God's love we must share it with others if we expect to keep it for ourselves. (Barnes) The dishonest manager was wise in one sense and perhaps even harmless. He is an enigma of that which can bear good. We are reminded that God has not placed two hearts inside any man. (Qur'an 33:4) We have only one heart with which to pursue the "one thing needful" in life, which is to be obedient to God. It has been said that, "holiness is to will one thing." (See teachings of Soren Kierkegaard) (Nates)

* The Law

Luke reported only three sayings on the Law:

¹⁶*The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.*

¹⁷*It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.*

¹⁸*Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*[SV3](Lk 16:16-18)

Notes: See Mt 11:12,13; 5:18; 5:32; 19:9 (Sources: Q, Mt).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Luke's summary treatment of Mosaic Law indicates it was not an important issue for his audience, who were primarily Gentiles; but for the Jews to whom Matthew was writing, the Law was a matter of faith (see Mt 5:17-20, laws and love: the new standard higher than the old). The first passage (Lk 16:16) indicates the time of the Law and Prophets ended with John the Baptist, but scholars are uncertain what to make of the reference to "forcing his way" into the kingdom of God. The second point (Lk 16:17) has little relevance if the Law has been fulfilled and is no longer a standard for righteousness. The third point (Lk 16:18) is on divorce, a continuing issue for Jews. Luke and Mark leave no

ambiguity on the subject, but Matthew reports an exception for infidelity (see marriage, divorce, and human sexuality). The Gospel of Thomas deals with the contentious issue of circumcision, which was mandatory under Hebrew law: ²*If it [circumcision] were useful, their father would produce children already circumcised from their mother.* ³*Rather, the true circumcision in spirit has become profitable in every respect.*[SV4](Th 53:2,3). Paul also rejected circumcision as a religious requirement (see Rom 2:25-29; Phil 3:3; Cor 7:17-19; Gal 6:5) and wrote that the commandments *...are summed up in the one rule: Love your neighbor as yourself. Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* (Rm 13:8-10; see also Ga 5:14). For other teachings on the Law, see laws and love: new standard higher than the old; love over law: civil disobedience and the greatest commandment. (Barnes). *As is clear in the passage (16) that the law and the prophets went from the time of Moses until John the Baptizer. There was to be a new law, the new covenant and the spiritual kingdom to come. A new order and covenant began with Jesus. The Law was fulfilled and the new Kingdom of God began with the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus. Verse 17 emphasizes that the Torah (law) has an eternal endurance. Some Jewish authorities thought that Jesus was weakening the religious laws, whereas in actuality he was proclaiming that what comes from God is eternal. The law was now realized in loving God with all ones heart mind and strength and loving one's neighbor as one loves oneself.* (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:231-236)

When you divorce women, and they have reached their term, then retain them honourably, or set them free honourably; do not retain them in harm to transgress; whoever does that has wronged his soul; take not God's verses in mockery, and remember God's grace upon you, and the Book, and the wisdom He has revealed to you, to exhort you therewith; and fear God, and know that God has knowledge of all things.

When you divorce women, and they have reached their term, do not debar them from marrying their husbands when they have agreed together honourably. That is an admonition for whoever of you believe in God and the Last Day; that is purer for you, and cleaner. God knows, and you know not.

Mothers suckle their children for two full years for such as desire to fulfil the suckling. It is for the father to provide them and clothe them honourably. No soul is charged save to its capacity; a mother shall not be harmed by her child; neither a

father by his child. The heir has a similar duty. But if the two desire by mutual consent and consultation to wean, then they would not be at fault. And if you desire to seek nursing for your children, you would not be at fault, provided you hand over what you have given honourably, and fear God, and know that God sees what you do.

And those of you who pass away, leaving wives, they shall wait by themselves for four months and ten. When they have reached their term, then you would not be at fault regarding what they may do with themselves, honourably; God is aware of what you do.

You would not be at fault regarding the proposal you present or hide in your hearts to women. God knows that you will be mindful of them; but do not make arrangements with them secretly, unless you speak honourable words. And do not resolve on the knot of marriage until that which is written has reached its term; and know that God knows what is in your souls; so be fearful of Him; and know that God is Forgiving, Forbearing.

You would not be at fault if you divorce women while you have not touched them, nor appointed any obligation for them; yet make provision of comforts for them honourably, the one of ample means, according to his means, and the needy man, according to his means - an obligation on the virtuous. (2:231-236)

Commentary on the Qur'an: Divorce is clearly discouraged in Islam (see marriage, divorce, and human sexuality). But the Divine Law also allows for remarriage to a different spouse, as the Quranic verses above indicate. The notion that remarriage should be prohibited on grounds of adultery has no basis in either Jewish or Islamic law. Although Islamic and Christian ethics are similar in most regards, sexual ethics is an important area of difference, most notably involving two different approaches to the spiritual significance of human sexuality. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Perhaps the most significant conflict between Christianity and Islam is in the role of sacred law. When Islamic law (Shari'a) is enforced in a way that violates fundamental human rights, as when apostasy and blasphemy laws undermine the freedom of religion and expression, then Islam becomes coercive and contradicts itself, creating a conflict of legitimacy (e.g. *Let there be no compulsion in religion*. Qur'an, Al Baqara 2:256); but when Muslims consider Shari'a a code of sacred but voluntary moral principles and not as coercive law, there is no issue of legitimacy. This is more a political and cultural issue than a theological issue. There is no major theological issue in Islamic law since it closely resembles

Mosaic law and reflects the common Semitic origins of Jews and Muslims. For Christians, however, Jesus (and Paul) taught and exemplified that God's love fulfilled Mosaic law as the standard of righteousness. By sharing the greatest commandment as a *common word* of faith, Jews, Christians and Jews can see their differences in the law in proper perspective and the great religions of the Book can move toward religious reconciliation rather than further competition and polarization. (Barnes)

The Torah (law) is that which one must followed to fulfill the will of God, in the minds of many people. Jesus came proclaiming a "new", eternal Kingdom of God. Most people today are not under a monarchy; therefore "kingdom" does not resonate with the minds and hearts of many. Jesus described the "kingdom" as the reign or rule of God in the souls and minds of everyone. The reign of God in one's life is more demanding than law but is at the same time more loving. Islam seems more compassionate with divorce and remarriage than does Christianity. Of course, we must consider the historic context. The statement is made, "Islam and Christian ethics are similar in most regards; sexual ethics is an important area of difference." Does this mean that there is a spiritual significance of human sexuality which is different in each body of faith? (Nates)

*** Insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus**

In the following parable a rich man consistently neglected a beggar named Lazarus, who was covered with sores. When the two men died, Lazarus went to heaven and the rich man to Hades. The rich man begged Abraham (the Jewish St. Peter at heaven's gate) for mercy, or at least to send Lazarus back to earth to warn his brothers to practice mercy so as to avoid the agony of Hades. Abraham's answer to the rich man's plea reflected the skepticism of Jesus that the Pharisees would ever find salvation, even through a risen savior:

³¹*He 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."*[SV4](Lk 16:19-31)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: In this parable Jesus sent a message to the Pharisees: if they neglected the teachings of Moses and the prophets on mercy, even a resurrected messenger or Messiah could not save them. The Pharisees were supposedly experts on the teachings of Moses and the prophets, but in their

hypocrisy and sanctimony they had forgotten the element of kindness (mercy) as described in Micah 6:8: *He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness [mercy], and to walk humbly with your God?* Jesus relied on miracles to demonstrate that he was God's Son and the word of God, but he also expressed frustration at the failure of miracles to convince skeptical and hostile Pharisees who accused him of blasphemy in performing miracles (see Jn 10:34-38, blasphemy or word of God?) Even the resurrection did not convince many of them that the teachings of Jesus were the word of God, as reflected in the story of Lazarus. Reference to a resurrection is evidence that the parable originated in the early church rather than with Jesus. The first part of the parable (Lk 16:19-26) was designated SV3; it was Luke's version of the last judgment in parable form, illustrating the consequences of ignoring the least of those around us. It also illustrates Luke's Beatitudes, where the afflicted are comforted, and the comfortable are afflicted. The remaining part of the parable (Lk 16:27-31) was designated SV4 since it seemingly dealt with events following the life of Jesus: the failure of most Jews to accept Jesus as Messiah following the resurrection. See a sign from heaven, the seven woes, the Pharisee and the publican, shrewdness, stewardship and the danger of riches and riches and salvation. As for Hades, or hell, it was not the Hell later popularized by the church, but the Greek concept of the afterlife (see end note 27). (Barnes) This is a parable. It is not an attempt to present a literal explanation of an afterlife. This parable could have been first told by Jesus (most of it was SV4) or presented from a popular parable told by Luke to represent the teachings of Jesus. A parable usually has one main point. The featured point of this story is that a wealthy man ignores the needs of a poor man and then suffers for it. At the heart of the teaching of Jesus is that we share what we have, wealth, strength, wisdom, courage and faith, to help others in need. In the Book of Acts we find that the followers shared what they had and no one had a need. At the heart of this story is that no one should rely on wealth for a sense of wellbeing or even eternal redemption. Wealth is not the problem but the misuse of any wealth we may have. Some religious people, in order to appease or even pacify those who suffer and are in poverty, lead the unfortunate to look to the afterlife for abundance, comfort and peace. Jesus often spoke of "eternal life", the good life, as in the here and now and not just in the life after death. The kingdom of God is here and is yet to come. This story also points out that those who have abundance and do not share suffer great regret and strong remorse. God does not do this to them, it is a result of their

own acts. The symbol of the gate shows the opportunity to do good to those in need. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (6:111)(13:31-32)(16:33-34)(25:21-24)(3:183-184)(46:20)(30:52-53)

And if We had sent down the angels to them, and the dead had spoken with them, and We had gathered against them all things in droves, yet they would not have believed, unless God willed; but most of them are ignorant. (6:111)

Even if it were a Qur'ān whereby the mountains were set in motion, or the earth were cleft, or the dead were spoken to. Nay, but the affair belongs entirely to God. Have they not realized, those who believe, that had God willed, He could have guided all mankind? And the disbelievers continue to be struck by devastation because of what they wrought; or you alight near their home until God's promise comes to pass; truly God does not break His promise.

Messengers were certainly mocked before you, but I gave respite to those who disbelieved; then I seized them, and how was My retribution? (13:31-32)

Do they await anything but that the angels should come to them or that there should come your Lord's command? So did those before them. And God did not wrong them, but they used to wrong themselves.

So that the evils of what they did smote them, and there besieged them that which they used to mock. (16:33-34)

And those who do not expect to encounter Us say, 'Why have the angels not been sent down to us, or why do we not see our Lord?' Assuredly they are full of arrogance within their souls and have become terribly insolent.

The day when they see the angels, there will be no good tidings on that day for the guilty, and they will say, 'A forbidding ban!'

And We shall attend to the works they did and turn them into scattered dust.

Those who will be the inhabitants of Paradise on that day will be in a [far] better abode, and a [far] better resting place. (25:21-24)

Those same who said, 'God has already made covenant with us that we should not believe in any messenger until he bring us an offering to be devoured by fire': 'messengers have come to you before me with clear proofs, and with that which you said. Why

*did you slay them, then, if you are truthful?'
But if they deny you, so were denied messengers before you who
came bearing clear proofs, and the Scriptures, and the
Illuminating Book. (3:183-184)*

*And on the day when those who disbelieve are exposed to the
Fire: 'You squandered your good things during your life of the
world and enjoyed them. So today you will be requited with the
chastisement of humiliation in return for acting arrogantly in
the earth without right and in return for that regarding which
you used to act immorally.' (46:20)*

*And so you cannot make the dead hear, nor can you make the deaf
hear the call when they go away with their backs turned.
Nor can you guide the blind out of their error. You can only
make hear those who believe in Our signs, and have thus
submitted. (30:52-53)*

Commentary on the Qur'an: These Quranic verses clearly indicate that arrogance rather than the presence or absence of miracles leads to denial and disbelief. The circumstance of revelation of 6:111, the first verse above, vividly illustrates this: "The Quraysh [Meccan tribe of idol worshipers at the time] spoke to the Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace. They said: 'You inform us that Moses, peace be upon him, had a staff with which he struck a stone and twelve springs gushed forth, and that Jesus, peace be upon him, revived the dead, and that Thamud had a camel; why do you not bring us some of those signs so that we believe in you?' The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, asked them: 'What sign do you want me to bring you?' They said: 'Turn [mount] al-Safa into gold.' He said: 'Would you believe in me if I did as you ask?' They said: 'Yes, by Allah, if you do, we will all follow you.' The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, stood up and began supplicating. Then, Gabriel, peace be upon him, came to him and said: 'If you wish, I can turn al-Safa into gold. However, never did I send a sign that people disbelieved in except that I sent chastisement after it. If you wish, I will leave them until some of them decide to repent.' The Messenger of Allah, Allah bless him and give him peace, said: 'Leave them until some of them decide to repent.' And so Allah, exalted is He, revealed (And they swear a solemn oath by Allah that if there come unto them a portent they will believe therein) up to His words (... they would not believe unless Allah so willed...) [6:111]." A similar demand for miracles occurred with the Jews of Medina, the occasion of revelation of 3:183-184 above. Of course, the Prophet did perform miracles, including

the splitting of the moon which was independently observed in locations far from Mecca. But the point is that miracles alone cannot overcome arrogance, let alone lead to faith, all of which come only by God's grace as the final verses indicate (30:52-53). (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Both Jesus and Muhammad knew the limitations of miracles – even the resurrection of the dead – to convince skeptics that they were speaking God's word. We, too, should be skeptical of any claiming to speak for God; but God's truth will speak to our hearts and minds if we repent and seek it, and we will discover that sharing God's love and mercy with others can bring us new spiritual life in this life and the next. (Barnes) Jesus calls us to help those in need. This is part of the greatest of the commandments of God. Arrogance leads to denial and disbelief. Christian faith and Islam depicts arrogance as one seeking to take the place of God. It is to deny our need of and dependence on God. It is stated above that, "True faith only comes through repentance and the grace of God." Arrogance has no place for repentance and does not recognize the need for the grace of God. (Nates)

*** The duty of discipleship**

Jesus used a servant to illustrate discipleship:

⁷Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, "Come along now and sit down to eat?" ⁸Would he rather say, "Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink?" ⁹Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, "We are unworthy servants, we have only done our duty." [SV4] (Lk 17:7-10)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The above should be read in light of then existing duties and responsibilities of servants (the word was sometimes translated as slaves). Once the disciples knew what moral conduct was expected of them, like a servant they were expected to conduct themselves accordingly and not to expect any special thanks for doing their duty; but Jesus reversed these expectations to illustrate the end times. It seems out of character for Jesus to have spoken of duty in

the context of free will, sacrificial love and the kingdom, a spiritual realm that could only be entered through God's grace (see the parable of the prodigal son, give in order to receive, the unseen kingdom of God and born again of the spirit:

Nicodemus); but the early church taught that duty was an important part of Christian responsibility, explaining the SV4 rating. Even so, Jesus used the servant or slave as a metaphor for discipleship--ironically, even for leadership (see humility: leaders as servants and Christian stewardship). (Barnes)

The words in this passage Luke 17:7-10, SV-4, which are translated as "unworthy servants" or even "unprofitable servants" can also be rendered as "idle servants", which speaks more to the core of its impact. The point is not that these servants are unworthy as persons but that they have not been true to their call as disciples. We are to constantly be obedient to our Master. We are to obey the will of God and not our contrary will. This is seen with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Disciples are to be obedient to the will of God whether they like it, feel like it, agree with it or not. Disciples are to do their duty. Soldiers in battle are to do their duty regardless of the cost. The cost of discipleship with Jesus is not cheap. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:127)

And when Abraham raised up the foundations of the House, and Ishmael with him: 'Our Lord! Receive this from us. Truly You are the Hearing, the Knowing. (2:127)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith Qudsi

"God said: 'Whoever treats a friend of Mine as an enemy, on him I declare war. My servant draws near to me by means of nothing dearer to me than that which I have established as a duty for him. And My Servant continues drawing nearer to Me through supererogatory acts until I love him; and when I love him, I become his ear with which he hears, his eye with which he sees, his hand with which he grasps, and his foot with which he walks. And if he asks Me [for something], I give it to him. If indeed he seeks My help, I help him. I have never hesitated to do anything as I hesitate [to take] the soul of the man of faith who hates death, for I hate to harm him.'"

Hadith

"Once there was an ascetic who lived on a mountain in the middle of the ocean who worshipped God for five hundred years. ... On

the Day of Judgment, he stands before God who says, 'Take My servant to Paradise on account of My mercy.' The ascetic exclaims in surprise: 'In fact, on account of my deeds!' God will repeat, 'Take My servant to Paradise on account of My mercy.' The ascetic again exclaims: 'In fact, on account of my deeds!' God will then command the angels, 'Scale My bounties in relation to his deeds.' The scaling and reckoning will yield that his five centuries of worship is equivalent to only the gift of vision, while the gifts for the rest of the body are still outstanding. God will then command: 'Take My servant to Hell.' He will be pulled towards Hell and will cry out, 'My Lord, by Your mercy, admit me to Paradise!' God will say, 'Bring him back to stand between the Hands of God.' God will then ask, 'O My servant, Who created you while you were nothing?' The servant will reply, 'You did, my Lord.' God will ask, 'Was that because of your account or by My mercy?' The servant will reply, 'Certainly by Your mercy.' God will then ask, 'Who empowered you to worship for five hundred years?' The servant will reply, 'You.'

"Your actions alone will not save any of you." They [the Prophet's companions] asked, "Not even you, O God's Apostle?" He said, "Not even me, unless God were to envelop me in His mercy. So be moderate in your religious deeds and do the deeds that are within your ability: and none of you should wish for death, for if he is a doer of good, he may increase his good deeds, and if he is an evil doer, he may repent to God." [Bukhari]

"If your hearts were always in the state that they are in during *dhikr* [remembrance of God], the angels would come to see you to the point that they would greet you in the middle of the road." [Muslim]

"There is no space in the seven heavens a foot's length or a hand-span or a palm's width which does not have an angel standing, bowing or prostrating on it. On the Day of Judgment, they will say together, 'Glory be to Thee! We did not worship Thee as Thou deserves.'" [Tabarani]

Commentary on the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*: These Quranic verses and *hadith* clearly demonstrate that good works alone can never save us, for God is the author of any good. Consciousness of this should eliminate any self-righteousness when it comes to "doing our duty" (hence Abraham's request in 2:127 that God receive their efforts in building the Ka'ba). Personally, the *hadith* about the angels' worship and testimony on the Day of Judgment helped transform how I look at many things, including the space

around me. Regarding the theological debate on the relation between faith and works, there is a spectrum of positions in Islamic theology analogous to the spectrum of positions within Christian (and Jewish) theology. (Ansary)

Joint commentary: Jesus made clear the duties of discipleship and framed them in terms of servanthood. Unlike servants most modern people have the free will to ignore a master's will, but when it comes to God's will, we ignore it at our peril – the peril of sin and death. Duty and discipline may not get us to God's kingdom, but they can help keep us there. (Barnes)
In the teachings of Jesus it is stated in essence that duty is not in conflict with free will. There is a Divine Imperative and there is human response. God (Allah) gives us all we need, that is, ears, hands, feet, etc., in order for us to be willing to do our duty. Duty may require us to change our will, by the grace of God, in order for us to do what is required by God. We may be called upon to say, "Not my will but Thine be done." Self righteousness is a weak limb on which to hang our hopes of being who we were meant to be, that is, all loving, all caring, all merciful, all serving. (Nates)

*** The unseen kingdom of God**

²⁰Once, when asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, *The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation...*[SV2](Lk 17:20)

Notes: See Th 113:2-4 (Source: Q, Th).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: It is strange that *The Jefferson Bible* includes Lk 17:20 but not verse 21, which is the rest of the sentence: ²...nor will people say, "Here it is," or "There it is," because the kingdom of God is within you.[SV2](Lk 17:20,21) Verse 21 is an integral part of the sentence and gives positive meaning to it. After verse 20 tells us that *The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation*, verse 21 tells us that is ...because the kingdom of God is within you (NIV), among you (NSRV) or in your presence (SV). The idea that something as mystical as God's kingdom is within you was congenial to the thinking of Jefferson who kept such matters of faith to himself while advocating the moral teachings of Jesus. Jefferson tried to separate the mystical from the moral, but he must have recognized the connection between the mystical kingdom of God, which was at the heart of the teachings of Jesus, and the moral imperative of sacrificial love, since he included

other sayings of Jesus on the kingdom of God in addition to this one (see the kingdom of God: the parable of the mustard seed and the kingdom: the parable of the treasure and the pearl). As explained in *The Rest of the story* both the mystical and moral are interwoven in the teachings of Jesus and in our faith. The mystical nature of God and His kingdom are at the foundation of the moral imperative of our faith to love God and neighbor. The greatest commandment links the mystical obligation to love God with the moral imperative to love our neighbor as ourselves. It summarizes the radical mission of Jesus to announce the supremacy of God's love over law. After all, *God is love* (1Jn 4:7-21) and God's kingdom is a metaphor for the transforming power of God's love. We pray regularly that *God's will be done and His kingdom come, on earth as in heaven*. Even so, the early church interpreted the coming kingdom of God (or imperial rule) to be a worldly apocalyptic event to follow the end times, as predicted by John the Baptist, and later the Apostle Paul and John of Patmos in the Book of Revelation (see expectations, the kingdom: parables of the treasure and the pearl, the parable of the net and kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed). The prevailing view was that God would overthrow the yoke of Roman oppression and restore the power and glory of ancient Israel. Today most scholars believe that Jesus was speaking of a spiritual transformation when he told Nicodemus that he must be born again of the spirit. The Gospel of Thomas reports an unseen kingdom, using similar language to that in Luke, and concludes *...the Father's imperial rule is spread out upon the earth, and people don't see it.*[SV2](Th 113:4) Thomas also has Jesus use parody and wit to describe the personal and spiritual dimension of the kingdom (imperial rule): ¹*Jesus said, If your leaders say to you, "Look, the <Father's> imperial rule is in the sky," then the birds of the sky will precede you. ²If they say to you, "It is in the sea," then the fish will precede you. ³Rather, the <Father's> imperial rule is within you and outside you.*[SV3](Th 3:1-3) Later Jesus tells his disciples that the kingdom has already arrived: *What you are looking forward to has come, but you don't know it.*[SV4](Th 51:2) Like other Biblical theophanies it is related to a divine fire: ¹*Whoever is near me is near the fire, ²and whoever is far from me is far from the <Father's> domain.*[SV3](Th 82:1,2, see also dissension, not peace). In the Gospel of John, the kingdom is described as life without death, and most references to eternal life imply that it begins in this life when we are born again of the spirit and extends into the next (see faith and eternal life). Both the Gospels of John and Thomas contemplate a spiritual rather than an earthly kingdom, which begins as a spark or light within you that can become a light on a stand, even a light of the world.

The dichotomy of light and darkness as symbols of good and evil are derived from Gnosticism,¹⁸ in which the forces of good and light are represented by God (or God's kingdom) and are engaged in a great cosmic battle with the forces of evil and darkness represented by Satan as prince of the world (see the temptations of Jesus, power over evil and miracles: the work of Satan or God?). The pseudo-gnosticism of the Gospel of John can be seen in Jn 1:1-13, and is also evident in Luke's *unseen kingdom of God*. *Gnosis* is Greek for knowledge. In its Christian context this does not relate to the sophistry of worldly knowledge that produced the hypocrisy and sanctimony of Jewish religious leaders, but to the humble spiritual understanding of a child-like faith. St. Augustine once said: *Seek not to understand so that you might believe, but believe so that you might understand*. To understand *the unseen kingdom of God*, one must recognize the limits of reason and look to revelation for spiritual understanding. The beginning of spiritual knowledge and wisdom is being born again of the spirit; and the stories of Nicodemus and the rich young ruler (see riches and salvation) illustrate how worldly knowledge and power can make it more difficult to enter the kingdom of God. (Barnes)

Perhaps it is natural for people who have spiritual interests to wonder "when" the Kingdom of God will come, when will God take over complete operations, when will God's reign be visible for all to see, when will everyone do the will of God, etc. Jesus told those who were asking, that the Kingdom of God does not come with careful observation. The Kingdom of God is "within" and is experienced rather than objectively observed. In other places in the Gospels it is indicated that the Kingdom of God is "here" and is yet to "come". Jesus would use paradoxes to point to that which is real but which is not necessarily outwardly observed. Jefferson's struggle with the mystical and the moral is necessary for all who take seriously the spiritual life of love of God and love of others. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (7:187)(42:17-18)(20:15-16)(22:6-8)(79:42-26)

They will question you about the Hour when it shall come to pass. Say: 'The knowledge of it is only with my Lord. He alone shall reveal it at its proper time. It weighs heavily in the heavens and the earth. It will not come on you save all of a sudden'. They will question you, as if you were preoccupied with it. Say: 'Knowledge of it is only with God, but most people do not know'. (7:187)

God it is Who has revealed the Book with the truth as well as the Balance. And what do you know – perhaps the Hour is near! Those who do not believe in it seek to hasten it, but those who believe are apprehensive of it and know that it is the truth. Nay, but verily those who are in doubt concerning the Hour are indeed in extreme error! (42:17-18)

The Hour is assuredly coming. [But] I will to keep it hidden so that every soul may be requited for what it strives for. So do not let him bar you from it, who believes not in it but follows his own whim, lest you perish. (20:15-16)

That, is because God, He is the Truth, and because He revives the dead and has power over all things; and because the Hour will come, whereof there is no doubt, and because God will resurrect those who are in the graves. And among mankind there are some who dispute about God without [any] knowledge or guidance, or an enlightening Scripture... (22:6-8)

They will ask you about the Hour: when will it set in? What have you to do with the mention of it? With your Lord it belongs ultimately. You are only a warner for the one who fears it. The day they see it, it will be as if they had only tarried for an evening or the morning thereof. (79:42-46)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith Qudsi

"My earth and My heavens do not contain Me, yet I am contained in the heart of My faithful servant."

Hadith

"The heart of the believer is the Throne of the All-Merciful."

A man asked the Prophet about the Hour (i.e. Day of Judgment) saying, "When will the Hour be?" The Prophet said, "What have you prepared for it?" The man said, "Nothing, except that I love God and His Apostle." The Prophet said, "You will be with those whom you love." Anas, who related the *hadith*, added: "We had never been so glad as we were on hearing that saying of the Prophet (i.e., "You will be with those whom you love.") Therefore, I love the Prophet, Abu Bakr and 'Umar, and I hope that I will be with them because of my love for them though my deeds are not similar to theirs." [Bukhari]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: If we interpret the Biblical verses above in an apocalyptic sense, similar questions were posed to the Prophet, providing the occasion of revelation to verses such as 7:187 above. According to al-Wahidi, "Jabal ibn Qushayr and Shamwal ibn Zayd, who belonged to the Jews, said: 'O Muhammad, tell us when the last Hour will be, if you are really a prophet, for we know when it is going to be?' And so God, exalted is He, revealed this verse. *They will question you about the Hour when it shall come to pass. Say: 'The knowledge of it is only with my Lord. He alone shall reveal it at its proper time. It weighs heavily in the heavens and the earth. It will not come on you save all of a sudden'. They will question you, as if you were preoccupied with it. Say: 'Knowledge of it is only with God, but most people do not know.'*" The *hadith* regarding God's presence in the heart also suggests an important principle concerning the Ka'ba in the preceding commentary on Abraham and the heart. The point of intersection between the vertical and the horizontal domains, or the vertical axis (*axis mundi*) of the Islamic universe (and in the deepest the whole of monotheism) is the Ka'ba. In fact, Muslim scholars point out that of all the places on the surface of the earth, the greatest amount of energy per square centimeter from the sun is at the Ka'ba (a "shaft of light" if you will - one would expect places farther south near the equator would have a higher energy level, but other conditions also come into play). And in the human body, the point at which the vertical and horizontal axes cross is our heart, our microcosmic center. And since the Ka'ba is macrocosmic center of the Islamic universe (that is, the point at which the vertical axis crosses the horizontal plane), there is a profound correspondence between the heart and the Ka'ba as the House of God. This explains the *hadith* above that "The heart of the believer is the Throne of the All-Merciful." Many Muslim scholars have therefore referred to the Ka'ba of the heart, and also the heart as Ka'ba, and the Ka'ba as the heart of the universe. All of these symbols and images are helpful to understand the Islamic analogue to Jesus' saying "the *kingdom of God is within you.*" (Ansari)

Joint commentary: There seems a consensus that the timing of the coming kingdom of God cannot be known, but the nature of that event—whether it will be an apocalyptic universal event or a personal spiritual event—is not only an issue between Christians and Muslims, but also among Christians. (Barnes)
When will the kingdom of God come? This is a question which has been discussed and debated by all people of faith perhaps since the beginning of time. One response of faith is that the kingdom of God will come at the right time whenever that may be.

To those who are rightly related to God, every day is the right day for a new epiphany of the Divine Lord. (Nates)

*** Persistence in prayer**

Jesus used an unlikely example of a cranky and unjust judge who was pursued by a importunate widow who relentlessly demanded that he give her justice against her adversary:

⁴For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, "Even though I don't fear God or care about men, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!" [SV2]
⁶And the Lord said, Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? ⁸I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth? [SV4] (Lk 18:1-8)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: As with previous parables that have had unlikely characters and scenarios, this story of an unjust judge who does good (perhaps for the wrong reasons) is considered to have originated with Jesus, while the explanation is thought to be a Lukan composition. The story, laced with ironic humor, illustrates the power of persistence in overcoming opposition. It may be difficult to consider the importunate pleas of a widow to an unjust judge as prayer, but John Wesley taught that prayer was an inseparable part of faithful living, and persistence is essential when it comes to the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor--especially the unlovable neighbor. If justice is a theme of the parable, it requires as much action as prayer. (see give and you will receive, faith and works and do not judge) On prayer, see the power of prayer and forgiveness, prayer in secret, and prayer in common. (Barnes)
This story, which is questionably from Jesus (SV4), can have a big impact. First, it is about a judge who neither had any fear of God nor any respect for any human being. Then there is a widow, assumingly of low estate but had a great determination. In the day when Luke was writing, Near Eastern judges were hesitant about taking cases for widows and poor people. In the customs of that day and in the faith of Israel, widows, poor people and foreigners were treated with care and compassion. However, the judge did not relent to the pleas of the widow

because of custom or faith, but because she was wearing him out. Of course, God does not give in to our pleas because of being worn out but because of who God is. Perhaps a better understanding is that God honors the determination of a faithful believer. There is another possible interpretation to this story which carries a profound message. This interpretation contends that God's kingdom is everywhere present, constantly coming and wearing down the resistance which is present. This kingdom forever confronts human beings until they open to its power and grace. God's abiding presence never gives up on anyone. Only through God can justice for all prevail. (Nates)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"The supplications of three groups of people are not rejected; the dua (supplication) of the fasting person when he is breaking his fast, the dua of the just imam (ruler), and the dua of the oppressed." (Tirmidhi)

Commentary on the Hadith: This hadith is self-explanatory and corresponds nicely to the Biblical verses above. A famous example of how seriously Muslims take this hadith is that when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was giving a speech before the Egyptian Parliament, a religious scholar interrupted him to declare that he was complaining to God about the President's oppression. Sadat, who was renowned for his eloquent oratory, turned pale and pleaded with the scholar to withdraw his supplication and was so shaken that he was barely able to complete his speech. (Ansari)

Joint commentary: Prayer must be understood in the broader context of faithful living. Persistence in prayer means persistence in one's efforts to eliminate injustice in a dark and broken world. Faith and works must go together. (Barnes) Persistence in prayer is vital in a life of faith and good works. Persistence is needed in all things which are good, holy and merciful. In a sense, persistent prayer is the inward and invisible sign and engagement of outward and visible deeds of compassion and justice. Paradoxically, it has been said, we are to believe that everything good depends on God, for it does and that we are to act as if everything good depends on us, for it does. God's abiding presence never gives up on anyone. Through God, justice and mercy for all can prevail. (Nates)

*** Sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and publican**

⁹To some that were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable:

¹⁰Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The 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. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get."

¹³But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat on his breast and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner."

¹⁴I tell you that this man [the tax collector], rather than the other [the Pharisee], went home justified before God.[SV2] For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.[SV3](Lk 18:9-14)

Notes: See Mt 23:12; Lk 14:11 (Source: Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The parable illustrates a major theme taught by Jesus: hypocrisy and sanctimony are major obstacles to repentance, reconciliation and redemption. The overweening pride of the Pharisee, a religious teacher, represents the blind leading the blind. The Pharisee violated two cardinal rules taught by Jesus: do not judge and criticizing self before others. The justification of the repentant publican (tax collector) rather than the sanctimonious Pharisee illustrated that Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous. (see also, do not judge, humility: leaders as servants, and the seven woes) (Barnes)

This a major theme of Jesus even though some scholars have some reservations about it being directly from Jesus (SV3). Luke or the church was certainly close to the spirit of Jesus in presenting this as being from him. It is clear through most of the New Testament that superficial sanctimony, pride and hypocrisy are foreign to those who are in a close and right relationship to God. Humility is the hallmark of one who knows the limits of human life and the holiness of God. So Jesus preached that those who exalt themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted. This can be tricky. For if one seeks to be humble in order to be exalted, then this is contrary to the way of God. In a sense, the best are those who are humble and are unaware of it. The scope of this story points out that there are some people who think they are not like other human beings and are proud of it. Then, others who recognize their limitations, that they often live lives devoid of the presence of God, which is the core definition of a

"sinner", are actually closer to God. They know they are not "God" and that God is the only God. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (31:18)(28:83)(28:76)(17:37)(7:23)(28:16)(21:87)

Do not avert your face from people out of haughtiness and do not strut about arrogantly on the earth. Truly God does not like any swaggering braggart. (31:18)

That Abode of the Next World: We grant it to those who do not seek to exalt themselves in the earth or to cause corruption in it. The successful outcome is for the God-fearing. (28:83)

Indeed Korah belonged to the people of Moses but he became insolent towards them. For We had given him so many treasures that [the number of] their keys would verily have burdened a group of strong men. When his people said to him, 'Do not gloat; truly God does not love people who gloat, (28:76)

Do not strut arrogantly about the earth. Indeed you will not rend the earth, nor attain the mountains in height. (17:37)

They said, 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall surely be among the lost.' (7:23)

He said, 'My Lord, I have indeed wronged myself, so forgive me!' So He forgave him. Truly He is the Forgiving, the Merciful. (28:16)

And Dhū'l-Nūn, when he went off enraged thinking that We had no power over him. Then he cried out in the darkneses: 'There is no god except You! Glory be to You! I have indeed been one of the wrongdoers.' (21:87)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith Qudsi

"Might is My wrapper, and pride is My cloak and I will punish anyone who contends with me [for them]." [Muslim]

Hadith

"None shall enter the Fire (of Hell) who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of faith and none shall enter Paradise who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride." [Muslim]

"Shall I tell you about the people of the Fire? All those who are coarse, domineering, and arrogant." [Bukhari]

"On the Day of Resurrection, God will not look at anyone who drags his waist-wrapper out of pride." [Bukhari]

"There are three people that God will not speak to on the Day of Resurrection nor purify nor look at and they will have a painful punishment: an old adulterer, a lying ruler and a poor person who is arrogant." [Muslim]

"Once a man was walking in his robe, proud of himself, his hair groomed, haughty in his gait, and God caused the earth to swallow him up. He will go on sinking into the earth until the Day of Resurrection." [Muslim]

"A man will continue to be arrogant until he is written among the tyrants and what strikes them will strike him." [Tirmidhi]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: These Quranic verses and hadith are largely self-explanatory and highlight the need for humility before God and others. This is not a sentimental attitude, but a matter of conforming to the truth, for pride consists in overestimating oneself and underestimating others (in fact, all virtues are ultimately a mode of conformity to the truth from the Islamic point of view). (Ansari)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: There is a difference in a healthy religious piety, or holiness, and religious pride, or sanctimony. Piety, unless overdone, reflects repentance and reconciliation with God, while religious pride or sanctimony is an obstacle to repentance and reconciliation with God. (Barnes) Comparisons are odious. We are not in contention with others, but only with the best we can be. Surely, "...pride consists in overestimating oneself and underestimating others." (See above, Commentary on Qur'an and Hadith). This is clearly presented in the teaching and life of Jesus. It is strongly and poetically stated in these words: "Truly God does not like any swaggering braggart." (Qur'an 31:18) Conformity to the truth of all things, in and through God, is what is needed by all people. Truth shall set us free to be conformed to the will of God. (Nates)

*** Zacchaeus: money and salvation**

In Jericho a tax collector named Zacchaeus climbed a tree in order to see Jesus. ⁵When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and said, Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.[SV4] ⁶So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. ⁷All the people saw this and began to mutter: "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

⁸But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord: "Look, Lord. Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

⁹Jesus said to him, Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.[SV4](Lk 19:1-10)

Notes: (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The story of Zacchaeus illustrates that salvation is possible for the wealthy without renouncing all their possessions, providing a contrast with the rich man in riches and salvation. Having money is not itself a sin; it is the love of money that is a sin (see 1 Tim 6:6-10; 17-19). Zacchaeus demonstrated that he loved God more than his money and committed himself and his resources to do God's will. John Wesley taught: *Make all you can, save all you can, and give all you can.* While rated SV4, the above words of Jesus reflect his other teachings. See Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous; the cost of discipleship; shrewdness, stewardship, and the danger of riches; money, faith, and God; greed and hoarding possessions; treasures and the heart, and renouncing family and possessions. (Barnes)

Though this story may not be directly from Jesus, it is a wonderful story. It is given a rating of SV4, indicating that some scholars consider that likely it is not from Jesus. However, it is certainly in concert with the intent and ministry of Jesus. Zacchaeus, a rich tax collector, was a determined man. He climbed up a tree to see Jesus. When, as the story tells us, Jesus said to him, "come down at once", Zacchaeus did so immediately. Then he welcomed Jesus into his home with great joy. The crowd of people called Zacchaeus a "sinner". Of course, in those days most if not all of the tax collectors made money by overcharging the taxpayers. But this one offered to make restitution by giving half of his possessions to the poor and to pay back to any he may have cheated four times the amount he had gained by this cheating. Jesus proclaimed that salvation had come to that house and that Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham. That

"salvation" was for then and not a promise for the future life. The word "salvation" means "wholeness" or "healthiness". Zacchaeus as a son of Abraham was to receive the promises given to Israel. Jesus comments that the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost. Zacchaeus responded to Jesus with much faith and a drastic change in his life, unlike the rich ruler of Luke 18:18-23. However, the Son of Man had already sought and saved him. It can remind us of an anonymous old hymn:

*I sought the Lord and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
No, I was found of thee. (Nates)*

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"The one who has wronged his brother should seek for his pardon before his death, for in the Hereafter there will be neither dinar nor dirham to compensate with it. Thus some of his good deeds will be taken from him and given to his brother. If he has no good deeds, some of the bad deeds of his brother are taken from him, and added to his account." [Bukhari]

Commentary on the Hadith: Muslim scholars distinguish between the rights of God and the rights of men, indicating that the requirements for repentance for violations of them are different. With respect to the rights of God, regret for sins and resolving not to do them again are sufficient for repentance, but this is not the case for resolving violations of the rights of men as the hadith above indicates. Zacchaeus is clearly attempting to restore the rights of people he has wronged in addition to his remorse, and this does not necessarily require that he give up all of his wealth. (Ansari)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Both Jesus and Muhammad cautioned against the danger of riches, and both understood the good that worldly riches can do. Wealth will always present a difficult challenge for the faithful. (Barnes)
Jesus and Muhammad both emphasized that we are not only to change our attitude about the place and influence of wealth, but that we are to restore the rights and goods to people we have wronged. Interestingly enough, this practice is one of the Twelve Steps in the path of sobriety in the fine organization Alcoholics Anonymous. We are to note that it is the love of wealth which is the culprit. This infers that the poor as well as the wealthy can be victims of this malady. (Nates)

*** Watch and pray**

Jesus warned his disciples not to get caught up in worldly things; they should be prepared to meet God and judgment at any time, even when they least expected it.

³⁴*Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness, and the anxieties of life, and the day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.* ³⁵*For it will come upon all those who live upon the face of the whole earth.* ³⁶*Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.*[SV4](Lk 21:34-36)

Notes: See Mk 13:33,35; Mt 24:42; 25:13 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This passage from Luke's end times has apocalyptic overtones, but it could also apply to how we should live facing the uncertainties of life and the inevitability of death, as in the story of the rich farmer in his greed and hoarding possessions. Scholars believe Lk 21:36 relates to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. This combined with the emphasis on judgment and the return of the Son of Man (Adam) make it likely that this passage originated in the early church rather than with Jesus. Even so, the passage sounds like something Jesus could have said. On similar themes, see expectations, end times, be ready: parable of the ten virgins, Jerusalem lamented, and the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. (Barnes)

These words may have been created by the church (see rating of SV4 by some biblical scholars) but they do seem to be consistent with the call of Jesus for all to be "watchful" in the midst of an uncertain world. Hearts may become "weighed down" with various maladies. "Dissipation", "drunkenness" and "worries" are named. Others could be added to the list. These are aspects of a "trap" which may catch those who are not watchful. This may apply to the present life and the life to come. All those who seek to be rightly related to God are to "be alert", to be watchful in the midst of capriciousness in life. To be alert, watchful, is to pray to God for strength to bear the trials of life. With this attitude we can escape or contend with life's difficulties and "stand before the Son of Man." Jesus is quoted as saying, "In this world you shall have tribulation but be of good cheer for I have overcome the world." (John 16:33) (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (21:40)(29:53)(39:54-55)(43:66)(9:38)(18:28)(28:60)

Nay, but it shall come upon them suddenly, dumbfounding them, and they shall not be able to ward it off, nor shall they be granted any respite. (21:40)

And they ask you to hasten the chastisement. Yet were it not for an appointed term, the chastisement would have come upon them, but it shall assuredly come upon them suddenly while they are unaware. (29:53)

And turn [penitently] to your Lord and submit to Him, before the chastisement comes on you, whereupon you will not be helped. And follow the best of what has been revealed to you from your Lord before the chastisement comes on you suddenly while you are unaware', (39:54-55)

Are they awaiting anything, but that Hour should come upon them suddenly, while they are unaware? (43:66)

O you who believe, what is wrong with you that, when it is said to you, 'Go forth in the way of God', you sink down heavily to the ground. Are you so content with the life of this world, rather than with the Hereafter? Yet the enjoyment of the life of this world is in the Hereafter but little. (9:38)

God expands provision for whom He will, and straitens for whomever He will; and they rejoice in the life of this world, yet the life of this world in the Hereafter, is but [a brief] enjoyment. (13:26)

And restrain yourself along with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, desiring His Countenance; and do not let your eyes overlook them desiring the glitter of the life of this world. And do not obey him whose heart We have made oblivious to Our remembrance, and who follows his own whim, and whose conduct is [mere] prodigality. (18:28)

And whatever things you have been given are [only] the [short-lived] enjoyment of the life of this world and an ornament thereof; and what is with God is better and more lasting. Will you not understand? (28:60)

Commentary on the Qur'an: The last Quranic verse above corresponds closely to the preceding Biblical verses, particularly in light of Tustari's classical commentary on 28:60 that, "Whoever takes [something] from the world out of his own

lust for it, will find that God deprives him of what is better than it both in this world and the Hereafter. Whoever takes from it [the world] out of a necessity [that arises] within himself or to fulfill a duty that is required of him, will not be deprived of what is better in this world, namely, the joy of worship (*'ibāda*) and the love of God, Mighty and Majestic is He, and in the Hereafter of the highest ranks (*al-darajāt al-'ulā*).” Regarding the question of whether the sudden and unexpected closing of the day “like a trap” has apocalyptic overtones or refers to the unpredictability of our death, Muslim scholars interpret the suddenness of the coming judgment in both senses. From this point of view, there is a macrocosmic judgment at the end of the present cycle of humanity and a microcosmic judgment upon death in which two angels will come to question us in the grave, the answers to which determine our posthumous state. (*Ansari*)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: The nature of life after death is described more by Muhammad in the Qur'an than in the teachings of Jesus, but for both Muslims and Christians it must remain a mysterious matter of faith since none who have made it there have returned to describe it. (*Barnes*)

How good it is to seek to be prepared at all times for we do not know what the times will bring. As good as it is, it is very difficult to be prepared for all things at all times. To “walk by faith and not by sight” is one way to deal with this plight. This is true for this life and for the afterlife. To be watchful and alert in life is another way to be cheerful in the tribulations of life. Having certitude about God and our faith is the bedrock of watchfulness and prayerful alertness in the uncertainty of our days. (*Nates*)

*** Jesus before the Sanhedrin**

After his arrest Jesus was brought to the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of the Jews, and was questioned:

⁶⁷*"If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us."*

Jesus answered, If I tell you, you will not believe me, ⁶⁸and if I asked you, you would not answer.[SV4]

⁷⁰*They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, You are right in saying I am.[SV4](Lk 22:67-68)*

Notes: See Mk 14:53-64; 15:1; Mt 26:57-66; 27:2; Jn 18:19-24 (Source: Mk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jefferson omitted verse 69 but included verse 70 in his *Bible*. Lk 22:69-71 is included here to complete the pericope: ⁶⁹*But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.* ⁷⁰*They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?" He replied, You are right in saying I am.[SV4]* ⁷¹*Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips."* (Lk 22:69-71) None of these verses relate to morality, and most scholars do not believe that Jesus ever asserted that he was the Son of God. It is important to note that the answer of Jesus to the critical question posed by the Sanhedrin in Lk 22:70 has been interpreted differently in the NIV (above), *The Jerusalem Bible* (*It is you who say I am*), NRSV (*You say that I am*) and the SV (*You are the ones who say so*). The venerable *King James Version* used by Jefferson is more like the NRSV than the NIV: *Ye say that I am*. The different translations reflect important differences among scholars as to what Jesus said about his divinity. Had Jefferson used the NIV rather than the *King James Bible*, he probably would not have included Lk 22:70. The Gospel of John reports Jesus giving the high priest Caiaphas a longer answer to the same question: ²⁰*I have spoken openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret.* ²¹*Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said.[SV4]* (Jn 18:20,21) Aside from the above passage in Luke, only Mark reports Jesus acknowledging himself to be Christ, the Son of the Blessed One (see Mk 14:62). Since there were no disciples present when Jesus testified before the Sanhedrin and since the early church wanted to believe that Jesus had asserted his divinity, the reports in the gospel accounts are not reliable. (see authority of Jesus, authority to perform miracles, blasphemy or Word of God, bread of life, and Jesus before Pilate) An assertion of divinity is out of character with other teachings of Jesus, who once told a man who called him *Good teacher* that *No one is good-except God alone.* (Mk 10:18; see riches and salvation) Throughout his ministry Jesus asserted only his prophetic authority as the word of God to announce the inbreaking and unseen kingdom of God and the supremacy of God's love over law. Most Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah since they were expecting a worldly leader/warrior who would overthrow Roman oppression and restore the power and glory of ancient Israel, and they rejected the later claims of the church that Jesus had been resurrected from the dead and would soon return in a *parousia* to introduce God's kingdom on earth. History has proven both expectations wrong, but many have since come to appreciate both the moral and mystical power of the word of God as taught and exemplified by Jesus. (Barnes)

Many things are assumed about Jesus which are not clearly stated in the Scriptures. In one sense, we are all sons and daughters of God. Jesus was certainly unique in many ways. That is a further discussion for a further time. (Nates)

Commentary on the Qur'an: There are no Quranic verses corresponding to this Biblical passage on Jesus before the Sanhedrin. For Quranic interpretations of Jesus' final days, see The arrest of Jesus and Jesus on the cross.

* The way to Calvary

As Jesus was led away to be crucified, a crowd of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.

²⁸Jesus turned to them and said, Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and your children. ²⁹For the time will come when you will say, "Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!"

³⁰Then they will say to the mountains, "Fall on us!" and to the hills, "Cover us!"

³¹For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?[SV4](Lk 23:28-32; Ho 10:8)

Notes: See Mk 15:20-23; Mt 27-34; Jn 19:17; Th 79:3 (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: This passage centers upon women who demonstrated their love for Jesus in his darkest hour. The prediction of disaster ahead may have been referring to bad times created by the evil in men rather than by God's judgment. The passage contemplates the destruction of Jerusalem (70 C.E.), when times would be so bad that women would be envious of those who had no children in a culture where the primary purpose of life was to have children (see Jerusalem lamented). Because of the apocalyptic language and structure of the passage, most scholars do not believe it originated with Jesus, but with the early church. See end times: the eschatological discourse and watch and pray. (Barnes)

As has been noted, this is probably the apocalyptic language of the church, used by Luke to speak to the needs of the followers of Jesus at that time. They likely speak the truth of the situation even though they do not emanate from Jesus. (Nates)

Commentary on the Qur'an: There are no Quranic verses corresponding to this Biblical passage on The way to Calvary.

For Quranic interpretations of Jesus' final days, see The arrest of Jesus and Jesus on the cross.

*** Forgiveness on the cross**

The final hours of Jesus were spent on a cross with two convicted criminals who were crucified with him.

³²*Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.*(Lk 23:32)

³⁴*Jesus said, Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.*[noSV](Lk 23:32)

³⁹*One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"* ⁴⁰*But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since we are under the same sentence?"* ⁴¹*We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."*(Lk 23:39-41)

Notes: See Mk 15:24-28; Mt 27:37,38; Jn 19:17-24 (Source: Lk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: *The Jefferson Bible* includes Lk 23:32, which is narrative, and Lk 23:34; Lk 23:33 is also narrative: ³³*When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals--one on his right, the other on his left. The SV excludes Lk 23:34 stating that it was not included in a number of important manuscripts so that it was probably not a part of the original text of Luke (accord, *The New Interpreters Bible*, Vol IX, p 455). The *Jefferson Bible* includes additional narrative from Lk 23:39-41, but omits verses 42 and 43 which are necessary to complete the story and include a saying of Jesus: ⁴²*Then he said, "Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom."* ⁴³*Jesus answered him, I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.*[SV4](Lk 23:39-43) It should be noted that there is little consistency among the gospel accounts of the last words of Jesus or the words attributed to the risen Christ, which are not included herein. See Jesus on the cross, forgiveness, power to forgive, and love, forgiveness and sinners. These sayings on forgiveness are as mystical as they are moral, indicating Jefferson's interest in those teachings of Jesus that went beyond a moral code of conduct. The forgiveness by Jesus of those who crucified him and of a dying man who had lived a life of sin illustrate that the entrance to the kingdom of God is not*

earned but a matter of God's grace (see sibling rivalry: parable of the prodigal son and envy and equity: parable of the workers in the vineyard). (*Barnes*)

The questions regarding this passage are clearly stated above. Jesus was forgiving toward all regardless of moral condition and station in life. Forgiveness is part of the nature of the Kingdom of God. We receive grace from God; we do not naturally deserve it. The Christian life is to be one of gratitude for all that God does for us. (*Nates*)

Commentary on the Qur'an: There are no Quranic verses corresponding to this Biblical passage on Forgiveness on the cross. For Quranic interpretations of Jesus' final days, see The arrest of Jesus and Jesus on the cross.

Chapter 4: Introduction to the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is conceptually different from the three Synoptic gospels. Tradition has it written by the apostle John, son of Zebedee, but it is dated at the end of the first century, beyond the lifetime of the apostle John. The Gospel is not so much an historical account of the life of Jesus as it is a close encounter with the Holy Spirit or *Logos* (the word of God).

John's gospel presents Jesus as the *Logos* made flesh (Jn 1:1-18). *Logos* meant more than our understanding of a word; it referred to the very power of God.¹⁹ The unique *I am* statements of Jesus in which he refers to himself as *the way, the truth, and the life, the light of the world, living water, and the bread of life*, all describe the divine power of *Logos*, or Holy Spirit, rather than the historical Jesus. John's Jesus is also unique in telling his disciples that after he leaves them God will send them the Holy Spirit as the *Logos* to *teach them all things and remind them of everything he had taught them* (Jn 14:26). In John's Gospel the Holy Spirit rather than the risen Christ sustains believers in God's word and redemptive power.

John's Gospel, like that of Thomas, has a Gnostic flavor with its dichotomies of spirit and flesh and light and darkness. As in Mark's Gospel, there is no mention of a virgin birth in John's Gospel; but like the other gospels it has the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus in the River Jordan.

The Synoptic Gospels emphasized the coming kingdom of heaven as an apocalyptic event (*Parousia*) within the lifetime of the apostles. But there is no *little apocalypse* in John's Gospel; the emphasis is on how love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace can lead to faith and eternal life. In John's Gospel, Jesus taught that eternal life begins when one is born again of the spirit, and his one command for his disciples was love one another (Jn 13:34). After 2,000 years without the end times, this interpretation of the coming kingdom of God seems more relevant than preparing for an apocalyptic second coming.

Since the Gospel of John is more about the Holy Spirit than the historical Jesus, *The Jefferson Bible* contains fewer sayings from John than from the Synoptic Gospels. But even though it is more mystical than moral, the new command to love one another is at the heart of John's gospel, and like the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor found in Mark, Matthew and Luke, the new command is a summary of the teachings and example of Jesus.

John on Morality

* Doing business in the temple

One of the few times that Jesus showed something akin to anger was when he went to the temple in Jerusalem during Passover and encountered merchants selling livestock and moneychangers in the temple. Jesus fashioned a whip out of cord and ran the merchants and livestock out of the temple, then he overturned the tables of the moneychangers and scattered their coins. To those who sold doves Jesus said:

Get these out of here! [SV3] How dare you turn my Father's house into a market! [SV4] (Jn 2:16)

Notes: See Mk 11:15-17; Mt 21:12,13; Lk 19:45,46 (Sources: Mk, Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: John's account is the most descriptive in all the gospels of the temple incident. The SV rating reflects the skepticism of scholars that Jesus ever said the above words, although he was critical of the temple cult (see the seven woes: condemnation of religious leaders and humility and sanctimony: the Pharisee and the publican). For Jesus the worship of God was not limited to the temple (see worship in spirit and in truth), and such an outburst of anger was not characteristic of him (see anger and reconciliation). The presence of money-changers was a necessary part of the required sacrifice procedure, since Jews could not use Roman coins to purchase sacrificial animals. Jesus never condemned merchants or business generally, but he considered any form of greed sinful and inappropriate in the temple (see individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean, the danger of riches; faith, God and Money; riches and salvation, and treasures and the heart). It is likely that the anger of Jesus was directed to faithless and ritualistic temple worship and the central role of blood sacrifice in temple worship rather than to the presence of moneychangers in the temple. Quoting Hosea and Amos, Jesus taught that God's will was *mercy, not sacrifice* (see Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous). (Barnes) We are told in Mark 11:17 that Jesus, using a quote from the prophet Isaiah (see 56:7;60:7)said, "Is it not written, 'My (God's) house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers." The real meaning of this passage is that Jesus is pronouncing God's judgment on faithless Judaism and its Temple. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (40:3)

Forgiver of sins, Acceptor of repentance, Severe in retribution, Possessed of Bounty. There is no god but He; unto Him is the journey's end. (40:3)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

While destroying each idol in the Ka'ba, the Prophet recited the verse: "Truth has come, and falsehood has vanished. Truly falsehood is ever vanishing (17:81)."

Commentary on the Qur'an: The Prophet's removal of idols from the Ka'ba is analogous to Jesus' chasing the money changers out of the Temple in the sense that both purified a house of God from a form of idolatry. There is an important distinction between holy anger, which all prophets manifest at some point, and passionate anger, which all prophets condemn. The following story illustrates the difference: the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet, Ali, was fighting against a disbeliever and had subdued him. Ali sat on his chest, and as he was about to kill him, the man spat on his face. Ali at once let him go. The man was amazed and said, "You should have become even more angry due to my spitting at you and should have hastened in killing me. Why did you spare me?" Ali replied, "Due to this action of yours, my nafs [ego] became involved and my intention did not remain purely for the sake of God." The man then embraced Islam. Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, the renowned twelfth century theologian, summarizes the Islamic perspective on anger by stating that it "is acceptable only at the right time, in the right place, for the right reasons, and with the right intensity." In more philosophical terms, "Holy anger is a movement of concentration and not a going outside oneself; it is like an 'incarnation' of the divine Wrath in the human microcosm, which must at that moment be free from passionate anger. The inner criterion of holy anger is precisely calmness, whereas passionate anger carries away the entire being and brings forgetfulness of God; it has no centre, that is to say it is entirely peripheral and dissipated. Holy anger exists only by virtue of a motionless centre, an implacable truth which determines it; when driving the money-changers from the Temple, Christ was impassible" [Frithjof Schuon, Stations of Wisdom]. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: It is problematic when Jesus shows anger, as in the temple incident and his

condemnation of hypocritical and sanctimonious religious leaders in the seven woes, since it seems inconsistent with his teachings on anger and reconciliation. But there are times when *passionate opposition* to sin or evil is necessary to demonstrate God's will. The greed, faithless ritualistic worship and blood sacrifice in temple worship justified the *righteous anger* of Jesus, and is consistent with how Jesus taught we should show our love for God in the greatest commandment; and Islam embraces the same priorities for worshiping and loving God. (Barnes) Jesus and the Prophet seem to be coming from the same point of view and the same essence of faith when they are described as representing "holy anger" and not "passionate anger". Non-violence is the stance of all holy persons. Some writings which are considered to be sacred may seem to refute this, but history is filled with persons who fulfill this role in the name of God. (Nates)

*** At the feast in Jerusalem**

The relatives of Jesus in Galilee had little faith in him, and they urged him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem to make his works known. Jesus told them:

⁶The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right. ⁷The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify that what it does is evil. ⁸You go to the Feast. I am not yet going to the Feast.[SV4](Jn 7:6-8)

After his relatives went to the Feast, Jesus followed quietly. In Jerusalem there was much whispering about Jesus: some considered him a good man and others considered him a deceiver. Halfway through the feast, Jesus went to the temple courts and began to preach. The Jews were amazed and asked how Jesus became so knowledgeable without having studied. Jesus answered,

My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.[SV4](Jn 7:16)

Has not Moses given you the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law. Why are you trying to kill me?[SV4](Jn 7:19)

²¹I did one miracle and you were all astonished. ²²Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. ²³Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry

with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? ²⁴Stop judging by mere appearances and make a right judgment.[SV4](Jn 7:21-24)

Notes: (Source: Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Timing was important for Jesus; he knew he had little time left to complete his mission because of the increasing hostility of Jewish religious leaders to his teachings and from those who put honor of men ahead of God. Earlier, before he turned the water into wine, he had told his mother his time had not yet come (see miracles: the work of Satan or God?). Jewish religious leaders were looking for Jesus at the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem. While Jesus was elusive, he made a surprise appearance at the temple, attracted a large audience and caught his enemies off guard. He lectured the Jews on their hypocrisy and sanctimony and their emphasis on the Mosaic Law as a standard of righteousness--its letter, not its spirit (see civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law, the seven woes and love and laws: new standard higher than the old). The failure of Jesus' enemies to capture him was attributed to the divine timetable: his time had not yet come (Jn 7:30). But at least one leader of the Jews who was a member of the ruling Sanhedrin, Nicodemus, had heard Jesus and was impressed enough to seek him out at night (see Born again of the spirit: Nicodemus) and later challenged other members of the Sanhedrin who wanted to arrest Jesus. The Pharisees, however, were insistent upon his arrest as a blasphemer, claiming that no Messiah could come from Galilee (Jn 7:50-52). (*Barnes*) Jesus was waiting for the right time. This was not to be a "right" time on the calendar, but the opportune time to do what he was called to do. It is interesting to note that the Jews have three main festivals: Passover, Pentecost and the Harvest Festival, simply called the Feast. It was the most popular of the three. It was at this time that Jesus had the best chance to do that for which he was waiting. Some Biblical Scholars have said that this waiting for the right time expresses at least two major facts. The first was that no one could force Jesus' hand. No one was going to take away his life or his mission. He was going to give his life away when he chose. The second was that no one could be indifferent to him. You were either for him or against him. He did not even tell his brothers what he was going to do. They were "of the world." He was not. They followed the lifestyle of the "world." He did not. His "world" was one of eternal life, which was a gift of God. His lifestyle was of God, one of love, service and forgiveness and not the lifestyle of his brothers and others, which was for selfishness, greed and domination over others. (*Nates*)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:48-52)(62:9-10)

And He will teach him [Jesus] the Book, Wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel.

And [to be] a messenger to the Children of Israel, "Truly I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. I will create for you out of clay the likeness of the figure of a bird. Then I will breathe into it, and it will be a bird by God's leave. I will heal the blind and the leper and revive the dead by God's leave. And I will inform you about what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Truly in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.

"And [I come] confirming that which was before me, the Torah, and to make lawful unto you some of that which was forbidden unto you. I have come to you with a sign from your Lord. So reverence God and obey me.

"Truly God is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path."

And when Jesus sensed their disbelief, he said, "Who are my helpers for the sake of God?" The disciples said, "We are God's helpers. We believe in Him; so testify that we are submitters. (3:48-52)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"My Lord educated me, and so made my education most excellent." [Aj'luni, Kashfu'l-Khafa]

"My Lord educated me and taught me good manners, and how well He educated me and how beautifully He taught me good manners!"

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Prophets do not owe their knowledge to any earthly source, since prophetic knowledge comes vertically from God, not horizontally from others. The Quranic verses above regarding Jesus' God-given knowledge is consistent with the Biblical verses that his teaching was not his own (the Quranic verses are also consistent with Jesus' sensing their disbelief). The same principle applies to the Prophet in the hadith above. Regarding the Sabbath, the supreme commandment in the Abrahamic traditions is the love of God, which "may require us always to be aware of the profound and underlying reasons for given prescriptions, just as it may require only zeal in obedience to the Law" [Schuon]. In this sense, Christianity, which is esoteric by definition, is fully conscious of the relative and conditional character of the rules of conduct. This is why authorities such as Abu Hamid al-Ghazzali, perhaps

the most famous religious scholar in Islamic history, integrated both Islamic law and Islamic mysticism in his teachings. In any regard, Islamic law regarding Friday prayers is relatively relaxed compared to the law of the Sabbath. The Quran states: *"O you who believe! When you are called to the Friday prayer, hasten to the remembrance of God and leave off trade. That is better for you if you but knew. And when the prayer is complete, disperse throughout the land, and seek the bounty of God, and remember God much, that haply you may prosper."* (62:9-10) (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Muhammad affirmed the teachings of Jesus to be the word of God and that his disciples were his followers. That means that Muslims can be disciples or followers of the teachings of Jesus as the word of God without believing in Jesus as God's Son. It's a shame that exclusivist church doctrine misinterprets the Gospel of John to condemn all who do not believe in Jesus as God's Son. In John's Gospel Jesus is presented as the word of God to be followed, not a surrogate Christian god to be worshiped (For a discussion of this point, see end note 2). A proper understanding of John's Gospel can reconcile Christians and Muslims with the word of God (*Logos*) as summarized in the new command to love one another. That is the way, the truth and the life that can reconcile people of all faiths, but that is not the way of exclusivist religious doctrines that condemn those of other faiths. (Barnes)

*** Justice or mercy: the adulterous woman**

The Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery before Jesus, and citing the Law of Moses which required that she be stoned to death they challenged Jesus to condemn her to death for her sin. Jesus looked down and began writing on the ground with his finger; but as they persisted with their questions trying to trap him, Jesus looked up and said:

If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.[SV4](Jn 8:7)

Jesus resumed writing on the ground with his finger, and the Pharisees began to disperse. Finally, when only the accused woman was left, Jesus straightened up and said:

¹⁰*Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?*

¹¹*"No one, sir," she said.*

Then neither do I condemn you, Jesus declared. Go now and leave your life of sin.[SV4](Jn 8:10,11)

Notes: (Source: Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Few scholars believe that Jesus told this story of the adulterous woman, but it is a beautiful story that is consistent with his teachings. It illustrates the contrast between standards of justice practiced by Jewish religious leaders at the time of Jesus and those advocated by Jesus. Old Testament justice was based on obedience to Mosaic Law, and God rewarded the obedient and punished the disobedient, assisted by religious leaders. The teachings of Jesus emphasized God's love over law, with mercy at the heart of God's justice. Worldly justice under law and mercy are mutually exclusive, making Micah's well-known advice seemingly a contradiction in terms: *To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God* (Micah 6:8). But in God's kingdom, unlike the world, mercy and justice were conformed. Micah was a true prophet and his saying summarized the teachings of Jesus on God's will. In matters of worldly justice, where there must be equality under the law, mercy has no place in determining guilt; its only place is in sentencing. The Law of Moses required death by stoning on adulterous women, with the witnesses to throw the first stones (Dt 17:7). It is the same under Islamic law in Saudi Arabia and other Islamist nations today where religious law prevails (see church and state). Jesus did not question the Law or the woman's guilt of the crime, but he turned the issue of justice upside down to emphasize that God's justice was based on mercy rather than condemnation and punishment. Unlike the Pharisees Jesus was neither a lawyer nor a judge (see Lk 12:14 in greed and hoarding possessions). In announcing the kingdom of God, Jesus introduced a new standard higher than the old, imposing God's standard of love over law. (See mercy, not sacrifice; love and laws, the Law, criticizing self before others, forgiveness, do not judge, and the greatest commandment.) (Barnes)

Whether this really happened with Jesus or not does not matter. It is a beautiful story, completely in line with the life and teaching of Jesus. The prophet Micah said it so well (Micah 6:8). Jesus did come with a higher standard. It embraced the intentional and ultimate will of God. Paul wrote that "...all have sinned and come short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:23) The real emphasis here is not on that all have sinned, but that God wants all to experience the glory of God. God wants not to condemn but to correct all so that we live a life of righteousness. (Nates)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

A Jew and a Jewess were brought to God's Apostle on a charge of committing illegal sexual intercourse. The Prophet asked them, "What is the legal punishment [for this sin] in your Book [Torah]?" They replied, "Our priests have innovated the punishment of blackening the faces with charcoal and tajbiya [being mounted on a donkey, with their faces in opposite directions, then mortified in public]." 'Abdullah bin Salam [a rabbi of aristocratic stock before converting to Islam] said, "O God's Apostle, tell them to bring the Torah." The Torah was brought, and then one of the Jews put his hand over the Divine Verse of the Rajam [stoning to death] and started reading what preceded and what followed it. On that, Ibn Salam said to the Jew, "Lift up your hand." Behold! The Divine Verse of the Rajam was under his hand. So God's Apostle ordered that the two [sinners] be stoned to death, and so they were stoned. [Bukhari]

Ma'iz b. Malik al-Aslami came to God's Messenger and said, "God's Messenger, I have wronged myself; I have committed adultery and I earnestly desire that you should purify me." He turned him away. On the following day, Ma'iz again came to him and said, "God's Messenger, I have committed adultery." God's Messenger turned him away for the second time, and sent him to his people saying, "Do you know if there is anything wrong with his mind?" They denied any such thing in him and said, "We do not know him but as a wise good man among us, so far as we can judge." Ma'iz came for the third time, and the Prophet sent him as he had done before. The Prophet asked Ma'iz's community about him again, and they informed him that there was nothing wrong with him or with his mind. When it was the fourth time, a ditch was dug for Ma'iz and the Prophet pronounced judgment about him, and he was stoned. There subsequently came to the Prophet a woman from Ghamid who said, "God's Messenger, I have committed adultery, so purify me." The Prophet turned her away. On the following day she said, "God's Messenger, why do you turn me away? Perhaps, you turn me away as you turned away Ma'iz. By God, I have become pregnant." He said, "Well, if you insist upon it, then go away until you give birth [to the child]." When she was delivered she came with the child [wrapped] in a cloth and said, "Here is the child whom I have given birth to." He said, "Go away and suckle him until you wean him." When she had weaned him, she came to the Prophet with the child who was holding a piece of bread in his hand. She said, "God's Apostle, here he is as I have weaned him and he eats food." The Prophet entrusted

the child to one of the Muslims and then pronounced punishment. ... Then giving command regarding her, he prayed over her and she was buried. [Muslim]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Islamic law related to adultery requires four witnesses rather than two in Jewish law, making punishment for adultery almost impossible to carry out in any era. In the contemporary period, scholars at Al-Azhar University, the most prestigious Islamic university in the Arab region and the oldest still-functioning university in the world (founded in 971 in Cairo), have ruled that social conditions no longer meet the requirements to carry out the punishment for adultery in Egypt (in fact, corporal punishment has not been carried out there for the past thousand years). In fact, the legal codes of the overwhelming majority of Islamic countries remain silent on corporal punishment based on the hadith, "Stay the enforcement of corporal punishments when there is doubt." In the context of the hadith on Ma'iz above, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Shaykh Ali Gomaa, points out that, "Investigations undertaken to uncover crimes, which lead to the implementation of corporal punishments, are not part of the method of the Shari'ah. During the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad [s], Ma'iz confessed to having committed adultery and the Prophet [s] turned his face away from him four times. He then turned him over to his family in the hopes that they would testify that he was mentally impaired or insane. When that could not be established, he sought loopholes for him, and when Ma'iz recanted while the punishment was being carried out, the Prophet [s] said to 'Umar [r], "Why did you not let him go?," [the hadith above in Muslim is a shorter form of the full account found in Tirmidhi and Ibn Hanbal]. From this exchange, the scholars understood that it is permissible to go back on one's confession as long as the crime has to do with transgressing the rights of God, as opposed to the rights of human beings. It must also be noted that the Prophet [s] never asked about the other party participating in the crime, nor did he seek her out even to complete the investigation. Along similar lines, Abu Bakr, 'Umar, Abu Darda', and Abu Hurayra would say to the thieves brought before them, "Have you stolen? ... Say, 'NO!'" It is therefore clear that the purpose of Islamic law is to discourage sins rather than to exact revenge, leaving the door open for repentance and encouraging the concealment of sins. The Islamic philosophy of law therefore asserts that Divine Law is not simply a function of Divine Rigor, but is also a matter of Divine Mercy in the sense that the Divine Law helps remove pitfalls that we are not even aware of. Divine Justice and Mercy are therefore complementary when properly understood and

implemented. Finally, it is interesting to note that when the Companions of the Prophet questioned him regarding his funeral prayer for the adulteress, he responded that her repentance was so great that it would have covered the entire city. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: The teaching on the adulterous woman and related teachings from the Qur'an and hadith underscore a major conflict between Christian concepts of justice and those of orthodox Judaism and Islam. Christian justice is based on the principle of altruistic and sacrificial love while Jewish and Islamic justice is based on immutable holy laws as the inerrant and infallible will of God. The Laws of the Hebrew Bible (the Torah) and those of Shari'a are similar, but the teachings of Jesus on God's justice contrast sharply with the enforcement of holy laws as God's standard of justice, whether against adultery, blasphemy or apostasy. Jesus never refuted the need for coercive laws, but he taught that God's justice was based on forgiveness and mercy, factors that cannot be considered in determining guilt or innocence in a courtroom where there must be equal justice under law. Libertarian human (civil) rights at the heart of Western systems of jurisprudence are based on our free will and God's love and mercy, while those human rights are absent in Islamist cultures of the East in which Shari'a prevails as a sacred and immutable rule of law. (See church and state and discussion at end note 5) (Barnes)

The above Joint Commentary speaks well of some conflicts which exist among some segments of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This is troubling with those who in good faith seek to emphasize the Common Cause among these three great religions of the world. It is good to read in the above Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith, "Divine Justice and Mercy are therefore complementary when properly understood and implemented." We all need to work on our understanding and implementation. On a very simple level, it is hard to imagine a human Father who, if he could, order that a son or daughter of his who was caught in adultery, be stoned to death or be put to death by any means. Jesus spoke of God as our heavenly Father. In the third chapter of the Gospel According to John, it is written that "God so loved the world..." In another place, Jesus told a story of the return of a sinful, rebellious son who was warmly welcomed by his Father when he returned home to find food and shelter. In a play entitled *The Lawgiver*, we find Moses alone in his tent after the death of his brother Aaron. Moses says to himself, "Aaron, your main problem was that you loved people more than you did the Law. My main problem is that I love the Law more than I do people." Perhaps God, most compassionate, most merciful, will one day reveal to us the proper places of Law and Love. (Nates)

*** Blindness as punishment for sin**

When Jesus came upon a man who had been blind since birth, his disciples asked him who had sinned--the man or his parents--to justify such punishment. Jesus answered,

Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.[SV4] (Jn 9:3)

Notes: (Source: Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jesus reaffirmed here that suffering is not God's will, and that illness and misfortune are not a form of divine punishment as many Jews then believed. The teachings that Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous and the Beatitudes make it clear that the less fortunate are loved as much or more by God than the fortunate. For a healing, this one was unique: it was not a faith healing but a demonstration of the authority of Jesus and his power to heal. It is one of the few accounts of miraculous healing cited by Jefferson since healings are more mystical than moral, but faith healings are common in the Gospel accounts (see Power to heal). The story of a blind man given sight is lengthy (Jn 9:1-41) and much of it is omitted from Jefferson's Bible. Before healing the man, Jesus told his disciples, *While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.[SV4]*(Jn 9:5; see light of the world) After being given sight, the man was questioned by some Pharisees who were seeking evidence to incriminate Jesus. When the parents of the healed man were questioned they verified that he had been born blind. The Pharisees grilled the man, but he knew nothing of Jesus and would only say, *"Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind and now I see."*(Jn 9:25) Later Jesus went to the healed man and revealed that he had healed him, and then went on to lecture the Pharisees on bringing sight and blindness. (Barnes) It is interesting that Jefferson selected this passage of Scripture since he was more concerned with moral and ethical teachings than with the mystical or even supernatural. Perhaps he saw this passage as a teaching about who Jesus was more than a physical healing. It is stated that the man was born blind "...so that God's works might be revealed in him." (9:3b) Jesus came as the light of the world to give spiritual sight to everyone. In some ways there is a deep and mysterious connection between sin and suffering and even sin and death.

Not all suffering and death is related to sin. Some is. There is a profound connection between the will of God and the free will of humans. One Biblical scholar has pointed out that the Greek verb "to heal", "make whole", is the same word as "to save." Jesus came to save, make whole and to heal. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (67:1-2)(21:35)(2:155-157)

*Blessed is He in Whose hand lies dominion and Who has power over all things,
Who created death and life that He may try you as to which of you is most virtuous in deed, and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving (67:1-2)*

Every soul shall taste death. We try you with evil and with good, as a test, and unto Us are you returned. (21:35)

And We will indeed test you with something of fear and hunger, and loss of wealth, souls, and fruits; and give glad tidings to the patient:

Those who, when affliction touches them, say, "Truly we are God's, and unto Him we return."

They are those upon whom come the blessings from their Lord, and compassion, and they are those who are rightly guided. (2:155-157)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"By Him, in Whose Hand is my soul, God does not ordain a Decree for a believer but for his good; and this merit is for no one except a believer..." [Muslim]

"No stress or exhaustion befalls the Muslim, nor worry or distress, even a thorn which pricks him, but God will expiate his sins because of that." [Bukhari]

Anas reported that God's Messenger once visited a Muslim man who was so weak that he was (thin) like a chicken, as described in the hadith. God's Messenger asked him, "Did you make a specific supplication or ask God for something (because of which you became like this)?" He replied, "Yes, I used to say, 'O God! Whatever punishment you have for me in the Hereafter, expedite it for me in this life.'" God Messenger said, "Exalted be God! You cannot withstand that. Instead, you should have said, 'Our Lord, grant us good in this life and in the next life, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire.'" [2:201]

The Prophet then implored God to cure him, and God cured him." [Muslim]

"If he (the believer) is granted ease of living, he is thankful; and this is best for him. And if he is afflicted with a hardship, he perseveres; and this is best for him." [Muslim]

A visually challenged person came to the Prophet and asked, "O Messenger of God, please pray that Almighty God restores my vision." The Prophet prayed and he could see. Another blind man came and requested for the same thing. The Prophet asked, "Do you prefer Paradise to blindness?" He asked, "Is Paradise the recompense of blindness?" The Messenger of God replied, "Almighty God is kinder than that He should keep a believer blind then not give him a place in Paradise." [Basair al-Darajat]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The above Quranic verses and prophetic hadith make it clear that illness and other misfortunes should not be interpreted as a sign of Divine wrath. It is important to note, however, that sin can create a disequilibrium which must be rectified, and God's Mercy will not allow us to be completely content in forgetting Him. Because this rectification is the means by which the sinner is enabled to return to God, even this comprises an aspect of Divine Mercy, which encompasses all. But it is clear that illness and other misfortunes which are not the result of our shortfalls is a test that can draw us closer to God, not a punishment. Finally, illness and other misfortunes make us recognize our mutual needs. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: This healing is unique in that it was not based on faith but was to demonstrate the power of Jesus to heal. There are no accounts of divine healing in the Qur'an or hadith, and unlike the ancient Jews (and some modern Christians), Muslims do not consider illness or misfortune to be God's punishment for sinfulness. (Barnes) It can continue to amaze us as we observe the similarity of passages in the Christian Scriptures and the Islamic Qur'an. Paul wrote in Romans 14:8, "If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." Qur'an 2:155-157, says, "Truly we are God's, and unto Him we return." Both are proclaiming that God means good for all of us. In times of ease we can be thankful. In times of trouble we can persevere to overcome them. In all these, God wants what is best for us. It

is our attitude and our faith and the grace of God, which determines how we relate to our circumstances. (Nates)

*** The good shepherd**

Jesus told the Jews a story about a shepherd being allowed into his sheep pen by the watchman of the gate. In the pen, the sheep knew the voice of their shepherd who called them by their name and then led them out of the pen, going ahead of them. The sheep followed the shepherd because they knew the sound of his voice. Jesus said that anyone who did not enter the pen by the gate was a thief and a robber, and that the sheep would never follow a stranger because they did not know his voice. The Jews did not understand this metaphor, so Jesus elaborated it:

⁷*I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. ¹¹I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ¹²The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. ¹³The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. ¹⁴I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me-- ¹⁵just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep. ¹⁶I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ¹⁷The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. ¹⁸No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.[SV4](Jn 10:7-18)*

Notes: (Source: Jn).

Commentary on the teaching of Jesus: This story is more an allegory than a parable and is fundamentally different than those sayings of Jesus found in the three Synoptic Gospels, so that most scholars do not believe that it originated with Jesus. The story is in the first person and is much longer than the short and pithy parables that characterized the teachings of

Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, but it fits with the Jesus of John's Gospel who was presented as the mystical *Logos* or word of God in the flesh (see Jn 1:1-18). Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus represented himself as the word of God: he was the gate and the good shepherd, while the hired hand represented a false prophet (see faith evidenced by works); as the good shepherd, Jesus would lay down his life for the sheep of this pen, and others as well, and then take his life up again by command of his Father (Jn 10:7-18). The references of Jesus to the resurrection is unique to John's Gospel and can be understood as validating his teachings as the word of God and that the Holy Spirit would be his successor: *All this I have spoken while with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* (Jn 14:25, 26; see Love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace) Some Jews were convinced Jesus was possessed by a demon, but those who had witnessed his miracles were not so sure (Jn 10:19-21). The good shepherd metaphor, similar to the one in the parable of the lost sheep, coupled with combining several flocks into one, reflects the inclusive and universal dimension of spiritual liberation offered through the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace. As Jesus taught in the good Samaritan and in his encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (see living water and worship in spirit and truth), all people—even those of other faiths—are spiritual brothers and sisters who should reconciled in the family of God, and as the word of God Jesus was the way, the truth and the life for all people. Only part of the above teaching is included in *The Jefferson Bible* (Jn 10:1-5,11-14,16); the remaining portion (Jn 10:7-10,15,17,18) is reported here to maintain the integrity of the teaching. (Barnes)

Here John is using the parables of the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, to create a meditation or allegory about the person of Christ. A parable usually contains one, pointed meaning while an allegory usually has a number of meanings. John is contrasting the ministry and teachings of Jesus with the wicked prophets and leaders which are mentioned in Ezekiel 34. Jesus is the gate of blessing and the good shepherd who knows his sheep and they know him. Jesus also is noted as saying that he has other sheep which are not of this fold. All people who love God and love others as they love themselves, are of his fold. To all of these he has come to give abundant life. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (2:146-147)(6:20)(2:136)

Those to whom We have given the Scripture, they recognize him, as they recognize their sons; even though there is a party of

*them that conceal the truth, while they know.
The truth is from thy Lord, so be not among the doubters.
(2:146-147)*

*Those unto whom We have given the Book recognize it as they
recognize their own children. (6:20)*

*Say: 'We believe in God, and in that which has been revealed to
us, and revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the
Tribes, and that which was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the
prophets, from their Lord, we make no division between any of
them, and to Him we submit.' (2:136)*

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"I am most akin to Jesus Christ among the whole of mankind, and
all the Prophets are of different mothers but belong to one
religion, and no prophet was raised between me and Jesus."
[Muslim]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Islam accepts the prophets
of Judaism and Christianity, making the closest analogue to
"false prophets" in the Islamic context the idolatrous teachings
of soothsayers in the pre-Islamic period. There is an
interesting analogy between the sheep recognizing Jesus and the
Quranic verses stating that the "ahl al-kitab," or people of
scripture (Jews and Christians in this case), recognize the
Quranic revelation and the Prophet as they recognize their own
children. According to Wahidi, 2:146 was revealed about 'Abd
Allah ibn Salam, a rabbi of aristocratic stock before converting
to Islam and his companions: "They knew God's Messenger, God
bless him and give him peace, by his description, traits and
mission from their Scripture as did any one of them know his son
upon seeing him with other boys. Said 'Abd Allah ibn Salam: 'I
knew God's Messenger, God bless him and give him peace, better
than I knew my son.' 'Umar ibn al-Khattab asked him: 'How is
that, O son of Salam?' He said: 'Because I bear witness that
Muhammad is the Messenger of God truly and out of certainty, but
I cannot bear witness truly and out of certainty that my son is
mine, for I have no knowledge of what women do [behind their
husbands' backs].'" 'Umar then said: 'May God give you success, O
son of Salam!'" Regarding the rest of the Biblical passage,
Islam is based on the soteriological function of knowledge ("the
Truth shall set you free," as Christ said, which is always
combined with love) rather than Christ's sacrifice. There are
thus no Islamic analogues to Christ laying down his life to take

it up again (although Muslims do not deny that Christ suffered).
(Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: The reference to Jesus laying down his life to take it up again reflects early church beliefs that are not found in the other Gospel accounts. When read in the context of John's Gospel this could refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit as God's validation that His living Word was eternal and would give new life to all who would follow it; but the orthodox Christian understanding of the resurrection is the atonement doctrine. It provides that the crucifixion was God's blood sacrifice to save believers from sin and a promise that Jesus would return in the end times. It is interesting that while Muslims do not believe in the resurrection of Jesus they believe that he will return in the end times. (Barnes)

This is a tremendous passage from Qur'an. It calls for belief in God and in all the good prophets through whom God has been revealed. This includes Jesus. There is no division in all these prophets. Regretfully, there is division among those who follow these various prophets. From the Hadith, we see that Mohammad stated, "I am most akin to Jesus Christ among the whole of mankind..." How good it would be if all Christians and Muslims would relate to one another in the same manner. Dr. Ansary tells us, "Islam is based on a soteriological function of knowledge ("the Truth shall set you free, as Christ said, which is always combined with love)..." He says that Islam does not accept an atonement theology which believes that Jesus died for our sins. So do many Christians. They believe that Jesus died in order to be true to the mission to which he was called. Christians are called to be faithful to God no matter what the end results. Jesus did not want to die. He wanted to live. But to be true to his mission he had to die. Real followers of Jesus must do the same thing ("...grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" John 1:17b). The truth of God, the love for God, the love for others as for ourselves, is the Common Cause of Christians and Muslims. (Nates)

*** Jesus predicts his death**

When the disciples Philip and Andrew told Jesus that some Greeks had asked to see him, Jesus replied,

²³*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.* ²⁴*I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*[SV3](Jn 12:23,24)

Notes: (Source: Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jefferson does not include Jn 12:25,26 in his Bible, but these verses complete the story:

²⁵*The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.[SV3]*

²⁶*Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.[SV4]*

(Jn 12:25,26; see the cost of discipleship, treasures and the heart, and the concluding line of the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi in *The Rest of the story*). The human side of Jesus was apparent when his heart became troubled, knowing his life would be ending soon (Jn 12:27; see the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak). Jesus frequently used seeds as a metaphor for the kingdom or power of God, as he did here in a different way: see sowing the seeds of faith: parable of the sower, and the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed. Jesus had earlier told his disciples that he was going away and that no one would be able to find him (Jn 7:34; 8:21; Th 38:2), and in the good shepherd Jesus also predicted his death (Jn 10:17,18). He later spoke of leaving (Jn 13:33,36), but at the same time assured his disciples that God would not abandon them when he left them and would send them the Holy Spirit to *...teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you*. (Jn 14:26; also Jn 16:27,28; see also faith and eternal life, effective prayer, and love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). (Barnes)

When the time is right the flower will bloom. The hour had come for the Son of Man to be glorified. This can be translated as a son of man (not the one and only Son of Man). When one comes who fulfills all the best of humanity (a son of man), then the door is opened for others to become the persons they are meant to be. Jesus was becoming the one he was intended to be, the beloved son of God. He was true and faithful to the Gracious God who calls upon all he has created to be true daughters and sons of God. In this relationship, love abounds and grace does much more abound! Jesus often used the germination of seeds to represent his teaching about life and death. He taught that only by "death", by spending our life in gratitude to God and love (service) to others, do we retain our "life." And when we come to think of it, Jesus' paradox about life is only common sense. (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (3:27)(2:154)

Thou bringest forth the living from the dead, and Thou bringest forth the dead from the living. (3:27)

And say not of those who are slain in the way of God, "They are dead." Nay, they live, but you are unaware. (2:154)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Be in the world like a traveler, or like a passer on, and reckon yourself as of the dead."

"Die before you die."

"Live in this world as (if you are) a wayfarer or a stranger."
[Bukhari]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: Every change in our state of being is a death in relation to one side (the antecedent state) and a birth in relation to the other (the subsequent state). The death of our carnal soul, or "dying to the world," is therefore equivalent to being born into the world of the spirit. The inner meaning of the above Quranic verses and ahadith should be understood in this light. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: This saying is not characteristic of Jefferson, being more mystical than moral, but both Jesus and Muhammad affirmed the spiritual dimension of life, both in this world and the next, and asserted that the two were inextricably but mysteriously woven together. (Barnes) The other commentaries offer the "spiritual dimension of life." Perhaps Jefferson would agree that there is a "spiritual dimension of life," beyond our ability to comprehend, which does affect the moral lives of people. There is a sense in which God can bring "life" out of any "death," be it physical life and death or "spiritual" life and death. In the lives and deaths of Jesus and Muhammad, a lot of people have been born into lives of faith, love and service. As Jesus pictured it, one seed which "dies" can bring forth "many seeds." Through one death which honors God, many other "living souls" can be born. (Nates)

*** Washing the disciples' feet**

Before the last supper, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples over the strident objection of Peter. When he was finished, Jesus asked them:

¹²*Do you understand what I have done for you?* ¹³*You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and that is rightly so, for that is what I*

am. ¹⁴Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.[SV4]
(Jn 13:12-17)

Notes: See Jn 15:20, Mt 10:24,25,40; Lk 6:40; 10:16 (Sources: John and Q).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The following prelude to the above passage is not included in the Jefferson Bible: ⁷You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand. ⁸"No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, Unless I wash you, you have no part with me. ⁹"Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well. ¹⁰Jesus answered, A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you.[SV4](Jn 13:7-10) By this humble act of foot-washing, normally the duty of lowly servants, Jesus assumed the role of the least and the last (see humility: leaders as servants) before God affirmed him as the greatest and first among men with the resurrection. The washing was the culminating act of love by Jesus before going to the cross. It was symbolic of the servanthood required of all who would follow Jesus and had the same place in the Gospel story as the Eucharist (the Last Supper) in the other gospel accounts. References to servant/master and messenger/sender relationships seem similar to the student/teacher and servant/master relationships of Mt 10:24,25 (see faith and persecution and the cost of discipleship); but here the relationship is reversed: Jesus is the enigmatic master who is also the servant of his followers. Jefferson did not include Jn 13:20, but it is included here to explain the role of Jesus as the messenger of God and the disciples as messengers for Jesus: *I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me, and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.*[SV3](Jn 13:20) This is the third time this is said in John. The first is at Jn 5:23: *He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*[SV4] The second is at Jn 12:44: *When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.*[SV4] The counterpart in Luke precedes the authority to perform miracles: *He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me.*[SV3](Lk 10:16) The same theme is found in the authority of Jesus and faith and eternal life, and Matthew provides a similar saying in messenger for Jesus. (Barnes)

Jesus, through his temptations and in his early ministry, knew that he was called of God to do supreme, godly things. This could have caused him to have supreme pride. But it did just the opposite. It worked on him to have supreme humility. He demonstrated this by washing the dirty, grungy feet of his disciples. He took on the role of a slave. In his nearness to God, he became nearer to the people around him, even those who were to betray him and even those who were going to kill him. He was the suffering servant. He suffered to show others the real meaning of life. This life was not one of always getting but one of always one of always giving. He gave his life as a ransom for many. This was not in a legalistic sense but in a spiritual sense. It has been said in years passed, "It is always true that there is no one closer to men than the man who is close to God." This is a brilliant portrait of Jesus! (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (59:9)

They prefer them to themselves, even if they themselves are needy (59:9)

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"Whoever humbles himself to God, God will raise him." (Muslim)

'Aisha [the Prophet's wife] reported that "The Prophet of God (sallallahu `alayhi wa sallam) used to repair his shoes, mend his clothes and occupied himself at home even as any of you occupy yourself. [He] was very softhearted, the kindest of all. He laughed often and smiled much." Anas [one of the sahabah] said that he had not seen a man who was more clement and nice to his household than the Prophet.

A woman brought the Prophet a woven cloak (burda) with a border and said, "I wove it with my own hands so that you could wear it." The Prophet took it as he was in need of it. He came out to us using it as a waist-wrapper. Someone admired it and said, "Give it to me to wear. How beautiful it is!" He said, "Yes," and the Prophet sat down in the assembly and then went back and folded it and sent it to him. The people said, "You have not acted rightly. The Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, wore it out of need for it and then you asked him for it knowing that he never refuses a request." He said, "By God, I have not asked for it in order to wear it, but I have asked for it only so that it can be my shroud." [The narrator, Sahl, then said, "It was indeed his shroud."] [al-Bukhari]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The Quranic verse and hadith are relatively self-explanatory. (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: Muhammad never acknowledged Jesus to be God's one and only Son, as Christians believe, but he did acknowledge Jesus to be a major prophet of God like Moses and Muhammad. In fact, in all the gospel accounts except John, Jesus is a messenger or prophet of God and not God incarnate. It is only in John that Jesus becomes the mystical word of God (*Logos*) made flesh. It is unfortunate indeed that debate over the divinity of Jesus has lessened the emphasis on his teachings as God's word for humankind. (Barnes) History, Christian Scripture, Qur'an and Hadith testify to the true character of both Jesus and Muhammad. Both were humble servants. Jesus washed feet, giving all an example of humility and servant hood. Muhammad was praised by Aisha, his wife, as a man who demonstrated soft heartedness, kindness and cheerfulness. The values of the "world" were not a part of the lives, teachings and faith of Jesus and Muhammad. Both of these Prophets, sons of God, gave teachings and examples of humility, servanthood and blessedness. (Nates)

*** Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification**

At the last supper Jesus became troubled in spirit and predicted his betrayal and glorification to his disciples:

²¹*I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.[SV4]*

²²*His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?"*

²⁶*Jesus answered, It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.[SV4]*
Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, Son of Simon.

³¹*When he was gone, Jesus said,*
Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.[SV4](Jn 13:21-31)

Notes: See Jn 6:61-70; 7:10; 12:28-31; 13:10,11,18; 16:19-22,27,28; Mk 14:17-21; Mt 26:20-25; Lk 22:21-23 (Source: Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Jefferson excluded the following parts of the betrayal story: ²⁷As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. What you are about to do, do quickly,[SV4] Jesus told him. ²⁸But no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. ²⁹Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. ³⁰As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. (Jn 13:27-30) Jefferson's Bible also left the passage on glorification incomplete: If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once.[SV4](Jn 13:32; see also Love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). All the gospels record Jesus foretelling his fate and presumably being in control of it, but John's account is the most elaborate. The glorification, beginning with Jn 13:31, initiates the farewell discourses (Jn 13:31-17:26). The first discourse ends at Jn 14:31; it is an eschatological discourse which scholars do not believe originated with Jesus but with the Johannine circle since it reflects the theology of that early Christian sect. The final prayer of Jesus is not considered to have originated with Jesus, but it counters exclusivist Christian doctrine based on other passages of John (see Jn 3:16-18 in faith and eternal life and Jn 14:6 in the truth will make you free) with the inclusive prayer for the unification of all believers at Jn 17:20-23. (Barnes)

What a sad night it was for Jesus and for Judas. There is evidence that Jesus may have given to Judas a special seat of honor, near him. Jesus could have and probably did, offer to Judas a special section of bread and then offer to him a chance to dip his portion of bread into his (Jesus') bowl, a special recognition. What happened next was tragic. "Satan entered into him)Judas)." (Jn 12:27b) The forces of evil had won the battle in Judas, if in fact a battle was going on. If we give ourselves to Christ, we are in the light. If not, we are in the dark. And in the dark, we always get lost. How could it be said that Jesus came into his time of glory with so many terrible, tragic, despicable things happening? Maybe it is simplistic to say, but those who make the greatest sacrifices enter into the greatest glory. Jesus was majestically glorified! (Nates)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: The betrayal of Jesus by Judas is unique to the Christian story and does not seem to correlate to any of the teachings of Muhammad.

*** A new command: love one another**

According to John, Jesus gave his disciples a new command at the last supper. During that evening he emphasized and reiterated to his disciples that sharing the love of God with others was the moral imperative of true faith.

³⁴*A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.[SV4]*
(Jn 13:34,35)

Notes: (Source: Jn).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: The new command to *love one another* is John's equivalent of the greatest commandment; it summarizes all of the moral teachings of Jesus as the way, the truth, and the life and is the only command in John's Gospel. It could not be simpler, but is exceedingly difficult to apply to those who we would avoid: the least, the last and the lost--even our enemies. It is another way of stating the golden rule. The command to *love one another* is not a law but the guiding principle of Christian morality (see love and laws and love over law). Love defines God, since *God is love*. (1Jn 4:16) But the love of God is sacrificial, not self-serving, love. It is not about getting what we want, but about giving to others what they need. God's love is reciprocal: It must be given in order to be received. Here it is a command, but love cannot be commanded. It is entirely voluntary and comes naturally to all whose hearts are filled with God's love when they are born again of the spirit, and it manifests itself in humble and selfless service to others, sharing what we have with others, forgiveness, tolerance, and mercy, all as taught and exemplified by Jesus. The Jefferson Bible includes only Jn 13:34,35, but the primacy of the new command as the moral imperative of our faith is evident by its repetition in the following verses:
If you love me, you will obey what I command.[SV4] (Jn 14:15)
Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me.[SV4] (Jn 14:21)
If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.[SV4] (Jn 14:23)
⁹*As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. ¹⁰If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in His love. ¹¹I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. ¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this,*

that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command.[SV4](Jn 15:9-14)
 This is my command: Love each other.[SV4](Jn 15:17)
 (See also love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace)
 Some have suggested that John's gospel limits the new command to love one another to the Christian community, but such an interpretation is inconsistent with the other gospel accounts which provide many examples of Jesus sharing God's love, especially the power of healing, with those outside the Jewish community. Even in John's gospel, the story of the Samaritan woman (see worship in spirit and truth) indicates that Jesus placed no boundaries on God's love and sought to reconcile not only sinners but also those of competing religions with God and others in the universal family of God. (see the unity of all believers) Despite the exclusivist interpretations given to Jn 3:16-18 (see faith and eternal life) and Jn 14:6 (see the truth will make you free), the teachings of Jesus require his followers to love all people, including those of other faiths. (see the greatest commandment, parable of the good Samaritan, the last judgment, and love for enemies). On giving one's life as the supreme act of love, see the cost of discipleship. The low SV rankings in John's Gospel indicate that Jesus probably never said those words; but those words certainly reflect the spiritual experience of early Christians with the word of God as they understood it, based on remembered sayings and through revelations of the Holy Spirit. When read with the other gospel accounts, John's Gospel confirms that sacrificial love remained at the core of Christian morality and faith. (Barnes)
 The above notes embrace this section of the Gospel with much insight and great clarity. Certainly, this is John's equivalent to the greatest commandment. Jesus said with humility and grace, that his disciples are to love one another. No jealousy, no envy, no strife or meanness. There is to be caring, cooperation, compassion and coordination. How is this love to be characterized? Followers of Jesus are to love one another as Jesus loved them. What a task! How can it be done? Only by the grace of God and deep commitment to embody the love which was in Jesus. This is the way and the manner in which Christians must love one another. Jesus said it long ago, but it has been captured in a brief song of faith:
 AND THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR LOVE,
 BY OUR LOVE, AND THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS BY OUR LOVE.
 God is Love. Jesus incarnated Love. We are to incarnate Jesus.
 (Nates)

Related teaching from the Qur'an:

Qur'an (8:63)(4:36)

And [God has] joined their [believers'] hearts. Hadst thou spent all that is on the earth, it would not have joined their hearts. But God joined them together. Truly He is Mighty, Wise. (8:63)

Worship God, and ascribe not partners unto Him. And be virtuous toward parents and kinsfolk, toward orphans and the indigent, toward the neighbor who is of kin and the neighbor who is not of kin, toward the companion at your side and the traveler, and toward those whom your right hands possess. Truly, God loves not those who are vainglorious, boastful, (4:36)

Related teachings in Hadith Qudsi:

God says, "Indeed, My love shall be bestowed upon the ones who visit each other for My sake, who love one another for My sake, who approach one another in humility for My sake, who rush to help each other for My sake." [Musnad Ahmed]

Related teachings of Muhammad:

Hadith

"None of you believes until he loves for his brother (or neighbor) what he loves for himself." [Bukhari]

"Seven people will be shaded by God under His shade on the day when there will be no shade except His. They are:

- (1) a just ruler;
- (2) a young man who has been brought up in the worship of God sincerely from his childhood;
- (3) a man whose heart is attached to the mosque;
- (4) two persons who love each other only for God's sake and they meet and part in God's cause only;**
- (5) a man who refuses the call of a charming woman of noble birth for illegal sexual intercourse with her and says, 'I am afraid of God';
- (6) a person who practices charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given;
- (7) a person who remembers God in seclusion and his eyes get flooded with tears." [Bukhari - italics added]

"None will have the sweetness (delight) of faith till: (a) he loves a person and loves him only for God's sake, and (b) it becomes dearer to him to be thrown in the fire than to revert to disbelief after God has brought him out of it, and (c) God and His Apostle become dearer to him than anything else." [Bukhari]

"If God loves a bondsman, he says to Gabriel, 'I love so-and-so, so love him.' So Gabriel loves him and then calls out to the people of heaven, 'God loves so-and-so, so love him,' and the people of heaven love him, and then acceptance is placed in the Earth for him. [Bukhari]

A man was with the Prophet and a man passed by him and said, "Apostle of God! I love this man." The Apostle of God then asked, "Have you informed him?" He replied, "No." He said, "Inform him." He then went to him and said, "I love you for God's sake." He replied, "May He for Whose sake you love me love you!" [Abu Dawud]

"Of two who love each other in God, the better of the two is the one who loves the other companion most." [Sahih Ibn Haban]

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: The preceding Quranic verses and hadith are relatively self-explanatory, but it is worth noting how Quranic commentators interpret "the neighbor who is near" and "the neighbor who is far" in 4:36. Tafsir al-Jalalayn, one of the most popular and easily accessible works of Quranic exegesis because of its simple style and one volume length, interprets "the neighbor who is near" as "the one who is near to you either in terms of residence, or of family ties, 'while 'the neighbor who is a stranger' means 'the one who is distant from you, either in terms of residence, or of family ties.' Ghazi bin Muhammad, the chief architect of the Common Word initiative, concludes from this that "the 'neighbor' means every person on the face of the earth, whether Muslim or disbeliever." In fact, another hadith states: "The believer is friendly and easy to befriend. And there is no good in the person who does not befriend and does not get befriended" [Musnad Ahmed]. Ibn Kathir, the renowned fourteenth century scholar and author of one of the most influential multivolume Quranic commentaries, provides another interesting interpretation of 4:36. He states, "It is related from 'Ikrimah, Mujahid, Maymun ibn Mahran, Dahhak, Zayd ibn Aslam, Muqatil bin Hayyan, Qatada, and Nawf Bakkali (according to Abu Ishaq) that 'the neighbor who is near' means the Muslim, and 'the neighbor who is a stranger' means the Jew and the Christian" (it is interesting to note in this regard that the Quran calls the Christians of Najran "believers" and curses those who tortured them: Perish the inhabitants of the pit, the fire well-fueled, when they sat by it, and were witness to what they did unto the believers, and took vengeance on them for naught but that they believed in God, the Mighty, the Praised (85:4-8). In short, because God's mercy "embraces all things"

(7:156), He creates mercy and love between all people (for an excellent extended discussion of this point, see Ghazi bin Muhammad, *Love in the Quran*, especially ch. 17). Finally, there is an entertaining commentary often added to the hadith above on God commanding Gabriel to love a person (which then is communicated throughout the cosmos): "Abu Idris al-Khawlani said, 'I entered the Damascus mosque and there was a young man with a beautiful mouth and white teeth sitting with some people. When they disagreed about something, they referred it to him and proceeded from his statement. I inquired about him, and it was said, 'This is Muadh ibn Jabal.' The next day I went to the noon-prayer, and I found that he had preceded me to the noon prayer and I found him praying. I waited for him until he had finished the prayer. Then I came to him from in front of him and greeted him and said, 'By God! I love you for God!' He said, 'By God?' I said, 'By God.' He said, 'By God?' I said, 'By God.' He said, 'By God?' I said, 'By God.' He took me by the upper part of my cloak and pulled me to him and said, 'Rejoice! I heard the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, say, 'God, the Blessed and Exalted, said, 'My love is obliged for those who love each other in Me, and those who sit with each other in Me, and those who visit each other in Me, and those who give to each other generously in Me.'" (Ansary)

Joint commentary on Jesus and Muhammad: The new command, as John's equivalent of the greatest commandment, is a *common word* of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. It is the moral imperative of all people of God. Based on the life and teachings of Jesus we cannot love God without loving others—all others, no exceptions. (Barnes)

It is stated above that the Quranic verse and hadith which are cited are relatively self-explanatory. This certainly seems to be the case. There is also some clarification in the "Commentary of the Qur'an and Hadith." It is very interesting that "Ghazi bin Muhammad, the chief architect of the *Common Word* initiative, concludes from this that "'the neighbor'" means every person on the face of the earth, whether Muslim or disbeliever." Allowing for varying interpretations, this seems to correct some confusion which may occur when it is said, "I love you for God's sake." This also speaks to understanding the phrase, "The neighbor who is near: and 'the neighbor who is far.'" This could be thought of as loving the one who is "near" and not loving the one who is "far." Jesus simply said, as we read in John 13:34: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." However, the main thrust of love which Jesus taught and lived was love for all people. This is in agreement with Ghazi bin Muhammad,

the chief architect of *A Common Word*. John 3:16 maintains that God so loved the world...although the "world" is alienated from God. The word for "love" here is *agape*—which in the New Testament means the unconditional love of that which is unlovable and repulsive. Christians and Muslims believe that all is of God. In 1 John 4, which has a wonderful passage on "God is love", we read in verse 19, "We love because he (God) first loved us." It goes on in verse 20, "for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God who they have not seen. It is all of God. And God's grace is sufficient for all situations. (Nates)

*** Jesus before Pilate**

Jesus was taken from Caiaphas to the Praetorium, the judicial court of Pontius Pilate. When Pilate asked what charges were brought against Jesus, the Jews told Pilate they would not have brought him if he were not a criminal. When Pilate told the Jews to take Jesus and judge him by their own law, the Jews told Pilate that they had no authority to execute anyone. Pilate then summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of Jews?" Jesus responded:

³⁴*Is that your own idea, or did others talk to you about me?[SV4]*

³⁵*"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"*

³⁶*Jesus said, My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.*

³⁷*"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, You are right in saying that I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.[SV4]*

³⁸*"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him." (Jn 18:34-38)*

Notes: See Mk 15:1-15; Mt 27:2,11; Lk 23:1-7; 13-25 (Sources: Jn, Mk).

Commentary on the teachings of Jesus: Different translations provide different responses of Jesus to Pilate's question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" and later, "You are a king, then!" In contrast to the above NIV translation in which Jesus says to

Pilate, *You are right in saying I am a king*, the NRSV translation, which closely follows the King James version, has Jesus say to Pilate, *You say that I am a king*. (Jn 18:37) There are similar differences in the testimony of Jesus before the Sanhedrin, and they raise questions about what Jesus said about his divinity. Aside from that contentious issue, Jesus made a clear distinction between worldly kingdoms and the spiritual realm of God (see church and state, liberation and leaders as servants). Jesus acknowledged that he was a king, but that his kingdom was *...not of this world...but from a different place*. (Jn 18:36) In this Jesus confirmed the unseen kingdom of God as a spiritual rather than a worldly kingdom. Finally, the rhetorical, perhaps cynical, question of Pilate has resonated down through the ages: *What is truth?* It is as relevant today as it was 2,000 years ago, and could be the primary question of all who seek the word of God. John's Gospel makes it clear that God's truth is found in the life and teachings of Jesus as the way, the truth and the life (see also the arrest of Jesus, Jesus before the Sanhedrin, church and state, the truth will make you free, and political authority from God). (Barnes)

When Pilate finally had Jesus before him, he asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus astutely replied with a question, "Do you ask this on your own or did others tell you about me?" And so it went. Imagine having Jesus before you in a court of law! It would seem that the judge or the person in charge would be on trial and not Jesus. Pilate could treat others with contempt, but not Jesus. He would be a presence of sheer majesty with absolute composure and deep inner peace. Pilate managed to reply that Jesus' own nation had handed him over to the authorities. Then Pilate said, "What have you done?" Again, Jesus took control. He stated, "My kingdom is not of this world." In essence, he was saying that his kingdom was in the hearts of those who follow him. His rules were based on love, compassion and justice. A little later, Jesus said, "...I came into the world to testify to the truth." The truth he came to proclaim was the truth about God, the truth about life and the truth about people. He came to spread the Gospel, the Good News of God and the reign of God. Jesus then stated, "Everyone who is on the side of truth listens to me." Truth is difficult to grasp and to know. Jesus came with the great truth of God. The truth of God will set all free, free to live as God intended us to live, in harmony, service and love. (Nates)

Commentary on the Qur'an and Hadith: There are no corresponding Quranic verses or hadith sayings, but see Jesus on the cross.

The Rest of the Story: The Mystical Teachings of Jesus on Faith

The teachings of Jesus in this section were not included in *The Jefferson Bible*. For Christians they are *the rest of the story*, and while these teachings are primarily mystical they are interwoven with the moral teachings selected by Jefferson, as indicated by the many cross-references found in the commentary.

Jefferson included the greatest commandment in those sayings of Jesus that he described as "the most sublime moral code ever devised by man." That great commandment was actually two commandments in one. It brought together the mystical obligation to love God with the moral obligation to love our neighbors as ourselves. If Jefferson truly believed in both the moral and mystical dimensions of love as expressed in the greatest commandment, then he was not just a rational and moral man (a secular humanist) but also a believer in a God of love and mercy, even if he chose not to make that mystical part of his faith public.

Morality and mysticism are components of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Mystical or spiritual matters are those beyond reason that are known by faith primarily through revelation, while moral matters are a mix of both revelation and reason. God's will is inherently mystical and gives legitimacy to the moral imperatives of our faith, that is, how we relate to each other, and that is based on our mystical beliefs in God. The relationship between our mystical beliefs and moral deeds has long been debated, but a true faith requires both. The evangelist James said it this way: *As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.* (James 2:26)

It is easier to find consensus among different religions on the moral obligation to love others (*the heart of legitimacy*) than on the mystical love of God; but the greatest commandment has been accepted as a *common word* of faith by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike, and its mystical and moral commands can be conflated into one: We love God by loving our neighbors as ourselves, and conversely we cannot love God and hate anyone. (see 1Jn 4:20-21)

Mystical matters of faith include the nature of God, His love, His kingdom and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is only through the spiritual power of God's love (or grace) that we can achieve reconciliation and lasting peace. That reconciling and redeeming power must be given in order to be received and it enables us to realize a spiritual unity of all believers.

The Dangers of Fundamentalism, Religious Law and Exclusivism

Mystical matters of faith can both reconcile and divide us. God's universal love reconciles and redeems, but fundamentalist religions that promote exclusivist beliefs and doctrines that condemn unbelievers seek to divide and conquer. Fundamentalism developed in the last century as a defense to the threat of change to traditional beliefs caused by scientific discovery and reason. Fundamentalism precludes reason with the absolute certainty of immutable revelation. It condemns unbelievers and creates a formidable obstacle to religious reconciliation.²⁰

Religious fundamentalists consider their scriptures to be the immutable word of God and their holy laws to be compulsory standards of legitimacy for all people. Most Jews and Christians in libertarian democracies consider their religious rules and rituals to be voluntary rather than compulsory; but where fundamentalist Jews, Christians and Islamists seek to make their holy laws compulsory and coercive for everyone, there can be no political freedom and no free will in faith.

There is irony here. The Qur'an states, *Let there be no compulsion in religion*, but Islamist regimes have nevertheless made apostasy and blasphemy crimes with severe penalties, denying meaningful democracy and human rights with the proviso that *God is the only legislator*.²¹ Another irony is that the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor is not a "command" that cannot be enforced, but a voluntary matter of the heart that requires the exercise of free will as taught by Jesus in emphasizing the primacy of love over law.

Jesus was a Jew who never promoted any religion, not even his own, and he never advocated the creation of a new religion. He taught that the universal and timeless truths of forgiveness and sacrificial love fulfilled Mosaic Law, and that all who followed his teachings and example were doing God's will and were his spiritual brothers and sisters in a universal family of God. This angered fundamentalist Jewish leaders of his day who taught that only those Jews who obeyed Mosaic Law were saved.

Despite the teachings of Jesus, the institutional church developed exclusivist religious doctrines and rejected the concept that salvation is possible for those of other religions. For fundamentalist Christians it is not enough to follow Jesus as the word of God. Instead, they must profess an exclusivist belief in Jesus as God's one and only Son, who was born of a virgin, crucified as a blood sacrifice for the atonement of

their sins, resurrected from the dead, who now sits at the right hand of God the Father to judge the quick and the dead and who will return in the end times to usher in God's kingdom in the world. The evangelical duty of orthodox Christians is to convert those of other faiths to Christianity. Ironically, Muslims share the belief that Jesus will return on *the Last Day*.

These mystical and exclusivist beliefs are not found in the teachings of Jesus and are thought by many scholars to have originated within the early church. They are essential elements of traditional Christian creeds, first *The Nicene Creed* and then its abbreviated successor, *The Apostles' Creed*. Both creeds remain professions of Christian beliefs though neither mentions the central theme of sacrificial love taught and exemplified by Jesus. A more recent creed, *A Modern Affirmation*, is faithful to the teachings and example of Jesus.²²

Jesus called his disciples to follow him as the word of God, not to worship him as God. For the Christian religion to be conformed to the teachings of Jesus, or discipleship, exclusivist Christian doctrines must give way to the universal and timeless principles of forgiveness, love and reconciliation as taught and exemplified by Jesus, and belief in an inerrant and infallible Bible must give way to interpreting the revelations of scripture through experience and reason.²³

The love of God and love of our unbelieving neighbors is not compatible with exclusivist doctrines, dogmas, rules and rituals like those of the ancient Pharisees and modern religious fundamentalists. Such exclusivist doctrines, rules and rituals, then and now, sanctify intolerance, hate, and persecution in the name of God, often identifying religious dissidents with Satan.²⁴ If the will of God is to reconcile and redeem people through love, mercy and forgiveness and the will of Satan is to divide and conquer through suspicion, fear and hate, then Satan has done an excellent imitation of God throughout history, and done some of his best work in the synagogue, church and mosque.

Jesus taught mystical beliefs that motivated the moral imperative to forgive and love others—even those of other religions. The greatest commandment teaches that we love God by loving our neighbor and the story of the good Samaritan teaches that our neighbor includes those of other religions. That is *the heart of legitimacy*; and the test of legitimacy for mystical beliefs is whether they motivate believers to reconcile with unbelievers, or condemn them as heretics or infidels.²⁵

God's love: A mystical gift of peace to be shared with others

Religious reconciliation among Jews, Christians and Muslims requires that the revelations of scripture in the Bible and the Qur'an be interpreted in the light of reason and experience.²⁶ Religious fundamentalism denies both reason and experience in promoting beliefs and doctrines that condemn unbelievers to hell.²⁷ When scripture is interpreted with reason and illuminated by the experience of God's love and mercy, its revelations reveal the primacy of love over law and the power of that love to overcome the mindless exclusivity of fundamentalist religion and to reconcile and redeem people of different faiths as brothers and sisters in the family of God.

Jesus taught that God is bigger than any religion, and that anyone can be liberated from the bondage of sin and death if they repent of their sins, accept the forgiveness of God and share the transforming power of God's reconciling and redemptive love and mercy with others. Through God's amazing grace and the sharing of God's love with others—even those of other religions—we can be reconciled and redeemed as children of God. Salvation is a mysterious and life-changing spiritual experience that produces a peace within us that is beyond our understanding and one that enables us to make peace with our adversaries.

The prayer of St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226 A.D.) remains a beautiful expression of the mystical and moral nature of a *common word* of faith and reminds us how we can love both God and our unbelieving neighbors in a dark and troubled world:

*Lord make me an instrument of thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is discord, union;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much
seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved, as to love,
for it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.*

Rudolph C. Barnes, Jr.

Chapter 5: The Gospel of Mark

* The call for repentance

Jesus began his ministry in his home province of Galilee preaching the Gospel: The revelation of the coming Kingdom of God and a call for repentance and belief in the good news:

The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.[SV4](Mk 1:15)

Notes: See Mt 4:17 (Source: Mk). This is the beginning of the Gospel of Mark, and like that of John it makes no mention of the nativity. It begins with Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan and witnessing the Holy Spirit descend upon him like a dove, and then being tempted in the desert by Satan (Mk 1:9-13). The other gospels also report the ministry of Jesus beginning when he was baptized and received the Holy Spirit in the River Jordan (Mt 3:13-17; Lk 3:21,22; Jn 1:32-34), an incarnation event corroborated in all four gospels while the virgin birth was reported in only two of the four gospel accounts (see the family of God and born again of the spirit). Jesus began his itinerant ministry with the call for repentance and a child-like faith as the means to enter the kingdom of God, which was a metaphor for salvation (see the coming kingdom of God, the kingdom: the parable of the treasure and pearl, and the kingdom: parable of the mustard seed). Jesus used the stories of the Pharisee and the publican and the prodigal son to illustrate the nature of repentance. Church doctrine has most often associated repentance with salvation and avoiding judgment to eternal damnation in Hell, or being among the chosen in an apocalyptic second coming when Jesus returns to transform the world into God's heavenly realm; but the teachings of Jesus suggest that the coming kingdom of God was not about either a worldly kingdom or what comes at death, but about an unseen spiritual power that could enable a person to be born again of the spirit in this life and know what it means to be a child of God (see the unseen kingdom of God and Jesus before Pilate). According to the teachings of Jesus, repentance was a precondition to God saving us from the bondage of sin and death, and Jesus never taught that God would condemn any of His creations to eternal damnation. The popular concept of hell has no Biblical authority and conflicts with the teachings of Jesus on God's merciful love and forgiveness.²⁷

* The call to discipleship

After preaching repentance to a skeptical hometown audience, Jesus began recruiting his disciples. While walking along the banks of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus encountered the fishermen Simon and his brother Andrew:

¹⁷*Come follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men.*[SV3] ¹⁸*At once they left their nets and followed him.* (Mk 1:17,18).

Notes: See Mt 4:18-22; Lk 5:1-11; Jn 1:35-42; 21:1-8 (Source: Mk). The call to discipleship that netted Simon (Peter) and Andrew, then brothers James and John, sons of Zebedee (Mk 1:19,20), and later Levi (thought to be Matthew of that Gospel; see follow me), is the same call made to modern disciples. Jesus was frequently referred to as a rabbi, or religious teacher, and it was normal for rabbis of his day to seek disciples or student followers. Jesus made it clear to those he called that the cost of discipleship was total commitment to follow his teachings of forgiveness and humble service, with leaders as servants. His mission was not to establish a new religion but to reform and revive Judaism as a faith of love over law. Any teachings attributed to Jesus that are interpreted to promote one religion over others—and that includes the Christian religion—are likely to be the creation of the early church (see prayer in common: the church and compare with prayer in secret). Jesus taught that he came to save sinners, not the righteous and that loving others, as summarized in the greatest commandment and the new command, was the moral imperative of faith and standard of legitimacy and righteousness for his disciples. This was in contrast the Old Testament standard of righteousness based on compliance with Mosaic Law. In spite of the egalitarian teachings of Jesus on the standard of love for the least, the last and the lost, there was elitism even among early Christians. The Gospel of Thomas has Jesus say: ¹*I shall choose you, one from a thousand, and two from ten thousand,* ²*and they will stand as a single one.*[SV4](Th 23:1,2) This probably refers to the reality that few choose to follow Jesus and enter the narrow gate of God's kingdom, rather than on any selection process. Jesus taught do not judge and that our judgment is self-imposed; and he never promoted any religion, not even his own. The family of God is not an exclusivist religious organization; it defines the church as a spiritual union of all who struggle to do the will of God (see the good Samaritan, living water, worship in spirit and in truth and the cost of discipleship). It is through the duty of discipleship,

not religion, that we experience salvation. It is a gift of peace and provides rest for the weary, but the transforming power of God's love must be given to be received. Sharing that spiritual power is what discipleship is all about.

*** Power over evil**

After Jesus spoke in the synagogue at Capernaum, in Galilee, an individual in the congregation who was possessed by an evil spirit acknowledged that Jesus was the Holy One of God and questioned whether he had come to destroy them; Jesus admonished the evil spirit:

²⁵*Be quiet! [SV4]*

Then Jesus gave an order to the evil spirit:

Come out of him! [SV4]

²⁶*The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. (Mk 1:25,26)*

Notes: See Lk 4:33-37,40,41; 8:26-39; Mk 1:34; 5:1-20; Mt 8:28-34 (Source: Mk). Mark records many exorcisms in which Jesus demonstrated his authority and power over evil. Exorcism required the power of God to defeat that of Satan. At this stage of his ministry, however, it seems that Jesus did not want his divine authority to be fully revealed so he commanded the evil spirits not to disclose his true identity (Mk 1:34). A later exorcism was far more dramatic and public: it involved Jesus ordering a legion of demons to leave a demoniac and enter a large herd of pigs which ran off a cliff and drowned in the Sea of Galilee (Mk 5:1-20; Mt 8:28-34; Lk 8:26-39). When these demons saw Jesus approaching they acknowledged their subservience to him and begged to be allowed to possess the pigs, and Jesus granted them their request. The herdsmen who witnessed their possessed pigs (and livelihood) going over the cliff rushed off to tell the story, and returned with many in their community who asked Jesus to leave. If there were indeed two thousand pigs involved as reported by Mark (Mk 5:13) the incident was an economic disaster for the entire community, and that made more of an impression on the people of Gerasene than seeing the former demoniac in possession of his senses. All accounts of exorcisms should be read in the context of a primitive understanding of medicine and science. Many conditions attributed to evil were likely illnesses such as epilepsy, so that some exorcisms were probably healings. One such incident involved a Gentile woman who believed her daughter was possessed by an unclean spirit, and begged Jesus to exorcise

the evil that had debilitated her. Jesus put her off, saying, ²⁷*First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to the dogs.[SV4]* Jesus was referring to the Jews as the children and the Gentiles as dogs, probably in a sarcastic manner. But the woman would not be denied, arguing that even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. Jesus said, ²⁹*For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.[SV4]*(Mk 7:27-29; Mt 15:21-28) In another incident that was probably a healing, a father brought his epileptic son to Jesus after his disciples were unable to help him. The man asked, "if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." ²³*If you can? said Jesus. Everything is possible for him who believes.[SV4]* When the man exclaimed, "I do believe, help me overcome my unbelief!" Jesus exorcised the spirit, and later explained to his disciples: ²⁹*This kind can come out only by prayer.[SV4]*(Mk 9:17-29; Mt 17:14-20; Lk 9:37-42) In Matthew, Jesus was not so charitable to his disciples. When they asked Jesus why they could not cast out the demon, he told them: *Because you have so little faith.[SV4]* I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.[SV3](Mt 17:20; see also Lk 9:37-43) Luke records Jesus sending a prophetic message to a suspicious Herod Antipas: *Go tell that fox, "I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal."*[SV3](Lk 13:32) As indicated by SV3 and SV4 designations there is doubt among scholars whether Jesus actually performed exorcisms and miraculous healings, but belief in such miracles has been an integral part of the Christian faith from its beginning (see authority to perform miracles and miracles: the work of Satan or God?). In the above accounts of exorcisms, evil spirits were expunged by divine directive, but there was the likelihood of the return of evil to any heart not protected by the prophylactic power of God's love. Jesus acknowledged that evil in its spiritual form was alive and well and often in control of worldly matters, but that it could be overcome by the love of God (see love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). He met the devil head-on in the temptation of Jesus, and taught us to pray for deliverance from evil in the Lord's prayer; but there was another more subtle form of evil present in the gospels that was beyond exorcism or prayer. It was personified in the enemies of Jesus and the early church, particularly the Pharisees (see the seven woes: condemnation of religious leaders and judgment: bringing sight and blindness). Their great sin or evil was their opposition to Jesus as the word of God, and this concept of evil was used by Christian leaders in doctrines on

heresy and apostasy to demonize religious enemies and glorify the church as God's realm on earth. As evidenced by the Crusades, the Inquisition, and the Salem witch trials, this interpretation of evil sanctified hate and brutal persecution by the church, all in the name of Christ. History records similar examples of religious exclusivism, intolerance, judgment, hate and violence in the name of God, and contemporary religious violence in the Middle East and Africa indicate no end in sight. On related powers of Jesus, see power to heal, power to forgive, and miracles: the work of Satan or God?

*** Power to heal**

The early ministry of Jesus was characterized by healing through faith. In one instance a man with leprosy demonstrated his faith by telling Jesus that he knew he could make him clean if he was willing. Showing compassion, Jesus reached out, touched the man, and said:

I am willing, he said. Be clean! [SV4] (Mk 1:41)

Notes: See Mt 4:23; 8:1-4; Lk 5:12-16; 17:11-19; Jn 4:46-54 (Source: Mk). As mentioned in power over evil, primitive knowledge blurred any distinction between exorcisms and healings (see Mk 1:32-34); and there has always been skepticism over whether Jesus actually performed exorcisms and healings or whether these miracles resulted from the belief that such conditions were caused by sin, and that the forgiveness of sin would remedy the condition (for the close relationship between healing and forgiveness, or spiritual cleansing, see power to forgive sins). Mark's gospel has Jesus tell exorcised demons and witnesses to keep his miracles a secret, as when Jesus warned the cleansed leper not to tell others that he had cured him: *See that you don't tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing as a testimony to them. [SV4] (Mk 1:44)* But the leper could not hold back, and began telling everyone what had happened. Mark's so-called *messianic secret* continues to baffle scholars; but if Jesus ever did attempt to keep his miracles secret he may have done so for two practical reasons: first, to keep his ministry from being perceived as a magic show rather than the revelation of the word of God; and second, to give him time to complete his ministry of word and deed, knowing that his enemies would have him killed if he were not discrete. Given the hostility of religious leaders to his ministry, such secrecy was required for Jesus' survival.

It would seem that the purpose of all of the miracles was to validate the authority of Jesus as the way, the truth and the life, but Jesus did not expect most religious leaders to believe him (see Lk 17:11-19, reported below, and insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus). Mark and the other gospels reported the following healings by Jesus: Jesus healed a man with a withered hand in the temple on the Sabbath, after asking the Pharisees: *Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?* [SV4](Mk 3:1-6; see Lk 13:10-17; 14:1-6 and civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law). Jesus healed a woman with a hemorrhage and even raised the dead (Mk 5:21-43; Mt 9:18-26; Lk 7:11-17; 8:40-56). Jesus healed at a distance (Mk 7:24-30; Lk 7:1-11 and Jn 46-54; see faith of the centurion in the authority of Jesus). Jesus raised his friend Lazarus (Jn 11:38-44; see miracles: work of Satan or God?), but had trouble healing in Nazareth (Mk 5:5,6; Mt 13:58) due to the lack of faith (see a prophet without honor in his hometown and power over evil). Jesus healed all who touched him at Gennesaret (Mk 5:53-56), and healed a deaf and dumb man in Decapolis (Mk 7:31-37). He healed a blind man at Bethsaida (Mk 8:22-26) and the blind beggar Bartimaeus at Jericho, where Jesus said: *Go, your faith has healed you.*[SV4](Mk 10:46-52) Luke reports Jesus healing ten men with skin diseases: They called out "*Jesus, Master, have pity on us!*" ¹⁴*When he saw them, he said, Go, show yourselves to the priests. And as they went they were cleansed.* ¹⁵*One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice.* ¹⁶*He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan.* ¹⁷*Jesus asked, Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?* ¹⁸*Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?* ¹⁹*Then he said to him, Rise and go, your faith has made you well.*[SV4](Lk 17:11-19; on the ritual rites of cleansing, see Lev 13) Since only the Samaritan returned it appears that the Jewish priests did not give credit to Jesus, and therefore to God, for the healing (see love over law and miracles: the work of Satan or God?).

*** Power to forgive sins**

Jesus had returned to Capernaum when a paralyzed man was brought to him. Because the crowd was so large the men carrying the paralytic climbed up on the roof, made a hole, and lowered the man on a stretcher to Jesus.

⁵*When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven.*

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, Why are you thinking such things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up, take your mat and walk?" ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins....

He said to the paralytic, ¹¹I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.[SV4](Mk 2:8-11)

Notes: See Mt 9:1-8; Lk 5:17-26; Jn 5:1-15 (Sources: Mk, Jn). Jesus' power to heal was often related to forgiveness, since ancient Jews believed that illness and suffering were the result of sin. Jesus both forgave sin and healed through faith in God, as was evident with Samaritans and the pagan Roman Centurion (see faith of the Centurion). And as mentioned in power over evil and power to heal, it was often as difficult to distinguish between exorcisms and healings as it was to distinguish healing from the forgiveness of sins. Possession by evil, illness and incapacity were all thought to be caused by sin, so that forgiveness of sin was a prerequisite for healing. But Jesus debunked that idea when he said that the suffering were blessed in the Beatitudes. He taught that suffering was not God's will, and more specifically that blindness was not punishment for sin, and then he demonstrated the healing power of forgiveness in the presence of Pharisees, who considered it blasphemous (see miracles: work of Satan or God? and blasphemy or the word of God). The paranoid Pharisees were right in believing that the power to forgive came only from God but wrong in rejecting Jesus as an instrument of God's healing power. They, like many religious people today, believed that God only forgave and healed those who held certain religious beliefs. Jesus taught that God was bigger than any religion and taught that God sought to reconcile and redeem humankind from the divisiveness and hatred of competing religions; but we are no closer to religious reconciliation today than in Jesus' day. The pagan centurion had faith in the healing power of God's love while the self-righteous Jews did not (see a prophet without honor in his hometown). It is interesting that in the above story no one professed any faith in order to be healed, but Jesus saw their faith and cured the paralytic. He also saw the lack of faith in the Pharisees by reading their hearts. When it came to faith, actions spoke louder than words (see a tree and its fruits and talk is cheap); but words were important as evidence of what was

in the heart and could lead to judgment (see faith, words, and judgment and blasphemies).

*** New standards of morality and faith: new wineskins**

The fact that Jesus and his disciples did not fast raised questions among religious Jews:

¹⁸*Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"*

¹⁹*Jesus answered, How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them.[SV2]* ²⁰*But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.[SV4]*

²¹*No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse.[SV3]* ²²*And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into new wineskins.[SV2](Mk 2:18-22)*

Notes: See Mt 9:14-17; Lk 5:33-39; Th 47:3-5; 104 (Sources: Mk, Th). Jesus and his followers were considered gluttons and drunkards when compared to the more austere John the Baptist (see fasting, the rejection of Jesus, hypocrisy and sanctimony, and the anointing of Jesus). While Jesus recommended austerity in his instructions to the disciples, he enjoyed social events such as dinners and weddings (see Jn 2:1-11, where Jesus turned water into wine, cited in miracles: the work of Satan or God?) and Jesus used the banquet as a metaphor for service in his parables (see serving the least of these rather than friends). The comment about guests of the bridegroom not fasting and enjoying themselves (Mk 2:19) is considered to have originated with Jesus, while the next remark is thought to have originated in the early church (Mk 2:20). Thomas links fasting with sin and, like Mark, notes that fasting is not appropriate at a wedding party: ²*What sin have I committed, or how have I been undone?* ³*Rather, when the groom leaves the bridal suite, then let the people fast and pray.*"[SV4](Th 104:2,3) In addition to using the metaphor of the bridegroom in the above parable, Jesus also used the metaphors of patched cloth and wineskins to illustrate that he was bringing new standards of morality and faith to replace the unyielding law of the Old Testament. The old wineskins and old garment represent Jewish religious rules and rituals, while the new wine and unshrunk patch represent the

new and radical teachings of Jesus. They illustrate how the new covenant of love would replace the old covenant of law (see old and new). While the early evangelists, especially Matthew, tried to reconcile the deontological teachings of the Hebrew Bible with the teleological teachings of Jesus, the metaphors in the above parable illustrate the dichotomy between the two (see laws and love: the new standard higher than the old and love over law: civil disobedience). The Lukan version (Lk 5:33-39) adds a verse that makes the story seem contradictory: *And no one after drinking old wine wants the new,[SV2] for he says, "The old is better."*[SV4](Lk 5:39) This reflects the traditional view that the old (wine) of old-time religion is better than the new (wine) of religious reform represented by Jesus. His detractors were religious leaders who rejected his teachings that put love over law. In John's gospel Jesus acknowledged that conflict when he said that he came not only so that the blind could see, but also so that those who thought they could see would be blind. (see bringing sight and blindness)

*** Miracles: the work of Satan or God?**

When accused by the Pharisees of deriving his power to heal from Satan, Jesus used logic to undermine their accusation:

²⁴*How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.* ²⁵*If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.* ²⁶*And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come.[SV3]* ²⁷*In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house.[SV2](Mk 3:24-27)*

Notes: See Mk 3:22-30; Mt 12:24-29; Lk 11:15-23; Th 35:1,2 (Sources: Mk, Q, Th). To counter the accusations of his religious enemies that his authority derived from Satan rather than God, Jesus used the metaphor of a house divided against itself (later popularized by President Lincoln) to illustrate the incompatibility of God and Satan. He also referred to the need to disable a strong man before entering his house. If Satan possessed someone, the Holy Spirit would have to overpower Satan to enter that person's heart. It was common to associate religious enemies with Satan; not only did the Pharisees associate Jesus with Satan, but the early Christian church also associated its Jewish enemies with Satan (see the truth will make you free). Most scholars believe that Jesus exorcised what were then thought to be demons, and that the above passage

originated with Jesus; but they believe most other accounts of miracles originated within the early church. In addition to exorcising demons (power over evil), healing (power to heal), and demonstrating power over nature in calming the tempest, the following miracles of Jesus were recorded: In the first and second miracles of the loaves Jesus fed multitudes with a few fish and loaves (Mk 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39; Lk 9:10-17; Jn 6:1-15). One explanation for this is that Jesus opened the hearts of the people to share what they had with others that day. Jesus was also said to have walked on water (Mk 6:45-52; Mt 14:22-33; Jn 6:16-21; see test of faith: walking on water). In the first miracle reported in John's gospel Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding party in Cana (Jn 2:1-11); he later raised Lazarus from the dead, the culmination of all miracles and a preview of Jesus' own resurrection (Jn 11:1-44). See also authority to perform miracles.

* Blasphemies

In responding to the Pharisees' accusation that he was the agent of Satan in exorcising demons, Jesus turned the charge around and characterized such accusations as blasphemy:

²⁸I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. ²⁹But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin."[SV4](Mk 3:28,29)

Notes: See Mt 12:31,32; Lk 12:10; Th 44:1-3 (Sources: Mk, Q, Th). While the above saying asserts that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is an unforgivable sin, there are no specifications for such a grave offense against God, and the very idea of an unforgivable sin is contrary to Jesus' teachings on forgiveness; but for the ancient Jews, words could cause great harm, and as evidence of what was in one's heart, words could well lead to judgment (see faith, words and judgment). Blasphemy was a capital offense under Jewish law (See Dt 13:1-6), and the Pharisees were collecting evidence to charge Jesus with that offense (see Jesus before the Sanhedrin). Jesus emphasized his miraculous works as those of God, their purpose to validate his teachings as *the Word of God* (see blasphemy or Word of God and miracles: work of Satan or God? and the way, the truth and the life). The legalistic Pharisees had challenged Jesus' testimony concerning his relationship with God; their law (as ours today) considered a person's testimony about himself self-serving and weak unless corroborated by extrinsic evidence (see Jn 5:31-38;

8:13-18 and brotherly correction). The miracles provided corroboration that Jesus' teachings were the word of God, or *Logos*, as proclaimed in Jn 1:1-14. Nicodemus was one of the few Pharisees who recognized the miracles of Jesus as divine corroboration of Jesus' teaching (see born of the spirit: Nicodemus and Jn 10:19-21); but most Pharisees became more hostile to Jesus as his miracles became more impressive. When they demanded a sign from heaven, they were looking for incriminating evidence. Jesus told them that no such sign would be given them, but his miracles were clearly such a sign, validating his teachings as the word of God (for a related parable, see insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus; also bringing sight and blindness). Just before resurrecting his friend Lazarus from death, Jesus prayed: *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.*[SV4](Jn 11:41,42) In this prayer Jesus affirmed that his public prayers and miracles were intended to convince the people that God had sent him and that his teachings were the word of God (see also Jn 14:11, and the truth will make you free).

*** Parable of the seed and harvest**

Jesus used a parable to describe the kingdom of God:

²⁶*This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸All by itself the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.*[SV2](Mk 4:26-29)

Notes: See Th 21:9 (Sources: Mk, Th). This parable follows sowing the seeds of faith and precedes the parable of the mustard seed. Jesus used the mystery of nature to illustrate how the kingdom of God, like a seed, miraculously sprouts and grows into faith and produces a bountiful harvest. Harvest was also a metaphor for judgment in the coming kingdom (see parable of the weeds, leaders in short supply, and instructions to the disciples). Many parables of the kingdom were interpreted to predict an apocalyptic second coming (see the kingdom: the parables of the treasure and the pearl, the parable of the weeds, the parable of the net and the parable of the yeast), but some allude to a spiritual kingdom, here and now, like a seed

that can grow within each of us and produce salvation (see the unseen kingdom of God and Nicodemus: born again of the spirit).

*** Power over nature: calming the tempest**

When Jesus and his disciples were crossing the Sea of Galilee in a small boat, they were caught in a furious squall.

³⁸*Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"*

³⁹*He got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the waves, Quiet! Be still! Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.*

⁴⁰*He said to his disciples, Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?[SV4](Mk 4:37-40)*

Notes: See Mt 8:18,23-27; Lk 8:22-25 (Source: Mk). This episode is similar to the other miracles (see power over evil, power to heal, power to forgive sins, authority to perform miracles, and miracles: work of Satan or God?) At this point his disciples were still referring to Jesus as teacher or rabbi (Mk 4:38), not as the Son of Man or the Messiah. Mark uses the word *terrified* to describe the reaction of the disciples and others who witnessed Jesus calming the tempest (Mk 4:41). They were terrified or awestruck by powers they knew could come only from God and that Jesus was the instrument of God's awesome power. Ironically their fear was the enemy of the very God whose power they were witnessing. That is why Jesus then spoke of their fear as a lack of faith. (Mk 4:40) We, too, can be paralyzed by fear, and we need to remember that ...*God is love, and that there is no fear in love.* (1 Jn 4:16) The words attributed to Jesus in this account, as with most miracles, are thought to have been those of the storyteller rather than Jesus, but that does not take away from story being a message from God. It is a message that faith can overcome any fear.

*** A Prophet is without honor in his hometown**

When Jesus returned to Nazareth and began teaching his friends and relatives in the synagogue, he was discouraged by their lack of faith. Jesus said to them:

Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house, is a prophet without honor.[SV2](Mk 6:4)

Notes: See Mt 13:53-58; Lk 4:16-30; Jn 4:44; Th 31:1 (Sources: Mk, Jn, Th). The people of Nazareth had grown up with Jesus and his family, and had no reason to expect miraculous things from him: *"Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son, and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?"* And they took offense at him. (Mk 6:3; see the family of God) In Luke's version of the story, Jesus told his skeptical hometown audience that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (see liberation); but then he angered them by suggesting that they were probably expecting favored treatment from him and were not likely to get it, citing Elijah and Elisha as prophets who had favored Gentiles rather than Hebrews with God's miracles. This so offended the crowd that they ran him out of town and tried to kill him. (Lk 4:23-30) It is not hard to believe that those who had known Jesus as he grew up in their community would be reluctant to accept him as their long-awaited Messiah. There is no evidence that any of them were aware of the miraculous birth reported in Matthew and Luke. Mark's gospel tells us that Jesus could not do any miracles there except heal a few sick people by laying his hands on them, and that Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith. (Mk 6:5,6) This illustrates the importance of faith to healings (see power to heal, power to forgive sins and miracles: the work of Satan or God?). The reputation of Jesus as an ordinary person among his townspeople makes it difficult to believe there was ever a glorious nativity that proclaimed him to be the Messiah; certainly his family and neighbors would have been aware of it, and would have expected Jesus to have been exercising his divine powers. See the rejection of Jesus and family of God.

*** God's commands and the traditions of the Pharisees**

When Jesus and his disciples were criticized by the Pharisees for failing to obey the Jewish law requiring them to wash before eating, Jesus quoted from Isaiah:

⁶*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.*

⁷*They worship me in vain;*

their teachings are but rules taught by men." (Is 29:13)

⁸*You have let go the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.*

⁹*And he said to them, You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own tradition!* ¹⁰*For*

Moses said, "Honor your father and your mother," (Ex 20:12; Dt 5:16) and, "Anyone that curses his father or mother must be put to death" (Ex 21:17; Lv 20:9). ¹¹But you say that if a man says to his father or mother: Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is Corban (that is, a gift devoted to God), ¹²then you no longer let him do anything for his father or mother. ¹³Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.[SV4] (Mk 7:6-13)

Notes: See Mt 15:1-9 (Source: Mk). Having been criticized by the Pharisees for his failure to obey the Law (see civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law and clean and unclean: individual responsibility and the law), Jesus turned the issue of the law around on them and condemned them for using a legal technicality to allow people to pledge their property to God (Corban) and avoid responsibility for the care of their parents. This was not the only example of how the Pharisees used a strained interpretation of the law to avoid doing the right thing (see integrity: plain talk, no oaths); they may have complied with the letter of the law, but they clearly violated its spirit. Christians do the same when they allow religious rules and doctrines (laws) to obfuscate the moral imperative to love the least of those among us (see the last judgment, serving the least of those rather than friends, laws and love: the new standard higher than the old and love over law: civil disobedience). The Nicene Creed is an early profession of Christian faith that does not even mention the word love, and it was recited by Christian zealots who slaughtered infidels and heretics in the Crusades and Inquisition. While scholars do not believe that Jesus originated the above story, it is typical of his criticism of such hypocrisy and sanctimony on the part of the religious leaders of his day (see sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican, hypocrisy: practise what you preach, humility: leaders as servants, and the seven woes: condemnation of religious leaders). Jesus did not emphasize honoring parents; he apparently felt family obligations, which were very strong under Jewish law, inhibited the obligation to love others beyond family and ethnic group. He renounced his own family to make the point and required his disciples to do the same (see family of God and renouncing family and possessions). Scholars do not believe it was the habit of Jesus to quote scripture, especially the harsh punishments of Mosaic law which are inconsistent with his teachings on forgiveness and love over law. Even so, Matthew's version of the story omits the explanatory portions found in Mark and was designated SV3, indicating it might be an echo of something Jesus said.

*** A sign from heaven**

After the second miracle of the loaves (Mk 8:1-10), some Pharisees attempted to trap Jesus by asking for a sign from heaven. Jesus sighed deeply and said:

Why does this generation ask for a miraculous sign? I tell you the truth, no sign will be given to it.[SV3](Mk 8:12)

Notes: See Mt 12:38-42; 16:1-4; Lk 11:16; Jn 6:30-51 (Sources: Mk, Q). It is ironic that the Pharisees asked for a sign from heaven after the second miracle of the loaves. Were they unaware of these and other miracles? Despite Jesus saying that no signs would be given, there were many signs validating the authority of Jesus as the Son of God, including his baptism (see also miracles, power over evil, power to heal, power to forgive sins, bread of life, end times and destiny: prediction of death and resurrection). Matthew's version of the above passage refers to a sign from heaven: *A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.[SV4](Mt 16:4)*. The sign of Jonah relates to the crucifixion and resurrection, as becomes evident in a related passage on interpreting the times found in Matthew and Luke: ³⁹*A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.* ⁴⁰*For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* ⁴¹*The men of Ninevah will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.* ⁴²*The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.[SV4](Mt 12:39-42; also Lk 11:29-30)* The resurrection as a sign was also alluded to in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where Abraham told a rich man in hell who wanted his surviving brothers warned of the consequences of sin: *"If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."*[SV4](Lk 16:31). The Pharisees saw the miracles of Jesus as a sign, not of God but of Satan (see miracles: work of Satan or God? and blasphemy or Word of God?).

*** Threat to the faith: the yeast of the Pharisees**

When Jesus was traveling with his disciples across the Sea of Galilee, they expressed concern that they had only one loaf of bread in the boat for all of them. Jesus warned them,

¹⁴*The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵"Be careful" Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod."*[SV3]

¹⁶ *They discussed this with one another and said: "It is because we have no bread."*

¹⁷ *Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember?*

¹⁹*When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"*[SV4]

"Twelve," they replied.

²⁰*"And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?"*

They answered, "Seven."

²¹*He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"*[SV4](Mk 8:14-21).

Notes: See Mt 16:5-12; Lk 12:1-3 (Source: Mk). Jesus understood the threat of the Pharisees to all who would spread the word of God, and that the threat could be subtle and indirect. Jesus was concerned about the gullibility of his disciples to the teachings of the Pharisees when they argued matters of faith. Matthew's version of the above passage provided an explanation: *Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in the bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.* (Mt 16:12) Often Jesus explained his parables to his disciples (see parable of the sower); here he was reminding them of miracles which validated his teachings as the word of God (see miracles, power over evil, power to heal, power to forgive sins, miracles: work of Satan or God?, laws and love, and hypocrisy and sanctimony). Luke did not portray the disciples as being so dense; in his version he left out the questions and answers on leftover food (see Lk 12:1-3). The SV scholars believe that the part left out by Luke was created by Mark and copied by Matthew, and that Jesus once referred to yeast (leaven) in his teachings, but in a unique and unexpected context (see the parable of the yeast). Leaven was commonly used as a symbol of evil (see 1 Cor 5:7; Lev 2:11), which explains the use of unleavened bread in religious rituals

such as the Eucharist. In this context yeast was used in its usual sense, symbolic of the evil of the Pharisees and their rejection of Jesus (on the perceived evil of such religious leaders, see the seven woes: condemnation of religious leaders; on the dichotomy between good and evil, see miracles: work of Satan or God? and blasphemy or Word of God?). On other occasions Jesus was more explicit in warning his disciples of the more subtle forms of evil: *Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.*[SV4](Mt 10:28; cited in courage: open and fearless speech)

*** The authority of Jesus**

On one occasion Jesus asked his disciples who people thought he was. The disciples had different answers: some thought Jesus was John the Baptist, others Elijah, and others thought him to be a prophet. Jesus looked at Peter:

²⁹*But what about you? he asked. Who do you say I am?*[SV4] Peter answered *"You are the Christ (Messiah)."* ³⁰Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. (Mk 8:27-30)

Later the Pharisees questioned Jesus about his authority:

²⁸*"By what authority are you doing these things?" they asked.*

"And who gave you authority to do this?"

²⁹Jesus replied, *I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things.*

³⁰John's baptism--was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me.[SV4]

³¹They discussed it among themselves and said, *"If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Then why didn't you believe him?'"* ³²But if we say, *'From men'...* (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

³³So they answered Jesus, *"We don't know."*

Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.[SV4](Mk 11:28-33)

Notes: For Mk 8:27-30, see Mt 16:13-20; Lk 9:18-21; Th 13:1-8 (Sources: Mk, Th); for Mk 11:29-33, see Mt 21:23-27; Lk 20:1-8 (Source: Mk). The authority of Jesus to teach the word of God was the central issue of his ministry, and relatively few of those who heard his teachings or witnessed his miracles accepted his authority as the word of God or him as the long-awaited Messiah. It was only after the Resurrection that his followers accepted his authority as the Son and Word of God. In this

saying Jesus addressed the issue of his authority first with Peter and then with his detractors, and with the latter he turned the tables on them by asking them a question on the authority of John the Baptist. They could not answer it without acknowledging that Jesus, like John, acted with the authority of God, or that John was a fraud. Jesus never claimed to be God, and the allegations of the Pharisees that he was guilty of blasphemy were absurd and unjust, even though church doctrine made the same claim. Jesus most often described himself as the *Son of Man* (translated in the *SV* as *Son of Adam*) with the authority to speak the word of God. The Gospel of John elaborates this authority by presenting Jesus symbolically as the *Logos*, or *Word of God* made flesh (Jn 1:1-18). John also emphasizes Jesus as the Son of God, and in his first discourse has Jesus say that he can do nothing by himself--it is only as the instrument of God's power that he performs signs and miracles: *I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*[SV4](Jn 5:19; see also 5:20-30) Later in the same discourse Jesus speaks of John the Baptist testifying to his authority as the Son of God, but Jesus is clearly skeptical that his detractors will ever acknowledge his authority. (Jn 5:31-47; for other Johannine references to the divine authority of Jesus, see Jn 3:13; 6:62; 7:16-29; 8:14-19, 25-29; 10:25-32; 14:12,24,28; 16:27,28, faith and eternal life and bread of life) Mark has Jesus equate welcoming his followers (as children) as welcoming Jesus and God as the One who sent him (see accepting children as Jesus). Matthew, like Mark, has Peter acknowledge Jesus to be the Messiah in Mt 16:13-20, after which Peter is designated as the rock of the future church. John's gospel includes a similar testimonial of Martha at Jn 11:27 and that of Jesus before Pilate acknowledging that he came as a king. Scholars have concluded that these passages did not originate with Jesus but within the early church to promote the divine status of Jesus. It should be remembered that the Jews were not expecting their Messiah to be God in the flesh but a leader like King David sent by God to establish His kingdom on earth. The teachings of Jesus in the Synoptic gospels are more ambiguous on his divinity than in John's unique and highly symbolic gospel which presents Jesus as the *Logos*, or *Word of God*, and has Jesus proclaim himself as such in a series of *I am* statements found only in John's gospel, such as *I am the bread of life* (Jn 6:48; see bread of life, the way, the truth and the life, the true vine, the light of the world, the good shepherd and blasphemy or the Word of God?). The Synoptic gospels provide better historic evidence of the life and teachings of Jesus than does John's

gospel, but even they must be read critically on matters of divinity since they were written to promote the church and were undoubtedly influenced by the letters of Paul which predate all of them. In the Synoptic gospels Jesus predicts his death and resurrection (see blasphemies, destiny: prediction of death and resurrection, and the transfiguration), but he does not assert his divinity. Jesus referred to God as his Father and himself as the Son (Mt 11:27; Lk 10:22; Jn 10:15), but he remained evasive when questioned as to his divinity, even as his life was hanging in the balance, first before the Sanhedrin (Mk 14:55-64; Mt 26:57-68; Lk 22:53-71; Jn 18:19-24) and later before Pontius Pilate (Mk 15:2-5; Mt 27:11-14; Lk 22:2,3; Jn 18:28-38). Thus Jesus asserted his divine authority to bring God's word to humankind, but not his personal divinity. Even in John, the issue of divinity related to the teachings of Jesus as *the Word of God*, not as God *per se*. Some of his day considered Jesus to be an inspired philosopher-prophet, some a blasphemer, and others (a minority) considered him to be the Messiah or Christ who was ordained by God to preach the Word (see blasphemy or Word of God?). The Gospel of Thomas leaves the status of Jesus even more ambiguous, suggesting that the disciples, including Peter, all had different ideas, and that Jesus provided no answers: ¹*Jesus said to his disciples, Compare me to something and tell me what I am like.* ²*Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a just angel."* ³*Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher."* ⁴*Thomas said to him, "Teacher, my mouth is utterly unable to say what you are like."* ⁵*Jesus said, I am not your teacher. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring that I have tended.*[SV4](Th 13:1-5) Jesus taught and exemplified sacrificial love as God's greatest commandment and new command, knowing that God in His own time would affirm that love as God's word and will. It was enough for Jesus to assert that his teachings were the word of God; his miracles and ultimate victory over death would validate his divine authority (see power over evil, power to heal, miracles: the work of Satan or God?, faith of the Centurion in the authority of Jesus, and authority to perform miracles). The contentious issue of whether Jesus was God's messenger or God in the flesh may appear critical to the faithful, but it need not be. That issue will remain mystical and beyond empirical proof; but the teachings of Jesus on forgiveness, love and reconciliation have been validated by history to be the only solutions to human depravity and the hate and violence that have contaminated the world since the beginning of time. God validated those moral teachings by giving Jesus victory over death, and God continues to validate the transforming power of his forgiveness, love and mercy through the Holy Spirit. If we

allow the experience of the Holy Spirit and our critical reason to illuminate the teachings of Jesus in the gospel accounts, we will be more focused on following Jesus and sharing God's love and mercy with others than on worshipping Jesus as God and seeking to convert others to the Christian religion. (see faith and eternal life, tolerance, forgiveness, love and laws: the new standard higher than the old and love over law: civil disobedience) How Christians see the relationship of Jesus to God is a mysterious matter of faith that shapes their relationships with others, especially when Christians believe that those who do not share their faith are condemned to Hell. Muslims have the same problem. While the Qur'an recognizes Jesus to be a prophet and messenger of God like Moses and Muhammad, it asserts that God has no family and condemns those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God (see Index of selected provisions of the Qur'an, *Belief, rewards and punishment for Jews and Christians* and *Stories about Jesus*).

*** Destiny: Prediction of death and resurrection**

The gospel accounts have Jesus repeatedly predict his death and resurrection:

³¹*He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.*

³²*But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. ³³Get behind me, Satan! he said. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.[SV4](Mk 8:31-33)*

Notes: See Mt 16:21-23; Lk 9:22 (Source: Mk). This is the first of three predictions of the crucifixion and resurrection in Mark (see Mk 9:31 and 10:32-34; also Mt 17:22-25; 20:17-19; 26:1,2; Lk 9:43-45; 13:31-33; 17:25; 18:31-34). SV scholars believe that these predictions were put on the lips of Jesus by Mark to establish the crucifixion as God's blood sacrifice of His son to atone for the sins of the world, as articulated by St. Paul in his *atonement doctrine* (see Rm 3:21-26; 5:6-19; I Cor 15:3). Thus the sacrificial death of Jesus became the primary purpose for his coming into the world and the cornerstone of the *Kerygma*, the earliest Christian dogma, which asserted that the risen Christ sat at the right hand of God and would soon return in a *Parousia* to initiate God's kingdom and a new age on earth. These mystical beliefs were dominant in the early church before

the gospel accounts were written and likely influenced them, taking precedence over the moral teachings of Jesus in church doctrines. But as time passed without a second coming the church had to consider new interpretations of the crucifixion and resurrection. After 2,000 years of theological speculation and debate there remains doubt as to whether Jesus saw his primary purpose to die as a divine sacrifice for the atonement of sin or to teach the word of God. Traditional church doctrines such as *The Apostles' Creed* remain the standard of the Christian faith, emphasizing the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as the atonement of sin and making no mention of the moral imperative of sacrificial love. It is obvious that St. Paul, a Pharisee converted to the Christian religion, would interpret the crucifixion as God's blood sacrifice of His Son and a physical resurrection at the end of the age to initiate the coming of God's kingdom on earth; but a more likely explanation of the crucifixion is that Jesus was executed by the Romans at the insistence of religious leaders who felt threatened by his radical teachings, and that his resurrection was God's validation of his teachings as God's living and eternal Word that could not be killed. History has confirmed that those holding power do not hesitate to eliminate those who threaten them; and while the ancient Jews expected their Messiah to usher in a new age with God's kingdom on earth, 2,000 years of history suggest that wasn't God's plan. Despite theological speculation, the mystical meanings of the crucifixion and resurrection remain mystical, but the moral teachings of Jesus have been validated by history as the heart of legitimacy and the only means to a lasting peace in a world contaminated with hate and violence (see the end times, life after death and love, the Holy Spirit, the gift of peace and the cost of discipleship that follows this passage in Mark, Matthew, and Luke).

*** Selfless service: the cost of discipleship**

After rebuking Peter, Jesus called the crowd and his disciples and taught them a conundrum about life and death:

³⁴*If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* ³⁵*For whoever wants to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.*[SV4]

³⁶*What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?* ³⁷*Or what can a man give in return for his soul?*[SV3](Mk 8:34-37)

Notes: See Mt 10:39; 16:24-26; Lk 9:23-26; 17:33; Jn 12:25; Th 55:2 (Sources: Mk, Q, Jn, Th). This saying about denying oneself and following Jesus, even to the point of losing one's life in order to save it, is both common to all gospel accounts and deeply mystical. It reflects a spiritual understanding of life and death, and the need to die to the loves of the world in order to experience the transforming power of the love of God, which gives us new spiritual life (see Nicodemus: born again of the Spirit). In this way it ties the love of God with love of neighbor as set forth in the greatest commandment, relating the mystical to the moral imperative of our faith. It is a symbolic way of describing the sacrificial nature of God's love for us as taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ and a directive to share that kind of love with others if we are to be disciples of Jesus. It is not a call to martyrdom, but a call to a life of sacrificial forgiveness, love and humble service. While the Markan version is designated S4, this saying is likely that of Jesus since it is found in all the gospel accounts. The Lukan version of saving one's life by losing it is considered the most authentic: *Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.*[SV2](Lk 17:33). The Gospel of John has a Gnostic twist, speaking of hating life rather than loving it in order to gain eternal life: *The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*[SV3](Jn 12:25; also cited in Jesus predicts his death) John's gospel includes many references to life and death as a spiritual rather than physical state of being (see born again of the Spirit and faith and eternal life). This spiritual dimension of life and death helps explain salvation as an experience that comes in this life, not at one's death, and relates one's relationships with others to eternal life (see giving in order to receive; and for the related *first/last* dichotomy, see humility: leaders as servants). While suffering (carrying a cross) often comes with sacrificial love, self-denial and suffering are not the same as sacrificial love and are not virtues in themselves; Jesus never fasted and had no desire to suffer and die on the cross, even though he was willing to do so to demonstrate the power of God's love for us (see fasting and the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak). On the other hand the selfishness of seeking the pleasures and powers of the world is an obstacle to God's love (sin) and leads to spiritual death (see greed and hoarding possessions, treasures and the heart and riches and salvation). For suffering to be virtuous it must be motivated by sacrificial love, even to the point of giving one's life for others as taught and exemplified by Jesus (see Jn 15:13 in a new command). While Jesus was candid about the costs of discipleship (see

instructions to the disciples), he also pointed out the benefits of inner peace provided by selfless service (see rest for the weary). By describing discipleship in terms of spiritual life over the bondage of sin and death Jesus was saying that our faith must go beyond belief in mystical matters—even in Jesus as God—and relate to our everyday relationships with others. See call to discipleship, unconditional commitment to discipleship, vine of love, pride and peer pressure; faith and persecution, and faith, God, and money. The *Prayer of Saint Francis* puts the moral imperative of sacrificial love in prayerful perspective: we must give in order to receive (see *The Rest of the Story*).

* Ashamed of Jesus

Jesus admonished those who were unwilling to risk associating with him and following his teachings:

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.[SV4](Mk 8:38)

Notes: See Mt 10:32,33; 16:27; Lk 12:8,9 (Sources: Mk, Q). This saying is thought to have originated in the early church to provide support for early Christians who faced persecution for asserting their faith in a risen Christ. Matthew has two sayings relating to opposition to Jesus (Mt 10:32,33; 12:31-32). The first is more judgmental: ³²*Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my father in heaven.* ³³*But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.[SV4](Mt 10:32,33; also Lk 12:8,9)* The second is more forgiving, making a distinction between an offense against Jesus and one against the Holy Spirit: ³¹*Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.* ³²*Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or the age to come.[SV4](Mt 12:31-32)* Such a distinction could have been made to counter opposition in the early church to the Holy Spirit being the successor to Jesus as the word of God (Jn 14:26). Opposition to Jesus was the norm during his lifetime. Following him was not fashionable for Jews in his day, as evidenced by Nicodemus waiting for the cover of darkness to visit Jesus (see Nicodemus: born again of the spirit). Pride and peer pressure kept most status-conscious Jews away from Jesus to avoid embarrassment among their leaders, most of whom saw Jesus as their enemy (Nicodemus was a notable exception).

The parable of the good Samaritan has religious Jews pass by a wounded Jew alongside the road before a detested Samaritan stops to help. It illustrates how religion can actually inhibit acts of sacrificial love, but the parable is found only in Luke's gospel which was written to Gentiles, not Jews.

Being *ashamed* of Jesus is condemned in this saying. *Shame* is a form of self-pity and evidence of spiritual weakness, but should not be confused with humility which is a Christian virtue associated with true faith, but not with religious sanctimony (see humility: leaders as servants, humility and sanctimony: the Pharisee and the publican, and humility in social matters).

* The coming Kingdom of God

Following a reference to an apocalyptic coming of the Son of Man, Jesus predicted the Kingdom of God was imminent:

I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God come with power.[SV3](Mk 9:1)

Notes: See Mt 16:28; Lk 9:27 (Source: Mk). This passage indicates that some living during the time of Jesus would see the kingdom of God before their death (see end times and the unseen Kingdom of God), thus fostering the idea of an imminent *parousia*, or second coming. While history confirms that an apocalypse never came, the first Christians experienced spiritual transformations and were born again of the Spirit (see the parable of the weeds, the parables of the treasure and the pearl, the parable of the net, the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed, and the parable of the yeast). The early church was split in its expectations of the coming kingdom, whether Jesus was describing an apocalyptic worldly event or an individual spiritual transformation. As time passed without an apocalyptic second coming the idea of a spiritual kingdom gained ground. The Apostle Paul's early letters reflected an expectation of an imminent second coming, while John's Gospel, written at the end of the 1st Century, described the spiritual transformation with Nicodemus: being born again of the spirit (see faith and eternal life). The Gospel of John had the advantage of history: it was written after all those who were standing with Jesus had tasted death without experiencing an apocalyptic second coming. (see also destiny: prediction of death and resurrection)

*** The transfiguration**

Peter, James, and John were with Jesus on a high mountain when his clothes became dazzling white and Elijah and Moses appeared before them, talking to Jesus. The three disciples were frightened, but Peter suggested to Jesus that they put up three shelters for the unearthly trio.

⁷*Then a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud:*

This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him! [SV4]

⁸*Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. ⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what "rising from the dead" meant. ¹¹And they asked him, "Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?"*

¹²*Jesus replied, To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him. [SV4] (Mk 9:2-13)*

Notes: See Mt 17:1-13; Lk 9:28-36 (Source: Mk). The transfiguration of Jesus was an incarnation event. The voice of God from the cloud was a reaffirmation of the ordination of Jesus as the Son of God, first reported during the baptism of Jesus (Mk 1:9-11) and in the nativity stories in Matthew and Luke. The story of the transfiguration helped establish the authority of Jesus in the early church as the Son and word of God who announced the coming kingdom of God and brought a new standard for doing God's will (see the family of God). In Matthew's version, the disciples fell on their faces when they heard the voice of God. Jesus then came and touched them, and said: *Get up. Don't be afraid. [SV4] (Mt 17:6,7)*. The disciples resolved the question about Elijah by concluding that Jesus had been speaking of John the Baptist (Mt 17:9-13). The early Christian church believed that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to herald the day of the Lord (see Mal 4:5). Scholars believe this passage was a fabrication by the early church to conform the story of Jesus to the stories of the Old Testament prophets. Jesus cited Old Testament prophets to establish his authority to announce the word of God and the coming kingdom, not to establish his divinity (see mercy, not sacrifice).

* Accepting children as Jesus

After telling his disciples those who want to be first must be last and servant of all, Jesus took a little child in his arms and said:

Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.[SV4](Mk 9:37)

Notes: Mt 18:5; Lk 9:48; 18:6; Jn 13:20 (Source: Mk). This passage uses little children as symbols of those with a child-like faith, like the disciples of Jesus (see Mk 10:24), who become instruments of the transforming power of God's love to all whose lives they touch. It speaks of the divine agency of such children of God to all who welcome them and become members of the family of God, and of the spiritual relationship between them, Jesus and God. Using the metaphor of children as followers of Jesus builds on the metaphor of being born again of the spirit. The parallel passage in Matthew is taken from the Book of Q and considered more authentic, although it omits any reference to children: *He who receives you [listens to you in Lk 10:16] receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me.[SV4](see messenger for Jesus, Mt 10:40-42; Lk 10:16; Source: Q)* In this way it relates to the greatest commandment: we love God by loving others as ourselves, including the least, the last and the lost (the *children* of the world). SV scholars believe that Mark altered the more original Q version to fit his context. The alternative to welcoming Jesus and his disciples is to reject them (see rejection of Jesus and ashamed of Jesus).

* Tolerance

On one occasion John told Jesus that the disciples had seen a man casting out devils in Jesus' name and that they had tried to stop him. Jesus admonished John:

³⁹*Do not stop him. No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me.[SV4]* ⁴⁰*For whoever is not against us is for us.[SV3](Mk 9:39,40)*

Notes: See Lk 9:49,50; 11:23; Mt 12:30 (Sources: Mk, Q). Jesus sought followers, but never sought to convert those of other faiths, such as Gentiles and Samaritans, to the Jewish faith. It is easy for Christians to forget that Jesus was a Jew who never promoted any religion, not even his own. Jesus never

condemned those of other faiths and had no tolerance for those who did, and he condemned sanctimonious Pharisees for their hypocrisy and sanctimony (see the seven woes: condemnation of religious leaders and sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican). In Luke's version of the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor Jesus used an apostate Samaritan—a person detested by Jews—to answer the question posed by a Pharisee: *Who is my neighbor?* (Lk 10:29-37) According to the Gospel of John, Jesus was sent to save and not condemn the world (see faith and eternal life); salvation came with following Jesus and sharing the love and mercy of God with others, not with professing exclusivist religious beliefs or following religious rules and rituals (see riches and salvation; and mercy, not sacrifice). Jesus spoke of faith as enabling miracles, but it was faith in Jesus as the instrument of God's transforming power and not faith in any religion, as when Jesus healed a paralytic in Lk 5:17-26 and healed a Centurion's servant in Lk 7:1-10 (see power to heal, power to forgive and power over evil). Judgment as to true faith was for God, not man. Jesus told the apostate Samaritan woman at Jacob's well that the time had come for both Samaritans and Jews to worship in spirit and truth. In his instructions to the disciples, Jesus told them to walk away (to shake the dust off their sandals) from those who opposed their message. In telling his disciples, *Whoever is not against us is for us* (Mk 9:40), Jesus urged cooperation with those of other faiths who were not against his teachings. Following Luke's version of this passage, Jesus rebuked his disciples for suggesting that fire be brought down on Samaritans who had rejected him (see Lk 9:51-56). Tolerance of other religious beliefs is required by Jesus' new command to love one another, to include love of enemies, and is especially relevant in a globalized world of competitive religions. The parable of the weeds also teaches tolerance of other faiths, leaving it to God to judge heresy. Jesus commanded that we do not judge in expressing the reciprocity of the golden rule and to give in order to receive which requires tolerance, openness, and inclusiveness. According to these teachings, the virtues of tolerance and forgiveness are at the heart of the sacrificial love taught and exemplified by Jesus (see criticizing self before others and dealing with rejection). Although there are sayings in Matthew, Luke and John that seem to contradict this saying on tolerance, such as *He who is not with me is against me.*[SV3](Mt 12:30; Lk 11:23), they were in other contexts and should not be understood as contradicting the teachings of Jesus on forgiveness, love, mercy and inclusiveness. Since religious intolerance and exclusivity were prevalent in the early church, scholars believe that sayings supporting religious intolerance

originated in the early church rather than with Jesus (See tolerance and judgment, brotherly correction, faith and eternal life and the way, the truth and the life).

*** Casting off sin**

Jesus continued teaching his disciples:

⁴²And if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck.[SV4] ⁴³If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, where the fire never goes out. [⁴⁴Where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] ⁴⁵And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown in hell. [⁴⁶where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.] ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell,[SV3] ⁴⁸"where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched." [SV4] (Mk 9:42-48)

Notes: See Mt 5:29,30; 18:6,8,9,10,14; Lk 17:12 (Sources: Mk; as to perpetual fire, Is 66:24). The above passage is the Markan version of leading others astray (Mk 9:43-47). As discussed in child-like faith, in the early church little ones were probably new converts to Christianity who were thought to have a special status in the Kingdom: See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.[SV4](Mt 18:10). And after Matthew's version of the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus was reported to have said, *In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.*[SV4](Mt 18:14). Jesus used *little ones* as a metaphor for his followers and disciples. This is evident in Matthew's version of Mk 9:41 which is about giving a glass of water to the disciples, and Matthew adds *little ones: And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.* (Mt 10:42) It is clear that Jesus used *little ones* to refer to early converts to the faith. The proverb about the millstone is thought to be from common lore, not Jesus, and the references to eternal worms and fire is from Isaiah. The bracketed portions were not included in early manuscripts of Mark, so they have been dropped from current translations as

later additions by scribes. The emphasis on punishment, judgment and hell is not characteristic of Jesus, but was characteristic of the early Christian church, which found the Old Testament God of judgment and punishment congenial to its exclusivist purposes; the fear of God and His vengeance was a strong incentive, albeit negative, for repentance and obedience. It should be noted that the reference to hell is not to a place of eternal damnation but to *Gehenna*, the city dump for Jerusalem. It was a miserable place, always burning and overrun by feral dogs gnashing their teeth as they fought over scraps of food. It was a perfect metaphor for the bondage of sin and death, the spiritual condition of hell on earth which is the absence of the peace and joy of God's kingdom in this life. It was not the Hell popularized by the church as a place of eternal damnation where God consigned sinners after their death.²⁷ As for maiming the body by cutting off one's hand or foot or gouging out one's eye, these are clearly metaphors for eliminating the incentive to sin through the spiritual powers of God's saving grace. The teachings of Jesus do not support mortification (harming oneself as a matter of faith), a practice which became prevalent in the early Christian church which was perhaps derived from this passage. But the idea of cutting off members that caused a person to sin was a part of Mosaic law and modern Islamic law, which both mandate cutting off the hands of thieves. But if spoken by Jesus this could not have been intended to be taken literally but as hyperbole. If a person is tempted to sin, the thought and not the offending member should be purged (as to the sin of adultery, see adultery and lust). The teachings of Jesus assume love for self and then for others, as in loving your neighbor as yourself (the greatest commandment) and treating others as you would have them treat you (the golden rule). Likewise, forgiveness must begin with forgiving oneself, and then others. We cannot love and forgive others if we hate ourselves, nor can we love God and hate any person, including ourselves (see 1 Jn 4:19-21; see also anger and reconciliation and give in order to receive).

*** Request for precedence**

James and John asked Jesus to allow them to sit on his right and left once the kingdom was established.

³⁸*You don't know what you are asking, Jesus said. Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?*

³⁹*"We can," they answered.*

Jesus said to them, You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.[SV4] (Mk 10:38-40)

Notes: See Mt 20:20-23; Lk 12:50 (Source: Mk). The remaining disciples were annoyed by this attempt by two of their number to achieve precedence in what they thought would be a worldly kingdom. Jesus used the occasion to admonish his disciples on seeking positions of worldly power by teaching that God's kingdom would not be like the kingdoms of worldly rulers. Instead of "lording it over" their subjects, the greatest in God's kingdom would be servants to all, and *...whoever wants to be first must be slave of all*. (Mk 10:41-45; see humility: leaders as servants). At the time, the disciples had no idea what Jesus meant when he said they would drink from his cup and share his baptism. The story is typical of Mark, who developed the image of the disciples as slow to understand the true nature of God's kingdom as a spiritual rather than a worldly kingdom (see the unseen kingdom of God). They were like most Jews of Jesus' day who were expecting a Messiah who would overthrow Roman oppression and restore the power and glory of ancient Israel.

*** The power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness**

When Peter called the attention of Jesus to the withered fig tree that he had cursed, Jesus answered:

²²Have faith in God. ²³I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.[SV3](Mk 11:22-25)

Notes: See Mt 6:14,15; 7:7-11; 17:20; 21:21,22; Lk 6:37; 11:9-13; 17:6; 18:1-8; Jn 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,24,26; Th 48; 106:2; 1 Cor 13:2 (Sources: Q, Mk, Jn, Th). There are several themes in this passage. The first refers to an earlier report recorded in Mark (Mk 11:14[SV4]) and Matthew (Mt 21:19[SV4]) in which Jesus cursed a fig tree found to be without fruit. Luke made a different use of the barren fig tree metaphor--one more consistent with the teachings of Jesus on mercy and forgiveness (see patience with sinners). The second theme has to do with

the power of prayer, even to move mountains into the sea. The Gospel of Thomas links peace and unity with the power to move mountains: Jesus said, *If two make peace with each other in a single house, they will say to the mountain, "Move from here!" and it will move.*[SV3](Th 48) *When you make the two into one, you will become children of Adam,[SV4] and when you say, "Mountain, move from here!" it will move.*[SV3](Th 106:1,2) Luke uses a tree in the place of a mountain, but with the same message (Lk 17:6[SV3]). These accounts in different contexts of moving mountains with prayer indicate the saying was common (it was also used by Paul in 1 Cor 13:2). The third theme, also related to prayer, is *ask and you will receive*, and it is more fully developed in the Gospel of John (Jn 14:13,14; 15:7,16; 16:23,24,26[SV4]). Scholars are doubtful that these passages were the words of Jesus, but he did teach on the power of prayer and faith in numerous sayings and on the need to forgive others in order to be forgiven. The power of prayer depends upon what is in one's heart. Prayer motivated by a heart full of God's love will be answered in that context. Like forgiveness, prayer illustrates the reciprocity of God's love and mercy, as in the *Lord's Prayer* (Lk 6:37[SV2]). See effective prayer, prayer in secret, prayer in common, and persistence in prayer; also reconciliation before worship, give and you will receive, and forgiveness. Note that Mk 11:26 is omitted; it is provided in a footnote to the NIV: *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your sins.* (Mk 11:26)

*** Rejection of the capstone**

Following his parable of the wicked tenants in which the tenants killed the owner's son, Jesus asked his audience,

⁹*What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.* ¹⁰*Haven't you read the scripture:*

*"The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone;*

¹¹*the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous to our eyes?"*[SV4](Mk 12:9-11)

Notes: See Mt 21:40-43; Lk 20:15-18; Th 66; Ps 118:22, 23; Is 28:16 (Sources: Mk, Th, Ps). This teaching follows the parable of the wicked tenants. The Pharisees understood the implication of that parable for them: They had been entrusted with leadership of God's chosen people, but had rejected God's son and would receive God's judgment. The Pharisees would have

liked to have arrested Jesus, but they were afraid of the crowd so they went away. (Mk 12:12) The parable that preceded this passage, at least the non-allegorized version found in the Gospel of Thomas (see Th 65:1-7 cited in parable of the wicked tenants) was considered to have originated with Jesus; but SV scholars believe this passage, with its citation of Old Testament scripture, was added by the gospel writers after they had reshaped the original parable into the allegorical form found in the Synoptic Gospels. The judgmental language is not consistent with the teachings of Jesus on tolerance, inclusiveness, mercy, love, and forgiveness; it is more characteristic of the Old Testament God of law, vengeance and judgment familiar to the Pharisees (see the rejection of Jesus).

*** Lineage of Jesus: Christ as son of David**

The Pharisees believed the Messiah had to be in the lineage of David. While teaching in the temple, Jesus used Davidic scripture to debunk this genealogical requirement:

³⁵How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David? ³⁶David himself speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared "The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet." ³⁷David himself calls him "Lord." How then can he be his son?[SV4](Mk 12:35-37; Ps 110:1)

Notes: See Mt 22:41-46; Lk 20:41-44 (Source: Mk). The importance of genealogical lineage to the Jews is evident in the beginning of Matthew, which traces the lineage of David to Jesus (Mt 1:1-37), and also in Luke, which makes a point of Jesus being in the House (or tribe) of David (Lk 1:27). The Jewish expectations of a Messiah were based on the model of King David as a great leader and warrior. Peter used the same scripture (Ps 110:1) to place Jesus at the right hand of God in Acts 2:34,35 (see also Heb 1:13; 10:12,13). The early Christian concept of Christ (the Greek for Messiah, or anointed one) was of a risen Christ who in the end times would return on the clouds in an apocalyptic *parousia* and restore the power and glory of ancient Israel. Matthew and Luke record an incarnation through a virgin birth and nativity while Mark and John do not. John's gospel has its own Christian creation story with Jesus presented as the human embodiment of the *Logos* or word of God that originated with God (Jn 1:1-14; see born again of the Spirit and faith and eternal life). All the gospels report Jesus being ordained or incarnated by the Holy Spirit in the River Jordan at the beginning of his ministry (see the call to

repentance and born again of the Spirit), and John's Gospel reports Jesus promising the disciples that God would send them the Holy Spirit after he left them *...to teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you.* (Jn 14:26; see love, the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace). John the Baptist disabused the Pharisees and Sadducees of any genealogical preference for salvation: *And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.* (Mt 3:9; see the truth will make you free) If we look to the teachings of Jesus there is no mention of his lineage other than in the above passage. The Gospel of John reports Jesus referring to Jews as sons of the devil in anti-Semitic language totally out of character for him: *You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks in his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.*[SV4](Jn 8:44; see the truth will make you free). References to the family of Jesus complicate the issue of his lineage, the virgin birth and the destiny of Jesus as Messiah. When they heard of his preaching and miraculous powers they considered him crazy, which was not consistent with knowledge of the angelic pronouncements surrounding a virgin birth (see the family of God: true kinsmen of Jesus and a prophet without honor in his own hometown). Jesus never suggested his authority was based on divine lineage, and once ignored his own family to advocate spiritual kinship with him in the family of God a relationship not based on blood kin but on doing God's will. Jesus was especially sensitive to the negative, prejudicial effect of Jewish family loyalty and lineage consciousness to the extent that it promoted ethnic exclusivity (see renouncing family and possessions and the good Samaritan). His teachings emphasized the reconciliation and redemptive power and inclusiveness of God's love; the greatest commandment, loving your enemy and the new command required the elimination of all obstacles to universal love and brotherhood, including family and ethnic loyalties (see the last judgment and serving the least of those instead of friends). If Jesus spoke the above words to the Pharisees, which scholars doubt, they were probably sarcastic. He likely never asserted his lineage to David, which would have implied his being the political and military Messiah expected by the Jews; instead, he referred to himself as *the Son of Man* (or Adam), suggesting a more generic origin and a destiny as a Messiah who could transcend the limits of Judaism with a universal following.

Chapter 6: The Gospel of Matthew

* The temptation of Jesus

After Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan and received the Holy Spirit, which descended upon him like a dove (see the call for repentance), he, like John, was drawn into the wilderness:

¹Then he was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. ²After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." ⁴Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man does not live on bread alone, but from every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" [SV4] (see Dt 8:13)

⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. ⁶"If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" (see Ps 91:11,12)

⁷Jesus answered him, "It is also written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test." [SV4] (see Dt 6:16)

⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ⁹"All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

¹⁰Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" [SV4] (Mt 4:1-10; see Dt 6:13)

Notes: See Mk 1:12,13; Lk 4:1-13 (Source: Q). The first temptation of Jesus was to satisfy his hunger after fasting 40 days and nights. While Jesus did not succumb to the temptation to feed himself he later created food for thousands of his hungry followers (see miracles: the work of Satan or God?). The second temptation of Jesus was to test whether God would protect him from harm, and the third was for worldly power and glory. Jesus rejected these temptations and chose instead the painful path of sacrificial love and humble service which he knew would lead to suffering and death, but he also knew it would open the door to salvation for all who would follow his teachings (see the cost of discipleship, leaders as servants, riches and salvation, and Jesus predicts his death). Mark makes only an abbreviated reference to the temptations (Mk 1:13). It is only in Matthew and Luke that specific temptations and dialogue between Jesus and the devil are reported; and in Luke the second

and third temptations are reversed. This unwitnessed dialogue with Satan is considered by scholars to have originated in the early church, not with Jesus.

*** Pearls to pigs**

In a discourse to his disciples, Jesus reportedly urged them to avoid pigs:

Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.[SV3](Mt 7:6)

Notes: See Th 93:1,2 (Sources: Mt, Th). Dogs and pigs were considered unclean by Jews in Jesus' day (see 2 Pet 2:22), and are considered unclean (*haram*) by Muslims today. Like the ancient Jews in his audience, Jesus reportedly used dogs as symbols of those considered undesirable, such as Gentiles, Samaritans, tax collectors and prostitutes. Such demeaning expressions are clearly out of character for Jesus, but like other rabbis of his day he used familiar metaphors, irony, parody and hyperbole (exaggeration) to get the attention of the crowds and to illustrate important principles of faith. For that reason not all the teachings of Jesus can be taken literally. Once, when confronted by a Canaanite woman who asked Jesus to heal her daughter he told her: *It is not right to take the children's bread and feed it to the dogs*; but when the woman replied, "Yes, Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table," Jesus told her: *Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.* (see Mt 15:21-28 cited in power over evil). The teachings of Jesus taken together leave no doubt as to his principles and priorities. They were not to condemn those of other faiths but to commend those who had faith in a common word of love for God and neighbor (see the greatest commandment, the Pharisee and the publican; Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous; clean and unclean; sinners, forgiveness, and love; Zacchaeus; worship in spirit and truth; the last judgment, and Lazarus: insensitivity to suffering). Jesus often used what we might consider vulgar language and even crude humor to get the attention of his audience of common folks and to make his points, as when he once used a vulgar term for human excrement to describe what comes out of the body (see Mk 7:15 in clean and unclean). Given these examples, it's not hard to imagine Jesus on late night TV--even *Saturday Night Live*.

*** The true disciple**

After Jesus spoke to his disciples of faith evidenced by works, as a tree by its fruit, he spoke of judgment:

²¹Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²²Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?" ²³Then I will tell them plainly, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers." [SV4] (Mt 7:21-23)

Notes: See Lk 6:46; 13:26,27 (Source: Q). This is a saying on hypocrisy and judgment, and Jesus condemned religious leaders who did not practice what they preach in the seven woes. The Lukan version of this saying, *Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and not do what I say?* [SV3] (Lk 6:46), is followed by contrasting examples of faith and works with wise and foolish builders (Lk 6:47-49), and then a stark contrast between the hypocrisy of religious leaders and repentant sinners in the Pharisee and the publican (Lk 18:9-14). Following Luke's parallel story on faith for the few: the narrow gate Luke reports Jesus saying: ²⁵Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you came from.' ²⁶"Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷"But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me you evildoers!'" [SV4] (Lk 13:25-27). Compare this with Jesus saying: *Knock and the door will be opened unto you* [SV2]. (Lk 11:9-10 in effective prayer) This teaching may also refer to modern Christians for whom talk is cheap; they call Jesus "Lord, Lord" and worship him, profess belief in the Apostles' Creed and support their church, but do not follow the teachings of Jesus as the word and will of God. Jesus said that he did not come to judge the world but to save it (Jn 3:17; see faith and eternal life) and taught us do not judge. Jesus emphasized God's mercy and forgiveness, not judgment; scholars believe this saying originated within the early church, not with Jesus.

*** Faith of the centurion in the authority of Jesus**

⁵When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. ⁶"Lord," he said, "my servant lies at home paralyzed and in terrible suffering.

⁷Jesus said to him, I will go and heal him.

⁸The centurion replied, "Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁹For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

¹⁰When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. ¹¹I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

¹²But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

¹³Then Jesus said to the centurion, Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.[SV4] And his servant was healed at that very hour.(Mt 8:5-13)

Notes: See Lk 7:1-10; 13:28,29; Jn 4:46-53 (Sources: Q, Jn). This passage is about faith and the power to heal, but not about religious faith. It is about faith in Jesus as an instrument of God's transforming and healing power. Faith was present in most of the healings of Jesus, as with the healing of the daughter of the Canaanite woman (see Pearls to pigs) and the woman with a hemorrhage who had faith that she would be healed by touching Jesus' cloak. Jesus said to her: *Take heart, daughter, your faith has healed you.*[SV4](Mt 9:22) Jesus said he had not found any Jew with the faith of this pagan Centurion, and he did not condemn either paganism or warfighting. Other soldiers played a role in the early church. The Book of Acts reports Cornelius, a God-fearing centurion in Caesaria, who received a vision that helped open the early church to Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48). An unnamed centurion in Jerusalem refused to have Paul flogged (Acts 22:23-29), and Julius, a centurion of the Imperial Regiment, was in charge of those soldiers accompanying Paul on his fateful voyage to Rome, treating him kindly, and once preventing his soldiers from killing him (Acts 27:42,43). Jesus undoubtedly opposed war but he never condemned any in the profession of arms even as he condemned hypocritical and sanctimonious religious leaders. Jesus predicted that wars would continue until the end times, and acknowledged the need to prepare for them (see effective planning). Matthew reported Jesus chastising those subjects of the kingdom (Jews) who rejected him, saying they *...will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.* (Mt 8:12; see the rejection of Jesus) Such judgmental statements were common for Matthew (see the last judgment) and even Luke

(Lk 13:28,29), but totally out of character for Jesus, who taught do not judge, forgiveness and love for enemies, and never taught that God condemned sinners to eternal damnation in hell.²⁷

*** Leaders in short supply**

³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into the harvest fields.[SV4](Mt 9:35-38)

Notes: See Mk 6:34; Lk 10:2; Jn 4:35,36; Th 73 (Sources: Q, Th). We are told that Jesus had compassion on the harassed and helpless in the crowds. That does not mean that Jesus gave them what they wanted, but he told them what they needed which was often not what they wanted. The harvest was a common metaphor for judgment or the coming Kingdom of God (see sowing the seeds of faith), but Jewish religious leaders were unsuited or unwilling to be workers in the harvest fields (see condemnation of religious leaders and the blind leading the blind). Jesus required leaders as servants to assist in the harvest of souls for the last judgment. This saying received a low rating since it seems to imply an apocalyptic worldly kingdom coming in the end times rather than an unseen kingdom of heaven based on a spiritual transformation (see Nicodemus: born again of the spirit and instructions to the disciples). Scholars believe it originated in the early church to encourage missionary work, but the harvest could have been a metaphor used by Jesus to describe a spiritual kingdom of God available to all, both then and now.

*** Faith and persecution**

Matthew reported Jesus telling his disciples of the dangers of discipleship:

¹⁹But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, ²⁰for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to

death. ²²All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. ²³When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

²⁴A student is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵It is enough for the student to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of the household! [SV4] (Mt 10:19-22, 24, 25)

Notes: See Mk 13:9-13; Mt 10:34-37, 24:9-13; Lk 6:40; 12:11, 12; 21:12-19; Jn 13:16; 15:18-27; 16:1-4 (Sources: Q, Mk, Mt, Jn). This is a continuation of Jesus' instructions to the disciples in which he urged courage: open and fearless speech. Mt 10:17-22 was borrowed from Mark's little apocalypse (Mk 13:9-13). The betrayal and persecution of Christians referred to in these sayings took place after Jesus' death, so that it likely originated in the early church rather than with Jesus. In the early church the cost of discipleship was often suffering and death, and it was only through faith that early Christians were sustained in difficult times. Because of their persecution, they came to rely on the Holy Spirit, love, and the gift of peace more so than do latter-day Christians who have not been threatened in the practice of their faith (see dissension, not peace and faith and morality). The idea that students should respect and emulate their teachers and slaves their masters is not characteristic of Jesus (for John's reference to slaves and masters, see washing the disciples' feet); but the student-teacher relationship is found in a different and more likely context for Jesus in criticizing self before others: blind leading the blind. The reference to Beelzebub probably derives from accusations made against Jesus that his miracles were the work of Satan, not God (see blasphemy or Word of God, miracles: the work of Satan or God?, return of evil, and power over evil).

*** Messengers for Jesus**

At the end of his instructions to his disciples, Jesus commissioned them as his agents to the people:

⁴⁰He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. [SV3] ⁴¹Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. ⁴²And if

anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward.[SV4](Mt 10:40-42)

Notes: See Lk 10:16; Mk 9:41; Jn 5:23; 12:44; 13:20 (Sources: Q, Jn, Mk). The saying begins with words taken from Mk 9:37 (see accepting children as Jesus; in describing his disciples as little children and serving them, see also a child-like faith). Jesus made his followers his agents, or messengers, just as he considered himself an agent or messenger of God. As with the principle of agency, the treatment of his messengers was imputed to him, and by extension, to God (see the authority of Jesus). This correlates to the greatest commandment and the last judgment that teach that we serve God by serving others, even the least of those. The parable of the wicked tenants involves tenants who reject messengers of the owner and ultimately his son, with resulting harsh judgment. The Gospel of John has three examples of divine agency (see Jn 5:23, 12:44, 13:20 in washing the disciples feet). The counterpart in Luke precedes the authority to perform miracles: *He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me.[SV3](Lk 10:16)* The repetition of the theme of divine agency makes it more likely that the saying originating with Jesus than indicated by its SV4 designation.

*** Message of faith for John the Baptist**

While John the Baptist was imprisoned he sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

⁴*Jesus replied, Go back and report to John what you hear and see.*

⁵*The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. ⁶Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.[SV4](Mt 11:4-6)*

Notes: See Lk 7:18-28 (Source: Q). Even John the Baptist was not sure that Jesus was the one he prophesied was coming after him and whose sandals he was not fit to carry, and who would not baptize with water but with the Holy Spirit and with fire. (Mt 3:11-12) The doubt of John the Baptist should make it easier to understand why so few Jews believed that Jesus was their long-awaited Messiah, at least until after the resurrection. The miracles listed in Mt 11:5 are taken from Isaiah: the blind,

deaf, and lame (Is 29:18,19; 35:5,6); the dead being raised (Is 26:19); and good news to the poor (Is 61:1) (see the authority of Jesus and as to the miracles, see the power over evil, power to heal and power over nature). On the nature of faith as it related to the miracles of Jesus, see faith of the centurion and a prophet is without honor in his hometown. The same list of miracles in Mt 11:5 above preceded the instructions to the disciples in Mt 10:8. Mt 11:6 has several different translations: In *The Jerusalem Bible* it is, *Happy is the man who does not lose faith in me*; the SV provides: *Congratulations to those who don't take offense at me* (see ashamed of Jesus). Matthew's purpose is to demonstrate that Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, and most scholars believe that these sayings originated in the early church rather than with Jesus.

*** Praise for John the Baptist**

⁷As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? ⁸If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces.[SV2] ⁹Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet.

¹⁰This is the one about whom it is written:

I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.[SV4]

¹¹I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. ¹²From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. ¹³For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. ¹⁴And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.[SV3]

¹⁵He who has ears, let him hear.[SV4](Mt 11:7-11)

Notes: See Lk 7:24-28; Th 46:1,2; 78:1-3 (Sources: Q, Th). The implicit criticism of those who waffle on controversial issues (reeds swayed by the wind) and who wear fine clothes relates to would-be leaders seeking public favor, then as now. They relate to popular measures of success, aptly described by Jesus in the Gospel of Thomas: *They are dressed in soft clothes, and they cannot understand truth*.[SV3](Th 78:3). See humility: leaders as servants, humility and sanctimony, integrity and hypocrisy, and pride and peer pressure: honor of men ahead of God. Here Jesus reportedly praised John the Baptist as the greatest of mortal men, but in the following passage on the

rejection of Jesus he is frustrated by their conflicting public images: John is seen as austere and holy while Jesus and his disciples are seen as libertines. But Jesus taught austerity in sharing one's cloak with others (see submission and retribution) and in not worrying about everyday needs (see do not worry). Mt 11:12-15 has confused scholars with its paradox of violence and peace; *The New Jerusalem Bible*, *The New Revised Standard Version* and the SV translations all use the word *violent* for the word *forceful* in the NIV. The reference to violence may have referred to the killing of John, or to the violence that had so often accompanied religious conflict. Jesus referred to the conflict between love and the violent and hateful inclinations of human nature in dissension, not peace and rest for the weary. It has been evident in the history of the church: Founded on the teachings of a man of peace, the church would often resort to violence and even holy war to promote its worldly power.

*** The rejection of Jesus**

Jesus was frustrated that so many rejected both him and John the Baptist as messengers of God, even as they presented contrasting images of the faith:

¹⁶*To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling out to others:*

¹⁷*We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.*

¹⁸*For John came neither eating or drinking, and they say, "He has a demon."* ¹⁹*The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners."*[SV3] *But wisdom is proved right by her actions.*[SV4]

²⁰*Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.*

²¹*Woe to you Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre or Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* ²²*But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you.* ²³*And you Capernaum, will you be lifted up in the skies? No, you will go down to the depths [Hades]. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.* ²⁴*But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.*[SV4](Mt 11:16-24)

Notes: See Lk 7:31-35; 10:13-15 (Source: Q). The children's music and lack of response were an analogy to John and Jesus: The joyful music represented Jesus, the dirge represented John. In neither event did the people respond in great numbers; indeed, most Jews and their religious leaders rejected both what John and Jesus had to say (see parable of the wicked tenants, rejection of the capstone, pride and peer pressure, prophet is without honor in his own hometown, liberation and family of God). Here Jesus acknowledged that his lifestyle of eating and drinking was in stark contrast to the ascetic lifestyle of John. Although Jesus spoke of fasting, he did not encourage it as a form of worship; he saw no conflict between enjoying the simple pleasures of life and serving God (see parable of the wedding banquet, fasting, and end times). In spite of the SV3 designation, these words probably originated with Jesus since it is highly unlikely that such an uncomplimentary description of his lifestyle would have originated in the early church, but the words that follow were not at all characteristic of Jesus. Matthew reports that Jesus condemned those cities where most of his miracles were performed for their failure to repent. While condemning entire cities to Hell is not characteristic of Jesus, who emphasized forgiveness, love for enemies and do not judge, such judgmental rhetoric is characteristic of Matthew whose Jewish audience related to an Old Testament God of vengeance and judgment. Matthew's Gospel was to convince his Jewish audience that Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, just as John the Baptist predicted his successor would do. The ministry of John the Baptist began with the same message as Jesus: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near* (Mt 3:2), but John went on to preach a fiery prophecy of God's judgment upon sinners rather than one of forgiveness and mercy (Mt 3:7-12). While Matthew's Gospel has more judgmental teachings than the other gospel accounts (see the seven woes: condemnation of religious leaders and messenger for Jesus), it also includes many teachings of Jesus on forgiveness, love and mercy. When it came to the rejection of Jesus, his instructions to the disciples was to shake the dust from their feet and leave, and Luke reported Jesus rebuking his disciples for suggesting that he bring God's judgment down upon those who rejected him (see tolerance, and for a related parable, see a new invitation: parable of the wedding feast). The early church encouraged repentance to avoid judgment in what they expected would be an imminent apocalyptic second coming of Jesus and the kingdom of heaven (see the coming Kingdom of God). Following the above passage in which Jesus reportedly condemned those towns that rejected him, he expressed his thanks to God for revealing His message to the simple rather

than the wise and learned (Mt 11:25,26, cited in child-like faith), and then promised rest for the weary (Mt 11:28-30).

* Return of evil

Jesus considered his exorcisms but a temporary defeat of Satan. For those who did not allow God's love to remain in their hearts, evil would return in force to fill the vacuum.

⁴³*When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. ⁴⁴Then it says "I will return to the house I left." When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. ⁴⁵Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.[SV3](Mt 12:43-45)*

Notes: See Lk 11:24-26 (Source: Q). This passage challenges both the prophylactic value of exorcisms and also the idea that salvation provides permanent protection against the forces of evil. Sin is the normal state of humanity, even for Christians. It is a chronic condition, even for those who have been born again of the spirit. For that reason salvation is not a one-time event (*once saved, always saved*) that protects us forever from the corrosive effects of evil. While God's love can displace the evil forces in our hearts, to keep Satan from returning and repossessing our hearts we must keep them full of God's love. Ironically the only way we can keep God's love in our hearts is to give it away. God's love is like perishable fruit; we must use it or lose it. God's forgiveness, love and mercy have a reciprocal quality that requires that they be given in order to be received. We cannot depend on God's forgiveness, love and mercy to keep us liberated from the bondage of sin and death unless we continuously share those divine qualities with others. Sinners are like alcoholics in that we always remain sinners, no matter how pure and holy we may think we are; and hypocrisy and sanctimony are sins typical of the most religious. Backsliding into the bondage sin and death is like falling off the wagon, and is typical of Christians who are complacent about their faith. We must remain vigilant against the forces of evil lest they return and corrupt us. We must continually repent and seek forgiveness in order to keep our hearts full of the love of God to prevent Satan from returning and repossessing them. See power over evil, authority to perform miracles and blasphemy or word of God.

* Parable of the yeast

Following the parable of the mustard seed, Jesus told another parable:

The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough.[SV1](Mt 13:33)

Notes: Lk 13:20,21; Th 96:1,2 (Sources: Q, Th). As in other parables about the kingdom of God, Jesus uses a familiar item (here yeast) as a metaphor for the mysterious kingdom of God, and since God's realm is spiritual, the word *kingdom* itself is a metaphor for the transforming power of God's love and mercy. Matthew uses *kingdom of heaven* rather than *of God* since the Jews to whom Matthew was writing thought it inappropriate to use the name of God (YAHWEH does not translate into *God*, but into *I am who I am*). The scholars of *The Jesus Seminar* gave this parable their highest rating because it was short and pithy, reflecting images that would have been striking to the audience and therefore typical of Jesus. Yeast, or leaven, was a symbol of corruption and avoided on holy days; but here Jesus surprisingly used yeast to represent the transforming power of God since yeast can transform a common substance (flour) into something new and essential to life (bread) through a common process known to all. Luke's version of the parable is almost identical, indicating both were taken from the same source: Q. For a reference to yeast with a more negative connotation, see threat to the faith: the yeast of the Pharisees. The version in Thomas is slightly different, suggesting that it may have been slightly edited: ¹*The Father's imperial rule is like [a] woman.* ²*She took a little leaven, [hid] it in dough, and made it into large loaves of bread.[SV2]* ³*Anyone here with two ears had better listen![SV3]* (Th 96:1-3) There is no doubt among scholars that Jesus used such metaphors as yeast and seeds to explain the otherwise inexplicable mysteries of the the unseen kingdom of heaven, a mystical power that could save us from sin and spiritual death and perhaps save the world from destruction in the end times. It was the way Jesus and other rabbis described the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil in language their audience could understand. See the parable of the weeds, the kingdom: parables of the treasure and the pearl, the coming kingdom of God, the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed, bread of life and born again of the Spirit.

*** Test of faith: walking on water**

After Jesus had performed his first miracle of the loaves to feed a crowd on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he told his disciples to take their boat and go ahead of him to the other side and that he would follow later. The disciples did as instructed, and were battling heavy seas that night when Jesus came to them walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water they were terrified, and cried out in fear: "It's a ghost." But Jesus said,

²⁷*Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid.[SV4]*

"Lord, if it is you," ²⁸*Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."*

²⁹*Come,[SV4] he said.*

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰*But when he saw the wind, he was afraid, and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!"*

³¹*Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him.*

You of little faith, he said. Why did you doubt?[SV4]

³²*And when they climbed in the boat, the wind died down.* ³³*And then those who were in the boat worshipped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God." (Mt 14:27-33).*

Notes: See Mk 6:45-52; Jn 6:16-21 (Source: Mk). Mark and John report Jesus walking on the water, but neither reports Paul's failed attempt. Matthew's unique account illustrates the power of faith and the danger of fear and doubt to that power. In a later incident when the disciples could not cast out an evil spirit, Jesus told them why they failed: *Because you have so little faith. [SV4] I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there" and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. [SV3](Mt 17:20);* see Mk 11:23; Lk 17:6; Mt 21:21; Th 48; 106:2 (Sources: Q, Mk, Th). See power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness; power over nature: calming the tempest; the kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed; power over evil, power to heal, power to forgive, the authority of Jesus, faith of the centurion in the authority of Jesus, faith and works, and faith and eternal life. Paul's failed attempt to walk on the water could be a lesson to not test God's power to work miracles. If Peter had been truly faithful (and sensible) he would have remained in the boat (see *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. VIII, p 329). Fear and doubt are not sins; they are a normal part of our journey of faith. Only by doubting do we ask, seek and knock on the door seeking answers to the great

mysteries of faith (see Mt 7:7-11, effective prayer). Our theological task is to question and interpret scripture using our reason and experience.²⁶

*** Prayer in common: the church**

The following teaching may relate to either prayer or church administration:

¹⁸*I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.* ¹⁹*Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.* ²⁰*For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*[SV4](Mt 18:18-20)

Notes: Mt 16:19; Th 30:1,2 (Source: Mt). The above instructions attributed to Jesus follow his instructions on brotherly correction; they could relate either to group prayer or to the authority of the early church to discipline its members and to perform other official acts. *The Jerusalem Bible* refers to chapter 18 of Matthew as the discourse on the church, and the above passage has been cited as authority for building the (Catholic) Church on Peter as its founder. Its requirement for at least two to agree on anything to be done in God's name recalls Dt 19:15 (more than one witness was required for a conviction), and is consistent with customs of the ancient Jews. The individual rights and liberties that have shaped Western concepts of human rights and due process did not have their origin in scripture but in the Enlightenment of the 18th century (see *Introduction*). The judgmental character of the above passage indicates it was the creation of Matthew rather than Jesus; it would certainly have been refuted by Paul (see Ga 2:7-9, 11-14). Some discount the institutional interpretation and interpret the passage as relating to group prayer; if so, it is in conflicts with Jesus' instructions for prayer in secret, not to mention almsgiving in secret and fasting in secret. Jesus sometimes expressed a preference for the individual over the group in the context of reconciliation of all into one (e.g. the parables of the lost sheep and the coin and the unity of all believers). Passages in Th 4:3; 22:5; 23:2 have a similar theme of reconciliation through love, the Holy Spirit and the gift of peace that is found in other teachings of Jesus (see love, forgiveness and sinners, family of God, the Beatitudes and anger and reconciliation). The real foundation for individual civil and human rights, however, is in the moral imperative to love

others—all others—as summarized in the greatest commandment and the new command. We cannot truly love others unless we protect their fundamental human rights, including the right to due process of law. Jesus understood the need for civil authority and the rule of law and taught that obligations to God may conflict with obligations to the state (see church and state). While Jesus did not elaborate on the limits of political power he was as skeptical as Thomas Jefferson of religious power. Both men understood that religious leaders who sought power and put honor of men before God were dangerous to the free will of faith and liberty (see pride and peer pressure and the narrow gate, follow me and the call to discipleship). Jesus was sharply critical of Jewish religious leaders for their hypocrisy and sanctimony, especially the Pharisees who were teachers of the law. Jesus opposed the enforcement of coercive religious laws (see justice or mercy: the adulterous woman) and emphasized the primacy of love over law. Unlike Paul, Jesus did not promote any religious organization or regulatory structure, and in matters of legitimacy, Jesus emphasized voluntary moral standards of love as God's will rather than coercive religious laws (see love over law and clean and unclean). The teachings of Jesus on faith were about communal obligations rather than individual rights. For us today the moral imperative to love others requires balancing the need to protect fundamental freedoms such as those of religion, expression and due process of law (individual rights) with the need to provide for the common good (communal rights). That balancing act is a great challenge for people of faith in modern libertarian democracies.

*** Jerusalem lamented**

Following the seven woes indicting the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus lamented the fate of Jerusalem:

³⁷O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. ³⁸Look, your house is left to you desolate. ³⁹For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.[SV4](Mt 23:37-39; Ps 118:26)

Notes: Lk 13:34,35; 19:41 (Source: Q). The implication is that the temple is already in ruin, which did not occur until 70 C.E. The saying anticipates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem and many scholars believe it was written within the early church

after Jesus and the temple had become part of history. But lamenting the fate of Jerusalem sounds like something Jesus would have said before its destruction (see the rejection of Jesus and end times). Jerusalem (and more broadly, the Palestinian Levant) remains dark and desolate as the crucible for conflict between Judaism, Christianity and Islam today, rather than the light of the world for peacemakers who were called blessed by Jesus in the Beatitudes. It is a reminder of the contemporary relevance of the teachings of Jesus on peace and reconciliation as God's will (see anger and reconciliation, the family of God and prayer in common: the church). Despite—or perhaps because of—the zealotry of the church in promoting its holy causes from its birth as a political dynasty under Constantine through the Crusades, Inquisitions and witch trials, when it comes to the battle between the forces of good and evil, little has changed in Jerusalem since Jesus lamented its fate over 2,000 years ago. In fact, the battle goes back to Joshua destroying Jericho in the first biblical account of ethnic cleansing in the Holy Land. Since then there has been untold suffering caused by hatred and violence in the name of God, confirming that Satan does a wonderful imitation of God, and does some of his best work in the synagogue, church and mosque.

Chapter 7: Luke on Faith

* Liberation

On at least one occasion, Jesus read scripture in his hometown synagogue:

¹⁴Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. ¹⁷The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸"The spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,

¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Is 61:1,2)

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." [SV4] (Lk 4:14-21)

Notes: (Source: Lk). It is unusual that Luke has Jesus quoting Isaiah and Matthew does not. The language from Isaiah relates to the Year of the Jubilee which occurred once every fifty years, when slaves were to be freed and debts forgiven (Lev 25:8-55). Isaiah (the third Isaiah) was probably speaking of the Jews being liberated from captivity following their Babylonian exile. While proclaiming freedom for prisoners and release of the oppressed sounds political, the teachings of Jesus did not promote political revolution. The *liberation* promoted by Jesus was spiritual, not political; but the concept of *liberation* and *free will* in the teachings of Jesus and letters of Paul produced liberation theology and sowed the seeds of libertarian democracy (see the *Introduction* and the truth will make you free). The Jews in the audience of Jesus were expecting a Messiah who would lead them to political rather than spiritual liberation by initiating a worldly kingdom of God in the end times. They did not consider Jesus, the son of a local carpenter, to be their long-awaited messiah, despite Luke reporting a miraculous birth proclaimed by a heavenly host (Lk

2:1-20). And according to Mark's Gospel, even the family of Jesus thought him to be out of his mind when they heard about his ministry (Mk 3:21; see the family of God) Jesus expected those in his hometown audience to request miracles (see sign from heaven) and expressed frustration at their lack of faith: ²³*Surely you will quote this proverb to me: "Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum."*[SV4] ²⁴*I tell you the truth, he continued, no prophet is accepted in his hometown.*[SV2](Lk 4:23-24; see Mark's version, Mk 6:4, in a prophet is without honor in his hometown). The hometown audience, initially impressed favorably by Jesus' reading of Scripture, became enraged when Jesus used stories about Elijah and Elisha helping foreigners to illustrate that God did not favor Jews over Gentiles (Lk 4:24-27). They ran Jesus out of the synagogue and would have killed him, but Jesus escaped through the crowd and went on his way (Lk 4:25-30). On spiritual liberation, see rest for the weary, love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace, the truth will make you free, the way, the truth, and the life; church and state and Jesus before Pilate. On universal salvation and the rejection of Jesus, see the family of God and the good shepherd.

*** Authority to perform miracles**

After Jesus commissioned and instructed the seventy-two disciples (Lk 10:1-16), they were sent out, and they returned impressed by what they had seen and done.

¹⁷*The seventy-two [disciples] returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."*
He replied, ¹⁸"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.[SV2]
¹⁹*I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. ²⁰However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*[SV4](Lk 10:17-20)

Notes: (Source: Lk). The above passage confirms the authority of Jesus over evil and nature, but Jesus felt it necessary to remind his seventy-two disciples that they should not be caught up in the excitement and wonder of the miracles but remember their divine source and mission: to prepare people to hear the good news of the Gospel through the teachings of Jesus as *the Word of God*. Here Jesus tells his disciples that nothing will harm them (Lk 10:19), but Jesus also told his disciples that they should expect suffering and even death from spreading the

gospel, not to mention snakes and scorpions (see the cost of discipleship and faith and persecution). As for miracles, the disciples sometimes lacked the faith required to perform exorcisms and healings, and Peter lacked the faith to walk on the water (see Lk 9:38-41 and Mt 17:19-20 in power over evil, power to heal and power over nature). The purpose of the miracles was to validate the divine authority of Jesus to announce the coming kingdom of God. John records Jesus telling the Pharisees, *"Even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."*[SV4](Jn 10:38; see blasphemy or word of God) The fall of Satan from heaven was an ancient myth referred to in Rev 12:7-12, where Satan was likened to a dragon defeated by the archangel Michael, and hurled to the earth. Following Luke's version of miracles: the work of Satan or God? there is a parallel saying to Lk 10:18 that is thought to have originated with Jesus: *"But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you."*[SV2](Lk 11:20) Asserting the superior power of God, Jesus challenged evil in the world through exorcism, healing and ultimately salvation (see power over evil); but Jesus also acknowledged Satan as the prince of the world (Jn 14:31). This dichotomy of good versus evil (spirit versus flesh) was at the foundation of Gnosticism and the dualistic concept in Greek (Platonic) Christianity (see the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak and courage: open and fearless speech). The likelihood of the return of evil undermines a commonly held belief that those born again of the spirit are forever immune to evil. See instructions to the disciples; authority of Jesus; power over evil; power to heal; power to forgive; power over nature; miracles: the work of Satan or God?, and faith of the Centurion in the authority of Jesus. The passage on authority to trample on snakes and scorpions has given rise to Christian sects that actually test their faith with snake-handling; clearly, Jesus did not intend any such test of faith (see the temptation of Jesus).

*** Renouncing family and possessions**

The teachings of Jesus in Luke often seem more demanding than those reported in the other gospels, as here, where Jesus requires his disciples renounce family and all possessions:

²⁶*If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple.*[SV2] ²⁷*And anyone who does*

not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.[SV4](Lk 14:26,27)

³³*In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.[SV4](Lk 14:33)*

Notes: See Mk 8:34; 10:29,30; Mt 10:37-39; 19:27-29; Lk 22:28-30; Th 55:1,2; 101:1-3 (Sources: Mk, Q, Th). If Jesus ever said this, which SV scholars doubt, it was obviously hyperbole; but it makes an important point on sacrificial love. It cannot be restricted to favored friends and family but must be shared with all, even those one detests (see love for enemies, the story of the good Samaritan and serving the least of those rather than friends). The passage also reflects an ancient cultural factor that is not present today: Ancient Jews felt obligations to family that often blinded them to caring for those beyond family (see dissension, not peace). Luke reports Jesus saying that all family loyalties and possessions must be renounced in order to follow him. Then in two related passages Jesus promises an eternal reward for such sacrifice: the first is a response to Peter's inquiry and is almost identical to Matthew's (Lk 18:28-30), while the second is a promise made at the last supper: ²⁸*You are those who have stood by me in my trials.* ²⁹*And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me,* ³⁰*so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.[SV4](Lk 22:28-30)* When it comes familial love, Thomas creates a paradox requiring both hate and love for mother and father: ¹*Whoever does not hate [father] and mother as I do cannot be my [disciple],* ²*and whoever does [not] love [father and] mother as I do cannot be my [disciple].* ³*For my mother [...], but my true [mother] gave me life."*[SV4](Th 101:1-3). Actually, it makes more sense than Luke's single command to hate one's father and mother since it includes love with the hyperbolic hate. Both Mark and Matthew report Peter asking Jesus what the disciples can expect for their sacrifices: ²⁹*I tell you the truth, Jesus replied, no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or field for me and the gospel* ³⁰*will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life.[SV3](Mk 10:29,30)* Matthew's version has Jesus promising each of his disciples a throne and a judgment role: ²⁸*I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.[SV4]* ²⁹*And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will*

inherit eternal life.[SV3](Mt 19:28,29) Such promises of divine authority to judge others are inconsistent with other teachings of Jesus that discourage both seeking positions of authority and judging others (see request for precedence, humility: leaders as servants, and do not judge). They are most likely creations of the early church which granted divine authority to those in its hierarchy, beginning with the disciples. Luke's harsh requirement to leave family also contradicts the teachings of Jesus on the nature of love, which necessarily begins in the family (see marriage, divorce, and human sexuality); certainly the word *hate* should be considered hyperbole and not taken literally. It is only if family responsibilities or possessions interfere with the greatest commandment, the new command, or the golden rule that they become an obstacle to discipleship. True love of family and friends can never preclude love for others; but an exaggerated sense of duty to family, clan, or tribe can be an obstacle to caring for others, just as the love of money is an obstacle to loving God (see treasures of the heart, riches and salvation; shrewdness, stewardship and the danger of riches; do not worry, faith, God, and money and celibacy and sexual preference; but the story of Zacchaeus: money and salvation illustrates that poverty is not a requirement of discipleship). When *anything* comes between us and loving God, whether it is love for money and power (see riches and salvation) or even family obligations or other human relationships, then these worldly loves are sinful since they separate us from the love of God. That is because we love God by loving *all* others, even those we dislike (see the greatest commandment and the good Samaritan). When the man told Jesus he would follow him after he buried his father, he revealed an obligation to his father greater than his obligation to God, and one that had to be renounced before he could be a disciple (see unconditional commitment to discipleship). This exaggerated sense of family loyalty produced a culture that often ignored those outside the family, such as orphans and widows, and denied them the social recognition and status that was critical to their survival. Jesus once quoted, apparently with sarcasm, a law of Moses that required capital punishment for Jews who cursed their father or mother (see God's commands and the traditions of the Pharisees). Jesus opposed any limitations on love, even in the name of family, and refused to recognize his own mother and brothers to illustrate the concept of a universal family of God. Today the role of family in our culture is quite different: there is little danger of too much love for family in an individualistic, hedonistic and materialistic culture which has undermined the family as the basic unit of society. If anything, today Jesus would likely teach that we should love and take responsibility

for the needs of those in our family rather than renouncing family obligations. Parental responsibility for children and children's respect for their parents should be strengthened, not weakened. Indeed, if the above passages were taken literally rather than as hyperbole, they would encourage divorce, the neglect of children and the failure to support elderly parents (which Jesus criticized in God's commands and the traditions of the Pharisees). This would not only contradict the teachings of Jesus but also common sense and our responsibility to provide for public welfare, encouraging irresponsibility and a breakdown of what is left of the family unit.

Chapter 8: John on Faith

* From doubt to belief: Nathanael

Philip, one of the first disciples chosen by Jesus, went to his friend Nathanael and told him that he had found Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth, the one about whom Moses and the prophets had written. A skeptical Nathanael responded,

⁴⁶"Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?"

"Come and see," said Philip.

When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him,

⁴⁷Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false.[SV4]

⁴⁸"How do you know me?" Nathanael asked.

Jesus answered, I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.[SV4]

⁴⁹Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the son of God; you are the King of Israel."

⁵⁰Jesus said, You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You shall see greater things than that.

⁵¹He then added, I tell you the truth, you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.[SV4](Jn 1:46-51)

Notes: (Source: Jn). Nathanael, who was probably the same person as Bartholomew in the Synoptic gospels, was understandably skeptical of the claims of Philip, who had just been told by Jesus to follow me, so Nathanael went to see Jesus for himself. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching he revealed that he knew Nathanael was ...*a true Israelite in which there was nothing false* (Jn 1:47) and had seen Nathanael under the fig tree even before Philip had called him (Jn 1:48). Nathanael was so impressed that he acknowledged Jesus as the son of God and king of Israel and became a disciple. But Jesus told Nathanael that he would ...*see greater things than that* (Jn 1:50). When Jesus continues, the *you* is second person plural with Jesus now speaking to a larger audience, telling them, ...*you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man*. (Jn 1:51) The image of the Son of Man is from Daniel 7:13 and that of angels ascending and descending recalls Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:12 as well as the dove descending on Jesus in the River Jordan (see the call for repentance). These images suggest that God will validate the teachings of Jesus as the Word of God (see authority to perform miracles).

*** Born again of the Spirit: Nicodemus**

¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. ²He came to Jesus at night and said "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him."

³In reply Jesus declared, I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.

⁴"How can a man be born when he is old? Nicodemus asked. Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

⁵Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. ⁷You should not be surprised by my saying, "You must be born again."

⁸The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.

⁹"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

¹⁰You are Israel's teacher, said Jesus, and do you not understand these things? ¹¹I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. ¹²I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? ¹³No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven--the Son of Man.[SV4](Jn 3:1-13)

Notes: (Source: Jn). Nicodemus was one of the few Pharisees who was not hostile to Jesus, and he was not just a Pharisee but also a member of the powerful Sanhedrin (the ruling body of Jews) that would ultimately determine the fate of Jesus. The nocturnal visit of Nicodemus was to avoid being seen by his peers; it is easy to understand why none of the disciples were from this ruling class (see pride and peer pressure). Jesus spoke to Nicodemus of the spiritual rebirth required for salvation. Being born again of the Spirit is a metaphor for our salvation; it is how we are reconciled with God after we repent, and it enables us to be redeemed as children of God and heirs to His kingdom. Jesus was an adult like Nicodemus when he was baptized and ordained as the word of God when the Holy Spirit descended and remained on him in the River Jordan (see Jn 1:29-34 and the call for repentance). In the church baptism has become a sacramental symbol of our salvation; we are only baptized once, but unlike Jesus we need to be saved more than once from the corrupting forces of evil (see return of evil). The *born again* passage brings to mind the birth of Jesus, but

there is no birth narrative in John's gospel, or in that of Mark. Nativity stories are found only in Matthew and Luke. According to John the Baptist, the incarnation of Jesus as the word of God made flesh (the *Logos*, Jn 1:1-14) was when the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove and came to rest upon him (Jn 1:32-34). In the other gospel accounts there are discrepancies concerning the birth of Jesus (see family of God and lineage of Jesus), but Jesus never mentions his parentage or ancestry as being relevant to his authority. All of the gospel accounts have the ministry of Jesus beginning when he received the Holy Spirit in the River Jordan and ending on the cross, with the resurrection validating the teachings of Jesus as the living word of God. In John's gospel, Jesus told his disciples that after he left them the Holy Spirit would come to them *...to teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.* (Jn 14:26). In explaining the workings of the Holy Spirit to Nicodemus, Jesus used the metaphor of the wind (Jn 3:8) to describe the presence of the mystical Holy Spirit, and the same metaphor was used by Luke to describe the Pentecost in Acts 2:2. The Prologue to John's Gospel speaks of being spiritually reborn as children of God (Jn 1:12,13) In regressing from the corruption of adulthood to the purity of a spiritual realm that precedes life, spiritual rebirth signifies the purity of a child-like faith. Paul used similar language in Ga 3:26-28 to describe all who were baptized into Christ as children of God. The Gospel of Thomas uses similar language in having Jesus compare salvation to nursing babies: *These nursing babies are like those who enter the <Father's> domain.*[SV3](Th 22:2) Spiritual rebirth was then likened to a mystical spiritual unity that precedes and follows life in which there are no divisive human distinctions like race and sex: *⁴Jesus said to them, When you make the two into one, and when you make the inner like the outer and the outer like the inner, and the upper like the lower, ⁵and when you make male and female into a single one, so that the male will not be male nor the female be female, ⁶when you make eyes in place of an eye, a hand in place of a hand, a foot in place of a foot, an image in place of an image, ⁷then you will enter {the <Father's> domain}.*[SV4](Th 22:4-7) See the unity of all believers, family of God, lineage of Jesus, worship in spirit and truth and prayer in common: the church. Spiritual rebirth provides a classic contrast between the corruptions of this world (the flesh) and the purity of God's spiritual Kingdom (see the unseen kingdom of God). This dichotomy between the flesh and the spirit is a Gnostic principle prevalent in the Gospels of John and Thomas (see faith and eternal life) that resonates in in the sacrament of the Eucharist, or Holy Communion, in which Catholics believe that

the bread and wine become the actual flesh and blood of Jesus (transubstantiation), while Protestants have a more spiritual or symbolic view of the elements. Using metaphorical hyperbole, Jesus spoke of eating his flesh and drinking his blood and then explained: *The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you [on the Eucharist] are spirit and they are life.*[SV4](Jn 6:55-63); see bread of life and spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Thomas reports Jesus analogizing the spirit as wealth with the flesh as poverty: ¹*Jesus said, If the flesh came into being because of spirit, that is a marvel, ²but if spirit came into being because of the body, that is a marvel of marvels. ³Yet I marvel at how this great wealth has come to dwell in poverty.* [SV4](Th 29:1-3) In another passage from Thomas Jesus says, *How miserable is the body that depends upon a body, and how miserable is the soul that depends on these two.*[SV4](Th 87) Later Thomas reports Jesus saying, ¹*Damn the flesh that depends on the soul. ²Damn the soul that depends on the flesh.*[SV4](Th 112:1,2) Jesus condemned religious leaders like the Pharisees for their love of worldly things such as wealth, power and prestige (see faith, God, and money), and their hypocrisy and sanctimony. They allowed pride and peer pressure to put honor of men ahead of God. The dichotomy between worldly matters of the flesh and spiritual matters of God is evident in many other teachings of Jesus, such as those on repentance, child-like faith, faith and works, spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, riches and salvation, renouncing family and possessions, the danger of riches, faith: God and money, family of God, love and laws, justice or mercy, the greatest commandment, and faith and eternal life, below. While SV scholars do not believe that the above account of Nicodemus originated with Jesus (like most other accounts from the Gospel of John), its compatibility with other sayings considered authentic confirms its relevance and ultimate spiritual truth, if not its worldly and factual truth.

*** Faith and eternal life**

The Gospel of John explains the mission of Jesus in a passage that has come to characterize the Christian faith:

¹⁴*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, ¹⁵that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*

¹⁸Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.[no SV](Jn 3:14-18)

Notes: (Source: Jn). Jn 3:16 is the most quoted verse of the Bible, but it's usually quoted out of context and may not even be a teaching of Jesus. Both the *SV* and the *Revised Standard Version* treat Jn 3:14-21 as narrative by the evangelist rather than the words of Jesus. It complements earlier narrative in the Prologue to John's Gospel relating to the *Logos*, or *Word of God*: ¹*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ²*He was with God in the beginning.* ³*Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.* ⁴*In him was life, and that life was the light of men.* ⁵*The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*(Jn 1:1-5) *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*(Jn 1:14) Later in John, Jesus is reported to have said that he existed before Abraham (Jn 8:53-58). Unlike the Synoptic gospels, John's Gospel presents Jesus symbolically as the divine *Logos* rather than the historic man Jesus. John's Gospel has few of the sayings of Jesus found in Matthew, Mark and Luke, and many sayings of Jesus that are both absent from the other gospel accounts and inconsistent with them. For instance, the *I am* statements attributed to Jesus in John's Gospel (see the light of the world, bread of life, the good shepherd, and the way, the truth and the life) are out of character with the Jesus presented in the Synoptics, as is Jesus teaching that he is *the one and only* Son of God, or God in the flesh, as opposed to Jesus teaching that we should follow him as *the Word of God*. Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of God in all of the gospel accounts, and in John's Gospel he prayed that his disciples and all people would believe that he was sent by God and would become one with him and God (Jn 17:6-24). The Gospel of John sends two sometimes conflicting messages: the first is that Jesus, like the Jewish prophets before him, came to reveal the word of God; and the second is that Jesus as *Logos* was the *alter ego* of God (one of the three persons of the Holy Trinity), and that salvation depended upon accepting and believing in him as the one and only Son of God or God in the flesh, not just as the Jewish Messiah, or Christ, who was to be a leader for God's people and not a surrogate Christian God. The first theological concept of Jesus was not antithetical to Jewish thought, but the second was, and it provoked hostility between orthodox Jews and those Jews who followed Jesus, a

hostility evident in the anti-Semitism found in John's Gospel (see Jn 8:44 in the truth will make you free).

Jn 3:16 must be read with Jn 3:17,18: *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but to save the world through him. Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.* Jn 3:16-18 is an integrated statement of Johannine theology that asserts belief in the *Logos* or *Word of God*, as the only way to salvation, and asserts *the new command* to love one another as God's moral imperative. The idea that God would condemn all who do not embrace orthodox Christian beliefs to eternal damnation is absurd in the context of all the teachings of Jesus and an example of how the Christian religion has corrupted those teachings.² Even if Jn 3:16 was intended to be a teaching of Jesus rather than narrative, it is inconsistent with other teachings of Jesus that emphasize a universal, loving and merciful God, as opposed to a vengeful, judgmental God of Law that showed preference for exclusivist believers (see love for enemies; love over law; love and laws; love, forgiveness, and sinners; the greatest command, the good Samaritan, and sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican), and while Jesus asserted his authority to reveal the word of God he never asserted himself to be God (see the authority of Jesus). Belief that Jesus was God in the flesh is considered blasphemy in the Hebrew Bible (see blasphemy or word of God?) and also in the Qur'an, which asserts that Jesus was a messenger like Moses and Muhammad and that God has no family, and that any person who believes Jesus was the son of God is condemned to Hell (see Index of selected provisions from the Qur'an, *Belief, rewards and punishment for Jews and Christians*). It should be noted that orthodox Christians take the opposite view and condemn all who do not believe in Jesus as God's one and only son. The obstacle to better interfaith relations is not the different beliefs but the condemnation of those having different beliefs. Jews, Christians and Muslims all recognize Jesus as a prophet who revealed God's *Word* with his teachings as summarized in the greatest commandment, and Muslims scholars have suggested that teaching as a *common word* of faith for Jews, Christians and Muslims alike. If all would embrace the love of God and neighbor and avoid condemning their unbelieving neighbors as taught by Jesus (see do not judge and the parable of the good Samaritan), there would be a chance of religious reconciliation among the People of the Book. If the Gospel of John is seen as a symbolic account of the *Logos* or Holy Spirit and not a record of the life and teachings of Jesus, then passages such as Jn 3:16-18 and Jn 14:6 (see the way, the life and the truth) are consistent with the teachings of Jesus.

The spiritual message of John's Gospel is invaluable, but not inviolable. The belief of the first Christians who believed that Jesus was their Messiah and would soon return in a *Parousia* to establish God's kingdom on earth was relevant to their time and place, but not to ours. More than 2,000 years later we know that the living *Word of God* has not been limited to Christians but has been a part of many faith traditions around the world. We know that God never limited His love and mercy to any one religion or chosen people, and history has time and again proven the fallibility of any one true religion and confirmed that God speaks to all humankind in a variety of languages and faith traditions. John's Gospel asserted the validity of an exclusivist Christian faith against Jews who were persecuting the early church 2,000 years ago, and that purpose has long since been served. Jesus urged understanding and tolerance of divergent opinions (see tolerance, do not judge, the good Samaritan and tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds), and the new command to love one another at the heart of John's Gospel must be read with the admonition do not judge. Even though John's Gospel is not as historically accurate an account of the life and teachings of Jesus as are the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke, it provides an important spiritual dimension to the sayings of Jesus that can enrich our faith. John's Jesus identified himself with the metaphors of light (the light of the world), water (living water), bread (the bread of life), the way the truth and the life and the good shepherd to illustrate that the word of God that came through him brought salvation and eternal life. While it should not be taken literally, the Gospel of John provides us with great spiritual truths (see the truth shall make you free), much like the creation stories in Genesis and apocalyptic accounts in Daniel and Revelation (as well as the end times accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke). John's Gospel is the most spiritual of the gospel accounts; it might be described as the Gospel of the Holy Spirit, and it is the Holy Spirit that gives real meaning to faith and eternal life. As Jesus told Nicodemus, eternal life begins in this life when we are born again of the Spirit through faith. We are reborn to new spiritual life when we die to the love of the world, not with physical death; and our salvation comes when we accept the teachings of Jesus as the *word of God* (see Jn 1:1-5 above): *I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.*[SV4](Jn 5:24) Jesus made it clear that eternal life does not begin with death: *I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, they will never see death.*[SV4](Jn 8:51) In his own personal grief just before he resurrected Lazarus, Jesus reportedly said to Martha:

²⁵I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?[SV4](Jn 11:25,26) After Jesus predicts his death, he said: The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.[SV3](Jn 12:25; see also Mt 16:24,25; Mk 8:34,35; Lk 9:23,24) Perhaps the most comforting words attributed to Jesus are found in John 16:33, even if they did not originate with Jesus: I have told you these things, so that in me you will have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.[SV4](Jn 16:33; see love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace) In his farewell prayer Jesus prayed that his followers may know God through him: Now this is eternal life; that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.[SV4](Jn 17:3) And Jesus concluded with a prayer for the unity of all believers: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. (Jn 17:23)

Earlier in John's Gospel there is another view of eternal life (and damnation) that is more characteristic of the early church than of Jesus: ²⁵I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. ²⁶For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself.

²⁷And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man. ²⁸Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice ²⁹and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.[SV4](Jn 5:25-29)

The Gospel of Thomas shares with John an emphasis on eternal life: And he said, Whoever discovers the interpretation of these sayings will not taste death.[SV4](Th 1). ¹The disciples said to Jesus, "Tell us, how will our end come?" ²Jesus said, Have you found the beginning, then, that you are looking for the end? You see, the end will be where the beginning is. ³Congratulations to the one who stands at the beginning: that one will know the end and will not taste death.[SV4](Th 18:1-3) Trees were used as a metaphor for eternal life, probably referring to the trees of life in Gen 2:9 and in Rev 22:2: ³For there are five trees in Paradise for you; they do not change, summer or winter, and their leaves do not fall. ⁴Whoever knows them will not taste death.[SV4](Th 19:3,4) The Son of Adam, or Son of Man, also figured in eternal life: ¹Jesus said, Adam came from great power and great wealth, but he was not worthy of you. ²For had he been worthy, [he would] not [have tasted] death. [SV4](Th 85:1,2) And lastly, according to Thomas, ¹Jesus said, The heavens and the

earth will roll up in your presence, ²and whoever is living from the living one will not see death.[SV4] (Th 111:1,2)

*** The light of the world**

The Gospel of John uses the metaphors of light and darkness to contrast the goodness of Jesus with evil:

¹⁹This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

²⁰Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.[no SV] (Jn 3:19-21)

Notes: (Source: Jn). The SV treats this and other passages in Jn 3:14-21 as narratives of the evangelist rather than the words of Jesus. Jn 3:19-21 is a continuation of Jn 3:14-18 (see faith and eternal life), and the metaphors of light and darkness introduced in Jn 1:4-9 that described the coming of Jesus as the Logos: ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ⁹The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. (Jn 1:4,5,9) Jesus told the people: I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. (Jn 8:12) John's Gospel uses the metaphor of light extensively both for Jesus and the transforming power of God's love, as do the Synoptic Gospels (see light and salt, light within you, and lamp on a stand). The contrasting metaphors of light versus darkness were characteristic of the Gnostic duality of good versus evil, life versus death (faith and eternal life), spirit versus flesh (the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak) and sight versus blindness (blindness as punishment for sin). Light and darkness are especially prevalent in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas: *There is light within a person of light, and it shines on the whole world. If it does not shine, it is dark.*[SV4](Th 24:3) Jesus was also reported to have said: *I am the light that is over all things. I am all: from me all came forth, and to me all attained.*[SV4](Th 77:1) In the first of the I am sayings that are unique to John's Gospel, Jesus tells the Pharisees: *I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*[SV4](Jn 8:12) For other I am sayings, see living water, the bread of life, the good shepherd, the way, the truth and the life and the vine of

love. The exalted first-person testimony of the Jesus in John and Thomas (see also Jn 9:4,5; 11:9,10; 12:35,36,46; Th 77:1 and faith and eternal life) is not consistent with the Jesus of Mark, Matthew and Luke, making scholars skeptical that those sayings in John and Thomas originated with Jesus. The above saying on the light of the world is a symbolic way of describing how faith is evidenced by works as a tree by its fruits. See also authority of Jesus and pride and peer pressure.

*** Living water**

While travelling through Samaria, Jesus, tired from his journey, sat down at Jacob's well.

⁷When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, Will you give me a drink? ⁸(His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (for Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

¹⁰Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

¹¹"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? ¹²Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us this well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and his herds?"

¹³Jesus answered, Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but whoever drinks of the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.[SV4](Jn 4:7-14)

Notes: (Source: Jn). The fact that Jesus, a Jew, approached a Samaritan woman was taboo in Jewish culture and reflected his radical ministry of universal inclusiveness. The same was true when he healed a Centurion's servant (see faith of the Centurion in the healing of Jesus), exorcised an evil spirit from the daughter of a Syrophoenician woman (see power over evil), taught that we must love those of other religions as our ourselves (see the parable of the good Samaritan), and spoke of his kinship with all who struggled to do God's will (see the family of God). John's Jesus used the metaphor of *living water* to emphasize the spiritual dimension of life and the need to nurture the spirit with the word of God even as we need to feed the body (or flesh) with food and water. For similar analogies see the *I am*

sayings: the bread of life; the light of the world, the good shepherd, the way, the truth and the life and the vine of love.

John later reported Jesus using the metaphor of living water at the Festival of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem: ³⁷*On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and announced in a loud voice: If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.*

³⁸*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.[SV4](Jn 7:37,38)* As explained to Nicodemus, water had a special role in salvation: *I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.[SV4](Jn 3:5; see Nicodemus: born again of the spirit)* In this context, water represents a ritual cleansing agent for sin, as with the baptisms of John the Baptist, while the Spirit gives us new birth with our repentance and reconciliation through faith and the grace of God. Pentecostal Christians have two separate baptisms of water and the Spirit, while most Christians combine them in one baptism.

*** Worship in spirit and in truth**

In his discussion with the Samaritan woman, Jesus revealed that he knew all about her, including the fact she had five husbands and was now living with someone who was not her husband. Based on his intimate knowledge of her life the woman realized Jesus was a prophet. She then brought up the contentious issue of where to worship God: the Samaritans worshipped God there on Mount Gerizim while the Jews claimed all true believers must worship God in Jerusalem (Jn 15-20).

²¹*Jesus said, Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain or in Jerusalem.*

²²*You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³Yet a time is coming and has now come when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and truth.[SV4]*

²⁵*The woman said, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes he will explain everything to us."*

²⁶*Then Jesus declared, I who speak to you am he.[SV4](Jn 4:21-26)*

Notes: (Source: Jn). The SV translation of Jn 4:22 indicates that Jesus may have been poking fun at sanctimonious Judean attitudes on proper worship which were at odds with those of the Samaritans: *You people worship God-knows-what; we worship what we know--"Judeans are the agents of salvation, and all that."*

[SV4] What does it mean to *worship in spirit and truth*? *Worship* is showing reverence and devotion to God. The *Spirit* relates to the Holy Spirit as described in faith and eternal life and born again of the Spirit, and *truth* means God's truth, and set forth in holy scripture for Jews and for Christians the teachings of Jesus, as in the truth will make you free and the way, the truth and the life. Forms of worship were a major concern for Judean and Samaritan Jews, but not for Jesus, who emphasized faith and morality—acts of love and mercy—over acts of worship and piety. In Matthew's gospel this priority was evident when Jesus cited earlier prophets who said God prefers mercy, not sacrifice (see Mt 10:13; 12:7; Ho 6:6; Am 5:12; see also Jesus came to save sinners, prayer, forgiveness, and fasting in secret). Since sacrifice was at the center of Jewish worship this saying meant that acts of love and mercy should take precedence over acts of worship and piety. That is evident in the greatest commandment which affirms that we love, or worship, God by loving our neighbor as ourselves, and that our neighbors are the least, the last and the lost—even our enemies. We cannot love God and *worship in spirit and truth* unless we avoid hating others. The Evangelist John makes this point: *If anyone says "I love God" yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.* (1 Jn 4:19-20)

The Sadducees who presided over the Temple emphasized worship through sacrificial rituals and the Pharisees emphasized obedience to Mosaic Law as the standard of righteousness, and both groups of religious leaders were hostile to Jesus since he did not emphasize worship or obedience to Mosaic Law. Christian religious leaders have been little different, advocating belief in esoteric religious doctrines and creeds and emphasizing religious rules, rituals and liturgies as the essentials of the Christian faith rather than practicing sacrificial love as taught and exemplified by Jesus. A good (or bad, depending on one's perspective) example of such misplaced priorities is found in the ancient *Nicene Creed* and its progeny, the *Apostles' Creed*. Both claim to include all the fundamentals of Christian faith but there is no mention of the teachings of Jesus on sacrificial love, which are the essence of the greatest commandment and the new command. These creeds were chanted by those Christian zealots hell-bent on destroying infidels in the Crusades and Inquisitions²⁰ and they continue to be promoted by modern Christian fundamentalists. There is little wonder that many non-Christians who have great admiration for Jesus as a man of God and a great moral teacher, as did Thomas Jefferson and Mohandas Gandhi, consider many Christians to be hypocrites.

*** Bread of life**

After the Samaritan woman had left the well, the disciples returned with food and urged Jesus to eat something.

³²But he said to them, I have food to eat that you know nothing about.

³³Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

³⁴My food, said Jesus, is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵Do you not say, "Four months more and then the harvest?" I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷Thus the saying, "One sows and another reaps," is true. ³⁸I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor.[SV4](Jn 4:32-38)

Following the miracle of Jesus feeding 5,000 with five loaves and two fishes, the crowds followed Jesus.

²⁵When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

²⁶Jesus answered, I tell you the truth, you are looking for me not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. ²⁷Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.

²⁸Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the work God requires?"

²⁹Jesus answered, The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.

³⁰So they asked him, "What miraculous sign will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? ³¹Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: He gave them bread from heaven to eat. (Ex 16:4; Neh 9:15; Ps 78:24,25)

³²Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.

³⁴"Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread."

³⁵Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be

thirsty. ³⁶But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. ³⁷All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. ³⁸For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. ³⁹And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. ⁴⁰For my Father's will is that everyone that looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

⁴¹At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, I am the bread of life that came down from heaven. ⁴²They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, I came down from heaven?"

⁴³Stop grumbling among yourselves, Jesus answered. ⁴⁴No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets: They will all be taught by God. (Is 54:13) Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. ⁴⁶No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. ⁴⁷I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. ⁴⁸I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. ⁵⁰But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

⁵²Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

⁵³Jesus said to them, I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. ⁵⁵For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. ⁵⁶Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. ⁵⁸This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever. ⁵⁹He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.[SV4](Jn 6:25-59)

Notes: (Source: Jn). The bread of life metaphor is similar to that of living water, contrasting the spiritual need to feed the spirit with the need to satisfy the body (flesh) with food (bread) and drink (water). It is clearly metaphorical and symbolic of Jesus coming as the word of God in the flesh (see Jn 1:14); but later explicit language relating to eating the body

and drinking the blood of Jesus is more problematic: ⁵³*I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.* ⁵⁴*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.* ⁵⁵*For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.* ⁵⁶*Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.* (Jn 6:53-56) Later Jesus explained: *The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet some of you still don't believe.*[SV4](Jn 6:63,64) It was natural that Jews in the audience of Jesus would recall manna being provided by God through Moses as sustenance in the wilderness, but Jesus reminded them that those who ate manna ultimately died a natural death, while those who ate the sacred bread (the word of God) that he gave them would have everlasting life (see also the way, the truth and the life). John began his gospel with Jesus as the *Logos* or the Word (of God) that became flesh (see Jn 1:14 in faith and eternal life and the light of the world), so that the above passages on the Eucharist provide a scriptural basis for bread and wine representing the word of God (see Mk 14:22-26; Mt 26:26-30; Lk 22:14-20; and discussion in Nicodemus: born again of the Spirit). Catholics take it more literally than Protestants with their doctrine of transubstantiation in which the bread and wine in the Eucharist become the actual body and blood of Jesus; but the sacrament of Holy Communion should renew the commitment of all Christians to follow the teachings of Jesus as the way, the truth and the life. But a peculiarity in John has led some scholars to believe that this passage was a later addition to the Gospel. John provides an account of the last supper in chapter 13, but there is no mention of continuing the tradition as the Eucharist. The confusion and sharp debate among the Jews over Jesus descending from heaven and the requirement to eat his flesh and drink his blood (Jn 6:41,43,52) was reminiscent of Nicodemus' confusion over being born again; they failed to understand the symbolism which is understandable if he used the language in the Gospel of John. Also, some in the audience could not accept Jesus as the Messiah because they knew him before the Holy Spirit descended upon him and ordained his ministry (see the rejection of Jesus, family of God and prophet without honor in his hometown). The symbolic qualities of bread and wine that represent the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist underscore the mysterious goodness of the spirit as contrasted with worldliness of the flesh so easily corrupted by evil. They relate to the Gnostic duality or dichotomy of good and evil, life and death and light and darkness that is found in the gospel accounts (see born again of the Spirit, the unseen kingdom of heaven, the spirit is willing but the flesh is

weak, courage: open and fearless speech, the light of the world and living water). In addition to the symbolism of bread as the word of God *the bread of life* also recalls the temptation of Jesus, in which he rejected the offer of Satan to convert rocks into bread to satisfy his hunger. The reference to the disciples reaping a harvest they did not deserve (Jn 4:37,38; see also leaders in short supply) may refer to those Christians at the end of the first century C.E. who did not suffer the hardships of earlier Christians, and is evidence that this passage, like most others in John, was the creation of the early Christian church rather than a remembered saying of Jesus. Even so it accurately portrays the power of God first revealed by Jesus and experienced in the early church through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is also important to note that the divinity of Jesus as the *Logos* or word of God made flesh (Jn 1:1-14) went beyond the authority of Jesus in the Synoptic gospels and has convinced most scholars that these words did not originate with Jesus but with the Christian church after it broke with the Jewish faith near the end of the first century C.E. The *I am* sayings of Jesus (see Jn 6:35; 8:12; 8:23-30; 8:58; 10:11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1) imply his existence as *Logos* back to the revelation of God as Yahweh in Ex 3:14 (*I am [who I am]*). If we read John's Gospel as equating Jesus with God, then salvation requires belief in Jesus as the 2nd person of the Trinity (see Jn 3:13; 6:40,44; 14:6, the way, the truth, and the life and faith and eternal life); but an alternative understanding is to believe that the word of God revealed by Jesus is the way the truth and the life, not belief in Jesus as the only human manifestation of God. The latter belief requires that Christians be disciples and follow the teachings and example of Jesus as the word of God rather than worshiping Jesus as God. The difference in the two beliefs was noted by Thomas Jefferson and more recently by Robin Meyers in Saving Jesus from the Church.² God's word did not die on the cross with Jesus. The Resurrection validated the teachings and example of Jesus as God's living word. It is a living word of sacrificial love and reconciliation found within all major religions. The exclusivist belief that Jesus was God's one and only Son sent as a blood sacrifice to atone for our sins is only one way to interpret the Gospel accounts. The understanding of Jesus as a messenger of God's universal word of love, mercy, reconciliation and redemption can transform us into children of God and bring healing and reconciliation to a world beset by religious hatred and violence, and that is an interpretation of the Gospel accounts that is more consistent with reason and experience.²⁶ Fundamentalist forms of Judaism, Christianity and Islam that condemn unbelievers create hate and violence in the name of God.

God's will is to reconcile and redeem all people as children of God, while Satan's will is to divide and conquer. History confirms that Satan does an excellent imitation of God and does some of his best work in synagogues, churches and mosques.

*** The truth will make you free**

Jesus used the concepts of truth and freedom to relate his teachings to eternal life:

³¹*To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. ³²Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*

³³*They answered him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we will be set free?"*

³⁴*Jesus replied, I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. ³⁵Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. ³⁶So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.[SV4](Jn 8:31-36)*

Notes: (Source: Jn). When Jesus spoke of *the truth* in John's Gospel, he was speaking as the *Logos*, or word of God as the way, the truth and the life; and according to Paul, the truth taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ fulfilled the Jewish law with the supremacy of love over law (see the greatest commandment and the new command) and it *freed* Jews from the oppression of the Law as God's standard of righteousness: *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by the yoke of slavery.* (Ga 5:1) Paul went on to say: *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge in the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: Love your neighbor as yourself.* (Ga 5:13,14; also Rm 13:8-10; see the new standard higher than the old and individual responsibility and the law) For Jesus and Paul, freedom from the oppression of sin and holy law in the unseen kingdom of God was more spiritual than political (see liberation); but the seeds of political freedom, libertarian democracy and human rights that blossomed in the Enlightenment (see *Introduction*) were sown in these teachings on *free will* in matters of faith that had previously been mandated by holy law. The unwillingness of most Jews to consider Jesus a true prophet and source of God's truth indicates that they had no knowledge of a divine birth, baptism, transfiguration or other signs of the authority of Jesus to teach the word of God; instead he was

regarded as an undistinguished and pretentious carpenter's son from Galilee, a radical rabbi followed by a rag-tag group of disciples. When Jesus spoke of himself as the Son of God or Son of Man, most Jews were incredulous and some hostile (see the rejection of Jesus, bread of life and prophet without honor in his hometown). As *sons of Abraham*, Jews considered themselves God's chosen people and expected their long-awaited Messiah to free them from Roman oppression, and were unwilling to believe that God's kingdom was about spiritual rather than political freedom. Since they equated righteousness with obedience to Mosaic Law, they remained in spiritual bondage to holy law and a God of judgment and vengeance rather than being freed by a God of love and mercy (see liberation, lineage of Jesus, love over laws, hypocrisy and sanctimony, the Pharisee and the publican and riches and salvation). John the Baptist was first to challenge the children of Abraham as the chosen people of God: ⁷*When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸Produce fruit in keeping with your repentance. ⁹And do not think you can say to yourselves, "We have Abraham as our father." I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children of Abraham. ¹⁰The axe is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.* (Mt 3:7-10; also Lk 3:7-9) The Synoptic Gospels report Jesus condemning religious leaders (see hypocrisy and sanctimony and blind leading the blind) and John's Gospel reports Jesus condemning all Jews. Not only were Jews no longer the children of Abraham (Jn 8:33-41), they were the children of the devil: ⁴²*Jesus said to them, If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own, but he sent me. ⁴³Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. ⁴⁴You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks in his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.[SV4](Jn 8:42-44).* Such condemnation was totally out of character with Jesus who taught tolerance (see tolerance and judgment: the parable of the weeds), but intolerance was common in the early church at the time of John's Gospel, where there was great animosity and hostility between traditional Jews and breakaway Christian Jews. Early Christian leaders accused the Jews of being agents of Satan, and later the church used the same accusation against heretics from within their own ranks.²⁴ Christians who claimed to follow Jesus and condemned and persecuted others as infidels or heretics were themselves guilty of hypocrisy and sanctimony,

much like the Pharisees who accused Jesus of being an instrument of Satan (see Jn 8:48; 10:19-21 and blasphemy and miracles: work of Satan or God?). There is no justification for religious intolerance that condemns those of other faiths in the name of God; that furthers Satan's purpose to divide and conquer, not God's will to reconcile and redeem all people as children of God. The liberating truth of God's word is in the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor and the new command to love one another, even to love our enemies. The truth about God's liberating love is that it must be given to be received (see the golden rule, the last judgment, forgiveness, do not judge; love, forgiveness, and sinners; love and laws, love over law, and loving your neighbor: the good Samaritan). In spite of its sometimes anti-Semitic tone, John's Gospel reports Jesus teaching the Jews that they could experience faith and eternal life if they would only accept his teachings on sacrificial love as God's truth. Jesus prefaced his most important teachings with: *I tell you the truth*; and Jesus last spoke of *truth* when on trial for his life before Pilate. When Jesus told Pilate his kingdom was not of this world, Pilate remarked ³⁷*"You are a king, then!"* Jesus answered, *You are right in saying that I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.*[SV4] ³⁸*"What is truth?"* Pilate asked. *With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him."* (Jn 18:37-38; see Jesus before Pilate). Those like Pilate who held worldly power had little desire to know spiritual truths, but the Roman Centurion (faith of the centurion in the authority of Jesus) and Nicodemus (born again of the spirit) were exceptions to the rule. See humility, liberation, and bringing sight and blindness.

*** Judgment: Bringing sight and blindness**

After Jesus explained to his disciples that being born blind was not punishment for sin, he restored the sight of a blind man on the Sabbath; and when the man acknowledged Jesus to be the Son of Man (Jn 9:38),

³⁹*Jesus said, For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.*

⁴⁰*Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"*

⁴¹*Jesus said, If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. [SV4]* (Jn 9:39-41)

Notes: See Jn 15:24; Mk 4:11,12; Mt 13:13-17; Th 62:1 (Source: Jn). The Gospel of John sent a mixed message on judgment. The above passage in Jn 9:39 seems to say that Jesus came to judge, but the opposite message is in Jn 3:17 and Jn 12:47, as well as in the admonition do not judge in Mark, Matthew and Luke. Jesus often chose to restore sight to the blind (see power to heal), but made it clear that blindness was not punishment for sin. In Jesus' day sight and hearing were common metaphors for receiving and understanding God's word and truth. Since the Pharisees claimed to see and hear God's word and truth and yet refused to accept Jesus as a spokesman for it, Jesus could say of them that his coming would make *...those who (think they) see become blind*. Jesus cited Isaiah to explain to his disciples that few would understand the mystery of the kingdom of God as revealed in his parables: *They may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven.*[SV4](Mk 4:12; Is 6:9,10; see sowing the seeds of faith: parable of the sower) The Gospel of Thomas reports Jesus saying, *I disclose my mysteries to those [who are worthy] of [my] mysteries.*[SV4](Th 62:1) Those who heard and saw Jesus and his miracles should have understood and accepted his teachings as the word of God; if they rejected Jesus they were blind and deaf to God's word and truth and condemned themselves to sin and death. Thus a judgmental distinction was made between those who heard Jesus and accepted his teachings as the word of God (*the blind who will see*) and those who heard Jesus and rejected him (*those who see who will become blind*). Those who never had the opportunity to know Jesus and remained blind to God's word and truth would not be held to the same standard as those who knew and rejected him (see expectations and love over law: new standard higher than the old). Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees, who were respected as authorities on the scriptures and teachers of the Law, but who were criticized by Jesus for their hypocrisy and sanctimony and making a public display of their social status to impress others (see prayer, fasting, and almsgiving in private, condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes and hypocrisy: practice what you preach). It was because they thought they could see that they were blind to the truth that could set them free, as illustrated in the Pharisee and the publican. For Jewish religious leaders and those seeking their favor, pride and peer pressure and putting honor before men ahead of God blinded them to the teachings of Jesus, which called for leaders to be servants (see condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes; blind leading the blind, hypocrisy: practice what you preach, and ashamed of Jesus). But despite this judgmental tone in John's Gospel, the primary

message of Jesus was that of forgiveness. (Jn 12:47) Even the Pharisees were assured of salvation if and when they repented of their hypocrisy and sanctimony and embraced the forgiveness, love and mercy of God as summarized in the greatest commandment to love God and neighbor and the new command to love one another (see Jesus came to save sinners, not the righteous; forgiveness, love, and sinners; forgiveness on the cross; love over law; love and laws, and give and you will receive).

*** Blasphemy or Word of God**

As Jesus became more explicit about his divine authority and mission as *the Word of God*, Jewish religious leaders became more hostile to him. Many wanted to kill him since they considered his testimony blasphemous. Jesus encountered his detractors during Hanukkah in the temple in Jerusalem.

²⁴The Jews gathered around him, saying "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

²⁵Jesus answered, I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, ²⁶but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. ²⁷My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. ²⁸I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. ²⁹My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand. ³⁰I and the Father are one.

³¹Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, ³²but Jesus said to them, I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?

³³"We are not stoning you for any of these," replied the Jews, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God."

³⁴Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your Law, I have said you are gods? (Ps 82:6) ³⁵If he called them "gods," to whom the word of God came--and the scripture cannot be broken--³⁶what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, "I am God's Son"? ³⁷Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. ³⁸But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father." [SV4] ³⁹Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp. (Jn 10:25-39)

Notes: (Source: Jn). The above passage followed the story about the good shepherd, which left listeners divided in their reaction to the teachings of Jesus: ²⁰Many of them said, "He is

demon possessed and raving mad. Why listen to him?" ²¹But others said, "These are not the sayings of a man possessed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?" (Jn 10:20,21; see blindness as punishment for sin, bringing sight and blindness, and miracles: the work of Satan or God?). Instead of trying to convince the crowds that Jesus was possessed by a demon, his enemies began to build a case for the crime of blasphemy (see Jesus before the Sanhedrin). Performing signs and miracles in the name of gods not known to the Jews was considered blasphemous and a capital offense under the Law (see Dt 13:1-6; Lv 24:16), as was alleging oneself to be God (Jn 10:33). Jesus also spoke of blasphemies in Mk 3:28,29 (see miracles: the work of Satan or God?). The Pharisees considered the enforcement of Mosaic Law, including the capital crime of blasphemy, to be a sacred obligation, while Jesus taught the rule of love over law (see laws and love: the new standard higher than the old) and even practiced civil disobedience on the Sabbath to emphasize his point. He once intervened in an execution of an adulteress to discourage the judgment of others for moral offenses (see justice or mercy: the adulterous woman and do not judge). Jesus and Paul taught that God's truth will make us free from the bondage of sin and holy laws, and blasphemy laws conflict with the fundamental freedoms of religion and expression. There were laws in Puritan New England against blasphemy in colonial times, and they remain today in Islamic cultures (see Index of selected provisions of the Qur'an, *Belief and unbelief/rewards and punishments, for Jews and Christians*). The Pharisees challenged the teaching of Jesus as uncorroborated by witnesses (see Jn 8:15), but Jesus cited the testimony of John the Baptist, the scriptures, and his miracles as sufficient signs that his teachings were the word of God (Jn 5:31-47; 8:14-18). At the feast in Jerusalem Jesus told the Pharisees that they knew him but not the one who sent him (Jn 7:28,29; also 8:19); frustrated by their unwillingness to accept him, ⁴⁴Then Jesus cried out, *When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.* ⁴⁵When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.[SV4](Jn 12:44,45) See the authority of Jesus, bringing sight and blindness, power to forgive, and love over laws. John is the only gospel to report that Jesus acknowledged that he and God were one (see faith and eternal life and the bread of life) which was evidence of blasphemy (see Jesus before the Sanhedrin). Aside from being presented as the mysterious *Logos*, the Jesus of John's Gospel continuously referred to himself as God's Son, not as God in the flesh. Mark, Matthew and Luke all report Jesus making a clear distinction between himself and God, even denying that he was good and saying that only God was good. (see Mk 10:10; Mt 19:17; Lk 18:19) Jesus

most often used the term *Son of Man* (or Adam) to describe himself, which term should be distinguished from *Son of God* (see the authority of Jesus). There is little credible evidence in the gospels that Jesus ever identified himself as God, or as God's only Son (see Jn 3:16 in faith and eternal life); but whatever his mystical relationship to God, Jesus revealed the word of God and God validated that word in the Resurrection and then sent the Holy Spirit to be a constant reminder of His word (see faith and eternal life and Love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). When Jesus spoke of believing in him in John's Gospel he was speaking of believing in the word of God (the *Logos*), not believing in him as God in the flesh. (Jn 1:1-14; 10:34-38) Jesus called his disciples to follow him as the word of God, not to worship him as God. In referring to himself as the Son of Man, the Messiah (Christ) and even as the Son of God, Jesus never said anything blasphemous, only that he was sent by God to reveal God's word and to announce the coming kingdom of God (see a sign from heaven and worship in spirit and truth). Jesus made it clear that anyone who does God's will was his spiritual brother or sister in the family of God (Mk 10:18; Mt 19:17; Lk 18:19), and he prayed for the unity of all believers who accepted his teachings as the word of God. (Jn 17:20-23)

*** Pride and peer pressure: honor of men ahead of God**

While Jewish leaders were generally hostile toward Jesus, there were exceptions:

⁴²Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the animosity of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear of being put out of the synagogue; ⁴³for they loved praise from men even more than they loved praise from God. (Jn 12:42,43)

Notes: (Source: Jn). Preceding the above narrative are passages from Isaiah (Is 53:1; 6:10) that predict the rejection of Jesus by Jewish religious leaders who have been blinded to the truth (Jn 12:37-41; see also judgment: bringing sight and blindness). This narrative summarizes and ties together several sayings of Jesus that criticize religious leaders who put their public image ahead of their commitment to God (see also Matthew's condemnation of religious leaders and hypocrisy). John's Gospel reports Jesus saying to the Pharisees: ⁴¹*I do not accept praise from men,* ⁴²*but I know you. I know that you do not have the love of God in your hearts.*[SV4](Jn 5:41,42) Jesus then criticized them for seeking approval from each other rather than from God:

How can you believe if you accept praise from each other, yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?[SV4](Jn 5:44) Jesus contrasted his role speaking for God with the Pharisees promoting themselves: *He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.*[SV4](Jn 7:18) Jesus was frustrated that most Jewish leaders were hostile to his teachings and the socially chilling effect that it had on others. Nicodemus was the exception. He consulted with Jesus and was told he must be born again of the Spirit, and later he suggested to his fellow Pharisees that they should not be so quick to condemn Jesus, and that he should be entitled to a fair hearing. The response of the Pharisees to Nicodemus was ridicule: *Are you a Galilean too?* (Jn 7:45-52; see also Jn 9:28-34) Through ridicule and intimidation the Pharisees effectively discouraged public interest in Jesus (see ashamed of Jesus and the rejection of Jesus). Of those who were more concerned with appearances than serving God, Jesus said: *They have received their reward in full.*[SV4](Mt 6:5); see prayer in secret, fasting, humility: leaders as servants, the last judgment, and dissension, not peace). Luke's Jesus used even stronger language to condemn those seeking worldly popularity, power and success: *What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.* (Lk 16:15)[SV4](see ostentatious giving) Jesus understood that forgiveness, sacrificial love and humble service at the heart of his teachings were a narrow gate and a faith for the few in his day, and those teachings are no more popular in our materialistic and hedonistic culture today than they were then. It is ironic that being a Christian today is perceived to be the popular thing to do. That's because the church has made Christianity the world's most popular and powerful religion by asserting its supremacy over other religions and subordinating the teachings of Jesus to belief in exclusivist religious doctrines congenial to worldly popularity, power and success. Dietrich Bonhoeffer has described this as *cheap grace* and Robin Meyers has argued that *The only way to save Jesus from the church is to stop worshiping Christ and following Jesus.*² This is an interfaith problem since Islam is the world's second most popular religion and its holy book, the Qur'an, condemns unbelievers to eternal damnation (see *Introduction* and *Index* of selected provisions of the Qur'an on *Belief and unbelief/rewards and punishments*). Until these competing religions can be reconciled with a common word of faith in the greatest commandment to love God and one's unbelieving neighbor, religious hate and violence will make world peace elusive.

*** Life after death: many rooms in my Father's house**

During the last supper Jesus told his disciples that he would soon be leaving them, and gave them the new command to love one another. He comforted them with these words:

¹*Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; also trust in me.* ²*In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.* ³*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you also may be where I am.* ⁴*You know the way to the place I am going.*[SV4](14:1-4)

Notes: (Source: Jn). Peter had earlier asked Jesus where he was going, and Jesus had replied, *Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later.*[SV4](Jn 13:36) The above passage elaborated on that answer with the metaphor of a heavenly house, linking faith with eternal life. Most of the time Jesus used the terms life and death metaphorically to equate being born again of the Spirit and being liberated from the bondage of sin and spiritual death (see faith, and eternal life and the way, the truth, and the life); but here Jesus was telling the disciples about what happened after the end of life, as when he told the Sadducees about marriage in life after death and the resurrection. Such mystical teachings complemented those on morality, and *The Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi*, set forth in the introduction to *The Rest of the Story*, describes how we must give in order to receive the eternal peace and joy of the unseen kingdom of God from which we came and to which we will return after we take our last earthly breath. *The Prayer of St Francis* concludes with *...it is in dying that we are born to eternal life*. But we need to remember that Jesus taught that we need not wait until our bodies die to experience eternal life. We can be born again of the Spirit in this life and experience the peace and joy of eternal life that begins in this life and continues on into the next. That was the promise Jesus made to Martha just before he raised Lazarus from the dead. He told Martha: *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.* (Jn 11:25-26) Those words are spoken to comfort the bereaved at services of death and resurrection, but they apply as much to spiritual life as to bodily death.

*** The way, the truth, and the life**

Thomas and Philip questioned Jesus about where he was going:

⁵Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"

⁶Jesus answered, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you really knew me, you would know the Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.[SV4]

⁸Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us."

⁹Jesus answered, Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you for such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father"? ¹⁰Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, doing his work. ¹¹Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. ¹²I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father. ¹³And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. ¹⁴You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.[SV4](Jn 14:5-14)

Notes: (Source: Jn). The second sentence of Jn 14:6 (No one comes to the Father except through me.) is often cited along with Jn 3:18 (...[W]hoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.) as authority for exclusivist Christian doctrine and dogma that requires belief in Jesus as God's one and only Son for faith and eternal life and condemns all unbelievers to Hell. But Jn 14:6, like Jn 3:17, puts that erroneous reading into proper perspective by shifting the focus of what we must believe from belief in Jesus as God in the flesh to belief in Jesus as the word of God, a divine message to be followed as *the way, and the truth, and the life*, rather than a god to be worshiped. This is just another of the many *I am* statements unique to John's Gospel which presents Jesus as *Logos* or the word of God (Jn 1:1-14). When the Jesus of John's Gospel says *I am...*, what follows is a statement describing the word of God rather than the man Jesus. The *I am* verses of John's Gospel are not a call to worship Jesus as the Son of God but a call to follow Jesus as the word of God; but early Christians reversed those priorities.

Early Christians were Jews who believed in Jesus not only as their Messiah but also as God's one and only Son who was crucified as a blood sacrifice to atone for the sins of those who believed in him (Rm 3:21-26). Before the Resurrection those and other Jews believed that obedience to Mosaic Law was *the way, the truth and the life* for them; they never worshipped Moses or any of their prophets and never condemned those of other religions. The Jews that formed the Christian church after the Resurrection ultimately embraced the views of Paul, a converted Pharisee, who emphasized belief in Jesus not as a prophet but as a risen Christ who sat at the right hand of God and who would soon return in a *parousia* (a second coming or Rapture at the end times) to establish God's eternal kingdom on earth, and that all unbelievers would be excluded. To attract followers the early church created exclusivist doctrine, dogma and creeds that emphasized belief in Jesus as a divine being and omitted any reference to the teachings of Jesus as the word of God, even though the Jesus of John's Gospel taught that the new command of God to *love one another* replaced Mosaic Law as God's standard of righteousness. Paul affirmed the principle of love over law but also emphasized the divinity of Jesus Christ and the church as the body of Christ (Rm 12:4-8; Eph 5:30).

John's Gospel is about the risen Christ as *Logos* or Holy Spirit rather than the man Jesus. When Thomas asked Jesus where he was going, Jesus answered as the *Logos*, and told Thomas that his teachings and example on sacrificial love were the word of God and *the way, the truth and the life*. That was the only way to come to the Father (see worship in spirit and truth, the truth will make you free, the greatest commandment, Jesus before Pilate and life after death). When Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father/God, Jesus told him that he revealed the word of God and that Philip should know that based on the miracles Jesus performed (Jn 14:9-11; see also authority to perform miracles). Jesus reminded his disciples that the purpose of the miracles was to validate his teachings as the word of God. He never asserted that the miracles or the Resurrection would prove him to be God; in fact, he told his disciples that they too would have the same power to perform miracles (see effective prayer). The passage *I am in the Father and the Father in me* is cited to support Jesus as being coequal with God, but it is just another *I Am* saying that affirmed the teachings and example of Jesus to be the word of God and the bread of life. The unique symbolism of John's Gospel allows different ways to understand the meaning of Jn 13:16-18 (see faith and eternal life) and *...no one comes to the Father except through me* in Jn 14:6; and on the different understandings of Jn 14:6 see those articles in the May/June 2007 issue of Circuit Rider at www.circuitrider.com).

*** Love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace**

In continuing to explain to the disciples what was soon to come, Jesus told them that they should continue to love one another, and that they would soon receive the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, and a peace beyond their understanding:

¹⁵If you love me you will obey what I command. ¹⁶And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever--¹⁷the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. ¹⁸I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. ¹⁹Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you will also live. ²⁰On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. ²¹Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me loves my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him.

²²Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?"

²³Jesus replied, If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. ²⁴He who does not love me will not obey my teachings. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸You have heard me say, "I am going away and coming back to you." If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. ²⁹I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

³⁰I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of the world is coming. He has no hold on me, ³¹but the world must learn that I love the Father and I do exactly what my Father has commanded me. Come now; let us leave.[SV4](Jn 14:15-31)

But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.[SV4](Jn 16:13)

I have told you these things, so that in me you will have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.[SV4](Jn 16:33)

Notes: (Source: Jn). Here Jesus continued to emphasize the new command to love one another as the way, the truth, and the life. Jesus assured his disciples that when he went to be with his Father, the Father would send them (and to all future believers) the Holy Spirit as their Counselor to *...teach you all things and remind you of everything I have taught you* to give them guidance and peace in times of trouble. In other words, the Holy Spirit would succeed Jesus as the *Logos*, or word of God; and for all those born again of the Spirit, it would give their faith new meaning and give them new spiritual life (see faith and eternal life, worship in spirit and truth, living water, bread of life, rest for the weary, the vine of love, and Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification). The first of the farewell discourses begins with Jn 13:31 (see Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification) and ends with Jn 14:31. As with most other teachings of Jesus reported in John's Gospel, scholars believe that these words originated in the early church and not with Jesus; but given their correlation with other teachings of Jesus in the Beatitudes, rest for the weary, faith and eternal life and life after death, even if these words were not those of Jesus their symbolic meaning is consistent with his teachings. Note that Jn 16:5-16 virtually repeats Jn 14:15-31. Of all the teachings on faith, Jn 16:33 is one of the most powerful and comforting in all the gospel accounts, and it is especially relevant in a modern world that continues to bring us trouble.

*** The vine of love**

Jesus used the metaphor of a vine and its branches and God as a gardener to symbolize the need for the faith of his followers to be nurtured by his Father's love:

¹*I am the vine, and my Father is the gardener. ²He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, so that it will be even more fruitful. ³You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

⁵*I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do*

nothing. ⁶If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you. ⁸This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

¹⁶You didn't choose me; I chose you. And I delegated you to go out and produce fruit. And your fruit will last because my Father will provide you with whatever you request in my name.[SV4](Jn 15:1-8,16)

Notes: (Source: Jn). This is the last of the *I am* statements of John's Jesus and one especially rich in symbolism. It begins with the usual *I am* symbolism of Jesus as the *Logos* or *Word of God* (Jn 1:1-14), then God's Word is symbolized as a vine from which the faithful are branches that produce fruit of the Spirit, and then God or the Holy Spirit is symbolized as the gardener who prunes and nurtures the vine. The word given by Jesus to the disciples (Jn 15:3) is the new command to love one another and that is the way, the truth, and the life (see also love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace). The condition for bearing fruit is that *you remain in me and my words remain in you* (Jn 15:7), and the alternative is to spiritually wither and die (see faith and works, faith evidenced by works as a tree by its fruit, faith and eternal life, the bread of life, and the authority of Jesus). The allegory of a vine of love and life ties the moral imperative of faith to *love one another* to the promise of salvation and eternal life (see faith and eternal life), and to the alternative bondage of sin and death. The image of God pruning and destroying those branches that do not produce fruit of the Spirit emphasizes that the transforming power of God's forgiveness and love must be given in order to be received. As to receiving whatever is asked, see the power of prayer, faith and forgiveness.

*** The farewell prayer of Jesus: the unity of all believers**

John's Gospel concludes the teachings of Jesus with a farewell prayer that follows his last words to the disciples:

¹After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ²For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true

God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.

⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.

⁶"I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ⁷Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. ⁸For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. ¹⁰All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name--the name you gave me--so that they may be one as we are one.

¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

¹³"I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. ¹⁴I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ¹⁵My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. ¹⁷Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ¹⁸As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ¹⁹For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

²⁰"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²²I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: ²³I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

²⁴"Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

²⁵"Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." (Jn 17:1-26)

Notes: (Source: Jn). The farewell prayer is a mystical soliloquy of the *Logos* to God, and a summary of how the early church—here the Johannine community—understood and related to the *Logos*, or word of God. The Prologue to John's Gospel introduces Jesus as the *Logos* (Jn 1:1-14) and this prayer is his farewell. They are like bookends to the story of Jesus as the word of God in John's Gospel, and there is nothing comparable to either the Prologue or the farewell prayer in the other gospel accounts. Jesus taught his disciples to pray in secret and he obviously practiced what he preached, so there would not have been any witness to report his prayer. While the words did not likely originate with Jesus, they are important to a proper understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit in the early church. Unlike the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke, John's Gospel is so stylized, symbolic and spiritual that it should not be read as an accurate account of the life and teachings of Jesus. But many Christians read John's Gospel as they do the other gospel accounts and take from it exclusivist beliefs that undermine a proper understanding of the teachings of Jesus, including Jn 3:16 cited in faith and eternal life and Jn 14:6 cited in the way, the truth and the life, and the other *I am* statements of Jesus (see the bread of life, the good shepherd and the vine of love). It is ironic that Christians do not understand that John's Gospel is fundamentally different from the other three, being a description of the mystical *Logos* or *Word of God* (see Jn 1:1-14) or the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:26) rather than the historical Jesus. The distinction is critical: Belief in Jesus as God's one and only Son and worshiping him is quite different than belief in Jesus as the word of God and following that word as the only way, truth and life. The former understanding is an essential element of an exclusivist Christian religion that emphasizes the need to believe in Jesus as coequal with God, while the latter emphasizes Jesus as a messenger of God's universal truth for all people, serving to reconcile and redeem all people through God's love and mercy, regardless of their religion. A complete reading of John's Gospel in the light of reason and experience supports its universality and interfaith inclusiveness. The new command to love one another is at the heart of John's Gospel and it complements the greatest commandment. The command to *love one another* is the only command in John's Gospel so that *the unity of all believers* is based on that all-inclusive reconciling and redeeming love of God. This theme is further elaborated in the first Letter of John: *Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.* (1Jn 4:7) The Evangelist John goes on to say: *God is love.* (1Jn 4:16) While there is language referring to

Jesus as *God's one and only son* in both the Gospel of John and the Letter of John, that language allowed early Christians to assert Jesus to be the definitive word of God in their time and place, but it does not require the belief that Jesus was the one and only human manifestation of God's word for all time (see the authority of Jesus). In the context of all the gospel accounts the focus of belief is on following the message of Jesus as God's word, not on worshipping the messenger as a surrogate Christian god. The word of God personified by Jesus in John's Gospel is about the mystical, timeless and universal power of sacrificial love to reconcile and redeem humankind as children of God (Jn 1:12,13. Jesus is the light of the world that can dispel the darkness of fear, hate and violence in the cosmic battle between the forces of good and evil.

The terms *belief*, *believer* and *unbeliever* have always been problematic in religious doctrines, not only in Christianity but in Islam as well (see Index of selected provisions of the Qur'an on *Belief and unbelief/rewards and punishments*, and *Belief, rewards and punishments for Jews and Christians*). The problem for these two competing religions is not reconciling their many differences, but eliminating the fundamentalist believers in both religions who condemn unbelievers to Hell. This is also a problem for the relatively few fundamentalist Jews who believe the Torah of the Hebrew Bible is the inerrant and infallible word of God, with its many laws and its assertion that Jews are the chosen people of God and entitled to Israel as their Promised Land. The teachings of Jesus as summarized in the greatest commandment to love God and one's *unbelieving* neighbors (see the story of the good Samaritan) is a *common word of faith* that can reconcile those contentious believers, and the prayer for *the unity of all believers* is a plea for the reconciliation of Jews, Christians and Muslims and to bring them together in the universal family of God.

*** Political authority from God**

After Pilate had Jesus flogged, the Jews continued to insist that he be crucified. But Pilate was reluctant to impose the death penalty and implored of Jesus,

¹⁰"Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize that I have power to either to free you or to crucify you?"

¹¹Jesus answered, You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.[SV4](Jn 19:10,11)

Notes: (Source: Jn). John records an incredulous account of Pilate doing everything in his power to avoid sentencing Jesus to death, in spite of historical records indicating Pilate was a ruthless ruler who cared little for Jews. This account probably reflects the effort of the early church to placate Roman authorities to avoid persecution. This passage does that by shifting full responsibility for the crucifixion to Jewish religious leaders who brought Jesus to Roman authorities and urged them to crucify him since the Jewish leaders could not execute anyone under Roman law (Jn 18:31). Placing the responsibility for crucifying Jesus on Jewish leaders also reflects the mutual animosity between early Christian Jews and mainstream Jews over their religious differences, and that animosity is reflected in anti-Semitic passages in John's Gospel (see Jn 8:42-44 cited in the truth will make you free). The SV rating indicates scholars believe the words attributed to Jesus in this account were not his own but created by the evangelist. The account reflects the negative attitude the early Christians had for their Jewish antagonists and their desire to placate Roman authorities. Paul's letters indicate a similar desire to placate worldly rulers. He urged his followers to submit to governing authorities as servants of God (see Rom 13:1-7), perhaps because he was convinced the return of Jesus was imminent. See also Jesus before Pilate and church and state.

END NOTES

1. As standards of what is right, the norms of legitimacy are relative and vary according to time and place. Standards of legitimacy in libertarian Western cultures like the US differ from those in Islamic cultures. On legitimacy and the law, see references at note 5, *infra*. Legitimacy gives a nation the moral authority to act, and since military operations are the ultimate extension of a nation's power to act, they are especially sensitive to issues of legitimacy. See Barnes, *The Role of Religion in Shaping Human Rights and Standards of Military Legitimacy in The 2013 Military Legitimacy Review* posted at www.militarylegitimacyreview.com. See generally, Barnes, *Military Legitimacy: Might and Right in the New Millennium*, Frank Cass, London, 1996; on *The Jefferson Bible*, see pp 21,22.

2. Thomas Jefferson embraced the moral teachings of Jesus but expressed contempt for the distortions and misuse of those teachings by Christian religious leaders. Jefferson wrote Henry Fry on June 17, 1804: "I consider the doctrines of Jesus as delivered by himself to contain the outlines of the sublimest morality that has ever been taught; but I hold in the utmost profound detestation and execration the corruptions of it which have been invested by priestcraft and kingcraft, constituting a conspiracy of church and state against the civil and religious liberties of man." Thomas Jefferson, *The Jefferson Bible*, edited by O. I. A. Roche, Clarkson H. Potter, Inc., New York, 1964, at p 378; see also Jefferson's letter to John Adams dated October 13, 1813, at pp 825, 826; Jefferson's commentaries are at pp 325-379. While many Christians considered Jefferson a heretic, Jefferson wrote of himself: "I am a Christian in the only sense in which he [Jesus] wished anyone to be; sincerely attached to his doctrine in preference to all others and ascribing to him every human excellence, believing he never claimed any other." (p 334) For Jefferson, being a Christian meant following Jesus as God's word rather than worshiping him as God's son. He emphasized the moral teachings of Jesus over the mystical, and in so doing emphasized discipleship over orthodox Christian beliefs, a distinction elaborated by Robin R. Meyers in *Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus*, HarperCollins, 2009. See also note 23, *infra*. Jefferson cut and pasted selected portions of the gospel accounts from four Bibles in four languages: Greek, Latin, French, and English (from the King James translation). His *Bible* illustrates the moral dimension of religion and its role in shaping legitimacy in US culture. Jon Meacham affirmed

Jefferson's prominent role in shaping American values that are at the heart of legitimacy in American Gospel, Random House, New York, 2006 (see pp 56-58, 72-77, 80-86, 104, 105, 247-250, 263, 264; reference to Jefferson's Bible at p 389); see also Meacham, Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power, Random House, New York, 2012, pp 471-473. Denise Spellberg has provided a history of those pioneers of religious freedom and reason who influenced Jefferson and his experience with Islam in Thomas Jefferson's Qur'an: Islam and the Founders, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2013.

3. See www.acommonword.com for a description of the interfaith initiative and supporting commentary from religious leaders, and the monograph of Seyyed Hassein Nasr, Love in the Holy Qur'an.

4. Violations of human rights in countries around the world are reported annually by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor of the U.S. Department of State in its Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. In the 2012 report on Pakistan the following is reported: "Courts routinely failed to protect the rights of religious minorities. Laws prohibiting blasphemy continued to be used discriminatorily against minority Muslims, Christians, Ahmadis and members of other religious groups." (p 19) It also reported that "Blasphemy laws restricted individuals' right to free speech concerning matters of religion and religious doctrine" (p 25), and harmful traditional practices such as "...honor killings; facial, bodily and genital mutilation." (p 44) Such violations are not unique to Pakistan and are reported in other Islamic nations.

The Department of State also issues an annual International Religious Freedom Report compiled by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, and its 2012 report warned that "Across the global landscape, the pivotal human right of religious freedom was under escalating attack." The report noted blasphemy prosecutions in Egypt and Pakistan, the repression of religious freedom in Iran, and the exportation of religious extremist material from Saudi Arabia. (p 1)

5. On the ambiguity of coercion or compulsion in Islamic law, known as Shariah (also Shari'a and Sharia), and God as the only legislator, see note 21, *infra*. For a discussion of how Shariah relates to democracy, human rights and the secular rule of law, see Rudolph C. Barnes, Jr., *Religion and the Rule of Law: Shari'a, Democracy and Human Rights*, p 5, 2011 Military Legitimacy Review, p 5, at www.militarylegitimacyreview.com. Related articles published in the 2011 Military Legitimacy Review and posted at the same website are as follows: Kevin Hugh Govern, *Shari'a and Human Rights Under U.S. and International*

Law: Cultural and Legal Influences and Impediments to Cultivating and Advancing Peace, p 37; David Linnan, *Legitimacy, Legal Pluralism and Sharia*, p 51; David Stott Gordon, *Cultural Context, Religion and Shari'a in Relation to Military Rule of Law Operations*, p 59. The four articles were part of a Continuing Legal Education presentation by the authors at the 2012 South Carolina Bar Convention on January 21, 2012. On the enforcement of blasphemy laws, see the reports in note 4, *supra*.

6. The Holy Bible, New International Version: The New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs (International Bible Society, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1984).

7. Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus: The Five Gospels (Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, N. Y., 1993). The authors recognized Thomas Jefferson as a pioneer in discovering the historical Jesus by scrutinizing the gospels "...to separate the real teachings of Jesus, the figure of history, from the encrustations of Christian doctrine." pp 2,3.

8. See the commentaries of Thomas Jefferson in The Jefferson Bible, *supra* at note 2, at pp 325-379; also the Introduction to The Five Gospels, *supra* at note 7, at pp 1-8; generally, see Marcus J. Borg, Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time, HarperSanFrancisco, 1994; also John Dominic Crossan, Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography, HarperSanFrancisco, 1994.

9. *The greatest commandment* relates the mystical obligation of faith to love God to the moral imperative to love one's neighbor. The teachings of Jesus reveal a God of love, not law, and the supremacy of love over law. The evangelist John went so far as to say that *God is love*. (1 Jn 4:7-21) By any measure, love is at the heart of legitimacy (what is right). This requires that the sacrificial love taught and exemplified by Jesus be distinguished from selfish love which relates to the gratification of personal desires. The original Greek of the gospel accounts distinguished various forms of love, with *agape* being the form most often used by the authors of the gospels. It meant merciful, compassionate and unconditional concern and care for others, and was distinguished from filial, platonic, and erotic forms of love. One of the best known descriptions of *agape* love is found in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth. It always protects, always trusts,*

always hopes, always perseveres. (I Co 13:4-7). In his letter to the Galatians Paul described how to resolve the conflict between law and love as God's standard of righteousness: *The entire law is summed up in a single command: love your neighbor as yourself.* (Ga 5:14) The inherent conflict between love (mercy or kindness) and law (justice) was not noted in the Old Testament. The prophet Micah spoke of justice and kindness as consistent ideals: *He has showed you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and love kindness [mercy], and to walk humbly with your God?* (Mi 6:8).

10. See Spong, Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism, (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), chapter 9.

11. *Ibid* at p 84.

12. The background material is taken from *The New Testament, An Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels, The Jerusalem Bible* (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, NY, 1966), pp 5-11.

13. For a history of *The Book of Q* (Q is from the German word *quelle*, which means source) and a compilation of the sayings thought to have been in it, see Burton L. Mack, The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q (HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

14. See The Jerusalem Bible, *supra* note 12, at pp 11, 12.

15. See Spong, Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism, *supra* note 10, chapter 11.

16. See The Jerusalem Bible, *supra* note 12, at p 13.

17. *Ibid* at p 14.

18. For a discussion of gnosticism as it relates to the Gospels, see The Five Gospels, *supra* note 7, pp 500, 501, 544).

19. The Gospel of John tells the Christian creation story, presenting Jesus as the *Logos*, the mystical *Word* of God that was with God in the beginning and a light in the darkness. (Jn 1:1-14) The Greek *Logos* has numerous meanings, such as word, wisdom, reason and power (both creative and redemptive), which relate to an ultimate principle or God. More than 500 years before the coming of Jesus the Greek philosopher Heraclitus used *logos* to give cosmic meaning to the universe, and Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics later elaborated on the term. Philo of Alexandria was a Hellenistic Jew and contemporary of Jesus who

referred to *Logos* as the "first born of God." In Hebrew thought the word of God was associated with creation, divine activity and power, and most of the statements in the prologue to John's Gospel have parallels in Hebrew wisdom literature and rabbinical teachings which link the Christian creation story to the Hebrew creation story in Genesis, where the word of God created light and separated it from the darkness. (Gen. 1:3-4; see Jaroslav Pelikan, Jesus Through the Centuries, Harper & Row, New York, 1987, chapter 5, *The Cosmic Christ*) In Proverbs 1:20-9:18, wisdom is personified by Sophia, a metaphorical female who closely resembled Jesus. She was with God in the beginning (Prov. 3:19, 8:22-31; Jn 1:1-5) and was rejected by those who she tried to reach with God's truth (Prov. 1:24,25; Jn 1:5,10,11). Wisdom is more precious than precious jewels (Prov. 3:13-16) and a superior power who is the source of life (Prov. 4:4-23). Marcus Borg has suggested that these parallels make Sophia an example of the *Logos* in the preamble to John's Gospel. (see Borg, Meeting Jesus Again do the First Time, HarperCollins, 1994, chapters 4&5; see also The New Interpreters Bible, Volume IX, Abingdon, 1995, pp 519, 520 and Encyclopedia Britannica, 1970, Volume 14, *logos*, pp 250-252) Most popular translations of Jn 1:1 state: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*, and that Jesus was the Word made flesh (Jn 1:14); but the Greek syntax is ambiguous, and in An American Translation and Moffatt, New Translation Jn 1:1 is translated: *...the Word was divine*. (see www.Wikipedia.com) The Nicene Creed (see note 22, *infra*) is based on Jesus being God: *We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made*. The Greek and Hebrew context of *Logos* as the word of God negate the idea that Jesus is the one and only Word of God and indicate that Sophia and any prophet of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) and Muhammad can be *Logos* if they are a true source of God's wisdom. The irony is that the Christian exclusivism that condemns Jews and Muslims is based primarily on passages from John's Gospel such as Jn 3:16 and Jn 14:6.

20. A recent Pew Forum survey conducted in 39 Muslim countries indicates that most Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the revealed word of God (75% in Egypt), and that many believe their laws (sharia) should be imposed on all, no matter what their religion (74% in Egypt). Egypt is noted since it is an evolving democracy and is considered the bellwether of Sunni theological thought. See The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society, April 30, 2013, posted at www.pewforum.org.

The first major reaction of the church to scientific discovery that threatened the immutability of church doctrine based on revelation came with Galileo (1564-1642). After his perfection of the telescope and confirmation of the Copernican theory (which debunked the biblical heliocentric theory that the earth was the center of the universe) and his vain attempt to reconcile the language of the Bible with that of nature, Galileo was tried by the Inquisition and forced to recant the truths he had discovered. See Daniel J. Boorstein, The Discoverers (Random House, New York, 1985), pp 322-327. Karen Armstrong has made a convincing case that religious fundamentalism as we know it developed in Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the 19th century when new scientific discoveries, knowledge and reason threatened the literal truth of the Bible and Qur'an—as when the theory of evolution threatened the literal truth of the creation stories in Genesis. To counter this threat of knowledge and reason fundamentalists asserted the absolute truth of their holy books as the revealed literal, inerrant, infallible, perfect and immutable word of God. See Karen Armstrong, The Battle for God: A History of Fundamentalism (Ballentine Books, NY, 2001). As an illustration of how reliance on revelation can distort reason and morality, Christian fundamentalist theologians in both the North and South in the early 19th century were reluctant to condemn slavery from the pulpit since it was prevalent and never condemned in the Bible. See Mark A. Noll, America's God (Oxford University Press, 2002), chapters 18-20. Harold Bloom has cited anti-intellectualism as a contributing cause of fundamentalism among Southern Baptists: "Even as Fundamentalists insist upon the inerrancy of the Bible, they give up all actual reading of the Bible, since in fact its language is too remote and difficult for them to understand. What is left is the Bible as physical object, limp and leather, a final icon or magical talisman." Harold Bloom, The American Religion (Simon & Schuster, New York, N. Y., 1992), p 222. In Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), Bishop John Shelby Spong has noted the many discrepancies found in the Bible, and the danger of fundamentalism to its relevance, with an emphasis on the teachings of Jesus. Samuel P. Huntington cited the revival of religious fundamentalism (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism) as a "...basis for identity and commitment that transcends national boundaries and unites civilizations." He cited the resurgence of ancient rivalries between Eastern and Western Orthodox Christians, as well as Christians and Muslims in Bosnia, Judaism and in the Middle East, and hostility between Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism in Asia as creating new fault lines for hostility between civilizations, replacing more predictable ideological fault line

of communism versus democracy which prevailed during the Cold War. Huntington's conclusion was "For the relevant future, there will be no universal civilization, but instead a world of different civilizations, each of which will have to learn to coexist with the others." Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, Foreign Affairs, Summer 1993, pp 22, 26, 49.

21. *Let there be no compulsion in religion. Truth stands out clear from Error. Whoever rejects Evil and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy hand-hold that never breaks. And Allah hears and knows all things.* (Qur'an, Al Baqara 2:256) On God as the only legislator for Islamists, see references to Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a prominent Egyptian Islamic jurist, and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a distinguished Islamic scholar, both cited in *The Scholars Speak in Barnes, Religion and the Rule of Law: Shari'a, Democracy and Human Rights* (cited in note 5, *supra*), at p 14 and notes 48 and 51.

22. The Council of Nicea, convened by Emperor Constantine in 325 C.E., was the first ecumenical council of the Christian church. There no less than 300 bishops, under the watchful eye of their emperor, worked out the Nicene Creed. The top priority of these bishops was defining the relationship between Jesus and God--what became known as the Trinity (for an extract of the resulting creed, see note 19, *supra*). The creed became law not only for the church but also for the empire. Strangely there was no mention of sacrificial love, and events following indicated that omission was not an oversight. Of the aftermath Professor Jaroslav Pelikan writes: "To the church of Alexandria Constantine wrote that 'the fearful enormity of the blasphemies which some were shamelessly uttering concerning the mighty Savior, our life and hope,' had now been condemned and suppressed; 'for that which has commended itself to 300 bishops cannot be other than the doctrine of God.' Therefore 'whatever is determined in the holy assemblies of the bishops,' Constantine wrote to all the churches in all his provinces, 'is to be regarded as indicative of the divine will.' He then issued an edict against heretics on that basis, forbidding them to gather and confiscating their church buildings and places of assembly." See Jaroslav Pelikan, Jesus Through the Centuries (Harper & Row, New York, 1987), at p 53. The seeds of the Crusades, the inquisitions and contemporary intolerance and hate in the name of God are in the Nicene Creed. And while it remains in widespread use, there are other creeds that conform to the teachings of Jesus. A *Modern Affirmation* found in The United Methodist Hymnal (1989), at p 885, states the Trinity in terms consistent with the teachings of Jesus:

Where the spirit of the Lord is,
 there is the one true church, apostolic and universal,
 whose holy faith let us now declare:
 We believe in God the Father,
 infinite in wisdom, power, and love,
 whose mercy is over all his works,
 and whose will is ever directed to his children's good.
 We believe in Jesus Christ,
 Son of God and Son of man,
 the gift of the Father's unfailing grace,
 the ground of our hope,
 and the promise of our deliverance from sin and death.
 We believe in the Holy Spirit
 as the divine presence in our lives,
 whereby we are kept in perpetual remembrance
 of the truth of Christ,
 and find strength and help in time of need.
 We believe that this faith should manifest itself
 in the service of love
 as set forth in the example of our blessed Lord,
 to the end
 that the kingdom of God may come upon the earth. Amen.

23. In A History of God (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, N.Y., 1993), Karen Armstrong has noted, "A distinction between exoteric and esoteric truth will be extremely important in the history of God." (p 114) In her history of God in Judaism, Christianity, and Judaism, Ms. Armstrong discusses the duality of those exoteric truths understood and practiced by most believers and those esoteric beliefs understood only by a privileged few, as well as the related duality of the *kerygma*, early church doctrinal beliefs that evolved into the Nicene Creed (see notes 19 and 22, *supra*), and *dogma*, the more esoteric spiritual matters that could only be experienced and expressed in symbolic form. The former became characteristic of western Christianity, the latter with the Eastern (Orthodox) church. On the distinction between the exclusivist Christianity of the church and the inclusive teachings of Jesus on compassion, and on faith as being, not belief, see Robin R. Meyers, Saving Jesus from the Church: How to Stop Worshiping Christ and Start Following Jesus, HarperCollins, 2009 (cited at note 2, *supra*).

24. Elaine Pagels has traced the theological evolution of Satan from Job to those heretics within the early Christian church in The Origin of Satan (Random House, New York, N.Y., 1995). Turtullian (c. 180 C.E.) was representative of the early Christian demagogues who discouraged deviance from hierarchical

determinations of the articles of faith by labeling dissidents as heretics or agents of Satan (pp 163-165). Even the Gospel of John refers to Jews as sons of the devil. (John 8:44; see also the truth will make you free) The intolerance in the early church was only a preview of the atrocities the church would commit once it gained political power, as evidenced in the Crusades, the Inquisitions and the execution of heretics and suspected witches.

25. See note 9, *supra*. There is no sacrificial quality to loving God and neighbor if that love does not extend to those of other religions. Jesus told a Pharisee the story of the good Samaritan in response to his question, "Who is my neighbor?" In the story a detested Samaritan stopped to help a wounded Jew after he had been passed by other Jews, and the Pharisee reluctantly acknowledged that the Samaritan was the good neighbor. (Luke 10:25-37)

26. The United Methodist Church teaches that our theological task is both individual and communal and requires us to interpret scripture using tradition, *experience and reason* (formerly known as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral). The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2004, the United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville TN, 2004, at pp 74-86.

27. Rob Bell, a popular evangelist, has pointed out that there is no biblical authority for a hell to which God condemns sinners to eternal damnation. He lists the few words that are translated into hell in the Bible (Sheol, death and the grave in the Old Testament, and Gehenna, Tartarus and Hades in the New Testament) and explains why those words do not describe the kind of hell popularized by the church. Jesus taught that sin (separation from God) produced misery and suffering (sin and death) in this life, not the next. See Rob Bell, Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived, chapter 3, (Harper One, 2011).

QUICK REFERENCE ALPHABETICAL INDEX TO TOPICS AND THEMES

Accepting children as Jesus (Mk 9:37), chap 5, p 361.

Adultery and lust (Mt 5:27,30), chap 2, p 99.

Adulterous woman, justice or mercy (Jn 8:1-11), chap 4, p 307.

Almsgiving: see ostentatious giving (Mt 6:1-4), chap 2, p 107.

Anger and reconciliation (Mt 5:22-24), chap 2, p 93.

Anointing Jesus (Mk 14:3-8), chap 1, p 78.

Arrest of Jesus (Mt 26:50,52,55,56), chap 2, p 201

Ashamed of Jesus (Mk 8:38), chap 5, p 358.

Ask, seek, knock; see effective prayer (Mt 7:7-11), chap 2, p 123.

Authority of Jesus (Mk 8:27-30), chap 5, p 352.

Authority to perform miracles (Lk 10:17-20), chap 7, p 386.

Be ready: parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13), chap 2, p 190.

Beatitudes, The (Mt 5:1-12), chap 2, p 82.

Blasphemy or Word of God (Jn 10:25-39), chap 8, p 411.

Blind leading the blind: criticizing self before others (Lk 6:39-42), chap 3, p 214.

Blindness as punishment for sin (Jn 9:1-3), chap 4, p 312.

Blindness, bringing sight and: Judgement (Jn 9:39-41), chap 8, p 409.

Born again of the spirit: Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-13), chap 8, p 392.

Bread of life (Jn 6:26-51), chap 8, p 403.

Bringing sight and blindness: Judgment (Jn 9:39-41), chap 8, p 409.

Brotherhood of man: see family of God (Mk 3:31-35), chap 1, p 21.

Brotherly correction (Mt 18:15-17), chap 2, p 160.

Business in the temple, Doing (Jn 2:13-22), chap 4, p 302.

Busy to hear Jesus, Too (Lk 10:38-42), chap 3, p 226.

Call to discipleship (Mk 1:17,18), chap 5, p 337.

Call for Repentance (Mk 1:15), chap 5, p 336.

Calming the tempest: power over nature (Mk 4:37-40), chap 5, p 347.

Calvary, the way to (Lk 23:26-32), chap 3, p 298.

Capstone, rejection of the (Mk 12:9-11), chap 5, p 366.

Casting off sin (Mk 9:42-48), chap 5, p 363.

Celibacy and sexual preference (Mt 19:11,12), chap 2, p 165.

Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16), chap 1, p 66.

Children, accepting them as Jesus (Mk 9:37), chap 5, p 361.

Christian stewardship: the parable of the talents
(Mt 25:14-30), chap 2, p 192.

Church and state (Mk 12:15-17), chap 1, p 57.

Church: prayer in common (Mt 18:19,20), chap 6, p 382.

Civil disobedience on the Sabbath: love over law (Mk 2:27; 3:4), chap 1, p 31.

Clean and unclean: individual responsibility and the law
(Mk 7:14-23), chap 1, p 35.

Command, new: love one another (Jn 13:34,35), chap 4, p 325.

Commandment, the greatest (Mk 12:28-34), chap 1, p 25.

Commitment, unconditional, to discipleship (Lk 9:59-62), chap 3, p 221.

Condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes
(Mt 23:13-36), chap 2, p 178.

Cost of discipleship: selfless service (Mk 8:34-37), chap 5,
p 356.

Courage: open and fearless speech (Mt 10:26,27), chap 2, p 136.

Criticizing self before others: blind leading the blind
(Lk 6:39-42), chap 3, p 214.

Curses; see the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12; Lk), chap 2, p 82; also
condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes
(Mt 23:13-36), chap 2, p 194.

Danger of Riches (Lk 16:1-15), chap 3, p 267.

Death, life after, and resurrection (Mk 12:24-27), chap 1, p 74.

Death, life after: many rooms in my Father's house
(Jn 14:1-4), chap 8, p 415.

Destiny: prediction of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33),
chap 5, p 355.

Disciple, the true (Mt 7:21-23), chap 6, p 371.

Disciples, instructions to (Mt 10:9-18;23), chap 2, p 133.

Discipleship, call to (Mk 1:17,18), chap 5, p 337.

Discipleship, cost of (Mk 8:34-37), chap 5, p 356.

Discipleship, duty of (Lk 17:7-10), chap 3, p 279.

Discipleship, unconditional commitment to (Lk 9:59-62), chap 3,
p 221.

Dissension, not peace (Lk 12:49-53), chap 3, p 241.

Divorce, marriage and sexuality (Mk 10:5-9), chap 1, p 39.

Doing business in the temple (Jn 2:13-22), chap 4, p 302.

Do not judge (Mt 7:1,2), chap 2, p 121.

Do not worry (Mt 6:25-27), chap 2, p 119.

Doubt to belief: Nathanael (Jn 1:47-51), chap 8, p 391.

Duty of discipleship (Lk 17:7-10), chap 3, p 279.

Effective planning (Lk 14:28-32), chap 3, p 258.

Effective prayer (Mt 7:7-11), chap 2, p 123.

End times: the eschatological discourse
(Mt 24:1,2,16-21,29,32,33,36-51), chap 2, p 183.

Enemies, love for (Mt 5:43-48), chap 2, p 104.

Envy and equity: parable of the workers in the vineyard
(Mt 20:1-16), chap 2, p 167.

Eternal life and faith (Jn 3:14-18), chap 8, p 394.

Evil, power over (Mk 1:25,26), chap 5, p 338.

Evil, return of (Mt 12:43-45), chap 6, p 379.

Exorcism: Power over evil (Mk 1:25,26), chap 5, p 338.

Expectations (Lk 12:48), chap 3, p 238.

Faith and eternal life (Jn 3:14-18), chap 8, p 394.

Faith and morality: salt and light (Mt 5:13-16), chap 2, p 88.

Faith and persecution (Mt 10:17-25), chap 6, p 373.

Faith and works: parable of the wise and foolish builders
(Mt 7:24-27), chap 2, p 130.

Faith, child-like (Mk 10:13-16), chap 1, p 66.

Faith evidenced by works, as a tree by its fruit (Mt 7:15-27),
chap 2, p 128.

Faith for the few: the narrow gate (Mt 7:13,14), chap 2, p 126.

Faith, forgiveness, and the power of prayer (Mk 11:20-25), chap
5, p 365.

Faith, God, and money (Mt 6:24), chap 2, p 117.

Faith, message of, for John the Baptist (Mt 11:2-6), chap 6, p 375.

Faith of the Centurion in the authority of Jesus (Mt 8:5-13), chap 6, p 371.

Faith, test of: walking on the water (Mt 14:22-33), chap 6, p 381.

Faith, words, and judgment (Mt 12:33-37), chap 2, p 141.

Family of God: true kinsmen of Jesus (Mk 3:33,34), chap 1, p 21.

Fasting (Mt 6:16-18), chap 2, p 114.

The Farewell Prayer of Jesus: the unity of all believers
(Jn 17:1-26), chap 8, p 420.

Feast in Jerusalem (Jn 7:2-16; 19-26), chap 4, p 304.

Flesh is weak, but the spirit strong (Mt 26:36-46), chap 2, p 198.

Follow me (Lk 5:27,28), chap 3, p 210.

Forgive sins, power to (Mk 2:5), chap 5, p 341.

Forgiveness (Mt 6:14,15), chap 2, p 113.

Forgiveness, faith, and the power of prayer (Mk 11:20-25), chap 5, p 365.

Forgiveness, love and sinners (Lk 7:36-50), chap 3, p 217.

Forgiveness on the cross (Lk 23:34), chap 3, p 299.

Forgiveness: the parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:21-35), chap 2, p 162.

Free, the truth will make you (Jn 8:31-36), chap 8, p 407.

Give and you will receive (Lk 6:36-38), chap 3, p 212.

Giving, ostentatious (Mt 6:1-4), chap 2, p 107.

Giving to all who ask, submission and retribution (Mt 5:38-42), chap 2, p 102.

God's commands and the traditions of the Pharisees (Mk 7:6-13), Chap 5, p 348.

God's will is not suffering (Lk 13:2-5), chap 3, p 248.

Golden rule, The (Mt 7:12), chap 2, p 124.

Good Samaritan, parable of the (Lk 10:29-37), chap 3, p 223.

Good shepherd (Jn 10:1-18), chap 4, p 315.

Greatest commandment (Mk 12:28-34), chap 1, p 25.

Greed and hoarding possessions (Lk 12:13-21), chap 3, p 231.

Harvest and seed, parable of (Mk 4:26-32), chap 5, p 346.

Heal, power to (Mk 1:41), chap 5, p 340.

Holy Spirit, love, and the gift of peace (Jn 14:26), chap 8, p 418.

Honor of men ahead of God: pride and peer pressure (Jn 12:42-49), chap 8, p 413.

Humble service: see humility

Humility: leaders as servants (Mk 9:37; 10:41-44), chap 1, p 54.

Humility and sanctimony: the Pharisee and the publican (Lk 18:9-14), chap 3, p 289.

Humility in social matters (Lk 14:8-11), chap 3, p 253.

Human sexuality, marriage and divorce (Mk 10:5-9), chap 1, p 39.

Hypocrisy: see Criticizing self before others; blind leading the blind (Lk 6:39-42), chap 3, p 214; Religious leaders, condemnation of: the seven woes (Mt 23:13-36), chap 2, p 178.

Hypocrisy and integrity: talk is cheap (Mt 21:28-31), chap 2, p 170.

Hypocrisy and sanctimony (Mk 12:38-40), chap 1, p 69.

Hypocrisy: practise what you preach (Mt 23:2-7), chap 2, p 175.

Insensitivity to suffering: the rich man and Lazarus
(Lk 16:19-31), chap 3, p 275.

Individual or group: see prayer in common: the church
(Mt 18:19,20), chap 6, p 382; family of God (Mk 3:31-35), chap
1, p 21; Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12), chap 2, p 82; also lost and
found: parables of the lost sheep and coin (Lk 15:4-7), chap 3,
p 261.

Individual responsibility and the law: clean and unclean
(Mk 7:14-23), chap 1, p 35.

Instructions to the disciples (Mt 10:9-18;23), chap 2, p 133.

Integrity: plain talk, no oaths (Mt 5:33-37), chap 2, p 100.

Integrity: see Hypocrisy and integrity: talk is cheap
(Mt 21:28-31), chap 2, p 170; Criticizing self before others:
blind leading the blind (Lk 6:39-45), chap 3, p 241; and Doubt
to belief: Nathanael (Jn 1:43-51), chap 8, p 391.

Integrity and hypocrisy: talk is cheap (Mt 21:28-31), chap 2,
p 170.

Interpreting the times (Lk 12:54-56), chap 3, p 244.

Invitation, a new: parable of the wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14),
chap 2, p 172.

Invitation (to the poor): see Serving the least of those rather
than friends (Lk 14:12-14), chap 3, p 255.

Jerusalem lamented (Mt 23:37-39), chap 6, p 383.

Jesus, anointing (Mk 14:3-8), chap 1, p 78.

Jesus, arrest of (Mt 26:50,52,55,56), chap 2, p 201.

Jesus, authority of (Mk 8:27-30), chap 5, p 352.

Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Lk 22:66-70), chap 3, p 296.

Jesus before Pilate (Jn 18:28-31;33-38), chap 4, p 330.

Jesus came to save sinners (Mk 2:17; Mt 9:13), chap 1, p 17.

Jesus, lineage of: Christ as the son of David (Mk 12:35-37), chap 5, p 367.

Jesus on the cross (Mt 27:46), chap 2, p 203.

Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31), chap 4, p 323.

Jesus predicts his death (Jn 12:19-24), chap 4, p 318.

Jesus, true kinsmen: family of God (Mk 3:33,34), chap 1, p 21.

John the Baptist, message of faith for (Mt 11:4-6), chap 6, p 375.

John the Baptist, praise for (Mt 11:7-11), chap 6, p 376.

Judge, do not (Mt 7:1,2), chap 2, p 121.

Judgment: bringing sight and blindness (Jn 9:39-41), chap 8, p 409.

Judgment, the last (Mt 25:31-40), chap 2, p 195.

Justice or mercy: the adulterous woman (Jn 8:1-11), chap 4, p 307.

Justification: see Sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican (Lk 18:9-14), chap 3, p 289.

Kingdom, the: parables of the treasure and the pearl (Mt 13:44-46), chap 2, p 149.

Kingdom of God coming (Mk 9:1), chap 5, p 359.

Kingdom of God: parable of the mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32), chap 1, p 51.

Kingdom of God, unseen (Lk 17:20,21), chap 3, p 282.

Knock, seek and ask: see effective prayer (Mt 7:7-11), chap 2, p 123.

Lamp on a stand (Mk 4:21-23), chap 1, p 43.

Last judgment (Mt 25:31-40), chap 2, p 195.

Law, the (Lk 16:16-18), chap 3, p 272.

Law, Individual responsibility and (Mk 7:14-23), chap 1, p 35.

Laws and love: new standard higher than the old (Mt 5:20), chap 2, p 90.

Lazarus, the rich man and: insensitivity to suffering
(Lk 16:19-31), chap 3, p 275; the account of the Lazarus who was raised from the dead is found in Jn 11:38-44, and mentioned in miracles: work of Satan or God? (Mk 3:24), chap 5, p 344.

Leaders as servants, humility (Mk 9:35; 10:41-44), chap 1, p 54.

Leaders in short supply (Mt 9:36-38), chap 6, p 373.

Leading others astray (Mt 18:7-9), chap 2, p 157.

Liberation (Lk 4:18,19,21,24), chap 7, p 385.

Life after death: many rooms in my Father's house (Jn 14:1-4), chap 8, p 415.

Life, eternal, and faith (Jn 3:16,17), chap 8, p 394.

Life, the way, and the truth (Jn 14:6,7), chap 8, p 416.

Light and salt (Mt 5:13-16), chap 2, p 88.

Light of the world (Jn 3:19-21; 8:12), chap 8, p 399.

Light (Lamp) on a stand (Mk 4:21-23), chap 1, p 43.

Light within you (Mt 6:22,23), chap 2, p 116.

Lineage of Jesus: Christ as son of David (Mt 12:35-37), chap 5, p 367.

Living water (Jn 4:1-21), chap 8, p 400.

Lord's prayer: prayer in secret (Mt 6:5-15), chap 2, p 110.

Lost and found: parables of the lost sheep and coin

(Lk 15:1-10), chap 3, p 261.

Lost sheep, parable of (Lk 15:4-7), chap 3, p 261.

Lost coin, parable of (Lk 15:4-7), chap 3, p 104.

Love for enemies (Mt 5:43-48), chap 2, p 104.

Love and laws: new standard higher than the old (Mt 5:20), chap 2, p 90.

Love, forgiveness, and sinners (Lk 7:36-50), chap 3, p 217.

Love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace (Jn 14:26), chap 8, p 418.

Love one another: a new command (Jn 13:34,35), chap 4, p 325.

Love over law: civil disobedience (Mk 2:27, 3:4), chap 1, p 31.

Loving your neighbor: the good Samaritan (Lk 10:30-36), chap 3, p 223.

Love, vine of (Jn 15:5), chap 8, p 419.

Many rooms in my Father's house: life after death (Jn 14:1-4), chap 8, p 415.

Marriage, divorce, and human sexuality (Mk 10:5-9), chap 1, p 39.

Mercy, not sacrifice: see Jesus came for sinners (Mk 2:17; Mt 9:13), chap 1, p 17; civil disobedience: love over law (Mk 2:27; Mt 12:7), chap 1, p 31; give and you will receive (Lk 6:36-38), chap 3, p 212.

Mercy or justice: the adulterous woman (Jn 8:1-11), chap 4, p 307.

Message of faith for John the Baptist (Mt 11:2-10), chap 6, p 375.

Messenger for Jesus (Mt 10:40,41), chap 6, p 374.

Miracles, authority to perform (Lk 10:17-20), chap 7, p 386.

Miracles: the work of Satan or God? (Mk 3:24), chap 5, p 344.

Money and salvation: Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10), chap 3, p 292.

Money, faith, and God (Mt 6:24), chap 2, p 117.

Morality and faith: salt and light (Mt 5:13-16), chap 2, p 88.

Morality and the law; see clean and unclean: individual responsibility and the law (Mk 7:14-23), chap 1, p 35.

Mustard seed: parable of (Mk 4:30-32), chap 1, p 51.

Narrow gate, faith for the few (Mt 7:13,14), chap 2, p 126.

Net, parable of (Mt 13:47-50), chap 2, p 151.

New command: love one another (Jn 13:34,35), chap 4, p 325.

New standards of morality and faith: new wineskins (Mk 2:19-22), chap 5, p 343.

Nicodemus: born again of the spirit (Jn 3:1-13), chap 8, p 392.

Oaths, no: Integrity (Mt 5:33-37), chap 2, p 100.

Old and new (Mt 13:51,52), chap 2, p 154.

Ostentatious giving (Mt 6:1-4), chap 2, p 107.

Parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10:29-37), chap 3, p 223.

Parables of the lost sheep and coin: lost and found (Lk 15:1-10), chap 3, p 261.

Parable of the mustard seed: Kingdom of God (Mk 4:30-32), chap 1, p 51.

Parable of the Pharisee and the publican (Lk 18:9-14), chap 3, p 289.

Parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32), chap 3, p 263.

Parable of seed and harvest (Mk 4:26-32), chap 5, p 346.

Parable of the Shrewd manager (Lk 16:1-15), chap 3, p 267.

Parable of the sower (Mk 4:1-20), chap 1, p 61.

Parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30), chap 2, p 192.

Parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13), chap 2, p 190.

Parables of the treasure and the pearl (Mt 13:44-46), chap 2, p 149.

Parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:21-35), chap 2, p 162.

Parable of the weeds (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43), chap 2, p 144.

Parable of the wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14), chap 2, p 172.

Parable of the wicked tenants (Mk 12:1-9), chap 1, p 72.

Parable of the wise and foolish builders: faith and works (Mt 7:24-27), chap 2, p 130.

Parable of the workers in the vineyard: envy and equity (Mt 20:1-16), chap 2, p 167.

Parable of the yeast (Mt 13:33), chap 6, p 380.

Patience with sinners (Lk 13:6-9), chap 3, p 251.

Peace, love and the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:15-31), chap 8, p 418.

Persistence (Lk 11:5-8), chap 3, p 228.

Persistence in prayer (Lk 18:1-8), chap 3, p 287.

Pharisee and the publican, sanctimony and humility (Lk 18:9-14), chap 3, p 289.

Planning, effective (Lk 14:28-32), chap 3, p 258.

Political authority from God (Jn 19:11), chap 8, p 423.

Popularity: see pride and peer pressure and narrow gate

Power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness (Mk 11:22-25), chap 5, p 365.

Power over evil (Mk 1:25,26), chap 5, p 338.

Power over nature (Mk 4:37-40), chap 5, p 347.

Power to heal (Mk 1:41), chap 5, p 340.

Power to forgive sins (Mk 2:5), chap 5, p 341.

Practice what you preach: hypocrisy (Mt 23:2-7), chap 2, p 175.

Praise for John the Baptist (Mt 11:7-11), chap 6, p 376.

Prayer, effective (Mt 7:7-11), chap 2, p 123.

Prayer in common: the church (Mt 18:19,20), chap 6, p 382.

Prayer in secret (Mt 6:5-15), chap 2, p 110.

Prayer, persistence in (Lk 18:1-8), chap 3, p 287.

Prayer (power of), faith, and forgiveness (Mk 11:20-25), chap 5, p 365.

Precedence, request for (Mk 10:38-40), chap 5, p 364.

Prediction of death and resurrection: destiny (Mk 8:31-33), chap 5, p 355.

Pride and peer pressure: honor of men ahead of God (Jn 12:42-49), chap 8, p 413.

Prodigal son, parable of (Lk 15:11-32), chap 3, p 263.

Prophet without honor in his hometown (Mk 6:4), chap 5, p 348.

Ready, Be: the parable of the ten virgins (Mt 25:1-13), chap 2, p 190.

Reconciliation, anger and (Mt 5:22-24), chap 2, p 93.

Rejection of the capstone (Mk 12:9-12), chap 5, p 366.

Rejection of Jesus (Mt 11:16-27), chap 6, p 377.

Religious leaders, condemnation of: the seven woes (Mt 23:13-36), chap 2, p 178.

Renouncing family and possessions (Lk 14:26,27,33), chap 7, p 386.

Repentance, call for (Mk 1:15), chap 5, p 336.

Repentance: see sanctimony and humility (Lk 18:9-14), chap 3, p 289.

Request for precedence (Mk 10:38-40), chap 5, p 364.

Resolving disputes out of court (Mt 5:25,26), chap 2, p 97.

Rest for the weary (Mt 11:28-30), chap 2, p 139.

Return of evil (Mt 12:43-45), chap 6, p 379.

Rich man and Lazarus: insensitivity to suffering (Lk 16:19-31), chap 3, p 275.

Riches and salvation (Mk 10:21-31), chap 1, p 45.

Riches (Danger of), shrewdness, and stewardship (Lk 16:1-15), chap 3, p 267.

Sabbath, civil disobedience on: love over law (Mk 2:27; 3:4), chap 1, p 31.

Salt and light (Mt 5:13-16), chap 2, p 88.

Salvation, Riches and (Mk 10:21-31), chap 1, p 45.

Samaritan, Good (Lk 10:30-36), chap 3, p 223.

Sanctimony, Hypocrisy and (Mk 12:38-40), chap 1, p 69.

Sanctimony and humility: the Pharisee and the publican (Lk 18:9-14), chap 3, p 223.

Seed and harvest, parable of (Mk 4:26-32), chap 5, p 346.

Seek, knock and ask: see effective prayer (Mt 7:7-11), chap 2, p 123.

Selfless service: the cost of discipleship (Mk 8:34-37), chap 5, p 356.

Servants, Leaders as (Mk 9:37), chap 1, p 54.

Serving the least of those rather than friends (Lk 14:12-14), chap 3, p 255.

Seven woes: condemnation of religious leaders (Mt 23:13-36), chap 2, p 178.

Sexual preference and celibacy (Mt 19:11,12), chap 2, p 165.

Sexuality, divorce, and marriage (Mk 10:5-9), chap 1, p 39.

Sheep, parable of the lost (Lk 15:1-10), chap 3, p 261.

Shepherd, the good (Jn 10:1-18), chap 4, p 315.

Shrewdness, stewardship, and the danger of riches (Lk 16:1-15), chap 3, p 267.

Sibling rivalry: return of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32), chap 3, p 263.

Sight and blindness, bringing (Jn 9:39-41), chap 8, p 409.

Sign from heaven (Mk 8:11-13), chap 5, p 350.

Sin, casting off (Mk 9:42-48), chap 5, p 363.

Sinners, forgiveness, and love (Lk 7:36-50), chap 3, p 217.

Sinners, Jesus came for (Mk 2:17), chap 1, p 17.

Sins, Power to forgive (Mk 2:5), chap 5, p 341.

Sowing the seeds of faith: parable of the sower (Mk 4:1-20), chap 1, p 61.

Spirit, born again of: Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-15), chap 8, p 392.

Spirit, Holy, love, and the gift of peace (Jn 14:15-27; 16:13.33), chap 8, p 418.

Spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:36-46), chap 2, p 198.

State and church (Mk 12:15-17), chap 1, p 57.

Stewardship, Christian: parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-30), chap 2, p 192.

Stewardship, shrewdness, and the danger of riches (Lk 16:1-15), chap 3, p 267.

Submission and retribution (Mt 5:38-42), chap 2, p 102.

Suffering not God's will (Lk 13:1-5), chap 3, p 248.

Talents, parable of (Mt 25:14-30), chap 2, p 192.

Talk is cheap: integrity and hypocrisy (Mt 21:28-31), chap 2, p 170.

Temptation of Jesus (Mt 4:1-11), chap 6. p 369.

Threat to the faith: the yeast of the Pharisees (Mk 8:14-21), chap 5, p 351.

Tolerance (Mk 9:38-40), chap 5, p 361.

Tolerance and judgment: parable of the weeds (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43), chap 2, p 144.

Traditions of the Pharisees (Mk 7:1-13), Chap 5, p 348.

Transfiguration (Mk 9:2-6), chap 5, p 360.

Treasures and the heart (Lk 12:33,34), chap 3, p 235.

Tree by its fruits, Faith evidenced by works as a (Mt 7:15-27), chap 2, p 128.

Truth, the way, and the life (Jn 14:6,7), chap 8, p 416.

Truth will make you free (Jn 8:31-36), chap 8, p 407.

Unconditional commitment to discipleship (Lk 9:59-62), chap 3, p 221.

Unity of all believers: The Farewell Prayer of Jesus (Jn 17:1-26), chap 8, p 420.

Unseen kingdom of God (Lk 17:20,21), chap 3, p 282.

Vine of love (Jn 15:1-8, 16), chap 8, p 419.

Vineyard workers, parable of (Mt 20:1-16), chap 2, p 167.

Walking on the water: test of faith (Mt 14:22-33), chap 6, p 381.

Washing the disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-17), chap 4, p 320.

Watch and pray (Lk 21:34-36), chap 3, p 294.

Water, living (Jn 4:1-21), chap 8, p 400.

Way, the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6,7), chap 8, p 416.

Wedding feast, parable of: a new invitation (Mt 22:1-14), chap 2, p 172.

Weeds, parable of (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43), chap 2, p 144.

Wicked tenants, parable of (Mk 12:1-9), chap 1, p 72.

Widow's mite, The (Mk 12:43, 44), chap 1, p 49.

Wineskins, new (Mk 2:19-22), chap 5, p 343.

Wise and foolish builders (Mt 7:24-27), chap 2, p 130.

Works and faith (Mt 7:24-27), chap 2, p 130.

Worry, Do not (Mt 6:25-34), chap 2, p 119.

Worship in spirit and truth (Jn 4:21-24), chap 8, p 401.

Yeast, parable of (Mt 13:33), chap 6, p 380.

Yeast of the Pharisees (Mk 8:14-21), chap 5, p 351.

Yoke of Jesus: see rest for the weary (Mt 11:28-30), chap 2, p 139.

Zacchaeus: money and salvation (Lk 19:1-10), chap 3, p 292.

CROSS-REFERENCE INDEX (from Gospel verses to Topics)

The Gospel of Mark

- Mk 1:1-17--Narrative (omitted)
Mk 1:17-20--The call to discipleship (chap 5)
Mk 1:21-28--Power over evil (chap 5)
Mk 1:29-34--Narrative (omitted)
Mk 1:35-39--see Instructions to the disciples
(Mt 10:9-18,23; chap 2)
Mk 1:40-45--Power to heal (chap 5)
Mk 2:1-12--Power to forgive sins (chap 5)
Mk 2:13-14--see Follow me (Lk 5:27,28; chap 3)
Mk 2:15-17--Jesus came to save sinners,
not the righteous (chap 1)
Mk 2:18-22--New standards of morality and faith:
new wineskins (chap 5)
Mk 2:23-28--Civil disobedience on the Sabbath:
love over law (chap 1)
Mk 3:1-6--Civil disobedience on the Sabbath:
love over law (chap 1)
Mk 3:7-19--Narrative (omitted)
Mk 3:20-27--Miracles:
the work of Satan or God? (chap 5)
Mk 3:28-30--Blasphemies (chap 5)
Mk 3:31-35--The family of God:
true kinsmen of Jesus (chap 1)
Mk 4:1-20--Sowing the seeds of faith:
parable of the sower (chap 1)
Mk 4:21-23--Lamp on a stand (chap 1)
Mk 4:25--see Christian stewardship:
parable of the talents (Mt 25:14-29; chap 2)
Mk 4:26-29--Parable of the seed and harvest (chap 5)
Mk 4:30-32--The kingdom of God:
parable of the mustard seed (chap 1)
Mk 4:33-41--Power over nature:
calming the tempest (chap 5)
Mk 5:1-20--see Power over evil (Mk 1:25; chap 5)
Mk 5:21-24--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
Mk 5:25-34--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
Mk 5:35-43--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
Mk 6:1-6--A prophet is without honor
in his hometown (chap 5)
Mk 6:7-11--see Instructions to the disciples
(Mt 10:5,6,9-18,23; chap 2)
Mk 6:12-30--Narrative (omitted)
Mk 6:31--see Prayer in secret: the Lord's Prayer
(Mt 6:5-13; chap 2)

Mk 6:32-46--see Miracles:
 the work of Satan or God? (Mk 3:24; chap 5)
 Mk 6:47-52--see Test of faith:
 walking on water (Mt 14:27-33; chap 6)
 Mk 6:53-56--Narrative (omitted)
 Mk 7:1-13--God's commands and the traditions
 of the Pharisees (chap 5)
 Mk 7:14-23--Individual responsibility and the law:
 clean and unclean (chap 1)
 Mk 7:24-30--see Power over evil (Mk 1:25; chap 5)
 Mk 7:31-37--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Mk 8:1-9--see Miracles:
 the work of Satan or God? (Mk 3:24; chap 5)
 Mk 8:10-13--A sign from heaven (chap 5)
 Mk 8:14-21--Threat to the faith:
 the yeast of the Pharisees (chap 5)
 Mk 8:22-26--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Mk 8:27-30--The authority of Jesus (chap 5)
 Mk 8:31-33--Destiny: prediction of death
 and resurrection (chap 5)
 Mk 8:34-37--Selfless service:
 the cost of discipleship (chap 5)
 Mk 8:38--Ashamed of Jesus (chap 5)
 Mk 9:1--The coming Kingdom of God (chap 5)
 Mk 9:2-13--The transfiguration (chap 5)
 Mk 9:14-29--see Power over evil (Mk 1:25; chap 5)
 Mk 9:30-32--see Destiny: prediction of death
 and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Mk 9:33-35--Humility: leaders as servants (chap 1)
 Mk 9:36,37--Accepting children as Jesus (chap 5)
 Mk 9:38-40--Tolerance (chap 5)
 Mk 9:41--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Mk 9:42-48--Casting off sin (chap 5)
 Mk 9:49,50--see Faith and morality:
 salt and light (Mt 5:13-16; chap 2)
 Mk 10:1-12--Marriage, divorce, and
 human sexuality (chap 1)
 Mk 10:13-16--Child-like faith (chap 1)
 Mk 10:17-31--Riches and salvation (chap 1)
 Mk 10:32-34--see Destiny: prediction of death
 and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Mk 10:35-40--Request for precedence (chap 5)
 Mk 10:41-44--see Humility: leaders as servants (chap 1)
 Mk 10:46-52--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Mk 11:1-3--Saying omitted (entry into Jerusalem)
 Mk 11:4-11--Narrative (omitted)

Mk 11:12-14--see Power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness (Mk 11:20-25; chap 5)
 Mk 11:15-19--see Doing business in the temple (Jn 2:12-16; chap 4)
 Mk 11:20-25--Power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness (chap 5)
 Mk 11:27-33--The authority of Jesus (Mk 8:27-30; chap 5)
 Mk 12:1-8--Parable of the wicked tenants (chap 1)
 Mk 12:9-11--Rejection of the capstone (chap 5)
 Mk 12:12-17--Church and state (chap 1)
 Mk 12:18-27--Life after death and resurrection (chap 1)
 Mk 12:28-34--The greatest commandment (chap 1)
 Mk 12:35-37--Lineage of Jesus: Christ as son of David (chap 5)
 Mk 12:38-40--Hypocrisy and sanctimony (chap 1)
 Mk 12:41-44--The widow's mite (chap 1)
 Mk 13:1-10--see End times: the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1; chap 2)
 Mk 13:11,12--see Courage: open and fearless speech (Mt 10:26-31; chap 2)
 Mk 13:13-32--see End times: the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1; chap 2)
 Mk 13:33-37--see Watch and pray (Lk 21:34-36; chap 3)
 Mk 14:1-9--The anointing of Jesus (chap 1)
 Mk 14:10-12--Narrative (omitted)
 Mk 14:13-15--Saying omitted
 Mk 14:16--Narrative (omitted)
 Mk 14:17-21--see Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26;31; chap 4)
 Mk 14:22-26--see Bread of life (Jn 6:51-58; chap 8)
 Mk 14:27-42--see The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31-46; chap 2)
 Mk 14:43-61--see The arrest of Jesus (Mt 26:50-56; chap 2)
 Mk 14:61-63--see Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Lk 23:66-70; chap 3)
 Mk 14:66-72--see The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31-46; chap 2)
 Mk 15:1-15--see Jesus before Pilate (Jn 18:33-38; chap 4)
 Mk 15:16-37--see Jesus on the cross (Mt 27:46; chap 2)
 Mk 15:38-47--Narrative (omitted)
 Mk 16:1-8--Narrative (omitted)

The Gospel of Matthew

Mt 1 and 2--Narrative (omitted)
Mt 3:1-12--Narrative (omitted)
Mt 3:13-17--see The family of God:
true kinsmen of Jesus (Mk 3:31-35; chap 1)
Mt 4:1-11--The temptation of Jesus (chap 6)
Mt 4:12-17--see The call for repentance
(Mk 1:15; chap 5)
Mt 4:18-22--see The call to discipleship
(Mk 1:17,18; chap 5)
Mt 4:23-25--Narrative (omitted)
Mt 5:1-12--The Beatitudes (chap 2)
Mt 5:13-16--Faith and morality: salt and light (chap 2)
Mt 5:17-20--Laws and love:
the new standard higher than the old (chap 2)
Mt 5:21-24--Anger and reconciliation (chap 2)
Mt 5:25,26--Resolving disputes out of court:
the risks of litigation (chap 2)
Mt 5:27,30--Adultery and lust (chap 2)
Mt 5:31,32--see Marriage, divorce, and human sexuality
(Mk 10:5-12; chap 1)
Mt 5:33-37--Integrity: plain talk, no oaths (chap 2)
Mt 5:38-42--Submission, retribution, and giving
to all who ask (chap 2)
Mt 5:43-48--Love for enemies (chap 2)
Mt 6:1-4--Ostentatious giving (chap 2)
Mt 6:5-13--Prayer in secret: the Lord's prayer (chap 2)
Mt 6:14,15--Forgiveness (chap 2)
Mt 6:16-18--Fasting (chap 2)
Mt 6:19-21--see Treasures and the heart
(Lk 12:33,34; chap 3)
Mt 6:22,23--The light within you (chap 2)
Mt 6:24--Faith, God, and money (chap 2)
Mt 6:25-34--Do not worry (chap 2)
Mt 7:1,2--Do not judge (chap 2)
Mt 7:3-5--see Criticizing self before others:
blind leading the blind (Lk 6:39-42; chap 3)
Mt 7:6--Pearls to pigs (chap 6)
Mt 7:7-11--Effective prayer (chap 2)
Mt 7:12--The golden rule (chap 2)
Mt 7:13,14--Faith for the few: the narrow gate (chap 2)
Mt 7:15-20--Faith evidenced by works
as a tree by its fruit (chap 2)
Mt 7:21-23--The true disciple (chap 6)
Mt 7:24-27--Faith and works:
parable of the wise and foolish builders (chap 2)
Mt 7:28,29--Narrative (omitted)

Mt 8:1-4--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Mt 8:5-13--Faith of the centurion
 in the authority of Jesus (chap 6)
 Mt 8:14-17--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Mt 8:18-22--see Unconditional commitment
 to discipleship (Lk 9:57-62; chap 3)
 Mt 8:23-27--see Power over nature:
 calming the tempest (Mk 4:37-40; chap 5)
 Mt 8:28-34--see Power over evil (Mk 5:1-20; chap 5)
 Mt 9:1-8--see Power to forgive sins (Mk 2:5; chap 5)
 Mt 9:9--see Follow me (Lk 5:27,28; chap 3)
 Mt 9:10-13--see Jesus came to save sinners,
 not the righteous (Mk 2:15-17; chap 1)
 Mt 9:14-17--see New standards of morality and faith:
 new wineskins (Mk 2:19-22; chap 5)
 Mt 9:18-35--see Power to heal (Mk 5:21; chap 5)
 Mt 9:36,37--Leaders in short supply (chap 6)
 Mt 10:1-4: Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 10:5-18,23--Instructions to the disciples (chap 2)
 Mt 10:19-22,24,25--Faith and persecution (chap 6)
 Mt 10:26-31--Courage: open and fearless speech (chap 2)
 Mt 10:32,33--see Ashamed of Jesus (Mk 8:38; chap 5)
 Mt 10:34-36--see Dissension, not peace
 (Lk 12:49-53; chap 3)
 Mt 10:37--see Renouncing family and possessions
 (Lk 14:26,27,33; chap 7)
 Mt 10:38,39--see Selfless service:
 the cost of discipleship (Mk 8:34-37; chap 5)
 Mt 10:40,41--Messenger for Jesus (chap 6)
 Mt 10:42--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Mt 11:1-6--Message of faith for John the Baptist(chap 6)
 Mt 11:7-15--Praise for John the Baptist (chap 6)
 Mt 11:16-24--The rejection of Jesus (chap 6)
 Mt 11:25-26--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Mt 11:27--see The authority of Jesus(Mk 8:27-30; chap 5)
 Mt 11:28-30--Rest for the weary (chap 2)
 Mt 12:1-8--see Civil disobedience on the Sabbath:
 love over law (Mk 2:23-28; chap 1)
 Mt 12:9-14--see Civil disobedience on the Sabbath:
 love over law (Mk 2:23-28; chap 1)
 Mt 12:15-21--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 12:22-29--see Miracles: the work of Satan or God?
 (Mk 3:24-27; chap 5)
 Mt 12:30--see Tolerance (Mk 9:39,40; chap 5)
 Mt 12:31,32--see Blasphemies (Mk 3:28,29; chap 5)
 Mt 12:33-37--Faith, words, and judgment (chap 2)
 Mt 12:38-42--see A sign from heaven (Mk 8:12; chap 5)

Mt 12:43-45--Return of evil (chap 6)
 Mt 12:46-50--see The family of God:
 true kinsmen of Jesus (Mk 3:31-35; chap 1)
 Mt 13:1-11--see Sowing the seeds of faith:
 parable of the sower (Mk 4:1-20; chap 1)
 Mt 13:12--see Christian stewardship (Mt 25:29; chap 2)
 Mt 13:13-23--see Sowing the seeds of faith:
 parable of the sower (Mk 4:1-20; chap 1)
 Mt 13:24-30--Tolerance and judgment:
 the parable of the weeds (chap 2)
 Mt 13:31,32--see The kingdom of God:
 the parable of the mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32; chap 1)
 Mt 13:33--Parable of the yeast (chap 2)
 Mt 13:36-43--Tolerance and judgment:
 the parable of the weeds (chap 2)
 Mt 13:44-46--The kingdom:
 the parables of the treasure and the pearl (chap 2)
 Mt 13:47-50--The parable of the net (chap 2)
 Mt 13:51,52--The old and the new (chap 2)
 Mt 13:53--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 13:54-58--see A prophet is without honor
 in his hometown (Mk 6:4; chap 5)
 Mt 14:1-14--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 14:15-21--see Miracles: the work of Satan or God?
 (Mk 6:24-27; 35-44; chap 5)
 Mt 14:22,23--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 14:24-33--Test of faith: walking on water (chap 2)
 Mt 14:34-36--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 15:1-9--see God's commands and the traditions
 of the Pharisees (Mk 7:6-13; chap 5)
 Mt 15:10,11--see Individual responsibility and the law:
 clean and unclean (Mk 7:14-23; chap 1)
 Mt 15:12,13--see Tolerance and judgment:
 parable of the weeds (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43; chap 2)
 Mt 15:14--see Criticizing self before others:
 blind leading the blind (Lk 6:39-42; chap 3)
 Mt 15:15-20--see Individual responsibility and the law:
 clean and unclean (Mk 7:14-23; chap 1)
 Mt 15:21-28--see Power over evil
 (Mk 1:25,26; 7:24-30; chap 5)
 Mt 15:29-39--see Miracles: the work of Satan or God?
 (Mk 6:24-27; 35-44; chap 5)
 Mt 16:1-4--see A sign from heaven (Mk 8:12; chap 5)
 Mt 16:5-12--see Threat to the faith:
 the yeast of the Pharisees (Mk 8:14-21; chap 5)
 Mt 16:13-20--see The authority of Jesus
 (Mk 8:37-30; chap 5)

Mt 16:21-23--see Destiny: prediction of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Mt 16:24-27--see Selfless service: the cost of discipleship (Mk 8:34-37; chap 5)
 Mt 16:28--see The coming Kingdom of God (Mk 9:1; chap 5)
 Mt 17:1-13--see The transfiguration (Mk 9:7-11; chap 5)
 Mt 17:14-20--see Power over evil (Mk 1:25; 9:19; 11:23; chap 5)
 Mt 17:22,23--see Destiny: prediction of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Mt 17:24-27--see Church and state (Mk 12:13-17; chap 1)
 Mt 18:1-6--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Mt 18:7-9--Leading others astray (chap 2)
 Mt 18:10--see Casting off sin (Mk 9:42-48; chap 5)
 Mt 18:12,13--see Lost and found: parables of the lost sheep and coin (Lk 15:1-7; chap 3)
 Mt 18:14--see Casting off sin (Mk 9:42-48; chap 5)
 Mt 18:15-17--Brotherly correction (chap 2)
 Mt 18:18-20--Prayer in common: the church (chap 6)
 Mt 18:21-35--Forgiveness: the parable of the unmerciful servant (chap 2)
 Mt 19:1-9--see Marriage, divorce, and human sexuality (Mk 10:5-12; chap 1)
 Mt 19:10--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 19:11,12--Celibacy and sexual preference (chap 2)
 Mt 19:13-15--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Mt 19:16-27--see Riches and salvation (Mk 10:17-31; chap 1)
 Mt 19:28,29--see Renouncing family and possessions (Lk 14:26,27,33; chap 7)
 Mt 19:30--see Riches and salvation (Mk 10:17-31; chap 1)
 Mt 20:1-16--Envy and equity: the parable of the workers in the vineyard (chap 2)
 Mt 20:17-19--see Destiny: prediction of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Mt 20:20-23--see Request for precedence (Mk 10:38-40; chap 5)
 Mt 20:24-28--see Humility: leaders as servants (Mk 9:35; 10:41-44; chap 1)
 Mt 20:29-34--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; 10:46-52; chap 5)
 Mt 21:1-11--Saying omitted
 Mt 21:12,13--see Doing business in the temple (Jn 2:12-16; chap 4)
 Mt 21:14-17--see Child-like faith (Mt 10:13-16; chap 1)

Mt 21:18-22--see Power of prayer, faith, and forgiveness (Mk 11:20-25; chap 5)
 Mt 21:23-27--see The authority of Jesus (Mk 8:27-30; 11:27-33; chap 5)
 Mt 21:28-31--Integrity and hypocrisy: talk is cheap (chap 2)
 Mt 21:33-41--see Parable of the wicked tenants (Mk 12:1-9; chap 1)
 Mt 21:42-46--see Rejection of the capstone (Mk 12:9-11; chap 5)
 Mt 22:1-14--A new invitation: parable of the wedding feast (chap 2)
 Mt 22:15-22--see Church and state (Mk 12:13-17; chap 1)
 Mt 22:23-33--see Life after death and resurrection (Mk 12:18-27; chap 1)
 Mt 22:34-40--see The greatest commandment (Mk 12:28-34; chap 1)
 Mt 22:41-46--see Lineage of Jesus: Christ as the son of David (Mk 12:35-37; chap 5)
 Mt 23:1-12--Hypocrisy: practise what you preach (chap 2)
 Mt 23:13-36--Condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes (chap 2)
 Mt 23:37-39--Jerusalem lamented (chap 6)
 Mt 24:1,2--End times: the eschatological discourse (chap 2)
 Mt 24:3-15--see Watch and pray (Lk 21:34-36; chap 3)
 Mt 24:16-51--End times: the eschatological discourse (chap 2)
 Mt 25:1-13--Be ready: parable of the ten virgins (chap 2)
 Mt 25:14-30--Christian stewardship: the parable of the talents (chap 2)
 Mt 25:31-46--The last judgment (chap 2)
 Mt 26:1,2--see Destiny: prediction of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Mt 26:3-13--see The anointing of Jesus (Mk 14:3-9; chap 1)
 Mt 26:14-19--Saying omitted
 Mt 26:20-25--see Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26;31; chap 4)
 Mt 26:26-30--see The bread of life (Jn 4:32-34; 6:26-58; chap 8)
 Mt 26:31-46--The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (chap 2)
 Mt 26:47-56--The arrest of Jesus (chap 2)
 Mt 26:57-68--see Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Lk 23:66-70; chap 3)

Mt 26:69-75--The spirit is willing
but the flesh is weak (chap 2)
 Mt 27:1-14--see Jesus before Pilate
 (Jn 18:28-31; 33-38; chap 4)
 Mt 27:1-42,44--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 27:43--see Jesus before the Sanhedrin
 (Lk 23:66-70; chap 3)
 Mt 27:45-47--Jesus on the cross (chap 2)
 Mt 27:48-66--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 28:1-8--Narrative (omitted)
 Mt 28:9-20--Sayings omitted

The Gospel of Luke

Lk 1:1-80--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 2:1-48--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 2:49--see Liberation (Lk 4:14-30; chap 7)
 Lk 2:50-52--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 3:1-38--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 4:1-13--see The temptation of Jesus
 (Mt 4:1-11; chap 6)
 Lk 4:14-30--Liberation (chap 3)
 Lk 4:31-37--see Power over evil (Mk 1:25,26; chap 5)
 Lk 4:38-41--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Lk 4:43,44--see Instructions to the disciples
 (Mt 10:9-18,23; chap 2)
 Lk 5:1-11--see The call to discipleship
 (Mk1:17,18; chap 5)
 Lk 5:12-16--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Lk 5:17-26--see Power to forgive sins(Mk 2:1-12; chap 5)
 Lk 5:27,28--Follow me (chap 3)
 Lk 5:29-32--see Jesus came to save sinners,
not the righteous (Mk 2:15-17; chap 1)
 Lk 5:33-39--see New standards of morality and faith:
new wineskins (Mk 2:19-22; chap 5)
 Lk 6:1-11--see Civil disobedience on the Sabbath:
love over law (Mk 2:23-28; 3:1-6; chap 1)
 Lk 6:12-26--see The Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12; chap 2)
 Lk 6:27-28--see Love for enemies (Mt 5:43-48; chap 2)
 Lk 6:29,30--see Submission and retribution
 (Mt 5:38-42; chap 2)
 Lk 6:31--see The golden rule (Mt 7:12; chap 2)
 Lk 6:32-35--see Love for enemies (Mt 5:43-48; chap 2)
 Lk 6:36-38--Give and you will receive (chap 3)
 Lk 6:39-42--Criticizing self before others:
blind leading the blind (chap 3)

Lk 6:43-45--see Faith evidenced by works
 as a tree by its fruit (Mt 7:15-20; chap 2)
 Lk 6:46--see The true disciple (Mt 7:21-23; chap 6)
 Lk 6:47-49--see Faith and works:
 the wise and foolish builders (Mt 7:24-27; chap 2)
 Lk 7:1-10--see Faith of the centurion
 in the authority of Jesus (Mt 8:5-13; chap 6)
 Lk 7:11-17--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Lk 7:18-23--see Message of faith for John the Baptist
 (Mt 11:2-6; chap 6)
 Lk 7:24-28--see Praise for John the Baptist
 (Mt 11:7-15; chap 6)
 Lk 7:29--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 7:31-35--see The rejection of Jesus
 (Mt 11:16-24; chap 6)
 Lk 7:36-50--Sinners, forgiveness, and love (chap 3)
 Lk 8:1-15--see Sowing the seeds of faith:
 parable of the sower (Mk 4:1-20; chap 1)
 Lk 8:16-18--see Lamp on a stand (Mk 4:21-23; chap 1)
 Lk 8:19-21--see The family of God:
 true kinsmen of Jesus (Mk 3:31-35; chap 1)
 Lk 8:22-25--see Power over nature:
 calming the tempest (Mk 4:37-40; chap 5)
 Lk 8:26-39--see Power over evil
 (Mk 1:25,26; 5:1-20; chap 5)
 Lk 8:40-56--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; 5:21-34; chap 5)
 Lk 9:1-6--see Instructions to the disciples
 (Mt 10:9-18; chap 2)
 Lk 9:7-11--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 9:12-17--see Miracles: work of Satan or God?
 (Mk 3:24--27; 6:35-44; chap 5)
 Lk 9:18-20--see The authority of Jesus
 (Mk 8:27-30; chap 5)
 Lk 9:21,22--see Destiny: prediction of death
 and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Lk 9:23-25--see Selfless service:
 the cost of discipleship (Mk 8:34-37; chap 5)
 Lk 9:26--see Ashamed of Jesus (Mk 8:38; chap 5)
 Lk 9:27--see The coming Kingdom of God (Mk 9:1; chap 5)
 Lk 9:28-36--see The transfiguration (Mk 9:7-11; chap 5)
 Lk 9:37-43--see Power over evil (Mk 1:25,26; chap 5)
 Lk 9:44,45--see Destiny: prediction of death
 and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Lk 9:46-48--see Accepting children as Jesus
 (Mk 9:37; chap 5)
 Lk 9:49-56--see Tolerance (Mk 9:39,40; chap 5)

Lk 9:57-62--Unconditional commitment to discipleship (chap 3)
 Lk 10:1--see Instructions to the disciples (Mt 10:1-18; chap 2)
 Lk 10:2--see Leaders in short supply (Mt 9:36-38; chap 6)
 Lk 10:3-12--see Instructions to the disciples (Mt 10:1-18; chap 2)
 Lk 10:13-15--see The rejection of Jesus (Mt 11:20-24; chap 6)
 Lk 10:16--see Messenger for Jesus (Mt 10:40,41; chap 6)
 Lk 10:17-20--Authority to perform miracles (chap 3)
 Lk 10:21--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Lk 10:22--see The authority of Jesus (Mk 8:27-30; chap 5)
 Lk 10:23,24--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Lk 10:25-29--see The greatest commandment (Mk 12:28-34; chap 1)
 Lk 10:29-37--Loving your neighbor: parable of the good Samaritan (chap 3)
 Lk 10:38-42--Too busy to hear Jesus: Mary and Martha (chap 3)
 Lk 11:1-4--see Prayer in secret: the Lord's prayer (Mt 6:5-13; chap 2)
 Lk 11:5-8--Persistence (chap 3)
 Lk 11:9-13--see Effective prayer (Mt 7:7-11; chap 2)
 Lk 11:14-22--see Miracles: the work of Satan or God? (Mk 3:24-27; chap 5)
 Lk 11:23--see Tolerance (Mk 9:39,40; chap 5)
 Lk 11:24-26--see Return of evil (Mt 12:43-45; chap 6)
 Lk 11:27,28--see The family of God: true kinsmen of Jesus (Mk 3:31-35; chap 1)
 Lk 11:29-32--see A sign from heaven (Mk 8:12; chap 5)
 Lk 11:33--see Lamp on a stand (Mk 4:21-23; chap 1)
 Lk 11:34-36--see The light within you (Mt 6:22,23; chap 2)
 Lk 11:37-54--see Condemnation of religious leaders: the seven woes (Mt 23:13-36; chap 2)
 Lk 12:1--see Threat to the faith: the yeast of the Pharisees (Mk 8:14-21; chap 5)
 Lk 12:2--see Lamp on a stand (Mk 4:21-23; chap 1)
 Lk 12:3-7--see Courage: open and fearless speech (Mt 10:26-31; chap 2)
 Lk 12:8,9--see Ashamed of Jesus (Mk 8:38; chap 5)
 Lk 12:10--see Blasphemies (Mk 3:28,29; chap 5)
 Lk 12:11,12--see Faith and persecution (Mt 10:19-22; chap 6)
 Lk 12:13-21--Greed and hoarding possessions (chap 3)

Lk 12:22-32--see Do not worry (Mt 6:25-34; chap 2)
 Lk 12:33,34--Treasures and the heart (chap 3)
 Lk 12:35-48--Expectations (chap 3)
 Lk 12:49-53--Dissension, not peace (chap 3)
 Lk 12:54-56--Interpreting the times (chap 3)
 Lk 13:1-5--Suffering not God's will (chap 3)
 Lk 13:6-9--Patience with sinners (chap 3)
 Lk 13:10-14--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Lk 13:15-17--see Civil disobedience on the Sabbath:
 love over law (Mk 2:15-17; chap 1)
 Lk 13:18,19--see The Kingdom of God:
 parable of the mustard seed (Mk 4:30-32; chap 1)
 Lk 13:20,21--see Parable of the yeast (Mt 13:33; chap 6)
 Lk 13:22-24--see Faith for the few: the narrow gate
 (Mt 7:13,14; chap 2)
 Lk 13:25--see Be ready: parable of the ten virgins
 (Mt 25:1-13; chap 2)
 Lk 13:26,27--see The true disciple (Mt 7:21-23; chap 6)
 Lk 13:28,29--see Faith of the centurion
 in the authority of Jesus (Mt 8:5-13; chap 6)
 Lk 13:30--see Riches and salvation (Mk 10:17-31; chap 1)
 Lk 13:31-33--see Power over evil (Mk 1:25,26; chap 1)
 Lk 13:34,35--see Jerusalem lamented (Mt 23:37-39; chap 6)
 Lk 14:1-6--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Lk 14:7-11--Humility in social matters (chap 3)
 Lk 14:12-14--Serving the least of those
 instead of friends (chap 3)
 Lk 14:15-24--see A new invitation:
 parable of the wedding feast (Mt 22:1-14; chap 2)
 Lk 14:25,26--Renouncing family and possessions (chap 3)
 Lk 14:27--see Selfless service: the cost of discipleship
 (Mk 8:34-37; chap 5)
 Lk 14:28-32--Effective planning (chap 3)
 Lk 14:33--Renouncing family and possessions (chap 3)
 Lk 14:34,35--see Faith and morality: salt and light
 (Mt 5:13-16; chap 2)
 Lk 15:1-10--Lost and found:
 parables of the lost sheep and coin (chap 3)
 Lk 15:11-32--Sibling rivalry:
 parable of the prodigal son (chap 3)
 Lk 16:1-15--Shrewdness, stewardship,
 and the danger of riches (chap 3)
 Lk 16:16-18--The Law (chap 3)
 Lk 16:18--see Marriage, divorce, and human sexuality
 (Mk 10:5-9; chap 1)
 Lk 16:19-31--Insensitivity to suffering:
 the rich man and Lazarus (chap 3)

Lk 17:1--see Leading others astray (Mt 18:7-9; chap 2)
 Lk 17:2--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Lk 17:3--see Brotherly correction (Mt 18:15-17; chap 2)
 Lk 17:4--see Forgiveness:
 parable of the unmerciful servant (Mt 18:21-35; chap 2)
 Lk 17:5,6--see The power of prayer, faith,
 and forgiveness (Mk 11:22-25; chap 5)
 Lk 17:7-10--The duty of discipleship (chap 3)
 Lk 17:11-19--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Lk 17:20,21--The unseen kingdom of God (chap 3)
 Lk 17:22-24--see End times:
 the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1-51; chap 2)
 Lk 17:25--see Destiny: prediction of death
 and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Lk 17:26-32--see End times:
 the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1-51; chap 2)
 Lk 17:33--see Selfless service: the cost of discipleship
 (Mk 8:34-37; chap 5)
 Lk 17:34-37--see End times:
 the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1-51; chap 2)
 Lk 18:1-8--Persistence in prayer (chap 3)
 Lk 18:9-14--Sanctimony and humility:
 the Pharisee and the publican (chap 2)
 Lk 18:15-17--see Child-like faith (Mk 10:13-16; chap 1)
 Lk 18:18-30--see Riches and salvation
 (Mk 10:17-30; chap 1)
 Lk 18:31-34--see Destiny: prediction of death
 and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Lk 18:35-43--see Power to heal (Mk 1:41; chap 5)
 Lk 19:1-10--Zacchaeus: money and salvation (chap 3)
 Lk 19:11-27--see Christian stewardship
 (Mt 25:14-29; chap 2)
 Lk 19:28-40: Saying omitted
 Lk 19:41-44--see End times:
 the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1-51; chap 2)
 Lk 19:45,46--see Doing business in the temple
 (Jn 2:12-16; chap 4)
 Lk 19:47--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 20:1-8--see The authority of Jesus
 (Mk 8:27-30; 11:27-33; chap 5)
 Lk 20:9-16--see Parable of the wicked tenants
 (Mk 12:1-9; chap 1)
 Lk 20:17,18--see Rejection of the capstone
 (Mk 12:9-11; chap 5)
 Lk 20:19-26--see Church and state (Mk 12:13-17; chap 1)
 Lk 20:27-40--see Life after death and resurrection
 (Mk 12:18-27; chap 1)

Lk 20:41-44--see Lineage of Jesus:
 Christ as son of David (Mk 12:35-37; chap 5)
 Lk 20:45-47--see Hypocrisy and sanctimony
 (Mk 12:38-40; chap 1)
 Lk 21:1-4--see The widow's mite (Mk 12:41-44; chap 1)
 Lk 21:5-11--see End times:
 the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1-51; chap 2)
 Lk 21:12,13--see Instructions to the disciples
 (Mt 10:9-18,23; chap 2)
 Lk 21:14,15--see Faith and persecution
 (Mt 10:19-25; chap 6)
 Lk 21:16-33--see End times:
 the eschatological discourse (Mt 24:1-51; chap 2)
 Lk 21:34-36--Watch and pray (chap 3)
 Lk 22:7-13--Saying omitted
 Lk 22:14-20--see Bread of life (Jn 6:26-58; chap 8)
 Lk 22:21-23--see Jesus predicts his betrayal
 and glorification (Jn 13:21-26; chap 4)
 Lk 22:24--see Request for precedence
 (Mk 10:38-40; chap 5)
 Lk 22:25-27--see Humility: leaders as servants
 (Mk 9:35; 10:41-44; chap 1)
 Lk 22:28-30--see Renouncing family and possessions
 (Lk 14:26,27,33; chap 7)
 Lk 22:31-34--see The spirit is willing
 but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31-46; chap 2)
 Lk 22:35-38--see Instructions to the disciples
 (Mt 10:9-18,23; chap 2)
 Lk 22:39-46--see The spirit is willing
 but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31-46; chap 2)
 Lk 22:47-53--see The arrest of Jesus
 (Mt 26:50-56; chap 2)
 Lk 22:54-60--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 22:61,62--see The spirit is willing
 but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31-46; chap 2)
 Lk 22:63-65--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 22:66-71--Jesus before the Sanhedrin (chap 3)
 Lk 23:1-7--see Jesus before Pilate
 (Jn 18:21-31; 33-38; chap 4)
 Lk 23:8-25--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 23:26-32--The way to Calvary (chap 3)
 Lk 23:32-43--Forgiveness on the cross (chap 3)
 Lk 23:44-46--see Jesus on the cross (Mt 27:46; chap 2)
 Lk 23:47-56--Narrative (omitted)
 Lk 24:1-53--Sayings omitted

The Gospel of John

Jn 1:1-5--see Faith and eternal life (Jn 3:16; chap 8)
Jn 1:4-9--see The light of the world
(Jn 3:19-21; chap 8)
Jn 1:10-36--Narrative (omitted)
Jn 1:37-42--see The call to discipleship
(Mk 1:16-20; chap 5)
Jn 1:43--see Follow me (Lk 5:27,28; chap 3)
Jn 1:44-51--From doubt to belief: Nathanael (chap 8)
Jn 2:1-11--see Miracles: the work of Satan or God?
(Mk 3:24-27; chap 5)
Jn 2:12-17--Doing business in the temple (chap 8)
Jn 2:18-22--see Destiny: prediction of death
and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
Jn 2:23-25--Narrative (omitted)
Jn 3:1-13--Born again of the spirit: Nicodemus (chap 8)
Jn 3:14-18--Faith and eternal life (chap 8)
Jn 3:19-21--The light of the world (chap 8)
Jn 3:22-36--Narrative (omitted)
Jn 4:1-4--Narrative (omitted)
Jn 4:5-14--Living water (chap 8)
Jn 4:15-26--Worship in spirit and truth (chap 8)
Jn 4:27-34--Bread of life (also 6:26-58; chap 8)
Jn 4:35-38--see Leaders in short supply
(Mt 9:36-38; chap 6)
Jn 4:39-42--Narrative (omitted)
Jn 4:43,44--see A prophet is without honor
in his hometown (Mk 6:4; chap 5)
Jn 4:45,46--Narrative (omitted)
Jn 4:47-54--see Power to heal
(Mk 1:41; Mt 8:5-13; chap 5)
Jn 5:1-15--Power to forgive sins
(Mk 2:1-12; chap 5)
Jn 5:16-18--see Civil disobedience on the Sabbath:
love over law (Mk 2:23-28; 3:1-6; chap 1)
Jn 5:19-23--see The authority of Jesus
(Mk 8:27-30; chap 5)
Jn 5:24-29--see Faith and eternal life
(Jn 3:16,17; chap 8)
Jn 5:30--see The authority of Jesus
(Mk 8:27-30; chap 5)
Jn 5:31-47--see Blasphemy or word of God?
(Jn 10:25-29; chap 8)
Jn 6:1-15--see Miracles: the work of Satan or God?
(Mk 3:24-27; chap 5)
Jn 6:16-21--see Test of faith:
walking on water (Mt 14:27-33; chap 6)

Jn 6:22-24--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 6:25-59--Bread of life (chap 8)
 Jn 6:60-62--see Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31; chap 4)
 Jn 6:63--see Born again of the spirit: Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-12; chap 8)
 Jn 6:64-70--see Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31; chap 4)
 Jn 7:1--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 7:2-24--At the feast in Jerusalem (chap 4)
 Jn 7:25-27--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 7:28,29--see Blasphemy or Word of God? (Jn 10:25-39; chap 8)
 Jn 7:30-32--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 7:33-36--see Destiny: predication of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Jn 7:37-39--see Living water (Jn 4:5-14; chap 8)
 Jn 7:40-52--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 8:1-11--Justice or mercy: the adulterous woman (chap 8)
 Jn 8:12--see The light of the world (Jn 3:19-21; chap 8)
 Jn 8:13-19--see Blasphemy or Word of God? (Jn 10:25-39; chap 8)
 Jn 8:21--see Destiny: predication of death and resurrection (Mk 8:31-33; chap 5)
 Jn 8:22--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 8:23-30--see Bread of life (Jn 4:32-34; chap 8)
 Jn 8:31-50--The truth will make you free (chap 8)
 Jn 8:51-58--see Faith and eternal life (Jn 3:16,17; chap 8)
 Jn 8:59--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 9:1-3--Blindness as punishment for sin (chap 4)
 Jn 9:4,5--see The light of the world (Jn 3:19-21; chap 8)
 Jn 9:6-41--Judgment: bringing sight and blindness (chap 8)
 Jn 10:1-18--The good shepherd (chap 8)
 Jn 10:19--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 10:20-39--Blasphemy or Word of God? (chap 8)
 Jn 10:40--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 11:1-44--see Miracles: the work of Satan or God? (Mk 3:24-27; chap 5)
 Jn 11:45-57--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 12:1-8--see The anointing of Jesus (Mk 14:3-9; chap 1)
 Jn 12:9-18--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 12:19-27--Jesus predicts his death (chap 4)
 Jn 12:28-31--see Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31; chap 4)

Jn 12:34--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 12:35,36--see The light of the world
 (Jn 3:19-21; chap 8)
 Jn 12:37-45--Pride and peer pressure:
honor of men ahead of God (chap 8)
 Jn 12:46--see The light of the world
 (Jn 3:19-21; chap 8)
 Jn 12:47,48--see Do not judge (Mt 7:1,2; chap 2)
 Jn 12:49,50--see Faith and eternal life
 (Jn 3:16,17; chap 8)
 Jn 13:1-4--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 13:5-17--Washing the disciples' feet (chap 4)
 Jn 13:18,19--see Jesus predicts his betrayal
and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31; chap 4)
 Jn 13:20--see Messenger for Jesus (Mt 10:40,41; chap 6)
 Jn 13:21-32--see Jesus predicts his betrayal
and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31; chap 4)
 Jn 13:33--see Jesus predicts his death
 (Jn 12:19-27; chap 4)
 Jn 13:34,35--A new command: love one another (chap 4)
 Jn 13:36--see Life after death:
many rooms in my Father's house (Jn 14:1-4; chap 8)
 Jn 13:37,38--see The spirit is willing
but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31,36-45; chap 2)
 Jn 14:1-4--Life after death:
many rooms in my Father's house (chap 8)
 Jn 14:5-14--The way, the truth, and the life (chap 8)
 Jn 14:15-31--Love, the Holy Spirit,
and the gift of peace (chap 8)
 Jn 15:1-8--The vine of love (chap 8)
 Jn 15:9-15--see A new command: love one another
 (Jn 13:34,35; chap 4)
 Jn 15:16--The vine of love (chap 8)
 Jn 15:17--see A new command: love one another
 (Jn 13:34,35; chap 4)
 Jn 15:18-27--see Faith and persecution
 (Mt 10:19-25; chap 6)
 Jn 16:1-4--see Faith and persecution
 (Mt 10:19-25; chap 6)
 Jn 16:5-16--see Love, the Holy Spirit,
and the gift of peace (Jn 14:15-31; chap 8)
 Jn 16:17,18--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 16:19-22--see Jesus predicts his betrayal
and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31; chap 4)
 Jn 16:23-26--see The power of prayer,
faith, and forgiveness (Mk 11:22-25; chap 5)

Jn 16:27,28--see Jesus predicts his betrayal and glorification (Jn 13:21-26,31; chap 4)
 Jn 16:29,30--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 16:31,32--see The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mt 26:31,36-45; chap 2)
 Jn 16:33--Love, the Holy Spirit, and the gift of peace (chap 8)
 Jn 17:1-26--Farewell prayer of Jesus: the unity of all believers
 Jn 18:1-11--see The arrest of Jesus (Mt 26:50,52,55,56; chap 2)
 Jn 18:12-18--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 18:19-24--see Jesus before the Sanhedrin (Lk 22:66-70; chap 3)
 Jn 18:25-27--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 18:28-40--see Jesus before Pilate (chap 4)
 Jn 19:1-9--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 19:10,11--Political authority from God (chap 8)
 Jn 19:12-25--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 19:26-29--see Jesus on the cross (Mt 27:46; chap 2)
 Jn 19:31-42--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 20:1-14--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 20:15-29--Sayings omitted
 Jn 20:30--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 21:1-4--Narrative (omitted)
 Jn 21:5-23--Sayings omitted

INDEX OF SELECTED PROVISIONS FROM THE QUR'AN

From www.quran.com (Sahih International)

1. Belief and Unbelief/rewards and punishments	469-474
2. Belief, rewards and punishments for Jews and Christians	475-484
3. Standards of morality and law	485-489
4. Family law (marriage, divorce and sexuality)	490-496
5. The Law of War and morality of violence	497-501
6. Stories about Jesus	502-505
7. Stories from the Hebrew Bible with index	506-545

Belief and Unbelief, Rewards and Punishment

Sin is unbelief or rejection of the Qur'an as the perfect and immutable word of God:

2:21-24, 39 (belief and the condemnation to hell of disbelievers who reject belief):

[2:21](#) O mankind, worship your Lord, who created you and those before you, that you may become righteous -

[2:22](#) [He] who made for you the earth a bed [spread out] and the sky a ceiling and sent down from the sky, rain and brought forth thereby fruits as provision for you. So do not attribute to Allah equals while you know [that there is nothing similar to Him].

[2:23](#) And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Muhammad], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful.

[2:24](#) But if you do not - and you will never be able to - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is men and stones, prepared for the disbelievers.

[2:39](#) And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - those will be companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally."

7:157-158 (Messenger commands what is just and forbids what is evil):

[7:157](#) Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful.

[7:158](#) Say, [O Muhammad], "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death." So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.

10:37 (Qur'an produced by Allah):

And it was not [possible] for this Qur'an to be produced by other than Allah, but [it is] a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of the [former] Scripture, about which there is no doubt, from the Lord of the worlds.

23:1-7 (the duties of believers):

[23:1](#) Certainly will the believers have succeeded:

[23:2](#) They who are during their prayer humbly submissive

[23:3](#) And they who turn away from ill speech

[23:4](#) And they who are observant of zakah

[23:5](#) And they who guard their private parts

[23:6](#) Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed -

[23:7](#) But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors -

30:15-16 (believers rewarded, disbelievers punished):

[30:15](#) And as for those who had believed and done righteous deeds, they will be in a garden [of Paradise], delighted.

[30:16](#) But as for those who disbelieved and denied Our verses and the meeting of the Hereafter, those will be brought into the punishment [to remain].

45:14 (believers should forgive unbelievers, but only Allah can reward them):

Say, [O Muhammad], to those who have believed that they [should] forgive those who expect not the days of Allah so that He may recompense a people for what they used to earn.

56:77-80 (the Qur'an):

[56:77](#) Indeed, it is a noble Qur'an

[56:78](#) In a Register well-protected;

[56:79](#) None touch it except the purified.

[56:80](#) [It is] a revelation from the Lord of the worlds.

God is merciful and forgiving to all sinners and unbelievers who accept Muhammad as a prophet of God and the Qur'an as the perfect expression of God's will:

11:1-3 (the Messenger sent by Allah to teach belief of forgiveness and repentance):

[11:1](#) Alif, Lam, Ra. [This is] a Book whose verses are perfected and then presented in detail from [one who is] Wise and Acquainted.

[11:2](#) [Through a messenger, saying], "Do not worship except Allah . Indeed, I am to you from Him a warner and a bringer of good tidings,"

[11:3](#) And [saying], "Seek forgiveness of your Lord and repent to Him, [and] He will let you enjoy a good provision for a specified term and give every doer of favor his favor. But if you turn away, then indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a great Day.

48:1-6 (Allah forgives and rewards believers who follow the straight way with tranquility):

[48:1](#) Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest

[48:2](#) That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow and complete His favor upon you and guide you to a straight path

[48:3](#) And [that] Allah may aid you with a mighty victory.

[48:4](#) It is He who sent down tranquillity into the hearts of the believers that they would increase in faith along with their [present] faith. And to Allah belong the soldiers of the heavens and the earth, and ever is Allah Knowing and Wise.

[48:5](#) [And] that He may admit the believing men and the believing women to gardens beneath which rivers flow to abide therein eternally and remove from them their misdeeds - and ever is that, in the sight of Allah , a great attainment -

[48:6](#) And [that] He may punish the hypocrite men and hypocrite women, and the polytheist men and polytheist women - those who assume about Allah an assumption of evil nature. Upon them is a misfortune of evil nature; and Allah has become angry with them and has cursed them and prepared for them Hell, and evil it is as a destination.

God's judgment of unbelievers comes at death and the Last Day when they are condemned to eternal suffering and misery (hell), while believers are promised eternal Paradise (heaven):

22:1-17 (The Last Day and Resurrection):

[22:1](#) O mankind, fear your Lord. Indeed, the convulsion of the [final] Hour is a terrible thing.

[22:2](#) On the Day you see it every nursing mother will be distracted from that [child] she was nursing, and every pregnant woman will abort her pregnancy, and you will see the people [appearing] intoxicated while they are not intoxicated; but the punishment of Allah is severe.

[22:3](#) And of the people is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge and follows every rebellious devil.

[22:4](#) It has been decreed for every devil that whoever turns to him - he will misguide him and will lead him to the punishment of the Blaze.

[22:5](#) O People, if you should be in doubt about the Resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed - that We may show you. And We settle in the wombs whom We will for a specified term, then We bring you out as a child, and then [We develop you] that you may reach your [time of] maturity. And among you is he who is taken in [early] death, and among you is he who is returned to the most decrepit [old] age so that he knows, after [once having] knowledge, nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind.

[22:6](#) That is because Allah is the Truth and because He gives life to the dead and because He is over all things competent

[22:7](#) And [that they may know] that the Hour is coming - no doubt about it - and that Allah will resurrect those in the graves.

[22:8](#) And of the people is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening book [from Him],

[22:9](#) Twisting his neck [in arrogance] to mislead [people] from the way of Allah . For him in the world is disgrace, and We will make him taste on the Day of Resurrection the punishment of the Burning Fire [while it is said],

[22:10](#) "That is for what your hands have put forth and because Allah is not ever unjust to [His] servants."

[22:11](#) And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what is the manifest loss.

[22:12](#) He invokes instead of Allah that which neither harms him nor benefits him. That is what is the extreme error.

[22:13](#) He invokes one whose harm is closer than his benefit - how wretched the protector and how wretched the associate.

[22:14](#) Indeed, Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. Indeed, Allah does what He intends.

[22:15](#) Whoever should think that Allah will not support [Prophet Muhammad] in this world and the Hereafter - let him extend a rope to the ceiling, then cut off [his breath], and let him see: will his effort remove that which enrages [him]?

[22:16](#) And thus have We sent the Qur'an down as verses of clear evidence and because Allah guides whom He intends.

[22:17](#) Indeed, those who have believed and those who were Jews and the Sabeans and the Christians and the Magians and those who associated with Allah - Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, over all things, Witness.

23:99-111 (judgment on the Last Day):

[23:99](#) [For such is the state of the disbelievers], until, when death comes to one of them, he says, "My Lord, send me back

[23:100](#) That I might do righteousness in that which I left behind." No! It is only a word he is saying; and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected.

[23:101](#) So when the Horn is blown, no relationship will there be among them that Day, nor will they ask about one another.

[23:102](#) And those whose scales are heavy [with good deeds] - it is they who are the successful.

[23:103](#) But those whose scales are light - those are the ones who have lost their souls, [being] in Hell, abiding eternally.

[23:104](#) The Fire will sear their faces, and they therein will have taut smiles.

[23:105](#) [It will be said]. "Were not My verses recited to you and you used to deny them?"

[23:106](#) They will say, "Our Lord, our wretchedness overcame us, and we were a people astray.

[23:107](#) Our Lord, remove us from it, and if we were to return [to evil], we would indeed be wrongdoers."

[23:108](#) He will say, "Remain despised therein and do not speak to Me.

[23:109](#) Indeed, there was a party of My servants who said, 'Our Lord, we have believed, so forgive us and have mercy upon us, and You are the best of the merciful.'

[23:110](#) But you took them in mockery to the point that they made you forget My remembrance, and you used to laugh at them.

[23:111](#) Indeed, I have rewarded them this Day for their patient endurance - that they are the attainers [of success]."

47:8-13 (disbelievers will be punished and believers rewarded):

[47:8](#) But those who disbelieve - for them is misery, and He will waste their deeds.

[47:9](#) That is because they disliked what Allah revealed, so He rendered worthless their deeds.

[47:10](#) Have they not traveled through the land and seen how was the end of those before them? Allah destroyed [everything] over them, and for the disbelievers is something comparable.

[47:11](#) That is because Allah is the protector of those who have believed and because the disbelievers have no protector.

[47:12](#) Indeed, Allah will admit those who have believed and done righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow, but those who disbelieve enjoy themselves and eat as grazing livestock eat, and the Fire will be a residence for them.

[47:13](#) And how many a city was stronger than your city [Makkah] which drove you out? We destroyed them; and there was no helper for them.

Rejecting Islam (apostasy) is a great sin and crime under Islamic Law and condemns the apostate to hell:

2:120 (Jews and Christians intolerant of Muslims; apostasy to follow them):

And never will the Jews or the Christians approve of you until you follow their religion. Say, "Indeed, the guidance of Allah is the [only] guidance." If you were to follow their desires after what has come to you of knowledge, you would have against Allah no protector or helper.

2:126, 161, 257; 3:10, 12 (disbelievers are cursed by Allah and will go to hell):

2:126 And [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits - whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day." [Allah] said. "And whoever disbelieves - I will grant him enjoyment for a little; then I will force him to the punishment of the Fire, and wretched is the destination."

2:161 Indeed, those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - upon them will be the curse of Allah and of the angels and the people, all together,

2:257 Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darknesses into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darknesses. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.

3:10 Indeed, those who disbelieve - never will their wealth or their children avail them against Allah at all. And it is they who are fuel for the Fire.

3:12 Say to those who disbelieve, "You will be overcome and gathered together to Hell, and wretched is the resting place."

3:84-85 (belief in Allah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and prophets and bowing in Islam):

3:84 Say, "We have believed in Allah and in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Descendants, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [submitting] to Him."

3:85 And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.

Loving believers and unbelievers as neighbors:

58:22 (believers do not love unbelievers, even if they are family members):

You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those - He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them with spirit from Him. And We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - those are the party of Allah . Unquestionably, the party of Allah - they are the successful.

60:1-9 (Do not love those who fight you, even family; be just only to those who do not fight):

60:1 O you who have believed, do not take My enemies and your enemies as allies, extending to them affection while they have disbelieved in what came to you of the truth, having driven out the Prophet and yourselves [only] because you believe in Allah , your Lord. If you have come out for jihad in My cause and seeking means to My approval, [take them not as friends]. You confide to them affection, but I am most knowing of what you have concealed and what you have declared. And whoever does it among you has certainly strayed from the soundness of the way.

[60:2](#) If they gain dominance over you, they would be to you as enemies and extend against you their hands and their tongues with evil, and they wish you would disbelieve.

[60:3](#) Never will your relatives or your children benefit you; the Day of Resurrection He will judge between you. And Allah , of what you do, is Seeing.

[60:4](#) There has already been for you an excellent pattern in Abraham and those with him, when they said to their people, "Indeed, we are disassociated from you and from whatever you worship other than Allah . We have denied you, and there has appeared between us and you animosity and hatred forever until you believe in Allah alone" except for the saying of Abraham to his father, "I will surely ask forgiveness for you, but I have not [power to do] for you anything against Allah . Our Lord, upon You we have relied, and to You we have returned, and to You is the destination.

[60:5](#) Our Lord, make us not [objects of] torment for the disbelievers and forgive us, our Lord. Indeed, it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise."

[60:6](#) There has certainly been for you in them an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day. And whoever turns away - then indeed, Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy.

[60:7](#) Perhaps Allah will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And Allah is competent, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

[60:8](#) Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.

[60:9](#) Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

Additional citations from *Love of Others* in Ghazi, Love in the Holy Qur'an:

[4:36](#) Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful.

[5:8](#) O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah , witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.

[6:108](#) And do not insult those they invoke other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge. Thus We have made pleasing to every community their deeds. Then to their Lord is their return, and He will inform them about what they used to do.

[10:85](#) So they said, "Upon Allah do we rely. Our Lord, make us not [objects of] trial for the wrongdoing people.

[25:63](#) And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace,

[104:1](#) Woe to every scorner and mocker.

Belief, Rewards and Punishment for Jews and Christians

God has no family and it is blasphemy for Christians to say that God had a son:

6:100-101 (Allah created Jinns but no sons or daughters):

6:100 But they have attributed to Allah partners - the jinn, while He has created them - and have fabricated for Him sons and daughters without knowledge. Exalted is He and high above what they describe.

6:101 [He is] Originator of the heavens and the earth. How could He have a son when He does not have a companion and He created all things? And He is, of all things, Knowing.

39:4-7 (Allah created everything, but had no son):

39:4 If Allah had intended to take a son, He could have chosen from what He creates whatever He willed. Exalted is He; He is Allah , the One, the Prevailing.

39:5 He created the heavens and earth in truth. He wraps the night over the day and wraps the day over the night and has subjected the sun and the moon, each running [its course] for a specified term. Unquestionably, He is the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver.

39:6 He created you from one soul. Then He made from it its mate, and He produced for you from the grazing livestock eight mates. He creates you in the wombs of your mothers, creation after creation, within three darknesses. That is Allah , your Lord; to Him belongs dominion. There is no deity except Him, so how are you averted?

112:1-4 (Allah is not begotten nor does he beget):

112:1 Say, "He is Allah , [who is] One,

112:2 Allah , the Eternal Refuge.

112:3 He neither begets nor is born,

112:4 Nor is there to Him any equivalent."

4:171-172 (condemnation of Christians who believe in Jesus as the Son of God and Trinity):

2:171 O People of the Scripture, do not commit excess in your religion or say about Allah except the truth. The Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, was but a messenger of Allah and His word which He directed to Mary and a soul [created at a command] from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And do not say, "Three"; desist - it is better for you. Indeed, Allah is but one God. Exalted is He above having a son. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And sufficient is Allah as Disposer of affairs.

4:172 Never would the Messiah disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor would the angels near [to Him]. And whoever disdains His worship and is arrogant - He will gather them to Himself all together.

5:17 (those who say Allah/God is Christ are disbelievers and blasphemers):

(Sahih International) They have certainly disbelieved who say that Allah is Christ, the son of Mary. Say, "Then who could prevent Allah at all if He had intended to destroy Christ, the son of Mary, or his mother or everyone on the earth?" And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them. He creates what He wills, and Allah is over all things competent.

(Yusuf Ali) In blasphemy indeed are those that say that Allah is Christ the son of Mary. Say:

"Who then hath the least power against Allah, if His will were to destroy Christ the son of Mary,

his mother, and all every - one that is on the earth? For to Allah belongeth the dominion of the heavens and the earth, and all that is between. He createth what He pleaseth. For Allah hath power over all things."

5:51 (Muslims should not consider Jews or Christians friends or allies; see also **4:144**):
(*Sahih International*) O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.
(*Yusuf Ali*) O ye who believe! take not the Jews and the Christians for your friends and protectors: They are but friends and protectors to each other. And he amongst you that turns to them (for friendship) is of them. Verily Allah guideth not a people unjust.

5:72-75 (Christians who believe God is Christ and in the Trinity are disbelievers/blasphemers):
5:72 (*Sahih International*) They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the Messiah, the son of Mary" while the Messiah has said, "O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Indeed, he who associates others with Allah - Allah has forbidden him Paradise, and his refuge is the Fire. And there are not for the wrongdoers any helpers.

5:72 (*Yusuf Ali*) They do blaspheme who say: "Allah is Christ the son of Mary." But said Christ: "O Children of Israel! worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord." Whoever joins other gods with Allah,- Allah will forbid him the garden, and the Fire will be his abode. There will for the wrong-doers be no one to help.

5:73 (*Sahih International*) They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the third of three." And there is no god except one God. And if they do not desist from what they are saying, there will surely afflict the disbelievers among them a painful punishment.

5:73 (*Yusuf Ali*) They do blaspheme who say: Allah is one of three in a Trinity: for there is no god except One Allah. If they desist not from their word (of blasphemy), verily a grievous penalty will befall the blasphemers among them.

5:74 So will they not repent to Allah and seek His forgiveness? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

5:75 The Messiah, son of Mary, was not but a messenger; [other] messengers have passed on before him. And his mother was a supporter of truth. They both used to eat food. Look how We make clear to them the signs; then look how they are deluded.

9:30 (May Allah destroy Christians who say Jesus is son of God):
The Jews say, "Ezra is the son of Allah "; and the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of Allah ." That is their statement from their mouths; they imitate the saying of those who disbelieved [before them]. May Allah destroy them; how are they deluded?

10:68-70 (Those who say that Allah has begotten a Son are condemned as blasphemers):

10:68 They have said, "Allah has taken a son." Exalted is He; He is the [one] Free of need. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth. You have no authority for this [claim]. Do you say about Allah that which you do not know?

10:69 Say, "Indeed, those who invent falsehood about Allah will not succeed."

10:70 (*Sahih International*) [For them is brief] enjoyment in this world; then to Us is their return; then We will make them taste the severe punishment because they used to disbelieve.

10:70 (*Yusuf Ali*) A little enjoyment in this world!- and then, to Us will be their return, then shall We make them taste the severest penalty for their blasphemies.

18:4-8 (warnings to Christians who believe Jesus was God's son):

18:4 And to warn those who say, "Allah has taken a son."

18:5 They have no knowledge of it, nor had their fathers. Grave is the word that comes out of their mouths; they speak not except a lie.

18:6 Then perhaps you would kill yourself through grief over them, [O Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow.

18:7 Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth adornment for it that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed.

18:8 And indeed, We will make that which is upon it [into] a barren ground.

23:91 (Allah has no son nor is there any deity with Him):

Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [If there had been], then each deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe [concerning Him].

43:78-83 (problem with Christian faith in Jesus as son of Allah):

43:78 We had certainly brought you the truth, but most of you, to the truth, were averse.

43:79 Or have they devised [some] affair? But indeed, We are devising [a plan].

43:80 Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private conversations? Yes, [We do], and Our messengers are with them recording.

43:81 Say, [O Muhammad], "If the Most Merciful had a son, then I would be the first of [his] worshippers."

43:82 Exalted is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe.

43:83 So leave them to converse vainly and amuse themselves until they meet their Day which they are promised.

Jesus was not the Son of God but only a messenger like Muhammad, and like Moses and Muhammad, Jesus affirmed the Law of Moses as God's standard of righteousness:

2:87 (We gave Moses and Jesus, strengthened with the Holy Spirit):

And We did certainly give Moses the Torah and followed up after him with messengers. And We gave Jesus, the son of Mary, clear proofs and supported him with the Pure Spirit. But is it [not] that every time a messenger came to you, [O Children of Israel], with what your souls did not desire, you were arrogant? And a party [of messengers] you denied and another party you killed.

3:3 (Allah sent the Book to Muhammad confirming Law of Moses and Gospel of Jesus):

He has sent down upon you, [O Muhammad], the Book in truth, confirming what was before it. And He revealed the Torah and the Gospel.

5:18-5:26 (Muhammad the successor to Moses as God's Messenger):

5:18 But the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the children of Allah and His beloved." Say, "Then why does He punish you for your sins?" Rather, you are human beings from among those

He has created. He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills. And to Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, and to Him is the [final] destination.

[5:19](#) O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger to make clear to you [the religion] after a period [of suspension] of messengers, lest you say, "There came not to us any bringer of good tidings or a warner." But there has come to you a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And Allah is over all things competent.

[5:20](#) And [mention, O Muhammad], when Moses said to his people, "O my people, remember the favor of Allah upon you when He appointed among you prophets and made you possessors and gave you that which He had not given anyone among the worlds.

[5:21](#) O my people, enter the Holy Land which Allah has assigned to you and do not turn back [from fighting in Allah 's cause] and [thus] become losers."

[5:22](#) They said, "O Moses, indeed within it is a people of tyrannical strength, and indeed, we will never enter it until they leave it; but if they leave it, then we will enter."

[5:23](#) Said two men from those who feared [to disobey] upon whom Allah had bestowed favor, "Enter upon them through the gate, for when you have entered it, you will be predominant. And upon Allah rely, if you should be believers."

[5:24](#) They said, "O Moses, indeed we will not enter it, ever, as long as they are within it; so go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we are remaining right here."

[5:25](#) [Moses] said, "My Lord, indeed I do not possess except myself and my brother, so part us from the defiantly disobedient people."

[5:26](#) [Allah] said, "Then indeed, it is forbidden to them for forty years [in which] they will wander throughout the land. So do not grieve over the defiantly disobedient people."

5:45-46 (Jesus sent by Allah/God to reaffirm Law of Moses; *lex talionis*):

[5:45](#) And We ordained for them therein a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution. But whoever gives [up his right as] charity, it is an expiation for him. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

[5:46](#) And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous.

5:110-118 (Jesus taught his followers to worship Allah, not himself and Mary):

[5:110](#) [The Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, remember My favor upon you and upon your mother when I supported you with the Pure Spirit and you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity; and [remember] when I taught you writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and when you designed from clay [what was] like the form of a bird with My permission, then you breathed into it, and it became a bird with My permission; and you healed the blind and the leper with My permission; and when you brought forth the dead with My permission; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from [killing] you when you came to them with clear proofs and those who disbelieved among them said, "This is not but obvious magic."

[5:111](#) And [remember] when I inspired to the disciples, "Believe in Me and in My messenger Jesus." They said, "We have believed, so bear witness that indeed we are Muslims [in submission to Allah]."

[5:112](#) [And remember] when the disciples said, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, can your Lord send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven? [Jesus] said," Fear Allah , if you should be believers."

[5:113](#) They said, "We wish to eat from it and let our hearts be reassured and know that you have been truthful to us and be among its witnesses."

[5:114](#) Said Jesus, the son of Mary, "O Allah , our Lord, send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven to be for us a festival for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from You. And provide for us, and You are the best of providers."

[5:115](#) Allah said, "Indeed, I will sent it down to you, but whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds."

[5:116](#) And [beware the Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah ?'" He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen.

[5:117](#) I said not to them except what You commanded me - to worship Allah , my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them; but when You took me up, You were the Observer over them, and You are, over all things, Witness.

[5:118](#) If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them - indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

42:13-15 (Islam is same religion as that of Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus):

[42:13](#) He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with Allah is that to which you invite them. Allah chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him].

[42:14](#) And they did not become divided until after knowledge had come to them - out of jealous animosity between themselves. And if not for a word that preceded from your Lord [postponing the penalty] until a specified time, it would have been concluded between them. And indeed, those who were granted inheritance of the Scripture after them are, concerning it, in disquieting doubt.

[42:15](#) So to that [religion of Allah] invite, [O Muhammad], and remain on a right course as you are commanded and do not follow their inclinations but say, "I have believed in what Allah has revealed of the Qur'an, and I have been commanded to do justice among you. Allah is our Lord and your Lord. For us are our deeds, and for you your deeds. There is no [need for] argument between us and you. Allah will bring us together, and to Him is the [final] destination."

43:57-65 (Jesus brought truth, but was only a servant of Allah like other messengers):

[43:57](#) And when the son of Mary was presented as an example, immediately your people laughed aloud.

[43:58](#) And they said, "Are our gods better, or is he?" They did not present the comparison except for [mere] argument. But, [in fact], they are a people prone to dispute.

[43:59](#) Jesus was not but a servant upon whom We bestowed favor, and We made him an example for the Children of Israel.

[43:60](#) And if We willed, We could have made [instead] of you angels succeeding [one another] on the earth.

[43:61](#) And indeed, Jesus will be [a sign for] knowledge of the Hour, so be not in doubt of it, and follow Me. This is a straight path.

[43:62](#) And never let Satan avert you. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.

[43:63](#) And when Jesus brought clear proofs, he said, "I have come to you with wisdom and to make clear to you some of that over which you differ, so fear Allah and obey me.

[43:64](#) Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path."

[43:65](#) But the denominations from among them differed [and separated], so woe to those who have wronged from the punishment of a painful Day.

61:6 (Jews rejection of Jesus as messenger of Allah who confirmed Mosaic Law):

And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad." But when he came to them with clear evidences, they said, "This is obvious magic."

Most Jews and Christians are unbelievers because they reject the Book (the Qur'an) revealed by Muhammad as the perfect and immutable word of God:

3:110 (most People of the Book are perverted transgressors):

You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah . If only the People of the Scripture had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient.

3:113-115 (different beliefs of the People of the Book):

[3:113](#) They are not [all] the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing [in obedience], reciting the verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating [in prayer].

[3:114](#) They believe in Allah and the Last Day, and they enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and hasten to good deeds. And those are among the righteous.

[3:115](#) And whatever good they do - never will it be removed from them. And Allah is Knowing of the righteous.

3:187-188 (People of the Book broke Allah's covenant and will be punished):

[3:187](#) And [mention, O Muhammad], when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture, [saying], "You must make it clear to the people and not conceal it." But they threw it away behind their backs and exchanged it for a small price. And wretched is that which they purchased.

[3:188](#) And never think that those who rejoice in what they have perpetrated and like to be praised for what they did not do - never think them [to be] in safety from the punishment, and for them is a painful punishment.

4:153-161 (disobedient Jews who broke covenant and rejected Jesus condemned):

[4:153](#) The People of the Scripture ask you to bring down to them a book from the heaven. But they had asked of Moses [even] greater than that and said, "Show us Allah outright," so the

thunderbolt struck them for their wrongdoing. Then they took the calf [for worship] after clear evidences had come to them, and We pardoned that. And We gave Moses a clear authority.

[4:154](#) And We raised over them the mount for [refusal of] their covenant; and We said to them, "Enter the gate bowing humbly", and We said to them, "Do not transgress on the sabbath", and We took from them a solemn covenant.

[4:155](#) And [We cursed them] for their breaking of the covenant and their disbelief in the signs of Allah and their killing of the prophets without right and their saying, "Our hearts are wrapped". Rather, Allah has sealed them because of their disbelief, so they believe not, except for a few.

[4:156](#) And [We cursed them] for their disbelief and their saying against Mary a great slander,

[4:157](#) And [for] their saying, "Indeed, we have killed the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary, the messenger of Allah ." And they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him; but [another] was made to resemble him to them. And indeed, those who differ over it are in doubt about it. They have no knowledge of it except the following of assumption. And they did not kill him, for certain.

[4:158](#) Rather, Allah raised him to Himself. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and Wise.

[4:159](#) And there is none from the People of the Scripture but that he will surely believe in Jesus before his death. And on the Day of Resurrection he will be against them a witness.

[4:160](#) For wrongdoing on the part of the Jews, We made unlawful for them [certain] good foods which had been lawful to them, and for their averting from the way of Allah many [people],

[4:161](#) And [for] their taking of usury while they had been forbidden from it, and their consuming of the people's wealth unjustly. And we have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful punishment.

4:162 (obedient Jews rewarded):

But those firm in knowledge among them and the believers believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you. And the establishers of prayer [especially] and the givers of zakah and the believers in Allah and the Last Day - those We will give a great reward.

5:12-16 (Jews and Christians sinful and should accept Muhammad as God's Messenger):

[5:12](#) And Allah had already taken a covenant from the Children of Israel, and We delegated from among them twelve leaders. And Allah said, "I am with you. If you establish prayer and give zakah and believe in My messengers and support them and loan Allah a goodly loan, I will surely remove from you your misdeeds and admit you to gardens beneath which rivers flow. But whoever of you disbelieves after that has certainly strayed from the soundness of the way."

[5:13](#) So for their breaking of the covenant We cursed them and made their hearts hard. They distort words from their [proper] usages and have forgotten a portion of that of which they were reminded. And you will still observe deceit among them, except a few of them. But pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, Allah loves the doers of good.

[5:14](#) And from those who say, "We are Christians" We took their covenant; but they forgot a portion of that of which they were reminded. So We caused among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection. And Allah is going to inform them about what they used to do.

[5:15](#) O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you used to conceal of the Scripture and overlooking much. There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book.

[5:16](#) By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darknesses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path.

5:62-69 (People of Book must believe in Law and Gospel):

[5:62](#) And you see many of them hastening into sin and aggression and the devouring of [what is] unlawful. How wretched is what they have been doing.

[5:63](#) Why do the rabbis and religious scholars not forbid them from saying what is sinful and devouring what is unlawful? How wretched is what they have been practicing.

[5:64](#) And the Jews say, "The hand of Allah is chained." Chained are their hands, and cursed are they for what they say. Rather, both His hands are extended; He spends however He wills. And that which has been revealed to you from your Lord will surely increase many of them in transgression and disbelief. And We have cast among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection. Every time they kindled the fire of war [against you], Allah extinguished it. And they strive throughout the land [causing] corruption, and Allah does not like corrupters.

[5:65](#) And if only the People of the Scripture had believed and feared Allah, We would have removed from them their misdeeds and admitted them to Gardens of Pleasure.

[5:66](#) And if only they upheld [the law of] the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to them from their Lord, they would have consumed [provision] from above them and from beneath their feet. Among them are a moderate community, but many of them - evil is that which they do.

[5:67](#) O Messenger, announce that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His message. And Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.

[5:68](#) Say, "O People of the Scripture, you are [standing] on nothing until you uphold [the law of] the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to you from your Lord." And that which has been revealed to you from your Lord will surely increase many of them in transgression and disbelief. So do not grieve over the disbelieving people.

[5:69](#) Indeed, those who have believed [in Prophet Muhammad] and those [before Him] who were Jews or Sabeans or Christians - those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.

5:82-85 (Jews and Pagans farthest from Believers; Christians are closer to Believers):

[5:82](#) You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allah; and you will find the nearest of them in affection to the believers those who say, "We are Christians." That is because among them are priests and monks and because they are not arrogant.

[5:83](#) And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth. They say, "Our Lord, we have believed, so register us among the witnesses.

[5:84](#) And why should we not believe in Allah and what has come to us of the truth? And we aspire that our Lord will admit us [to Paradise] with the righteous people."

[5:85](#) So Allah rewarded them for what they said with gardens [in Paradise] beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. And that is the reward of doers of good.

7:159-169 (condemnation of Jews who did not follow the Book of Moses):

[7:159](#) And among the people of Moses is a community which guides by truth and by it establishes justice.

[7:160](#) And We divided them into twelve descendant tribes [as distinct] nations. And We inspired to Moses when his people implored him for water, "Strike with your staff the stone," and there gushed forth from it twelve springs. Every people knew its watering place. And We shaded them with clouds and sent down upon them manna and quails, [saying], "Eat from the good things with which We have provided you." And they wronged Us not, but they were [only] wronging themselves.

[7:161](#) And [mention, O Muhammad], when it was said to them, "Dwell in this city and eat from it wherever you will and say, 'Relieve us of our burdens,' and enter the gate bowing humbly; We will [then] forgive you your sins. We will increase the doers of good [in goodness and reward]."

[7:162](#) But those who wronged among them changed [the words] to a statement other than that which had been said to them. So We sent upon them a punishment from the sky for the wrong that they were doing.

[7:163](#) And ask them about the town that was by the sea - when they transgressed in [the matter of] the sabbath - when their fish came to them openly on their sabbath day, and the day they had no sabbath they did not come to them. Thus did We give them trial because they were defiantly disobedient.

[7:164](#) And when a community among them said, "Why do you advise [or warn] a people whom Allah is [about] to destroy or to punish with a severe punishment?" they [the advisors] said, "To be absolved before your Lord and perhaps they may fear Him."

[7:165](#) And when they forgot that by which they had been reminded, We saved those who had forbidden evil and seized those who wronged, with a wretched punishment, because they were defiantly disobeying.

[7:166](#) So when they were insolent about that which they had been forbidden, We said to them, "Be apes, despised."

[7:167](#) And [mention] when your Lord declared that He would surely [continue to] send upon them until the Day of Resurrection those who would afflict them with the worst torment. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful.

[7:168](#) And We divided them throughout the earth into nations. Of them some were righteous, and of them some were otherwise. And We tested them with good [times] and bad that perhaps they would return [to obedience].

[7:169](#) And there followed them successors who inherited the Scripture [while] taking the commodities of this lower life and saying, "It will be forgiven for us." And if an offer like it comes to them, they will [again] take it. Was not the covenant of the Scripture taken from them that they would not say about Allah except the truth, and they studied what was in it? And the home of the Hereafter is better for those who fear Allah, so will you not use reason?

27:76 (The Qur'an explains matters over which Jews and Christians disagree):

Indeed, this Qur'an relates to the Children of Israel most of that over which they disagree.

57:27 (Jesus brought Gospel of mercy and compassion, but most did not follow it):

Then We sent following their footsteps Our messengers and followed [them] with Jesus, the son of Mary, and gave him the Gospel. And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy and monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them

except [that they did so] seeking the approval of Allah . But they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave the ones who believed among them their reward, but many of them are defiantly disobedient.

61:6 (Jews rejection of Jesus as messenger of Allah who confirmed Mosaic Law):

And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad." But when he came to them with clear evidences, they said, "This is obvious magic."

62:5-6 (Jews who do not follow Mosaic Law and consider themselves God's chosen people):

62:5 The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah . And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.

62:6 Say, "O you who are Jews, if you claim that you are allies of Allah , excluding the [other] people, then wish for death, if you should be truthful."

Standards of Morality and Law

Principles of law:

2:178, 179 (*lex talionis*; the law of equality):

2:178 O you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered - the free for the free, the slave for the slave, and the female for the female. But whoever overlooks from his brother anything, then there should be a suitable follow-up and payment to him with good conduct. This is an alleviation from your Lord and a mercy. But whoever transgresses after that will have a painful punishment.

2:179 And there is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, O you [people] of understanding, that you may become righteous.

5:45 (*lex talionis*; law of equality):

And We ordained for them therein a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution. But whoever gives [up his right as] charity, it is an expiation for him. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

Summary of God's commandments:

6:151-153 (summary of Allah's commandments):

6:151 Say, "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason."

6:152 And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best until he reaches maturity. And give full measure and weight in justice. We do not charge any soul except [with that within] its capacity. And when you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative. And the covenant of Allah fulfill. This has He instructed you that you may remember.

6:153 And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous.

7:33 (forbidden things):

Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know."

17:23, 26, 27, 31-35 (summary of laws):

17:23 And your Lord has decreed that you not worship except Him, and to parents, good treatment. Whether one or both of them reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], "uff," and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.

17:26 And give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully.

[17:27](#) Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils, and ever has Satan been to his Lord ungrateful.

[17:31](#) And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin.

[17:32](#) And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way.

[17:33](#) And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden, except by right. And whoever is killed unjustly - We have given his heir authority, but let him not exceed limits in [the matter of] taking life. Indeed, he has been supported [by the law].

[17:34](#) And do not approach the property of an orphan, except in the way that is best, until he reaches maturity. And fulfill [every] commitment. Indeed, the commitment is ever [that about which one will be] questioned.

[17:35](#) And give full measure when you measure, and weigh with an even balance. That is the best [way] and best in result.

Interfaith relations:

2:256 (religious tolerance):

There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Taghut and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold with no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

4:144 (do not accept unbelievers as allies or friends; see also **5:51**):

O you who have believed, do not take the disbelievers as allies instead of the believers. Do you wish to give Allah against yourselves a clear case?

5:51 (do not take Jews and Christians as allies, friends or protectors):

O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.

29:46-47 (avoid disputes with People of the Book over scripture; discussion OK):

[29:46](#) And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them, and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you. And our God and your God is one; and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him."

[29:47](#) And thus We have sent down to you the Qur'an. And those to whom We [previously] gave the Scripture believe in it. And among these [people of Makkah] are those who believe in it. And none reject Our verses except the disbelievers.

Criminal laws and crimes against God:

5:32-38 (murder, war against Allah, unbelief and theft):

[5:32](#) Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to

them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.

[5:33](#) Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment,

[5:34](#) Except for those who return [repenting] before you apprehend them. And know that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

[5:35](#) O you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of nearness] to Him and strive in His cause that you may succeed.

[5:36](#) Indeed, those who disbelieve - if they should have all that is in the earth and the like of it with it by which to ransom themselves from the punishment of the Day of Resurrection, it will not be accepted from them, and for them is a painful punishment

[5:37](#) They will wish to get out of the Fire, but never are they to emerge therefrom, and for them is an enduring punishment.

[5:38](#) [As for] the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent [punishment] from Allah . And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

Religious rules and rituals:

2:183-187 (fasting and Ramadan and breaking fasts):

[2:183](#) O you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous -

[2:184](#) [Fasting for] a limited number of days. So whoever among you is ill or on a journey [during them] - then an equal number of days [are to be made up]. And upon those who are able [to fast, but with hardship] - a ransom [as substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]. And whoever volunteers excess - it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew.

[2:185](#) The month of Ramadhan [is that] in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion. So whoever sights [the new moon of] the month, let him fast it; and whoever is ill or on a journey - then an equal number of other days. Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship and [wants] for you to complete the period and to glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and perhaps you will be grateful.

[2:187](#) It has been made permissible for you the night preceding fasting to go to your wives [for sexual relations]. They are clothing for you and you are clothing for them. Allah knows that you used to deceive yourselves, so He accepted your repentance and forgave you. So now, have relations with them and seek that which Allah has decreed for you. And eat and drink until the white thread of dawn becomes distinct to you from the black thread [of night]. Then complete the fast until the sunset. And do not have relations with them as long as you are staying for worship in the mosques. These are the limits [set by] Allah , so do not approach them. Thus does Allah make clear His ordinances to the people that they may become righteous.

49:9-12 (rules of conduct among believers):

[49:9](#) And if two factions among the believers should fight, then make settlement between the two. But if one of them oppresses the other, then fight against the one that oppresses until it

returns to the ordinance of Allah . And if it returns, then make settlement between them in justice and act justly. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.

[49:10](#) The believers are but brothers, so make settlement between your brothers. And fear Allah that you may receive mercy.

[49:11](#) O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

[49:12](#) O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful.

62:9-10 (duty to pray on Sabbath):

[62:9](#) O you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew.

[62:10](#) And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah , and remember Allah often that you may succeed.

Dietary Laws:

2:173 (prohibited meat):

He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah . But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

3:93 (Law of Moses and dietary restrictions):

All food was lawful to the Children of Israel except what Israel had made unlawful to himself before the Torah was revealed. Say, [O Muhammad], "So bring the Torah and recite it, if you should be truthful."

5:1-5 (dietary laws):

[5:1](#) O you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts. Lawful for you are the animals of grazing livestock except for that which is recited to you [in this Qur'an] - hunting not being permitted while you are in the state of ihram. Indeed, Allah ordains what He intends.

[5:2](#) O you who have believed, do not violate the rites of Allah or [the sanctity of] the sacred month or [neglect the marking of] the sacrificial animals and garlanding [them] or [violate the safety of] those coming to the Sacred House seeking bounty from their Lord and [His] approval. But when you come out of ihram, then [you may] hunt. And do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from al-Masjid al-Haram lead you to transgress. And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah ; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.

[5:3](#) Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah , and [those animals] killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a head-long fall or by the goring of horns, and those from which a wild animal has eaten, except

what you [are able to] slaughter [before its death], and those which are sacrificed on stone altars, and [prohibited is] that you seek decision through divining arrows. That is grave disobedience. This day those who disbelieve have despaired of [defeating] your religion; so fear them not, but fear Me. This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

[5:4](#) They ask you, [O Muhammad], what has been made lawful for them. Say, "Lawful for you are [all] good foods and [game caught by] what you have trained of hunting animals which you train as Allah has taught you. So eat of what they catch for you, and mention the name of Allah upon it, and fear Allah ." Indeed, Allah is swift in account.

[5:5](#) This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you, when you have given them their due compensation, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers. And whoever denies the faith - his work has become worthless, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.

6:121 (do not eat meat that has not been blessed in the name of Allah):

And do not eat of that upon which the name of Allah has not been mentioned, for indeed, it is grave disobedience. And indeed do the devils inspire their allies [among men] to dispute with you. And if you were to obey them, indeed, you would be associators [of others with Him].

5:95-96 (hunting):

[5:95](#) O you who have believed, do not kill game while you are in the state of ihram. And whoever of you kills it intentionally - the penalty is an equivalent from sacrificial animals to what he killed, as judged by two just men among you as an offering [to Allah] delivered to the Ka'bah, or an expiation: the feeding of needy people or the equivalent of that in fasting, that he may taste the consequence of his deed. Allah has pardoned what is past; but whoever returns [to violation], then Allah will take retribution from him. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Owner of Retribution.

[5:96](#) Lawful to you is game from the sea and its food as provision for you and the travelers, but forbidden to you is game from the land as long as you are in the state of ihram. And fear Allah to whom you will be gathered.

Family law (marriage, divorce and sexual relations):

2:221-241 (family law):

[2:221](#) And do not marry polytheistic women until they believe. And a believing slave woman is better than a polytheist, even though she might please you. And do not marry polytheistic men [to your women] until they believe. And a believing slave is better than a polytheist, even though he might please you. Those invite [you] to the Fire, but Allah invites to Paradise and to forgiveness, by His permission. And He makes clear His verses to the people that perhaps they may remember.

[2:222](#) And they ask you about menstruation. Say, "It is harm, so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not approach them until they are pure. And when they have purified themselves, then come to them from where Allah has ordained for you. Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves."

[2:223](#) Your wives are a place of sowing of seed for you, so come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves. And fear Allah and know that you will meet Him. And give good tidings to the believers.

[2:224](#) And do not make [your oath by] Allah an excuse against being righteous and fearing Allah and making peace among people. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

[2:225](#) Allah does not impose blame upon you for what is unintentional in your oaths, but He imposes blame upon you for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing.

[2:226](#) For those who swear not to have sexual relations with their wives is a waiting time of four months, but if they return [to normal relations] - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

[2:227](#) And if they decide on divorce - then indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

[2:228](#) Divorced women remain in waiting for three periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what Allah has created in their wombs if they believe in Allah and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation. And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

[2:229](#) Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] in an acceptable manner or release [her] with good treatment. And it is not lawful for you to take anything of what you have given them unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah . But if you fear that they will not keep [within] the limits of Allah , then there is no blame upon either of them concerning that by which she ransoms herself. These are the limits of Allah , so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah - it is those who are the wrongdoers.

[2:230](#) And if he has divorced her [for the third time], then she is not lawful to him afterward until [after] she marries a husband other than him. And if the latter husband divorces her [or dies], there is no blame upon the woman and her former husband for returning to each other if they think that they can keep [within] the limits of Allah . These are the limits of Allah , which He makes clear to a people who know.

[2:231](#) And when you divorce women and they have [nearly] fulfilled their term, either retain them according to acceptable terms or release them according to acceptable terms, and do not keep them, intending harm, to transgress [against them]. And whoever does that has certainly wronged himself. And do not take the verses of Allah in jest. And remember the favor of Allah

upon you and what has been revealed to you of the Book and wisdom by which He instructs you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Knowing of all things.

[2:232](#) And when you divorce women and they have fulfilled their term, do not prevent them from remarrying their [former] husbands if they agree among themselves on an acceptable basis. That is instructed to whoever of you believes in Allah and the Last Day. That is better for you and purer, and Allah knows and you know not.

[2:233](#) Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]. Upon the father is the mothers' provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than his capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child. And upon the [father's] heir is [a duty] like that [of the father]. And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them. And if you wish to have your children nursed by a substitute, there is no blame upon you as long as you give payment according to what is acceptable. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Seeing of what you do.

[2:234](#) And those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind - they, [the wives, shall] wait four months and ten [days]. And when they have fulfilled their term, then there is no blame upon you for what they do with themselves in an acceptable manner. And Allah is [fully] Acquainted with what you do.

[2:235](#) There is no blame upon you for that to which you [indirectly] allude concerning a proposal to women or for what you conceal within yourselves. Allah knows that you will have them in mind. But do not promise them secretly except for saying a proper saying. And do not determine to undertake a marriage contract until the decreed period reaches its end. And know that Allah knows what is within yourselves, so beware of Him. And know that Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing.

[2:236](#) There is no blame upon you if you divorce women you have not touched nor specified for them an obligation. But give them [a gift of] compensation - the wealthy according to his capability and the poor according to his capability - a provision according to what is acceptable, a duty upon the doers of good.

[2:237](#) And if you divorce them before you have touched them and you have already specified for them an obligation, then [give] half of what you specified - unless they forego the right or the one in whose hand is the marriage contract foregoes it. And to forego it is nearer to righteousness. And do not forget graciousness between you. Indeed Allah , of whatever you do, is Seeing.

[2:238](#) Maintain with care the [obligatory] prayers and [in particular] the middle prayer and stand before Allah , devoutly obedient.

[2:239](#) And if you fear [an enemy, then pray] on foot or riding. But when you are secure, then remember Allah [in prayer], as He has taught you that which you did not [previously] know.

[2:240](#) And those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind - for their wives is a bequest: maintenance for one year without turning [them] out. But if they leave [of their own accord], then there is no blame upon you for what they do with themselves in an acceptable way. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise.

[2:241](#) And for divorced women is a provision according to what is acceptable - a duty upon the righteous.

4:15-16 (unlawful sexual intercourse or lewdness/homosexuality):

4:15 Those who commit unlawful sexual intercourse of your women - bring against them four [witnesses] from among you. And if they testify, confine the guilty women to houses until death takes them or Allah ordains for them [another] way.

4:16 And the two who commit it among you, dishonor them both. But if they repent and correct themselves, leave them alone. Indeed, Allah is ever Accepting of repentance and Merciful.

4:19-25 (domestic law on wives and marriage):

4:19 O you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them unless they commit a clear immorality. And live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good.

4:20 But if you want to replace one wife with another and you have given one of them a great amount [in gifts], do not take [back] from it anything. Would you take it in injustice and manifest sin?

4:21 And how could you take it while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?

4:22 And do not marry those [women] whom your fathers married, except what has already occurred. Indeed, it was an immorality and hateful [to Allah] and was evil as a way.

4:23 Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brother's daughters, your sister's daughters, your [milk] mothers who nursed you, your sisters through nursing, your wives' mothers, and your step-daughters under your guardianship [born] of your wives unto whom you have gone in. But if you have not gone in unto them, there is no sin upon you. And [also prohibited are] the wives of your sons who are from your [own] loins, and that you take [in marriage] two sisters simultaneously, except for what has already occurred. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.

4:24 And [also prohibited to you are all] married women except those your right hands possess. [This is] the decree of Allah upon you. And lawful to you are [all others] beyond these, [provided] that you seek them [in marriage] with [gifts from] your property, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse. So for whatever you enjoy [of marriage] from them, give them their due compensation as an obligation. And there is no blame upon you for what you mutually agree to beyond the obligation. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.

4:25 And whoever among you cannot [find] the means to marry free, believing women, then [he may marry] from those whom your right hands possess of believing slave girls. And Allah is most knowing about your faith. You [believers] are of one another. So marry them with the permission of their people and give them their due compensation according to what is acceptable. [They should be] chaste, neither [of] those who commit unlawful intercourse randomly nor those who take [secret] lovers. But once they are sheltered in marriage, if they should commit adultery, then for them is half the punishment for free [unmarried] women. This [allowance] is for him among you who fears sin, but to be patient is better for you. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

4:34 (men can discipline arrogant, disobedient or disloyal women by striking them):

Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard. But those [wives] from whom

you fear arrogance - [first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], strike them. But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them. Indeed, Allah is ever Exalted and Grand.

4:128-130 (settlement best for husband who is cruel or deserts wife):

[4:128](#) And if a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of settlement between them - and settlement is best. And present in [human] souls is stinginess. But if you do good and fear Allah - then indeed Allah is ever, with what you do, Acquainted.

[4:129](#) And you will never be able to be equal [in feeling] between wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. So do not incline completely [toward one] and leave another hanging. And if you amend [your affairs] and fear Allah - then indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful.

[4:130](#) But if they separate [by divorce], Allah will enrich each [of them] from His abundance. And ever is Allah Encompassing and Wise.

24:2-33 (sex offenses):

[24:2](#) The [unmarried] woman or [unmarried] man found guilty of sexual intercourse - lash each one of them with a hundred lashes, and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah , if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.

[24:3](#) The fornicator does not marry except a [female] fornicator or polytheist, and none marries her except a fornicator or a polytheist, and that has been made unlawful to the believers.

[24:4](#) And those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses - lash them with eighty lashes and do not accept from them testimony ever after. And those are the defiantly disobedient,

[24:5](#) Except for those who repent thereafter and reform, for indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

[24:6](#) And those who accuse their wives [of adultery] and have no witnesses except themselves - then the witness of one of them [shall be] four testimonies [swearing] by Allah that indeed, he is of the truthful.

[24:7](#) And the fifth [oath will be] that the curse of Allah be upon him if he should be among the liars.

[24:8](#) But it will prevent punishment from her if she gives four testimonies [swearing] by Allah that indeed, he is of the liars.

[24:9](#) And the fifth [oath will be] that the wrath of Allah be upon her if he was of the truthful.

[24:10](#) And if not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy... and because Allah is Accepting of repentance and Wise.

[24:11](#) Indeed, those who came with falsehood are a group among you. Do not think it bad for you; rather it is good for you. For every person among them is what [punishment] he has earned from the sin, and he who took upon himself the greater portion thereof - for him is a great punishment.

[24:12](#) Why, when you heard it, did not the believing men and believing women think good of one another and say, "This is an obvious falsehood"?

[24:13](#) Why did they [who slandered] not produce for it four witnesses? And when they do not produce the witnesses, then it is they, in the sight of Allah , who are the liars.

[24:14](#) And if it had not been for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy in this world and the Hereafter, you would have been touched for that [lie] in which you were involved by a great punishment

[24:15](#) When you received it with your tongues and said with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge and thought it was insignificant while it was, in the sight of Allah , tremendous.

[24:16](#) And why, when you heard it, did you not say, "It is not for us to speak of this. Exalted are You, [O Allah]; this is a great slander"?

[24:17](#) Allah warns you against returning to the likes of this [conduct], ever, if you should be believers.

[24:18](#) And Allah makes clear to you the verses, and Allah is Knowing and Wise.

[24:19](#) Indeed, those who like that immorality should be spread [or publicized] among those who have believed will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you do not know.

[24:20](#) And if it had not been for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy... and because Allah is Kind and Merciful.

[24:21](#) O you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing. And if not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy, not one of you would have been pure, ever, but Allah purifies whom He wills, and Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

[24:22](#) And let not those of virtue among you and wealth swear not to give [aid] to their relatives and the needy and the emigrants for the cause of Allah , and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

[24:23](#) Indeed, those who [falsely] accuse chaste, unaware and believing women are cursed in this world and the Hereafter; and they will have a great punishment

[24:24](#) On a Day when their tongues, their hands and their feet will bear witness against them as to what they used to do.

[24:25](#) That Day, Allah will pay them in full their deserved recompense, and they will know that it is Allah who is the perfect in justice.

[24:26](#) Evil words are for evil men, and evil men are [subjected] to evil words. And good words are for good men, and good men are [an object] of good words. Those [good people] are declared innocent of what the slanderers say. For them is forgiveness and noble provision.

[24:27](#) O you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants. That is best for you; perhaps you will be reminded.

[24:28](#) And if you do not find anyone therein, do not enter them until permission has been given you. And if it is said to you, "Go back," then go back; it is purer for you. And Allah is Knowing of what you do.

[24:29](#) There is no blame upon you for entering houses not inhabited in which there is convenience for you. And Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal.

[24:30](#) Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do.

[24:31](#) And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those

male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, O believers, that you might succeed.

[24:32](#) And marry the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male slaves and female slaves. If they should be poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty, and Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing.

[24:33](#) But let them who find not [the means for] marriage abstain [from sexual relations] until Allah enriches them from His bounty. And those who seek a contract [for eventual emancipation] from among whom your right hands possess - then make a contract with them if you know there is within them goodness and give them from the wealth of Allah which He has given you. And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity, to seek [thereby] the temporary interests of worldly life. And if someone should compel them, then indeed, Allah is [to them], after their compulsion, Forgiving and Merciful.

58:1-4 (separation and divorce):

[58:1](#) Certainly has Allah heard the speech of the one who argues with you, [O Muhammad], concerning her husband and directs her complaint to Allah . And Allah hears your dialogue; indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing.

[58:2](#) Those who pronounce thihar among you [to separate] from their wives - they are not [consequently] their mothers. Their mothers are none but those who gave birth to them. And indeed, they are saying an objectionable statement and a falsehood. But indeed, Allah is Pardoning and Forgiving.

[58:3](#) And those who pronounce thihar from their wives and then [wish to] go back on what they said - then [there must be] the freeing of a slave before they touch one another. That is what you are admonished thereby; and Allah is Acquainted with what you do.

[58:4](#) And he who does not find [a slave] - then a fast for two months consecutively before they touch one another; and he who is unable - then the feeding of sixty poor persons. That is for you to believe [completely] in Allah and His Messenger; and those are the limits [set by] Allah . And for the disbelievers is a painful punishment.

65:1-6 (prohibited relations with women and divorce):

[65:1](#) O Prophet, when you [Muslims] divorce women, divorce them for [the commencement of] their waiting period and keep count of the waiting period, and fear Allah , your Lord. Do not turn them out of their [husbands'] houses, nor should they [themselves] leave [during that period] unless they are committing a clear immorality. And those are the limits [set by] Allah . And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah has certainly wronged himself. You know not; perhaps Allah will bring about after that a [different] matter.

[65:2](#) And when they have [nearly] fulfilled their term, either retain them according to acceptable terms or part with them according to acceptable terms. And bring to witness two just men from among you and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah . That is instructed to whoever should believe in Allah and the Last day. And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out

[65:3](#) And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent.

[65:4](#) And those who no longer expect menstruation among your women - if you doubt, then their period is three months, and [also for] those who have not menstruated. And for those who are pregnant, their term is until they give birth. And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him of his matter ease.

[65:5](#) That is the command of Allah , which He has sent down to you; and whoever fears Allah - He will remove for him his misdeeds and make great for him his reward.

[65:6](#) Lodge them [in a section] of where you dwell out of your means and do not harm them in order to oppress them. And if they should be pregnant, then spend on them until they give birth. And if they breastfeed for you, then give them their payment and confer among yourselves in the acceptable way; but if you are in discord, then there may breastfeed for the father another woman.

24:58-60 (rules on decorum, nudity/undress):

[24:58](#) O you who have believed, let those whom your right hands possess and those who have not [yet] reached puberty among you ask permission of you [before entering] at three times: before the dawn prayer and when you put aside your clothing [for rest] at noon and after the night prayer. [These are] three times of privacy for you. There is no blame upon you nor upon them beyond these [periods], for they continually circulate among you - some of you, among others. Thus does Allah make clear to you the verses; and Allah is Knowing and Wise.

[24:59](#) And when the children among you reach puberty, let them ask permission [at all times] as those before them have done. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses; and Allah is Knowing and Wise.

[24:60](#) And women of post-menstrual age who have no desire for marriage - there is no blame upon them for putting aside their outer garments [but] not displaying adornment. But to modestly refrain [from that] is better for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

The Law of War and the morality of violence:

2:190-194 (law of war):

[2:190](#) Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors.

[2:191](#) And kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al- Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers.

[2:192](#) And if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

[2:193](#) Fight them until there is no [more] fitnah and [until] worship is [acknowledged to be] for Allah . But if they cease, then there is to be no aggression except against the oppressors.

[2:194](#) [Fighting in] the sacred month is for [aggression committed in] the sacred month, and for [all] violations is legal retribution. So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him.

2:216-218 (warrior ethic/morality of fighting):

[2:216](#) Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not.

[2:217](#) They ask you about the sacred month - about fighting therein. Say, "Fighting therein is great [sin], but averting [people] from the way of Allah and disbelief in Him and [preventing access to] al-Masjid al-Haram and the expulsion of its people therefrom are greater [evil] in the sight of Allah . And fitnah is greater than killing." And they will continue to fight you until they turn you back from your religion if they are able. And whoever of you reverts from his religion [to disbelief] and dies while he is a disbeliever - for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire, they will abide therein eternally.

[2:218](#) Indeed, those who have believed and those who have emigrated and fought in the cause of Allah - those expect the mercy of Allah . And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

4:74-76 (those who fight in the cause of Allah are rewarded):

[4:74](#) So let those fight in the cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of Allah and is killed or achieves victory - We will bestow upon him a great reward.

[4:75](#) And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, "Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?"

[4:76](#) Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah , and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Taghut. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak.

4:89-90 (war with unbelieving renegades and peace):

[4:89](#) They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved so you would be alike. So do not take from among them allies until they emigrate for the cause of Allah . But if they turn away, then

seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take not from among them any ally or helper.

[4:90](#) Except for those who take refuge with a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty or those who come to you, their hearts strained at [the prospect of] fighting you or fighting their own people. And if Allah had willed, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. So if they remove themselves from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a cause [for fighting] against them.

4:92-93 (do not kill a believer; those who do go to hell):

[4:92](#) And never is it for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake - then the freeing of a believing slave and a compensation payment presented to the deceased's family [is required] unless they give [up their right as] charity. But if the deceased was from a people at war with you and he was a believer - then [only] the freeing of a believing slave; and if he was from a people with whom you have a treaty - then a compensation payment presented to his family and the freeing of a believing slave. And whoever does not find [one or cannot afford to buy one] - then [instead], a fast for two months consecutively, [seeking] acceptance of repentance from Allah . And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.

[4:93](#) But whoever kills a believer intentionally - his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment.

4:95 (Allah favors warriors/mujahideen):

Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled - and the mujahideen, [who strive and fight] in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives. Allah has preferred the mujahideen through their wealth and their lives over those who remain [behind], by degrees. And to both Allah has promised the best [reward]. But Allah has preferred the mujahideen over those who remain [behind] with a great reward -

8:12-17 (don't flee from unbelievers but slay them; it is Allah who slays them for you):

[8:12](#) [Remember] when your Lord inspired to the angels, "I am with you, so strengthen those who have believed. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieved, so strike [them] upon the necks and strike from them every fingertip."

[8:13](#) That is because they opposed Allah and His Messenger. And whoever opposes Allah and His Messenger - indeed, Allah is severe in penalty.

[8:14](#) "That [is yours], so taste it." And indeed for the disbelievers is the punishment of the Fire.

[8:15](#) O you who have believed, when you meet those who disbelieve advancing [for battle], do not turn to them your backs [in flight].

[8:16](#) And whoever turns his back to them on such a day, unless swerving [as a strategy] for war or joining [another] company, has certainly returned with anger [upon him] from Allah , and his refuge is Hell - and wretched is the destination.

[8:17](#) And you did not kill them, but it was Allah who killed them. And you threw not, [O Muhammad], when you threw, but it was Allah who threw that He might test the believers with a good test. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.

8:38-41 (fighting unbelievers for Allah; do not avoid holy fight; provision for booty):

8:38 Say to those who have disbelieved [that] if they cease, what has previously occurred will be forgiven for them. But if they return [to hostility] - then the precedent of the former [rebellious] peoples has already taken place.

8:39 And fight them until there is no fitnah and [until] the religion, all of it, is for Allah . And if they cease - then indeed, Allah is Seeing of what they do.

8:40 But if they turn away - then know that Allah is your protector. Excellent is the protector, and Excellent is the helper.

8:41 And know that anything you obtain of war booty - then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] traveler, if you have believed in Allah and in that which We sent down to Our Servant on the day of criterion - the day when the two armies met. And Allah , over all things, is competent.

8:59-61 (fighting the enemies of Allah; making peace with the enemy):

8:59 And let not those who disbelieve think they will escape. Indeed, they will not cause failure [to Allah].

8:60 And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged.

8:61 And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah . Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing.

8:69-72 (booty and captives in war):

8:69 So consume what you have taken of war booty [as being] lawful and good, and fear Allah . Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

8:70 O Prophet, say to whoever is in your hands of the captives, "If Allah knows [any] good in your hearts, He will give you [something] better than what was taken from you, and He will forgive you; and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

8:71 But if they intend to betray you - then they have already betrayed Allah before, and He empowered [you] over them. And Allah is Knowing and Wise.

8:72 Indeed, those who have believed and emigrated and fought with their wealth and lives in the cause of Allah and those who gave shelter and aided - they are allies of one another. But those who believed and did not emigrate - for you there is no guardianship of them until they emigrate. And if they seek help of you for the religion, then you must help, except against a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty. And Allah is Seeing of what you do.

9:5 (*sword verse*; killing the polytheists and pagans wherever you find them):

And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.

9:13-15 (fight aggressors who violate their oaths and plot against the Messenger):

9:13 Would you not fight a people who broke their oaths and determined to expel the Messenger, and they had begun [the attack upon] you the first time? Do you fear them? But Allah has more right that you should fear Him, if you are [truly] believers.

9:14 Fight them; Allah will punish them by your hands and will disgrace them and give you victory over them and satisfy the breasts of a believing people

9:15 And remove the fury in the believers' hearts. And Allah turns in forgiveness to whom He wills; and Allah is Knowing and Wise.

9:29 (fight the unbelievers):

Fight those who do not believe in Allah or in the Last Day and who do not consider unlawful what Allah and His Messenger have made unlawful and who do not adopt the religion of truth from those who were given the Scripture - [fight] until they give the jizyah willingly while they are humbled.

9:52 (martyrdom or victory):

Say, "Do you await for us except one of the two best things while we await for you that Allah will afflict you with punishment from Himself or at our hands? So wait; indeed we, along with you, are waiting."

9:90-95 (those who make excuses not to fight are an abomination):

9:90 Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, "I can find nothing for you to ride upon." They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of Allah].

9:93 The cause [for blame] is only upon those who ask permission of you while they are rich. They are satisfied to be with those who stay behind, and Allah has sealed over their hearts, so they do not know.

9:94 They will make excuses to you when you have returned to them. Say, "Make no excuse - never will we believe you. Allah has already informed us of your news. And Allah will observe your deeds, and [so will] His Messenger; then you will be taken back to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do."

9:95 They will swear by Allah to you when you return to them that you would leave them alone. So leave them alone; indeed they are evil; and their refuge is Hell as recompense for what they had been earning.

22:38-41 (Allah defends believers by allowing war on unbelievers):

22:38 Indeed, Allah defends those who have believed. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone treacherous and ungrateful.

22:39 Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory.

22:40 [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah ." And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.

[22:41](#) [And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.

33:60-62 (massacre the hypocrites who stir up dissension [in Medina]):

[33:60](#) If the hypocrites and those in whose hearts is disease and those who spread rumors in al-Madinah do not cease, We will surely incite you against them; then they will not remain your neighbors therein except for a little.

[33:61](#) Accursed wherever they are found, [being] seized and massacred completely.

[33:62](#) [This is] the established way of Allah with those who passed on before; and you will not find in the way of Allah any change.

47:4-6 (killing and capturing disbelievers; believers killed admitted to Paradise):

[47:4](#) So when you meet those who disbelieve [in battle], strike [their] necks until, when you have inflicted slaughter upon them, then secure their bonds, and either [confer] favor afterwards or ransom [them] until the war lays down its burdens. That [is the command]. And if Allah had willed, He could have taken vengeance upon them [Himself], but [He ordered armed struggle] to test some of you by means of others. And those who are killed in the cause of Allah - never will He waste their deeds.

[47:5](#) He will guide them and amend their condition

[47:6](#) And admit them to Paradise, which He has made known to them.

48:16 (fighters are rewarded; those who turn away are punished):

Say to those who remained behind of the bedouins, "You will be called to [face] a people of great military might; you may fight them, or they will submit. So if you obey, Allah will give you a good reward; but if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment."

60:8-9 (do not befriend those who fight you over faith and drive you from your homes):

[60:8](#) Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.

[60:9](#) Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

61:4 (Allah loves those who fight):

Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause in a row as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly.

Stories of Jesus (Sahih International, from www.quran.com):

3:35-59 (story of Mary, Zechariah and Jesus who attested to the Law):

[3:35](#) [Mention, O Muhammad], when the wife of 'Imran said, "My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb, consecrated [for Your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing."

[3:36](#) But when she delivered her, she said, "My Lord, I have delivered a female." And Allah was most knowing of what she delivered, "And the male is not like the female. And I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge for her in You and [for] her descendants from Satan, the expelled [from the mercy of Allah]."

[3:37](#) So her Lord accepted her with good acceptance and caused her to grow in a good manner and put her in the care of Zechariah. Every time Zechariah entered upon her in the prayer chamber, he found with her provision. He said, "O Mary, from where is this [coming] to you?" She said, "It is from Allah . Indeed, Allah provides for whom He wills without account."

[3:38](#) At that, Zechariah called upon his Lord, saying, "My Lord, grant me from Yourself a good offspring. Indeed, You are the Hearer of supplication."

[3:39](#) So the angels called him while he was standing in prayer in the chamber, "Indeed, Allah gives you good tidings of John, confirming a word from Allah and [who will be] honorable, abstaining [from women], and a prophet from among the righteous."

[3:40](#) He said, "My Lord, how will I have a boy when I have reached old age and my wife is barren?" The angel said, "Such is Allah ; He does what He wills."

[3:41](#) He said, "My Lord, make for me a sign." He Said, "Your sign is that you will not [be able to] speak to the people for three days except by gesture. And remember your Lord much and exalt [Him with praise] in the evening and the morning."

[3:42](#) And [mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the worlds."

[3:43](#) O Mary, be devoutly obedient to your Lord and prostrate and bow with those who bow [in prayer]."

[3:44](#) That is from the news of the unseen which We reveal to you, [O Muhammad]. And you were not with them when they cast their pens as to which of them should be responsible for Mary. Nor were you with them when they disputed.

[3:45](#) [And mention] when the angels said, "O Mary, indeed Allah gives you good tidings of a word from Him, whose name will be the Messiah, Jesus, the son of Mary - distinguished in this world and the Hereafter and among those brought near [to Allah].

Yusuf Ali

[3:45](#) Behold! the angels said: "O Mary! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a Word from Him: his name will be Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, held in honour in this world and the Hereafter and of (the company of) those nearest to Allah;

[3:46](#) He will speak to the people in the cradle and in maturity and will be of the righteous."

[3:47](#) She said, "My Lord, how will I have a child when no man has touched me?" [The angel] said, "Such is Allah ; He creates what He wills. When He decrees a matter, He only says to it, 'Be,' and it is."

[3:48](#) And He will teach him writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel

[3:49](#) And [make him] a messenger to the Children of Israel, [who will say], 'Indeed I have come to you with a sign from your Lord in that I design for you from clay [that which is] like the form of a bird, then I breathe into it and it becomes a bird by permission of Allah . And I cure the

blind and the leper, and I give life to the dead - by permission of Allah . And I inform you of what you eat and what you store in your houses. Indeed in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.

[3:50](#) And [I have come] confirming what was before me of the Torah and to make lawful for you some of what was forbidden to you. And I have come to you with a sign from your Lord, so fear Allah and obey me.

[3:51](#) Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path."

[3:52](#) But when Jesus felt [persistence in] disbelief from them, he said, "Who are my supporters for [the cause of] Allah?" The disciples said, " We are supporters for Allah. We have believed in Allah and testify that we are Muslims [submitting to Him].

[3:53](#) Our Lord, we have believed in what You revealed and have followed the messenger Jesus, so register us among the witnesses [to truth]."

[3:54](#) And the disbelievers planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners.

[3:55](#) [Mention] when Allah said, "O Jesus, indeed I will take you and raise you to Myself and purify you from those who disbelieve and make those who follow you [in submission to Allah alone] superior to those who disbelieve until the Day of Resurrection. Then to Me is your return, and I will judge between you concerning that in which you used to differ.

[3:56](#) And as for those who disbelieved, I will punish them with a severe punishment in this world and the Hereafter, and they will have no helpers."

[3:57](#) But as for those who believed and did righteous deeds, He will give them in full their rewards, and Allah does not like the wrongdoers.

[3:58](#) This is what We recite to you, [O Muhammad], of [Our] verses and the precise [and wise] message.

[3:59](#) Indeed, the example of Jesus to Allah is like that of Adam. He created Him from dust; then He said to him, "Be," and he was.

5:44-46 (Allah sent the Law to Moses and it was confirmed by Jesus):

[5:44](#) Indeed, We sent down the Torah, in which was guidance and light. The prophets who submitted [to Allah] judged by it for the Jews, as did the rabbis and scholars by that with which they were entrusted of the Scripture of Allah , and they were witnesses thereto. So do not fear the people but fear Me, and do not exchange My verses for a small price. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the disbelievers.

[5:45](#) And We ordained for them therein a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds is legal retribution. But whoever gives [up his right as] charity, it is an expiation for him. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed - then it is those who are the wrongdoers.

[5:46](#) And We sent, following in their footsteps, Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming that which came before him in the Torah; and We gave him the Gospel, in which was guidance and light and confirming that which preceded it of the Torah as guidance and instruction for the righteous.

5:110-118 (Jesus taught his followers to worship Allah, not himself and Mary):

[5:110](#) [The Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, remember My favor upon you and upon your mother when I supported you with the Pure Spirit and you spoke to the people in the cradle and in maturity; and [remember] when I taught you writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel; and when you designed from clay [what was] like the form of a bird with My permission, then you breathed into it, and it became a bird with My permission; and you healed

the blind and the leper with My permission; and when you brought forth the dead with My permission; and when I restrained the Children of Israel from [killing] you when you came to them with clear proofs and those who disbelieved among them said, "This is not but obvious magic."

[5:111](#) And [remember] when I inspired to the disciples, "Believe in Me and in My messenger Jesus." They said, "We have believed, so bear witness that indeed we are Muslims [in submission to Allah]."

[5:112](#) [And remember] when the disciples said, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, can your Lord send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven? [Jesus] said," Fear Allah , if you should be believers."

[5:113](#) They said, "We wish to eat from it and let our hearts be reassured and know that you have been truthful to us and be among its witnesses."

[5:114](#) Said Jesus, the son of Mary, "O Allah , our Lord, send down to us a table [spread with food] from the heaven to be for us a festival for the first of us and the last of us and a sign from You. And provide for us, and You are the best of providers."

[5:115](#) Allah said, "Indeed, I will sent it down to you, but whoever disbelieves afterwards from among you - then indeed will I punish him with a punishment by which I have not punished anyone among the worlds."

[5:116](#) And [beware the Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah ?"" He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen.

[5:117](#) I said not to them except what You commanded me - to worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. And I was a witness over them as long as I was among them; but when You took me up, You were the Observer over them, and You are, over all things, Witness.

[5:118](#) If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants; but if You forgive them - indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

18:88-92 (Zechariah, Elizabeth, John and Mary):

[18:88](#) And [mention] Zechariah, when he called to his Lord, "My Lord, do not leave me alone [with no heir], while you are the best of inheritors."

[21:90](#) So We responded to him, and We gave to him John, and amended for him his wife.

Indeed, they used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive.

[21:91](#) And [mention] the one who guarded her chastity, so We blew into her [garment] through Our angel [Gabriel], and We made her and her son a sign for the worlds.

43:57-65 (Jesus brought truth, but nothing more than a servant of Allah like other messengers):

[43:57](#) And when the son of Mary was presented as an example, immediately your people laughed aloud.

[43:58](#) And they said, "Are our gods better, or is he?" They did not present the comparison except for [mere] argument. But, [in fact], they are a people prone to dispute.

[43:59](#) Jesus was not but a servant upon whom We bestowed favor, and We made him an example for the Children of Israel.

[43:60](#) And if We willed, We could have made [instead] of you angels succeeding [one another] on the earth.

[43:61](#) And indeed, Jesus will be [a sign for] knowledge of the Hour, so be not in doubt of it, and follow Me. This is a straight path.

[43:62](#) And never let Satan avert you. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.

[43:63](#) And when Jesus brought clear proofs, he said, "I have come to you with wisdom and to make clear to you some of that over which you differ, so fear Allah and obey me.

[43:64](#) Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. This is a straight path."

[43:65](#) But the denominations from among them differed [and separated], so woe to those who have wronged from the punishment of a painful Day.

57:27 (Jesus brought Gospel of mercy and compassion, but most did not follow it):

Then We sent following their footsteps Our messengers and followed [them] with Jesus, the son of Mary, and gave him the Gospel. And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy and monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them except [that they did so] seeking the approval of Allah. But they did not observe it with due observance. So We gave the ones who believed among them their reward, but many of them are defiantly disobedient.

61:6 (Jews rejection of Jesus as messenger of Allah who confirmed Mosaic Law):

And [mention] when Jesus, the son of Mary, said, "O children of Israel, indeed I am the messenger of Allah to you confirming what came before me of the Torah and bringing good tidings of a messenger to come after me, whose name is Ahmad." But when he came to them with clear evidences, they said, "This is obvious magic."

61:14 (factions within Judaism as to Jesus, but believers prevailed):

O you who have believed, be supporters of Allah, as when Jesus, the son of Mary, said to the disciples, "Who are my supporters for Allah?" The disciples said, "We are supporters of Allah." And a faction of the Children of Israel believed and a faction disbelieved. So We supported those who believed against their enemy, and they became dominant.

Stories from the Hebrew Bible

(*Sahih International* translation found at www.quran.com)

Index:

1. Creation, Adam and Satan: 2:35-48; 15:26-43; 18:50-54; 20:115-127. p. 507
2. Noah (the Flood): 7:59-72; 10:71-74; 11:25-48; 21:76-77; 23:23-30; 26:105-122; 54:9-16; 71:1-28. p. 510
3. Abraham and Lot (Sodom and Gomorrah): 11:69-83; 21:51-75; 26:70-104; 26:160-175; 27:54-58; 29:28-35; 37:83-113; 54:33-39. p. 515
4. Joseph (son of Jacob; in Egypt): 12:4-101. p. 520
5. Job (ancient wisdom folk story, circa 2000-1000BC): 21:83-84; 38:41-44. p. 526
6. Moses (circa 1500 BC): 2:49-64; 7:103-158; 10:75-93; 18:60-82; 20:9-99; 26:10-68; 28:3-34; 40:23-54. p. 527
7. David, Solomon and Sheba (1000-950 BC): 21:78-82; 27:15-44; 38:17-40. p. 542
8. Jonah (circa Jeroboam II, 750 BC): 37:139-148. p. 545

I. Creation, Adam and Satan

2:35-64:

[2:35](#) And We said, "O Adam, dwell, you and your wife, in Paradise and eat therefrom in [ease and] abundance from wherever you will. But do not approach this tree, lest you be among the wrongdoers."

[2:36](#) But Satan caused them to slip out of it and removed them from that [condition] in which they had been. And We said, "Go down, [all of you], as enemies to one another, and you will have upon the earth a place of settlement and provision for a time."

[2:37](#) Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.

[2:38](#) We said, "Go down from it, all of you. And when guidance comes to you from Me, whoever follows My guidance - there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.

[2:39](#) And those who disbelieve and deny Our signs - those will be companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally."

[2:40](#) O Children of Israel, remember My favor which I have bestowed upon you and fulfill My covenant [upon you] that I will fulfill your covenant [from Me], and be afraid of [only] Me.

[2:41](#) And believe in what I have sent down confirming that which is [already] with you, and be not the first to disbelieve in it. And do not exchange My signs for a small price, and fear [only] Me.

[2:42](#) And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know [it].

[2:43](#) And establish prayer and give zakah and bow with those who bow [in worship and obedience].

[2:44](#) Do you order righteousness of the people and forget yourselves while you recite the Scripture? Then will you not reason?

[2:45](#) And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah]

[2:46](#) Who are certain that they will meet their Lord and that they will return to Him.

[2:47](#) O Children of Israel, remember My favor that I have bestowed upon you and that I preferred you over the worlds.

[2:48](#) And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all, nor will intercession be accepted from it, nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be aided.

15:26-43:

[15:26](#) And We did certainly create man out of clay from an altered black mud.

[15:27](#) And the jinn We created before from scorching fire.

[15:28](#) And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "I will create a human being out of clay from an altered black mud.

[15:29](#) And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration."

[15:30](#) So the angels prostrated - all of them entirely,

[15:31](#) Except Iblees, he refused to be with those who prostrated.

[15:32](#) [Allah] said, O Iblees, what is [the matter] with you that you are not with those who prostrate?"

[15:33](#) He said, "Never would I prostrate to a human whom You created out of clay from an altered black mud."

[15:34](#) [Allah] said, "Then get out of it, for indeed, you are expelled.
[15:35](#) And indeed, upon you is the curse until the Day of Recompense."
[15:36](#) He said, "My Lord, then reprieve me until the Day they are resurrected."
[15:37](#) [Allah] said, "So indeed, you are of those reprieved
[15:38](#) Until the Day of the time well-known."
[15:39](#) [Iblees] said, "My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them on earth, and I will mislead them all
[15:40](#) Except, among them, Your chosen servants."
[15:41](#) [Allah] said, "This is a path [of return] to Me [that is] straight.
[15:42](#) Indeed, My servants - no authority will you have over them, except those who follow you of the deviators.
[15:43](#) And indeed, Hell is the promised place for them all.

18:50-54:

[18:54](#) And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate to Adam," and they prostrated, except for Iblees. He was of the jinn and departed from the command of his Lord. Then will you take him and his descendants as allies other than Me while they are enemies to you? Wretched it is for the wrongdoers as an exchange.
[18:51](#) I did not make them witness to the creation of the heavens and the earth or to the creation of themselves, and I would not have taken the misguiders as assistants.
[18:52](#) And [warn of] the Day when He will say, "Call 'My partners' whom you claimed," and they will invoke them, but they will not respond to them. And We will put between them [a valley of] destruction.
[18:53](#) And the criminals will see the Fire and will be certain that they are to fall therein. And they will not find from it a way elsewhere.
[18:54](#) And We have certainly diversified in this Qur'an for the people from every [kind of] example; but man has ever been, most of anything, [prone to] dispute.

20:115-127:

[20:115](#) And We had already taken a promise from Adam before, but he forgot; and We found not in him determination.
[20:116](#) And [mention] when We said to the angels, "Prostrate to Adam," and they prostrated, except Iblees; he refused.
[20:117](#) So We said, "O Adam, indeed this is an enemy to you and to your wife. Then let him not remove you from Paradise so you would suffer.
[20:118](#) Indeed, it is [promised] for you not to be hungry therein or be unclothed.
[20:119](#) And indeed, you will not be thirsty therein or be hot from the sun."
[20:120](#) Then Satan whispered to him; he said, "O Adam, shall I direct you to the tree of eternity and possession that will not deteriorate?"
[20:121](#) And Adam and his wife ate of it, and their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten over themselves from the leaves of Paradise. And Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred.
[20:122](#) Then his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him].
[20:123](#) [Allah] said, "Descend from Paradise - all, [your descendants] being enemies to one another. And if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter].

[20:124](#) And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind."

[20:125](#) He will say, "My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?"

[20:126](#) [Allah] will say, "Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten."

[20:127](#) And thus do We recompense he who transgressed and did not believe in the signs of his Lord. And the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe and more enduring.

II. Noah (the Flood):

7:59-72:

[7:59](#) We had certainly sent Noah to his people, and he said, "O my people, worship Allah ; you have no deity other than Him. Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a tremendous Day.

[7:60](#) Said the eminent among his people, "Indeed, we see you in clear error."

[7:61](#) [Noah] said, "O my people, there is not error in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds."

[7:62](#) I convey to you the messages of my Lord and advise you; and I know from Allah what you do not know.

[7:63](#) Then do you wonder that there has come to you a reminder from your Lord through a man from among you, that he may warn you and that you may fear Allah so you might receive mercy."

[7:64](#) But they denied him, so We saved him and those who were with him in the ship. And We drowned those who denied Our signs. Indeed, they were a blind people.

[7:65](#) And to the 'Aad [We sent] their brother Hud. He said, "O my people, worship Allah ; you have no deity other than Him. Then will you not fear Him?"

[7:66](#) Said the eminent ones who disbelieved among his people, "Indeed, we see you in foolishness, and indeed, we think you are of the liars."

[7:67](#) [Hud] said, "O my people, there is not foolishness in me, but I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds."

[7:68](#) I convey to you the messages of my Lord, and I am to you a trustworthy adviser.

[7:69](#) Then do you wonder that there has come to you a reminder from your Lord through a man from among you, that he may warn you? And remember when He made you successors after the people of Noah and increased you in stature extensively. So remember the favors of Allah that you might succeed.

[7:70](#) They said, "Have you come to us that we should worship Allah alone and leave what our fathers have worshipped? Then bring us what you promise us, if you should be of the truthful."

[7:71](#) [Hud] said, "Already have defilement and anger fallen upon you from your Lord. Do you dispute with me concerning [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has not sent down any authority? Then wait; indeed, I am with you among those who wait."

[7:72](#) So We saved him and those with him by mercy from Us. And We eliminated those who denied Our signs, and they were not [at all] believers.

10:71-74:

[10:71](#) And recite to them the news of Noah, when he said to his people, "O my people, if my residence and my reminding of the signs of Allah has become burdensome upon you - then I have relied upon Allah . So resolve upon your plan and [call upon] your associates. Then let not your plan be obscure to you. Then carry it out upon me and do not give me respite.

[10:72](#) And if you turn away [from my advice] then no payment have I asked of you. My reward is only from Allah , and I have been commanded to be of the Muslims."

[10:73](#) And they denied him, so We saved him and those with him in the ship and made them successors, and We drowned those who denied Our signs. Then see how was the end of those who were warned.

[10:74](#) Then We sent after him messengers to their peoples, and they came to them with clear proofs. But they were not to believe in that which they had denied before. Thus We seal over the hearts of the transgressors

11:25-48:

[11:25](#) And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, [saying], " Indeed, I am to you a clear warner

[11:26](#) That you not worship except Allah . Indeed, I fear for you the punishment of a painful day."

[11:27](#) So the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said, " We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us [and] at first suggestion. And we do not see in you over us any merit; rather, we think you are liars."

[11:28](#) He said, "O my people have you considered: if I should be upon clear evidence from my Lord while He has given me mercy from Himself but it has been made unapparent to you, should we force it upon you while you are averse to it?

[11:29](#) And O my people, I ask not of you for it any wealth. My reward is not but from Allah . And I am not one to drive away those who have believed. Indeed, they will meet their Lord, but I see that you are a people behaving ignorantly.

[11:30](#) And O my people, who would protect me from Allah if I drove them away? Then will you not be reminded?

[11:31](#) And I do not tell you that I have the depositories [containing the provision] of Allah or that I know the unseen, nor do I tell you that I am an angel, nor do I say of those upon whom your eyes look down that Allah will never grant them any good. Allah is most knowing of what is within their souls. Indeed, I would then be among the wrongdoers."

[11:32](#) They said, "O Noah, you have disputed us and been frequent in dispute of us. So bring us what you threaten us, if you should be of the truthful."

[11:33](#) He said, " Allah will only bring it to you if He wills, and you will not cause [Him] failure.

[11:34](#) And my advice will not benefit you - although I wished to advise you - If Allah should intend to put you in error. He is your Lord, and to Him you will be returned."

[11:35](#) Or do they say [about Prophet Muhammad], "He invented it"? Say, "If I have invented it, then upon me is [the consequence of] my crime; but I am innocent of what [crimes] you commit."

[11:36](#) And it was revealed to Noah that, "No one will believe from your people except those who have already believed, so do not be distressed by what they have been doing.

[11:37](#) And construct the ship under Our observation and Our inspiration and do not address Me concerning those who have wronged; indeed, they are [to be] drowned."

[11:38](#) And he constructed the ship, and whenever an assembly of the eminent of his people passed by him, they ridiculed him. He said, "If you ridicule us, then we will ridicule you just as you ridicule.

[11:39](#) And you are going to know who will get a punishment that will disgrace him [on earth] and upon whom will descend an enduring punishment [in the Hereafter]."

[11:40](#) [So it was], until when Our command came and the oven overflowed, We said, "Load upon the ship of each [creature] two mates and your family, except those about whom the word has preceded, and [include] whoever has believed." But none had believed with him, except a few.

[11:41](#) And [Noah] said, "Embark therein; in the name of Allah is its course and its anchorage. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful."

[11:42](#) And it sailed with them through waves like mountains, and Noah called to his son who was apart [from them], "O my son, come aboard with us and be not with the disbelievers."

[11:43](#) [But] he said, "I will take refuge on a mountain to protect me from the water." [Noah] said, "There is no protector today from the decree of Allah , except for whom He gives mercy." And the waves came between them, and he was among the drowned.

[11:44](#) And it was said, "O earth, swallow your water, and O sky, withhold [your rain]." And the water subsided, and the matter was accomplished, and the ship came to rest on the [mountain of] Judiyy. And it was said, "Away with the wrongdoing people."

[11:45](#) And Noah called to his Lord and said, "My Lord, indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges!"

[11:46](#) He said, "O Noah, indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous, so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge. Indeed, I advise you, lest you be among the ignorant."

[11:47](#) [Noah] said, "My Lord, I seek refuge in You from asking that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have mercy upon me, I will be among the losers."

[11:48](#) It was said, "O Noah, disembark in security from Us and blessings upon you and upon nations [descending] from those with you. But other nations [of them] We will grant enjoyment; then there will touch them from Us a painful punishment."

21:76-77:

[21:76](#) And [mention] Noah, when he called [to Allah] before [that time], so We responded to him and saved him and his family from the great flood.

[21:77](#) And We saved him from the people who denied Our signs. Indeed, they were a people of evil, so We drowned them, all together.

23:23-30:

[23:23](#) And We had certainly sent Noah to his people, and he said, "O my people, worship Allah ; you have no deity other than Him; then will you not fear Him?"

[23:24](#) But the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said, "This is not but a man like yourselves who wishes to take precedence over you; and if Allah had willed [to send a messenger], He would have sent down angels. We have not heard of this among our forefathers.

[23:25](#) He is not but a man possessed with madness, so wait concerning him for a time."

[23:26](#) [Noah] said, "My Lord, support me because they have denied me."

[23:27](#) So We inspired to him, "Construct the ship under Our observation, and Our inspiration, and when Our command comes and the oven overflows, put into the ship from each [creature] two mates and your family, except those for whom the decree [of destruction] has proceeded. And do not address Me concerning those who have wronged; indeed, they are to be drowned.

[23:28](#) And when you have boarded the ship, you and those with you, then say, 'Praise to Allah who has saved us form the wrongdoing people.'

[23:29](#) And say, 'My Lord, let me land at a blessed landing place, and You are the best to accommodate [us].' "

[23:30](#) Indeed in that are signs, and indeed, We are ever testing [Our servants].

26:105-122:

[26:105](#) The people of Noah denied the messengers

[26:106](#) When their brother Noah said to them, "Will you not fear Allah ?

[26:107](#) Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger.

[26:108](#) So fear Allah and obey me.

[26:109](#) And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds.

[26:110](#) So fear Allah and obey me."

[26:111](#) They said, "Should we believe you while you are followed by the lowest [class of people]?"

[26:112](#) He said, "And what is my knowledge of what they used to do?

[26:113](#) Their account is only upon my Lord, if you [could] perceive.

[26:114](#) And I am not one to drive away the believers.

[26:115](#) I am only a clear warner."

[26:116](#) They said, "If you do not desist, O Noah, you will surely be of those who are stoned."

[26:117](#) He said, "My Lord, indeed my people have denied me.

[26:118](#) Then judge between me and them with decisive judgement and save me and those with me of the believers."

[26:119](#) So We saved him and those with him in the laden ship.

[26:120](#) Then We drowned thereafter the remaining ones.

[26:121](#) Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers.

[26:122](#) And indeed, your Lord - He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

54:9-16:

[54:9](#) The people of Noah denied before them, and they denied Our servant and said, "A madman," and he was repelled.

[54:10](#) So he invoked his Lord, "Indeed, I am overpowered, so help."

[54:11](#) Then We opened the gates of the heaven with rain pouring down

[54:12](#) And caused the earth to burst with springs, and the waters met for a matter already predestined.

[54:13](#) And We carried him on a [construction of] planks and nails,

[54:14](#) Sailing under Our observation as reward for he who had been denied.

[54:15](#) And We left it as a sign, so is there any who will remember?

[54:16](#) And how [severe] were My punishment and warning.

71:1-28:

[71:1](#) Indeed, We sent Noah to his people, [saying], "Warn your people before there comes to them a painful punishment."

[71:2](#) He said, "O my people, indeed I am to you a clear warner,

[71:3](#) [Saying], 'Worship Allah , fear Him and obey me.

[71:4](#) Allah will forgive you of your sins and delay you for a specified term. Indeed, the time [set by] Allah , when it comes, will not be delayed, if you only knew.' "

[71:5](#) He said, "My Lord, indeed I invited my people [to truth] night and day.

[71:6](#) But my invitation increased them not except in flight.

[71:7](#) And indeed, every time I invited them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, covered themselves with their garments, persisted, and were arrogant with [great] arrogance.

[71:8](#) Then I invited them publicly.

[71:9](#) Then I announced to them and [also] confided to them secretly

[71:10](#) And said, 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver.

[71:11](#) He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers

[71:12](#) And give you increase in wealth and children and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers.

[71:13](#) What is [the matter] with you that you do not attribute to Allah [due] grandeur

[71:14](#) While He has created you in stages?

[71:15](#) Do you not consider how Allah has created seven heavens in layers

[71:16](#) And made the moon therein a [reflected] light and made the sun a burning lamp?

[71:17](#) And Allah has caused you to grow from the earth a [progressive] growth.

[71:18](#) Then He will return you into it and extract you [another] extraction.

[71:19](#) And Allah has made for you the earth an expanse

[71:20](#) That you may follow therein roads of passage.' "

[71:21](#) Noah said, "My Lord, indeed they have disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children will not increase him except in loss.

[71:22](#) And they conspired an immense conspiracy.

[71:23](#) And said, 'Never leave your gods and never leave Wadd or Suwa' or Yaghuth and Ya'uq and Nasr.

[71:24](#) And already they have misled many. And, [my Lord], do not increase the wrongdoers except in error."

[71:25](#) Because of their sins they were drowned and put into the Fire, and they found not for themselves besides Allah [any] helpers.

[71:26](#) And Noah said, "My Lord, do not leave upon the earth from among the disbelievers an inhabitant.

[71:27](#) Indeed, if You leave them, they will mislead Your servants and not beget except [every] wicked one and [confirmed] disbeliever.

[71:28](#) My Lord, forgive me and my parents and whoever enters my house a believer and the believing men and believing women. And do not increase the wrongdoers except in destruction."

III. Abraham and Lot (Sodom and Gomorrah):

11:69-83:

[11:69](#) And certainly did Our messengers come to Abraham with good tidings; they said, "Peace." He said, "Peace," and did not delay in bringing [them] a roasted calf.

[11:70](#) But when he saw their hands not reaching for it, he distrusted them and felt from them apprehension. They said, "Fear not. We have been sent to the people of Lot."

[11:71](#) And his Wife was standing, and she smiled. Then We gave her good tidings of Isaac and after Isaac, Jacob.

[11:72](#) She said, "Woe to me! Shall I give birth while I am an old woman and this, my husband, is an old man? Indeed, this is an amazing thing!"

[11:73](#) They said, "Are you amazed at the decree of Allah ? May the mercy of Allah and His blessings be upon you, people of the house. Indeed, He is Praiseworthy and Honorable."

[11:74](#) And when the fright had left Abraham and the good tidings had reached him, he began to argue with Us concerning the people of Lot.

[11:75](#) Indeed, Abraham was forbearing, grieving and [frequently] returning [to Allah].

[11:76](#) [The angels said], "O Abraham, give up this [plea]. Indeed, the command of your Lord has come, and indeed, there will reach them a punishment that cannot be repelled."

[11:77](#) And when Our messengers, [the angels], came to Lot, he was anguished for them and felt for them great discomfort and said, "This is a trying day."

[11:78](#) And his people came hastening to him, and before [this] they had been doing evil deeds. He said, "O my people, these are my daughters; they are purer for you. So fear Allah and do not disgrace me concerning my guests. Is there not among you a man of reason?"

[11:79](#) They said, "You have already known that we have not concerning your daughters any claim, and indeed, you know what we want."

[11:80](#) He said, "If only I had against you some power or could take refuge in a strong support."

[11:81](#) The angels said, "O Lot, indeed we are messengers of your Lord; [therefore], they will never reach you. So set out with your family during a portion of the night and let not any among you look back - except your wife; indeed, she will be struck by that which strikes them. Indeed, their appointment is [for] the morning. Is not the morning near?"

[11:82](#) So when Our command came, We made the highest part [of the city] its lowest and rained upon them stones of layered hard clay, [which were]

[11:83](#) Marked from your Lord. And Allah 's punishment is not from the wrongdoers [very] far.

21:51-75:

[21:51](#) And We had certainly given Abraham his sound judgement before, and We were of him well-Knowing

[21:52](#) When he said to his father and his people, "What are these statues to which you are devoted?"

[21:53](#) They said, "We found our fathers worshippers of them."

[21:54](#) He said, "You were certainly, you and your fathers, in manifest error."

[21:55](#) They said, "Have you come to us with truth, or are you of those who jest?"

[21:56](#) He said, "[No], rather, your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth who created them, and I, to that, am of those who testify.

[21:57](#) And [I swear] by Allah , I will surely plan against your idols after you have turned and gone away."

[21:58](#) So he made them into fragments, except a large one among them, that they might return to it [and question].

[21:59](#) They said, "Who has done this to our gods? Indeed, he is of the wrongdoers."

[21:60](#) They said, "We heard a young man mention them who is called Abraham."

[21:61](#) They said, "Then bring him before the eyes of the people that they may testify."

[21:62](#) They said, "Have you done this to our gods, O Abraham?"

[21:63](#) He said, "Rather, this - the largest of them - did it, so ask them, if they should [be able to] speak."

[21:64](#) So they returned to [blaming] themselves and said [to each other], "Indeed, you are the wrongdoers."

[21:65](#) Then they reversed themselves, [saying], "You have already known that these do not speak!"

[21:66](#) He said, "Then do you worship instead of Allah that which does not benefit you at all or harm you?"

[21:67](#) Uff to you and to what you worship instead of Allah . Then will you not use reason?"

[21:68](#) They said, "Burn him and support your gods - if you are to act."

[21:69](#) Allah said, "O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham."

[21:70](#) And they intended for him harm, but We made them the greatest losers.

[21:71](#) And We delivered him and Lot to the land which We had blessed for the worlds.

[21:72](#) And We gave him Isaac and Jacob in addition, and all [of them] We made righteous.

[21:73](#) And We made them leaders guiding by Our command. And We inspired to them the doing of good deeds, establishment of prayer, and giving of zakah; and they were worshippers of Us.

[21:74](#) And to Lot We gave judgement and knowledge, and We saved him from the city that was committing wicked deeds. Indeed, they were a people of evil, defiantly disobedient.

[21:75](#) And We admitted him into Our mercy. Indeed, he was of the righteous.

26:70-104:

[26:70](#) When he said to his father and his people, "What do you worship?"

[26:71](#) They said, "We worship idols and remain to them devoted."

[26:72](#) He said, "Do they hear you when you supplicate?"

[26:73](#) Or do they benefit you, or do they harm?"

[26:74](#) They said, "But we found our fathers doing thus."

[26:75](#) He said, "Then do you see what you have been worshipping,

[26:76](#) You and your ancient forefathers?"

[26:77](#) Indeed, they are enemies to me, except the Lord of the worlds,

[26:78](#) Who created me, and He [it is who] guides me.

[26:79](#) And it is He who feeds me and gives me drink.

[26:80](#) And when I am ill, it is He who cures me

[26:81](#) And who will cause me to die and then bring me to life

[26:82](#) And who I aspire that He will forgive me my sin on the Day of Recompense."

[26:83](#) [And he said], "My Lord, grant me authority and join me with the righteous.

[26:84](#) And grant me a reputation of honor among later generations.

[26:85](#) And place me among the inheritors of the Garden of Pleasure.

[26:86](#) And forgive my father. Indeed, he has been of those astray.

[26:87](#) And do not disgrace me on the Day they are [all] resurrected -

[26:88](#) The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children

[26:89](#) But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart."
[26:90](#) And Paradise will be brought near [that Day] to the righteous.
[26:91](#) And Hellfire will be brought forth for the deviators,
[26:92](#) And it will be said to them, "Where are those you used to worship
[26:93](#) Other than Allah ? Can they help you or help themselves?"
[26:94](#) So they will be overturned into Hellfire, they and the deviators
[26:95](#) And the soldiers of Iblees, all together.
[26:96](#) They will say while they dispute therein,
[26:97](#) "By Allah , we were indeed in manifest error
[26:98](#) When we equated you with the Lord of the worlds.
[26:99](#) And no one misguided us except the criminals.
[26:100](#) So now we have no intercessors
[26:101](#) And not a devoted friend.
[26:102](#) Then if we only had a return [to the world] and could be of the believers... "
[26:103](#) Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers.
[26:104](#) And indeed, your Lord - He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

26:160-175:

[26:160](#) The people of Lot denied the messengers
[26:161](#) When their brother Lot said to them, "Will you not fear Allah ?
[26:162](#) Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger.
[26:163](#) So fear Allah and obey me.
[26:164](#) And I do not ask you for it any payment. My payment is only from the Lord of the worlds.
[26:165](#) Do you approach males among the worlds
[26:166](#) And leave what your Lord has created for you as mates? But you are a people transgressing."
[26:167](#) They said, "If you do not desist, O Lot, you will surely be of those evicted."
[26:168](#) He said, "Indeed, I am, toward your deed, of those who detest [it].
[26:169](#) My Lord, save me and my family from [the consequence of] what they do."
[26:170](#) So We saved him and his family, all,
[26:171](#) Except an old woman among those who remained behind.
[26:172](#) Then We destroyed the others.
[26:173](#) And We rained upon them a rain [of stones], and evil was the rain of those who were warned.
[26:174](#) Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers.
[26:175](#) And indeed, your Lord - He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

27:54-58:

[27:54](#) And [mention] Lot, when he said to his people, "Do you commit immorality while you are seeing?
[27:55](#) Do you indeed approach men with desire instead of women? Rather, you are a people behaving ignorantly."
[27:56](#) But the answer of his people was not except that they said, "Expel the family of Lot from your city. Indeed, they are people who keep themselves pure."

[27:57](#) So We saved him and his family, except for his wife; We destined her to be of those who remained behind.

[27:58](#) And We rained upon them a rain [of stones], and evil was the rain of those who were warned.

29:28-35:

[29:28](#) And [mention] Lot, when he said to his people, "Indeed, you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds.

[29:29](#) Indeed, you approach men and obstruct the road and commit in your meetings [every] evil." And the answer of his people was not but they said, "Bring us the punishment of Allah , if you should be of the truthful."

[29:30](#) He said, "My Lord, support me against the corrupting people."

[29:31](#) And when Our messengers came to Abraham with the good tidings, they said, "Indeed, we will destroy the people of that Lot's city. Indeed, its people have been wrongdoers."

[29:32](#) [Abraham] said, "Indeed, within it is Lot." They said, "We are more knowing of who is within it. We will surely save him and his family, except his wife. She is to be of those who remain behind."

[29:33](#) And when Our messengers came to Lot, he was distressed for them and felt for them great discomfort. They said, "Fear not, nor grieve. Indeed, we will save you and your family, except your wife; she is to be of those who remain behind.

[29:34](#) Indeed, we will bring down on the people of this city punishment from the sky because they have been defiantly disobedient."

[29:35](#) And We have certainly left of it a sign as clear evidence for a people who use reason.

37:83-113:

[37:83](#) And indeed, among his kind was Abraham,

[37:84](#) When he came to his Lord with a sound heart

[37:85](#) [And] when he said to his father and his people, "What do you worship?

[37:86](#) Is it falsehood [as] gods other than Allah you desire?

[37:87](#) Then what is your thought about the Lord of the worlds?"

[37:88](#) And he cast a look at the stars

[37:89](#) And said, "Indeed, I am [about to be] ill."

[37:90](#) So they turned away from him, departing.

[37:91](#) Then he turned to their gods and said, "Do you not eat?

[37:92](#) What is [wrong] with you that you do not speak?"

[37:93](#) And he turned upon them a blow with [his] right hand.

[37:94](#) Then the people came toward him, hastening.

[37:95](#) He said, "Do you worship that which you [yourselves] carve,

[37:96](#) While Allah created you and that which you do?"

[37:97](#) They said, "Construct for him a furnace and throw him into the burning fire."

[37:98](#) And they intended for him a plan, but We made them the most debased.

[37:99](#) And [then] he said, "Indeed, I will go to [where I am ordered by] my Lord; He will guide me.

[37:100](#) My Lord, grant me [a child] from among the righteous."

[37:101](#) So We gave him good tidings of a forbearing boy.

[37:102](#) And when he reached with him [the age of] exertion, he said, "O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you, so see what you think." He said, "O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast."

[37:103](#) And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead,

[37:104](#) We called to him, "O Abraham,

[37:105](#) You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.

[37:106](#) Indeed, this was the clear trial.

[37:107](#) And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice,

[37:108](#) And We left for him [favorable mention] among later generations:

[37:109](#) "Peace upon Abraham."

[37:110](#) Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good.

[37:111](#) Indeed, he was of Our believing servants.

[37:112](#) And We gave him good tidings of Isaac, a prophet from among the righteous.

[37:113](#) And We blessed him and Isaac. But among their descendants is the doer of good and the clearly unjust to himself.

54:33-39:

[54:33](#) The people of Lot denied the warning.

[54:34](#) Indeed, We sent upon them a storm of stones, except the family of Lot - We saved them before dawn

[54:35](#) As favor from us. Thus do We reward he who is grateful.

[54:36](#) And he had already warned them of Our assault, but they disputed the warning.

[54:37](#) And they had demanded from him his guests, but We obliterated their eyes, [saying], "Taste My punishment and warning."

[54:38](#) And there came upon them by morning an abiding punishment.

[54:39](#) So taste My punishment and warning.

IV. Joseph (son of Jacob, in Egypt)

12:4-101:

[12:4](#) [Of these stories mention] when Joseph said to his father, "O my father, indeed I have seen [in a dream] eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating to me."

[12:5](#) He said, "O my son, do not relate your vision to your brothers or they will contrive against you a plan. Indeed Satan, to man, is a manifest enemy.

[12:6](#) And thus will your Lord choose you and teach you the interpretation of narratives and complete His favor upon you and upon the family of Jacob, as He completed it upon your fathers before, Abraham and Isaac. Indeed, your Lord is Knowing and Wise."

[12:7](#) Certainly were there in Joseph and his brothers signs for those who ask,

[12:8](#) When they said, "Joseph and his brother are more beloved to our father than we, while we are a clan. Indeed, our father is in clear error.

[12:9](#) Kill Joseph or cast him out to [another] land; the countenance of your father will [then] be only for you, and you will be after that a righteous people."

[12:10](#) Said a speaker among them, "Do not kill Joseph but throw him into the bottom of the well; some travelers will pick him up - if you would do [something]."

[12:11](#) They said, "O our father, why do you not entrust us with Joseph while indeed, we are to him sincere counselors?

[12:12](#) Send him with us tomorrow that he may eat well and play. And indeed, we will be his guardians.

[12:13](#) [Jacob] said, "Indeed, it saddens me that you should take him, and I fear that a wolf would eat him while you are of him unaware."

[12:14](#) They said, " If a wolf should eat him while we are a [strong] clan, indeed, we would then be losers."

[12:15](#) So when they took him [out] and agreed to put him into the bottom of the well... But We inspired to him, "You will surely inform them [someday] about this affair of theirs while they do not perceive [your identity]."

[12:16](#) And they came to their father at night, weeping.

[12:17](#) They said, "O our father, indeed we went racing each other and left Joseph with our possessions, and a wolf ate him. But you would not believe us, even if we were truthful."

[12:18](#) And they brought upon his shirt false blood. [Jacob] said, "Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so patience is most fitting. And Allah is the one sought for help against that which you describe."

[12:19](#) And there came a company of travelers; then they sent their water drawer, and he let down his bucket. He said, "Good news! Here is a boy." And they concealed him, [taking him] as merchandise; and Allah was knowing of what they did.

[12:20](#) And they sold him for a reduced price - a few dirhams - and they were, concerning him, of those content with little.

[12:21](#) And the one from Egypt who bought him said to his wife, "Make his residence comfortable. Perhaps he will benefit us, or we will adopt him as a son." And thus, We established Joseph in the land that We might teach him the interpretation of events. And Allah is predominant over His affair, but most of the people do not know.

[12:22](#) And when Joseph reached maturity, We gave him judgment and knowledge. And thus We reward the doers of good.

[12:23](#) And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, "Come, you." He said, "[I seek] the refuge of Allah . Indeed, he is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed."

[12:24](#) And she certainly determined [to seduce] him, and he would have inclined to her had he not seen the proof of his Lord. And thus [it was] that We should avert from him evil and immorality. Indeed, he was of Our chosen servants.

[12:25](#) And they both raced to the door, and she tore his shirt from the back, and they found her husband at the door. She said, "What is the recompense of one who intended evil for your wife but that he be imprisoned or a painful punishment?"

[12:26](#) [Joseph] said, "It was she who sought to seduce me." And a witness from her family testified. "If his shirt is torn from the front, then she has told the truth, and he is of the liars.

[12:27](#) But if his shirt is torn from the back, then she has lied, and he is of the truthful."

[12:28](#) So when her husband saw his shirt torn from the back, he said, "Indeed, it is of the women's plan. Indeed, your plan is great.

[12:29](#) Joseph, ignore this. And, [my wife], ask forgiveness for your sin. Indeed, you were of the sinful."

[12:30](#) And women in the city said, "The wife of al-'Azeez is seeking to seduce her slave boy; he has impassioned her with love. Indeed, we see her [to be] in clear error."

[12:31](#) So when she heard of their scheming, she sent for them and prepared for them a banquet and gave each one of them a knife and said [to Joseph], "Come out before them." And when they saw him, they greatly admired him and cut their hands and said, "Perfect is Allah ! This is not a man; this is none but a noble angel."

[12:32](#) She said, "That is the one about whom you blamed me. And I certainly sought to seduce him, but he firmly refused; and if he will not do what I order him, he will surely be imprisoned and will be of those debased."

[12:33](#) He said, "My Lord, prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me. And if You do not avert from me their plan, I might incline toward them and [thus] be of the ignorant."

[12:34](#) So his Lord responded to him and averted from him their plan. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.

[12:35](#) Then it appeared to them after they had seen the signs that al-'Azeez should surely imprison him for a time.

[12:36](#) And there entered the prison with him two young men. One of them said, "Indeed, I have seen myself [in a dream] pressing wine." The other said, "Indeed, I have seen myself carrying upon my head [some] bread, from which the birds were eating. Inform us of its interpretation; indeed, we see you to be of those who do good."

[12:37](#) He said, "You will not receive food that is provided to you except that I will inform you of its interpretation before it comes to you. That is from what my Lord has taught me. Indeed, I have left the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah , and they, in the Hereafter, are disbelievers.

[12:38](#) And I have followed the religion of my fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And it was not for us to associate anything with Allah . That is from the favor of Allah upon us and upon the people, but most of the people are not grateful.

[12:39](#) O [my] two companions of prison, are separate lords better or Allah , the One, the Prevailing?

[12:40](#) You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah . He has

commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.

[12:41](#) O two companions of prison, as for one of you, he will give drink to his master of wine; but as for the other, he will be crucified, and the birds will eat from his head. The matter has been decreed about which you both inquire."

[12:42](#) And he said to the one whom he knew would go free, "Mention me before your master." But Satan made him forget the mention [to] his master, and Joseph remained in prison several years.

[12:43](#) And [subsequently] the king said, "Indeed, I have seen [in a dream] seven fat cows being eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry. O eminent ones, explain to me my vision, if you should interpret visions."

[12:44](#) They said, "[It is but] a mixture of false dreams, and we are not learned in the interpretation of dreams."

[12:45](#) But the one who was freed and remembered after a time said, "I will inform you of its interpretation, so send me forth."

[12:46](#) [He said], "Joseph, O man of truth, explain to us about seven fat cows eaten by seven [that were] lean, and seven green spikes [of grain] and others [that were] dry - that I may return to the people; perhaps they will know [about you]."

[12:47](#) [Joseph] said, "You will plant for seven years consecutively; and what you harvest leave in its spikes, except a little from which you will eat.

[12:48](#) Then will come after that seven difficult [years] which will consume what you saved for them, except a little from which you will store.

[12:49](#) Then will come after that a year in which the people will be given rain and in which they will press [olives and grapes]."

[12:50](#) And the king said, "Bring him to me." But when the messenger came to him, [Joseph] said, "Return to your master and ask him what is the case of the women who cut their hands. Indeed, my Lord is Knowing of their plan."

[12:51](#) Said [the king to the women], "What was your condition when you sought to seduce Joseph?" They said, "Perfect is Allah ! We know about him no evil." The wife of al-'Azeez said, "Now the truth has become evident. It was I who sought to seduce him, and indeed, he is of the truthful.

[12:52](#) That is so al-'Azeez will know that I did not betray him in [his] absence and that Allah does not guide the plan of betrayers.

[12:53](#) And I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except those upon which my Lord has mercy. Indeed, my Lord is Forgiving and Merciful."

[12:54](#) And the king said, "Bring him to me; I will appoint him exclusively for myself." And when he spoke to him, he said, "Indeed, you are today established [in position] and trusted."

[12:55](#) [Joseph] said, "Appoint me over the storehouses of the land. Indeed, I will be a knowing guardian."

[12:56](#) And thus We established Joseph in the land to settle therein wherever he willed. We touch with Our mercy whom We will, and We do not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good.

[12:57](#) And the reward of the Hereafter is better for those who believed and were fearing Allah .

[12:58](#) And the brothers of Joseph came [seeking food], and they entered upon him; and he recognized them, but he was to them unknown.

[12:59](#) And when he had furnished them with their supplies, he said, "Bring me a brother of yours from your father. Do not you see that I give full measure and that I am the best of accommodators?"

[12:60](#) But if you do not bring him to me, no measure will there be [hereafter] for you from me, nor will you approach me."

[12:61](#) They said, "We will attempt to dissuade his father from [keeping] him, and indeed, we will do [it]."

[12:62](#) And [Joseph] said to his servants, "Put their merchandise into their saddlebags so they might recognize it when they have gone back to their people that perhaps they will [again] return."

[12:63](#) So when they returned to their father, they said, "O our father, [further] measure has been denied to us, so send with us our brother [that] we will be given measure. And indeed, we will be his guardians."

[12:64](#) He said, "Should I entrust you with him except [under coercion] as I entrusted you with his brother before? But Allah is the best guardian, and He is the most merciful of the merciful."

[12:65](#) And when they opened their baggage, they found their merchandise returned to them. They said, "O our father, what [more] could we desire? This is our merchandise returned to us. And we will obtain supplies for our family and protect our brother and obtain an increase of a camel's load; that is an easy measurement."

[12:66](#) [Jacob] said, "Never will I send him with you until you give me a promise by Allah that you will bring him [back] to me, unless you should be surrounded by enemies." And when they had given their promise, he said, "Allah, over what we say, is Witness."

[12:67](#) And he said, "O my sons, do not enter from one gate but enter from different gates; and I cannot avail you against [the decree of] Allah at all. The decision is only for Allah; upon Him I have relied, and upon Him let those who would rely [indeed] rely."

[12:68](#) And when they entered from where their father had ordered them, it did not avail them against Allah at all except [it was] a need within the soul of Jacob, which he satisfied. And indeed, he was a possessor of knowledge because of what We had taught him, but most of the people do not know.

[12:69](#) And when they entered upon Joseph, he took his brother to himself; he said, "Indeed, I am your brother, so do not despair over what they used to do [to me]."

[12:70](#) So when he had furnished them with their supplies, he put the [gold measuring] bowl into the bag of his brother. Then an announcer called out, "O caravan, indeed you are thieves."

[12:71](#) They said while approaching them, "What is it you are missing?"

[12:72](#) They said, "We are missing the measure of the king. And for he who produces it is [the reward of] a camel's load, and I am responsible for it."

[12:73](#) They said, "By Allah, you have certainly known that we did not come to cause corruption in the land, and we have not been thieves."

[12:74](#) The accusers said, "Then what would be its recompense if you should be liars?"

[12:75](#) [The brothers] said, "Its recompense is that he in whose bag it is found - he [himself] will be its recompense. Thus do we recompense the wrongdoers."

[12:76](#) So he began [the search] with their bags before the bag of his brother; then he extracted it from the bag of his brother. Thus did We plan for Joseph. He could not have taken his brother within the religion of the king except that Allah willed. We raise in degrees whom We will, but over every possessor of knowledge is one [more] knowing.

[12:77](#) They said, "If he steals - a brother of his has stolen before." But Joseph kept it within himself and did not reveal it to them. He said, "You are worse in position, and Allah is most knowing of what you describe."

[12:78](#) They said, "O 'Azeez, indeed he has a father [who is] an old man, so take one of us in place of him. Indeed, we see you as a doer of good."

[12:79](#) He said, "[I seek] the refuge of Allah [to prevent] that we take except him with whom we found our possession. Indeed, we would then be unjust."

[12:80](#) So when they had despaired of him, they secluded themselves in private consultation. The eldest of them said, "Do you not know that your father has taken upon you an oath by Allah and [that] before you failed in [your duty to] Joseph? So I will never leave [this] land until my father permits me or Allah decides for me, and He is the best of judges."

[12:81](#) Return to your father and say, "O our father, indeed your son has stolen, and we did not testify except to what we knew. And we were not witnesses of the unseen,

[12:82](#) And ask the city in which we were and the caravan in which we came - and indeed, we are truthful,"

[12:83](#) [Jacob] said, "Rather, your souls have enticed you to something, so patience is most fitting. Perhaps Allah will bring them to me all together. Indeed it is He who is the Knowing, the Wise."

[12:84](#) And he turned away from them and said, "Oh, my sorrow over Joseph," and his eyes became white from grief, for he was [of that] a suppressor.

[12:85](#) They said, "By Allah , you will not cease remembering Joseph until you become fatally ill or become of those who perish."

[12:86](#) He said, "I only complain of my suffering and my grief to Allah , and I know from Allah that which you do not know."

[12:87](#) O my sons, go and find out about Joseph and his brother and despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people."

[12:88](#) So when they entered upon Joseph, they said, "O 'Azeez, adversity has touched us and our family, and we have come with goods poor in quality, but give us full measure and be charitable to us. Indeed, Allah rewards the charitable."

[12:89](#) He said, "Do you know what you did with Joseph and his brother when you were ignorant?"

[12:90](#) They said, "Are you indeed Joseph?" He said "I am Joseph, and this is my brother. Allah has certainly favored us. Indeed, he who fears Allah and is patient, then indeed, Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good."

[12:91](#) They said, "By Allah , certainly has Allah preferred you over us, and indeed, we have been sinners."

[12:92](#) He said, "No blame will there be upon you today. Allah will forgive you; and He is the most merciful of the merciful."

[12:93](#) Take this, my shirt, and cast it over the face of my father; he will become seeing. And bring me your family, all together."

[12:94](#) And when the caravan departed [from Egypt], their father said, "Indeed, I find the smell of Joseph [and would say that he was alive] if you did not think me weakened in mind."

[12:95](#) They said, "By Allah , indeed you are in your [same] old error."

[12:96](#) And when the bearer of good tidings arrived, he cast it over his face, and he returned [once again] seeing. He said, "Did I not tell you that I know from Allah that which you do not know?"

[12:97](#) They said, "O our father, ask for us forgiveness of our sins; indeed, we have been sinners."

[12:98](#) He said, "I will ask forgiveness for you from my Lord. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."

[12:99](#) And when they entered upon Joseph, he took his parents to himself and said, "Enter Egypt, Allah willing, safe [and secure]."

[12:100](#) And he raised his parents upon the throne, and they bowed to him in prostration. And he said, "O my father, this is the explanation of my vision of before. My Lord has made it reality. And He was certainly good to me when He took me out of prison and brought you [here] from bedouin life after Satan had induced [estrangement] between me and my brothers. Indeed, my Lord is Subtle in what He wills. Indeed, it is He who is the Knowing, the Wise.

[12:101](#) My Lord, You have given me [something] of sovereignty and taught me of the interpretation of dreams. Creator of the heavens and earth, You are my protector in this world and in the Hereafter. Cause me to die a Muslim and join me with the righteous."

V. Job

21:83-84:

[21:83](#) And [mention] Job, when he called to his Lord, "Indeed, adversity has touched me, and you are the Most Merciful of the merciful."

[21:84](#) So We responded to him and removed what afflicted him of adversity. And We gave him [back] his family and the like thereof with them as mercy from Us and a reminder for the worshippers [of Allah].

38:41-44:

[38:41](#) And remember Our servant Job, when he called to his Lord, "Indeed, Satan has touched me with hardship and torment."

[38:42](#) [So he was told], "Strike [the ground] with your foot; this is a [spring for] a cool bath and drink."

[38:43](#) And We granted him his family and a like [number] with them as mercy from Us and a reminder for those of understanding.

[38:44](#) [We said], "And take in your hand a bunch [of grass] and strike with it and do not break your oath." Indeed, We found him patient, an excellent servant. Indeed, he was one repeatedly turning back [to Allah].

VI. Moses

2:49-64:

[2:49](#) And [recall] when We saved your forefathers from the people of Pharaoh, who afflicted you with the worst torment, slaughtering your [newborn] sons and keeping your females alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord.

[2:50](#) And [recall] when We parted the sea for you and saved you and drowned the people of Pharaoh while you were looking on.

[2:51](#) And [recall] when We made an appointment with Moses for forty nights. Then you took [for worship] the calf after him, while you were wrongdoers.

[2:52](#) Then We forgave you after that so perhaps you would be grateful.

[2:53](#) And [recall] when We gave Moses the Scripture and criterion that perhaps you would be guided.

[2:54](#) And [recall] when Moses said to his people, "O my people, indeed you have wronged yourselves by your taking of the calf [for worship]. So repent to your Creator and kill yourselves. That is best for [all of] you in the sight of your Creator." Then He accepted your repentance; indeed, He is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful.

[2:55](#) And [recall] when you said, "O Moses, we will never believe you until we see Allah outright"; so the thunderbolt took you while you were looking on.

[2:56](#) Then We revived you after your death that perhaps you would be grateful.

[2:57](#) And We shaded you with clouds and sent down to you manna and quails, [saying], "Eat from the good things with which We have provided you." And they wronged Us not - but they were [only] wronging themselves.

[2:58](#) And [recall] when We said, "Enter this city and eat from it wherever you will in [ease and] abundance, and enter the gate bowing humbly and say, 'Relieve us of our burdens.' We will [then] forgive your sins for you, and We will increase the doers of good [in goodness and reward]."

[2:59](#) But those who wronged changed [those words] to a statement other than that which had been said to them, so We sent down upon those who wronged a punishment from the sky because they were defiantly disobeying.

[2:60](#) And [recall] when Moses prayed for water for his people, so We said, "Strike with your staff the stone." And there gushed forth from it twelve springs, and every people knew its watering place. "Eat and drink from the provision of Allah, and do not commit abuse on the earth, spreading corruption."

[2:61](#) And [recall] when you said, "O Moses, we can never endure one [kind of] food. So call upon your Lord to bring forth for us from the earth its green herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions." [Moses] said, "Would you exchange what is better for what is less? Go into [any] settlement and indeed, you will have what you have asked." And they were covered with humiliation and poverty and returned with anger from Allah [upon them]. That was because they [repeatedly] disbelieved in the signs of Allah and killed the prophets without right. That was because they disobeyed and were [habitually] transgressing.

[2:62](#) Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans [before Prophet Muhammad] - those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.

[2:63](#) And [recall] when We took your covenant, [O Children of Israel, to abide by the Torah] and We raised over you the mount, [saying], "Take what We have given you with determination and remember what is in it that perhaps you may become righteous."

[2:64](#) Then you turned away after that. And if not for the favor of Allah upon you and His mercy, you would have been among the losers.

7:103-158:

[7:103](#) Then We sent after them Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his establishment, but they were unjust toward them. So see how was the end of the corrupters.

[7:104](#) And Moses said, "O Pharaoh, I am a messenger from the Lord of the worlds

[7:105](#) [Who is] obligated not to say about Allah except the truth. I have come to you with clear evidence from your Lord, so send with me the Children of Israel."

[7:106](#) [Pharaoh] said, "If you have come with a sign, then bring it forth, if you should be of the truthful."

[7:107](#) So Moses threw his staff, and suddenly it was a serpent, manifest.

[7:108](#) And he drew out his hand; thereupon it was white [with radiance] for the observers.

[7:109](#) Said the eminent among the people of Pharaoh, "Indeed, this is a learned magician

[7:110](#) Who wants to expel you from your land [through magic], so what do you instruct?"

[7:111](#) They said, "Postpone [the matter of] him and his brother and send among the cities gatherers

[7:112](#) Who will bring you every learned magician."

[7:113](#) And the magicians came to Pharaoh. They said, "Indeed for us is a reward if we are the predominant."

[7:114](#) He said, "Yes, and, [moreover], you will be among those made near [to me]."

[7:115](#) They said, "O Moses, either you throw [your staff], or we will be the ones to throw [first]."

[7:116](#) He said, "Throw," and when they threw, they bewitched the eyes of the people and struck terror into them, and they presented a great [feat of] magic.

[7:117](#) And We inspired to Moses, "Throw your staff," and at once it devoured what they were falsifying.

[7:118](#) So the truth was established, and abolished was what they were doing.

[7:119](#) And Pharaoh and his people were overcome right there and became debased.

[7:120](#) And the magicians fell down in prostration [to Allah].

[7:121](#) They said, "We have believed in the Lord of the worlds,

[7:122](#) The Lord of Moses and Aaron."

[7:123](#) Said Pharaoh, "You believed in him before I gave you permission. Indeed, this is a conspiracy which you conspired in the city to expel therefrom its people. But you are going to know.

[7:124](#) I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides; then I will surely crucify you all."

[7:125](#) They said, "Indeed, to our Lord we will return.

[7:126](#) And you do not resent us except because we believed in the signs of our Lord when they came to us. Our Lord, pour upon us patience and let us die as Muslims [in submission to You]."

[7:127](#) And the eminent among the people of Pharaoh said, "Will you leave Moses and his people to cause corruption in the land and abandon you and your gods?" [Pharaoh] said, "We will kill their sons and keep their women alive; and indeed, we are subjugators over them."

[7:128](#) Said Moses to his people, "Seek help through Allah and be patient. Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah . He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous."

[7:129](#) They said, "We have been harmed before you came to us and after you have come to us." He said, "Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and grant you succession in the land and see how you will do."

[7:130](#) And We certainly seized the people of Pharaoh with years of famine and a deficiency in fruits that perhaps they would be reminded.

[7:131](#) But when good came to them, they said, "This is ours [by right]." And if a bad [condition] struck them, they saw an evil omen in Moses and those with him. Unquestionably, their fortune is with Allah , but most of them do not know.

[7:132](#) And they said, "No matter what sign you bring us with which to bewitch us, we will not be believers in you."

[7:133](#) So We sent upon them the flood and locusts and lice and frogs and blood as distinct signs, but they were arrogant and were a criminal people.

[7:134](#) And when the punishment descended upon them, they said, "O Moses, invoke for us your Lord by what He has promised you. If you [can] remove the punishment from us, we will surely believe you, and we will send with you the Children of Israel."

[7:135](#) But when We removed the punishment from them until a term which they were to reach, then at once they broke their word.

[7:136](#) So We took retribution from them, and We drowned them in the sea because they denied Our signs and were heedless of them.

[7:137](#) And We caused the people who had been oppressed to inherit the eastern regions of the land and the western ones, which We had blessed. And the good word of your Lord was fulfilled for the Children of Israel because of what they had patiently endured. And We destroyed [all] that Pharaoh and his people were producing and what they had been building.

[7:138](#) And We took the Children of Israel across the sea; then they came upon a people intent in devotion to [some] idols of theirs. They said, "O Moses, make for us a god just as they have gods." He said, "Indeed, you are a people behaving ignorantly.

[7:139](#) Indeed, those [worshippers] - destroyed is that in which they are [engaged], and worthless is whatever they were doing."

[7:140](#) He said, "Is it other than Allah I should desire for you as a god while He has preferred you over the worlds?"

[7:141](#) And [recall, O Children of Israel], when We saved you from the people of Pharaoh, [who were] afflicting you with the worst torment - killing your sons and keeping your women alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord.

[7:142](#) And We made an appointment with Moses for thirty nights and perfected them by [the addition of] ten; so the term of his Lord was completed as forty nights. And Moses said to his brother Aaron, "Take my place among my people, do right [by them], and do not follow the way of the corrupters."

[7:143](#) And when Moses arrived at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, "My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You." [Allah] said, "You will not see Me, but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me." But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious. And when he awoke, he said, "Exalted are You! I have repented to You, and I am the first of the believers."

[7:144](#) [Allah] said, "O Moses, I have chosen you over the people with My messages and My words [to you]. So take what I have given you and be among the grateful."

[7:145](#) And We wrote for him on the tablets [something] of all things - instruction and explanation for all things, [saying], "Take them with determination and order your people to take the best of it. I will show you the home of the defiantly disobedient."

[7:146](#) I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right; and if they should see every sign, they will not believe in it. And if they see the way of consciousness, they will not adopt it as a way; but if they see the way of error, they will adopt it as a way. That is because they have denied Our signs and they were heedless of them.

[7:147](#) Those who denied Our signs and the meeting of the Hereafter - their deeds have become worthless. Are they recompensed except for what they used to do?

[7:148](#) And the people of Moses made, after [his departure], from their ornaments a calf - an image having a lowing sound. Did they not see that it could neither speak to them nor guide them to a way? They took it [for worship], and they were wrongdoers.

[7:149](#) And when regret overcame them and they saw that they had gone astray, they said, "If our Lord does not have mercy upon us and forgive us, we will surely be among the losers."

[7:150](#) And when Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved, he said, "How wretched is that by which you have replaced me after [my departure]. Were you impatient over the matter of your Lord?" And he threw down the tablets and seized his brother by [the hair of] his head, pulling him toward him. [Aaron] said, "O son of my mother, indeed the people oppressed me and were about to kill me, so let not the enemies rejoice over me and do not place me among the wrongdoing people."

[7:151](#) [Moses] said, "My Lord, forgive me and my brother and admit us into Your mercy, for You are the most merciful of the merciful."

[7:152](#) Indeed, those who took the calf [for worship] will obtain anger from their Lord and humiliation in the life of this world, and thus do We recompense the inventors [of falsehood].

[7:153](#) But those who committed misdeeds and then repented after them and believed - indeed your Lord, thereafter, is Forgiving and Merciful.

[7:154](#) And when the anger subsided in Moses, he took up the tablets; and in their inscription was guidance and mercy for those who are fearful of their Lord.

[7:155](#) And Moses chose from his people seventy men for Our appointment. And when the earthquake seized them, he said, "My Lord, if You had willed, You could have destroyed them before and me [as well]. Would You destroy us for what the foolish among us have done? This is not but Your trial by which You send astray whom You will and guide whom You will. You are our Protector, so forgive us and have mercy upon us; and You are the best of forgivers.

[7:156](#) And decree for us in this world [that which is] good and [also] in the Hereafter; indeed, we have turned back to You." [Allah] said, "My punishment - I afflict with it whom I will, but My mercy encompasses all things." So I will decree it [especially] for those who fear Me and give zakah and those who believe in Our verses -

[7:157](#) Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful.

[7:158](#) Say, [O Muhammad], "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death." So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet, who believes in Allah and His words, and follow him that you may be guided.

10:75-93:

[10:75](#) Then We sent after them Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh and his establishment with Our signs, but they behaved arrogantly and were a criminal people

[10:76](#) So when there came to them the truth from Us, they said, "Indeed, this is obvious magic."

[10:77](#) Moses said, "Do you say [thus] about the truth when it has come to you? Is this magic? But magicians will not succeed."

[10:78](#) They said, "Have you come to us to turn us away from that upon which we found our fathers and so that you two may have grandeur in the land? And we are not believers in you."

[10:79](#) And Pharaoh said, "Bring to me every learned magician."

[10:80](#) So when the magicians came, Moses said to them, "Throw down whatever you will throw."

[10:81](#) And when they had thrown, Moses said, "What you have brought is [only] magic. Indeed, Allah will expose its worthlessness. Indeed, Allah does not amend the work of corrupters.

[10:82](#) And Allah will establish the truth by His words, even if the criminals dislike it."

[10:83](#) But no one believed Moses, except [some] youths among his people, for fear of Pharaoh and his establishment that they would persecute them. And indeed, Pharaoh was haughty within the land, and indeed, he was of the transgressors

[10:84](#) And Moses said, "O my people, if you have believed in Allah, then rely upon Him, if you should be Muslims."

[10:85](#) So they said, "Upon Allah do we rely. Our Lord, make us not [objects of] trial for the wrongdoing people

[10:86](#) And save us by Your mercy from the disbelieving people."

[10:87](#) And We inspired to Moses and his brother, "Settle your people in Egypt in houses and make your houses [facing the] qiblah and establish prayer and give good tidings to the believers."

[10:88](#) And Moses said, "Our Lord, indeed You have given Pharaoh and his establishment splendor and wealth in the worldly life, our Lord, that they may lead [men] astray from Your way. Our Lord, obliterate their wealth and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the painful punishment."

[10:89](#) [Allah] said, "Your supplication has been answered." So remain on a right course and follow not the way of those who do not know."

[10:90](#) And We took the Children of Israel across the sea, and Pharaoh and his soldiers pursued them in tyranny and enmity until, when drowning overtook him, he said, "I believe that there is no deity except that in whom the Children of Israel believe, and I am of the Muslims."

[10:91](#) Now? And you had disobeyed [Him] before and were of the corrupters?

[10:92](#) So today We will save you in body that you may be to those who succeed you a sign. And indeed, many among the people, of Our signs, are heedless

[10:93](#) And We had certainly settled the Children of Israel in an agreeable settlement and provided them with good things. And they did not differ until [after] knowledge had come to them. Indeed, your Lord will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which they used to differ

18:60-82:

[18:60](#) And [mention] when Moses said to his servant, "I will not cease [traveling] until I reach the junction of the two seas or continue for a long period."

[18:61](#) But when they reached the junction between them, they forgot their fish, and it took its course into the sea, slipping away.

[18:62](#) So when they had passed beyond it, [Moses] said to his boy, "Bring us our morning meal. We have certainly suffered in this, our journey, [much] fatigue."

[18:63](#) He said, "Did you see when we retired to the rock? Indeed, I forgot [there] the fish. And none made me forget it except Satan - that I should mention it. And it took its course into the sea amazingly".

[18:64](#) [Moses] said, "That is what we were seeking." So they returned, following their footprints.

[18:65](#) And they found a servant from among Our servants to whom we had given mercy from us and had taught him from Us a [certain] knowledge.

[18:66](#) Moses said to him, "May I follow you on [the condition] that you teach me from what you have been taught of sound judgement?"

[18:67](#) He said, "Indeed, with me you will never be able to have patience.

[18:68](#) And how can you have patience for what you do not encompass in knowledge?"

[18:69](#) [Moses] said, "You will find me, if Allah wills, patient, and I will not disobey you in [any] order."

[18:70](#) He said, "Then if you follow me, do not ask me about anything until I make to you about it mention."

[18:71](#) So they set out, until when they had embarked on the ship, al-Khidh r tore it open. [Moses] said, "Have you torn it open to drown its people? You have certainly done a grave thing."

[18:72](#) [Al-Khidh r] said, "Did I not say that with me you would never be able to have patience?"

[18:73](#) [Moses] said, "Do not blame me for what I forgot and do not cover me in my matter with difficulty."

[18:74](#) So they set out, until when they met a boy, al-Khidh r killed him. [Moses] said, "Have you killed a pure soul for other than [having killed] a soul? You have certainly done a deplorable thing."

[18:75](#) [Al-Khidh r] said, "Did I not tell you that with me you would never be able to have patience?"

[18:76](#) [Moses] said, "If I should ask you about anything after this, then do not keep me as a companion. You have obtained from me an excuse."

[18:77](#) So they set out, until when they came to the people of a town, they asked its people for food, but they refused to offer them hospitality. And they found therein a wall about to collapse, so al-Khidh r restored it. [Moses] said, "If you wished, you could have taken for it a payment."

[18:78](#) [Al-Khidh r] said, "This is parting between me and you. I will inform you of the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience.

[18:79](#) As for the ship, it belonged to poor people working at sea. So I intended to cause defect in it as there was after them a king who seized every [good] ship by force.

[18:80](#) And as for the boy, his parents were believers, and we feared that he would overburden them by transgression and disbelief.

[18:81](#) So we intended that their Lord should substitute for them one better than him in purity and nearer to mercy.

[18:82](#) And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the city, and there was beneath it a treasure for them, and their father had been righteous. So your Lord intended that they reach

maturity and extract their treasure, as a mercy from your Lord. And I did it not of my own accord. That is the interpretation of that about which you could not have patience."

20:9-99:

[20:9](#) And has the story of Moses reached you? -

[20:10](#) When he saw a fire and said to his family, "Stay here; indeed, I have perceived a fire; perhaps I can bring you a torch or find at the fire some guidance."

[20:11](#) And when he came to it, he was called, "O Moses,

[20:12](#) Indeed, I am your Lord, so remove your sandals. Indeed, you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.

[20:13](#) And I have chosen you, so listen to what is revealed [to you].

[20:14](#) Indeed, I am Allah . There is no deity except Me, so worship Me and establish prayer for My remembrance.

[20:15](#) Indeed, the Hour is coming - I almost conceal it - so that every soul may be recompensed according to that for which it strives.

[20:16](#) So do not let one avert you from it who does not believe in it and follows his desire, for you [then] would perish.

[20:17](#) And what is that in your right hand, O Moses?"

[20:18](#) He said, "It is my staff; I lean upon it, and I bring down leaves for my sheep and I have therein other uses."

[20:19](#) [Allah] said, "Throw it down, O Moses."

[20:20](#) So he threw it down, and thereupon it was a snake, moving swiftly.

[20:21](#) [Allah] said, "Seize it and fear not; We will return it to its former condition.

[20:22](#) And draw in your hand to your side; it will come out white without disease - another sign,

[20:23](#) That We may show you [some] of Our greater signs.

[20:24](#) Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed."

[20:25](#) [Moses] said, "My Lord, expand for me my breast [with assurance]

[20:26](#) And ease for me my task

[20:27](#) And untie the knot from my tongue

[20:28](#) That they may understand my speech.

[20:29](#) And appoint for me a minister from my family -

[20:30](#) Aaron, my brother.

[20:31](#) Increase through him my strength

[20:32](#) And let him share my task

[20:33](#) That we may exalt You much

[20:34](#) And remember You much.

[20:35](#) Indeed, You are of us ever Seeing."

[20:36](#) [Allah] said, "You have been granted your request, O Moses.

[20:37](#) And We had already conferred favor upon you another time,

[20:38](#) When We inspired to your mother what We inspired,

[20:39](#) [Saying], 'Cast him into the chest and cast it into the river, and the river will throw it onto the bank; there will take him an enemy to Me and an enemy to him.' And I bestowed upon you love from Me that you would be brought up under My eye.

[20:40](#) [And We favored you] when your sister went and said, 'Shall I direct you to someone who will be responsible for him?' So We restored you to your mother that she might be content and not grieve. And you killed someone, but We saved you from retaliation and tried you with a

[severe] trial. And you remained [some] years among the people of Madyan. Then you came [here] at the decreed time, O Moses.

[20:41](#) And I produced you for Myself.

[20:42](#) Go, you and your brother, with My signs and do not slacken in My remembrance.

[20:43](#) Go, both of you, to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed.

[20:44](#) And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah]."

[20:45](#) They said, "Our Lord, indeed we are afraid that he will hasten [punishment] against us or that he will transgress."

[20:46](#) [Allah] said, "Fear not. Indeed, I am with you both; I hear and I see.

[20:47](#) So go to him and say, 'Indeed, we are messengers of your Lord, so send with us the Children of Israel and do not torment them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord. And peace will be upon he who follows the guidance.

[20:48](#) Indeed, it has been revealed to us that the punishment will be upon whoever denies and turns away.' "

[20:49](#) [Pharaoh] said, "So who is the Lord of you two, O Moses?"

[20:50](#) He said, "Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it]."

[20:51](#) [Pharaoh] said, "Then what is the case of the former generations?"

[20:52](#) [Moses] said, "The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a record. My Lord neither errs nor forgets."

[20:53](#) [It is He] who has made for you the earth as a bed [spread out] and inserted therein for you roadways and sent down from the sky, rain and produced thereby categories of various plants.

[20:54](#) Eat [therefrom] and pasture your livestock. Indeed, in that are signs for those of intelligence.

[20:55](#) From the earth We created you, and into it We will return you, and from it We will extract you another time.

[20:56](#) And We certainly showed Pharaoh Our signs - all of them - but he denied and refused.

[20:57](#) He said, "Have you come to us to drive us out of our land with your magic, O Moses?

[20:58](#) Then we will surely bring you magic like it, so make between us and you an appointment, which we will not fail to keep and neither will you, in a place assigned."

[20:59](#) [Moses] said, "Your appointment is on the day of the festival when the people assemble at mid-morning."

[20:60](#) So Pharaoh went away, put together his plan, and then came [to Moses].

[20:61](#) Moses said to the magicians summoned by Pharaoh, "Woe to you! Do not invent a lie against Allah or He will exterminate you with a punishment; and he has failed who invents [such falsehood]."

[20:62](#) So they disputed over their affair among themselves and concealed their private conversation.

[20:63](#) They said, "Indeed, these are two magicians who want to drive you out of your land with their magic and do away with your most exemplary way.

[20:64](#) So resolve upon your plan and then come [forward] in line. And he has succeeded today who overcomes."

[20:65](#) They said, "O Moses, either you throw or we will be the first to throw."

[20:66](#) He said, "Rather, you throw." And suddenly their ropes and staffs seemed to him from their magic that they were moving [like snakes].

[20:67](#) And he sensed within himself apprehension, did Moses.

[20:68](#) Allah said, "Fear not. Indeed, it is you who are superior.

[20:69](#) And throw what is in your right hand; it will swallow up what they have crafted. What they have crafted is but the trick of a magician, and the magician will not succeed wherever he is."

[20:70](#) So the magicians fell down in prostration. They said, "We have believed in the Lord of Aaron and Moses."

[20:71](#) [Pharaoh] said, "You believed him before I gave you permission. Indeed, he is your leader who has taught you magic. So I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees, and you will surely know which of us is more severe in [giving] punishment and more enduring."

[20:72](#) They said, "Never will we prefer you over what has come to us of clear proofs and [over] He who created us. So decree whatever you are to decree. You can only decree for this worldly life.

[20:73](#) Indeed, we have believed in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and what you compelled us [to do] of magic. And Allah is better and more enduring."

[20:74](#) Indeed, whoever comes to his Lord as a criminal - indeed, for him is Hell; he will neither die therein nor live.

[20:75](#) But whoever comes to Him as a believer having done righteous deeds - for those will be the highest degrees [in position]:

[20:76](#) Gardens of perpetual residence beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. And that is the reward of one who purifies himself.

[20:77](#) And We had inspired to Moses, "Travel by night with My servants and strike for them a dry path through the sea; you will not fear being overtaken [by Pharaoh] nor be afraid [of drowning]."

[20:78](#) So Pharaoh pursued them with his soldiers, and there covered them from the sea that which covered them,

[20:79](#) And Pharaoh led his people astray and did not guide [them].

[20:80](#) O Children of Israel, We delivered you from your enemy, and We made an appointment with you at the right side of the mount, and We sent down to you manna and quails,

[20:81](#) [Saying], "Eat from the good things with which We have provided you and do not transgress [or oppress others] therein, lest My anger should descend upon you. And he upon whom My anger descends has certainly fallen."

[20:82](#) But indeed, I am the Perpetual Forgiver of whoever repents and believes and does righteousness and then continues in guidance.

[20:83](#) [Allah] said, "And what made you hasten from your people, O Moses?"

[20:84](#) He said, "They are close upon my tracks, and I hastened to You, my Lord, that You be pleased."

[20:85](#) [Allah] said, "But indeed, We have tried your people after you [departed], and the Samiri has led them astray."

[20:86](#) So Moses returned to his people, angry and grieved. He said, "O my people, did your Lord not make you a good promise? Then, was the time [of its fulfillment] too long for you, or did you wish that wrath from your Lord descend upon you, so you broke your promise [of obedience] to me?"

[20:87](#) They said, "We did not break our promise to you by our will, but we were made to carry burdens from the ornaments of the people [of Pharaoh], so we threw them [into the fire], and thus did the Samiri throw."

[20:88](#) And he extracted for them [the statue of] a calf which had a lowing sound, and they said, "This is your god and the god of Moses, but he forgot."

[20:89](#) Did they not see that it could not return to them any speech and that it did not possess for them any harm or benefit?

[20:90](#) And Aaron had already told them before [the return of Moses], "O my people, you are only being tested by it, and indeed, your Lord is the Most Merciful, so follow me and obey my order."

[20:91](#) They said, "We will never cease being devoted to the calf until Moses returns to us."

[20:92](#) [Moses] said, "O Aaron, what prevented you, when you saw them going astray,

[20:93](#) From following me? Then have you disobeyed my order?"

[20:94](#) [Aaron] said, "O son of my mother, do not seize [me] by my beard or by my head. Indeed, I feared that you would say, 'You caused division among the Children of Israel, and you did not observe [or await] my word.' "

[20:95](#) [Moses] said, "And what is your case, O Samiri?"

[20:96](#) He said, "I saw what they did not see, so I took a handful [of dust] from the track of the messenger and threw it, and thus did my soul entice me."

[20:97](#) [Moses] said, "Then go. And indeed, it is [decreed] for you in [this] life to say, 'No contact.' And indeed, you have an appointment [in the Hereafter] you will not fail to keep. And look at your 'god' to which you remained devoted. We will surely burn it and blow it into the sea with a blast.

[20:98](#) Your god is only Allah , except for whom there is no deity. He has encompassed all things in knowledge."

[20:99](#) Thus, [O Muhammad], We relate to you from the news of what has preceded. And We have certainly given you from Us the Qur'an.

26:10-68:

[26:10](#) And [mention] when your Lord called Moses, [saying], "Go to the wrongdoing people -

[26:11](#) The people of Pharaoh. Will they not fear Allah ?"

[26:12](#) He said, "My Lord, indeed I fear that they will deny me

[26:13](#) And that my breast will tighten and my tongue will not be fluent, so send for Aaron.

[26:14](#) And they have upon me a [claim due to] sin, so I fear that they will kill me."

[26:15](#) [Allah] said, "No. Go both of you with Our signs; indeed, We are with you, listening.

[26:16](#) Go to Pharaoh and say, 'We are the messengers of the Lord of the worlds,

[26:17](#) [Commanded to say], "Send with us the Children of Israel.'""

[26:18](#) [Pharaoh] said, "Did we not raise you among us as a child, and you remained among us for years of your life?

[26:19](#) And [then] you did your deed which you did, and you were of the ungrateful."

[26:20](#) [Moses] said, "I did it, then, while I was of those astray.

[26:21](#) So I fled from you when I feared you. Then my Lord granted me wisdom and prophethood and appointed me [as one] of the messengers.

[26:22](#) And is this a favor of which you remind me - that you have enslaved the Children of Israel?"

[26:23](#) Said Pharaoh, "And what is the Lord of the worlds?"

[26:24](#) [Moses] said, "The Lord of the heavens and earth and that between them, if you should be convinced."

[26:25](#) [Pharaoh] said to those around him, "Do you not hear?"

[26:26](#) [Moses] said, "Your Lord and the Lord of your first forefathers."
[26:27](#) [Pharaoh] said, "Indeed, your 'messenger' who has been sent to you is mad."
[26:28](#) [Moses] said, "Lord of the east and the west and that between them, if you were to reason."
[26:29](#) [Pharaoh] said, "If you take a god other than me, I will surely place you among those imprisoned."
[26:30](#) [Moses] said, "Even if I brought you proof manifest?"
[26:31](#) [Pharaoh] said, "Then bring it, if you should be of the truthful."
[26:32](#) So [Moses] threw his staff, and suddenly it was a serpent manifest.
[26:33](#) And he drew out his hand; thereupon it was white for the observers.
[26:34](#) [Pharaoh] said to the eminent ones around him, "Indeed, this is a learned magician.
[26:35](#) He wants to drive you out of your land by his magic, so what do you advise?"
[26:36](#) They said, "Postpone [the matter of] him and his brother and send among the cities gatherers
[26:37](#) Who will bring you every learned, skilled magician."
[26:38](#) So the magicians were assembled for the appointment of a well-known day.
[26:39](#) And it was said to the people, "Will you congregate
[26:40](#) That we might follow the magicians if they are the predominant?"
[26:41](#) And when the magicians arrived, they said to Pharaoh, "Is there indeed for us a reward if we are the predominant?"
[26:42](#) He said, "Yes, and indeed, you will then be of those near [to me]."
[26:43](#) Moses said to them, "Throw whatever you will throw."
[26:44](#) So they threw their ropes and their staffs and said, "By the might of Pharaoh, indeed it is we who are predominant."
[26:45](#) Then Moses threw his staff, and at once it devoured what they falsified.
[26:46](#) So the magicians fell down in prostration [to Allah].
[26:47](#) They said, "We have believed in the Lord of the worlds,
[26:48](#) The Lord of Moses and Aaron."
[26:49](#) [Pharaoh] said, "You believed Moses before I gave you permission. Indeed, he is your leader who has taught you magic, but you are going to know. I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will surely crucify you all."
[26:50](#) They said, "No harm. Indeed, to our Lord we will return.
[26:51](#) Indeed, we aspire that our Lord will forgive us our sins because we were the first of the believers."
[26:52](#) And We inspired to Moses, "Travel by night with My servants; indeed, you will be pursued."
[26:53](#) Then Pharaoh sent among the cities gatherers
[26:54](#) [And said], "Indeed, those are but a small band,
[26:55](#) And indeed, they are enraging us,
[26:56](#) And indeed, we are a cautious society... "
[26:57](#) So We removed them from gardens and springs
[26:58](#) And treasures and honorable station -
[26:59](#) Thus. And We caused to inherit it the Children of Israel.
[26:60](#) So they pursued them at sunrise.
[26:61](#) And when the two companies saw one another, the companions of Moses said, "Indeed, we are to be overtaken!"
[26:62](#) [Moses] said, "No! Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me."

[26:63](#) Then We inspired to Moses, "Strike with your staff the sea," and it parted, and each portion was like a great towering mountain.

[26:64](#) And We advanced thereto the pursuers.

[26:65](#) And We saved Moses and those with him, all together.

[26:66](#) Then We drowned the others.

[26:67](#) Indeed in that is a sign, but most of them were not to be believers.

[26:68](#) And indeed, your Lord - He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful.

28:3-34:

[28:3](#) We recite to you from the news of Moses and Pharaoh in truth for a people who believe.

[28:4](#) Indeed, Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and made its people into factions, oppressing a sector among them, slaughtering their [newborn] sons and keeping their females alive. Indeed, he was of the corrupters.

[28:5](#) And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors

[28:6](#) And establish them in the land and show Pharaoh and [his minister] Haman and their soldiers through them that which they had feared.

[28:7](#) And We inspired to the mother of Moses, "Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve. Indeed, We will return him to you and will make him [one] of the messengers."

[28:8](#) And the family of Pharaoh picked him up [out of the river] so that he would become to them an enemy and a [cause of] grief. Indeed, Pharaoh and Haman and their soldiers were deliberate sinners.

[28:9](#) And the wife of Pharaoh said, "[He will be] a comfort of the eye for me and for you. Do not kill him; perhaps he may benefit us, or we may adopt him as a son." And they perceived not.

[28:10](#) And the heart of Moses' mother became empty [of all else]. She was about to disclose [the matter concerning] him had We not bound fast her heart that she would be of the believers.

[28:11](#) And she said to his sister, "Follow him"; so she watched him from a distance while they perceived not.

[28:12](#) And We had prevented from him [all] wet nurses before, so she said, "Shall I direct you to a household that will be responsible for him for you while they are to him [for his upbringing] sincere?"

[28:13](#) So We restored him to his mother that she might be content and not grieve and that she would know that the promise of Allah is true. But most of the people do not know.

[28:14](#) And when he attained his full strength and was [mentally] mature, We bestowed upon him judgement and knowledge. And thus do We reward the doers of good.

[28:15](#) And he entered the city at a time of inattention by its people and found therein two men fighting: one from his faction and one from among his enemy. And the one from his faction called for help to him against the one from his enemy, so Moses struck him and [unintentionally] killed him. [Moses] said, "This is from the work of Satan. Indeed, he is a manifest, misleading enemy."

[28:16](#) He said, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, so forgive me," and He forgave him. Indeed, He is the Forgiving, the Merciful.

[28:17](#) He said, "My Lord, for the favor You bestowed upon me, I will never be an assistant to the criminals."

[28:18](#) And he became inside the city fearful and anticipating [exposure], when suddenly the one who sought his help the previous day cried out to him [once again]. Moses said to him, "Indeed, you are an evident, [persistent] deviator."

[28:19](#) And when he wanted to strike the one who was an enemy to both of them, he said, "O Moses, do you intend to kill me as you killed someone yesterday? You only want to be a tyrant in the land and do not want to be of the amenders."

[28:20](#) And a man came from the farthest end of the city, running. He said, "O Moses, indeed the eminent ones are conferring over you [intending] to kill you, so leave [the city]; indeed, I am to you of the sincere advisors."

[28:21](#) So he left it, fearful and anticipating [apprehension]. He said, "My Lord, save me from the wrongdoing people."

[28:22](#) And when he directed himself toward Madyan, he said, "Perhaps my Lord will guide me to the sound way."

[28:23](#) And when he came to the well of Madyan, he found there a crowd of people watering [their flocks], and he found aside from them two women driving back [their flocks]. He said, "What is your circumstance?" They said, "We do not water until the shepherds dispatch [their flocks]; and our father is an old man."

[28:24](#) So he watered [their flocks] for them; then he went back to the shade and said, "My Lord, indeed I am, for whatever good You would send down to me, in need."

[28:25](#) Then one of the two women came to him walking with shyness. She said, "Indeed, my father invites you that he may reward you for having watered for us." So when he came to him and related to him the story, he said, "Fear not. You have escaped from the wrongdoing people."

[28:26](#) One of the women said, "O my father, hire him. Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy."

[28:27](#) He said, "Indeed, I wish to wed you one of these, my two daughters, on [the condition] that you serve me for eight years; but if you complete ten, it will be [as a favor] from you. And I do not wish to put you in difficulty. You will find me, if Allah wills, from among the righteous."

[28:28](#) [Moses] said, "That is [established] between me and you. Whichever of the two terms I complete - there is no injustice to me, and Allah, over what we say, is Witness."

[28:29](#) And when Moses had completed the term and was traveling with his family, he perceived from the direction of the mount a fire. He said to his family, "Stay here; indeed, I have perceived a fire. Perhaps I will bring you from there [some] information or burning wood from the fire that you may warm yourselves."

[28:30](#) But when he came to it, he was called from the right side of the valley in a blessed spot - from the tree, "O Moses, indeed I am Allah, Lord of the worlds."

[28:31](#) And [he was told], "Throw down your staff." But when he saw it writhing as if it was a snake, he turned in flight and did not return. [Allah said], "O Moses, approach and fear not. Indeed, you are of the secure."

[28:32](#) Insert your hand into the opening of your garment; it will come out white, without disease. And draw in your arm close to you [as prevention] from fear, for those are two proofs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his establishment. Indeed, they have been a people defiantly disobedient."

[28:33](#) He said, "My Lord, indeed, I killed from among them someone, and I fear they will kill me."

[28:34](#) And my brother Aaron is more fluent than me in tongue, so send him with me as support, verifying me. Indeed, I fear that they will deny me."

40:23-54:

[40:23](#) And We did certainly send Moses with Our signs and a clear authority

[40:24](#) To Pharaoh, Haman and Qarun; but they said, "[He is] a magician and a liar."

[40:25](#) And when he brought them the truth from Us, they said, "Kill the sons of those who have believed with him and keep their women alive." But the plan of the disbelievers is not except in error.

[40:26](#) And Pharaoh said, "Let me kill Moses and let him call upon his Lord. Indeed, I fear that he will change your religion or that he will cause corruption in the land."

[40:27](#) But Moses said, "Indeed, I have sought refuge in my Lord and your Lord from every arrogant one who does not believe in the Day of Account."

[40:28](#) And a believing man from the family of Pharaoh who concealed his faith said, "Do you kill a man [merely] because he says, 'My Lord is Allah ' while he has brought you clear proofs from your Lord? And if he should be lying, then upon him is [the consequence of] his lie; but if he should be truthful, there will strike you some of what he promises you. Indeed, Allah does not guide one who is a transgressor and a liar.

[40:29](#) O my people, sovereignty is yours today, [your being] dominant in the land. But who would protect us from the punishment of Allah if it came to us?" Pharaoh said, "I do not show you except what I see, and I do not guide you except to the way of right conduct."

[40:30](#) And he who believed said, "O my people, indeed I fear for you [a fate] like the day of the companies -

[40:31](#) Like the custom of the people of Noah and of 'Aad and Thamud and those after them. And Allah wants no injustice for [His] servants.

[40:32](#) And O my people, indeed I fear for you the Day of Calling -

[40:33](#) The Day you will turn your backs fleeing; there is not for you from Allah any protector. And whoever Allah leaves astray - there is not for him any guide.

[40:34](#) And Joseph had already come to you before with clear proofs, but you remained in doubt of that which he brought to you, until when he died, you said, 'Never will Allah send a messenger after him.' Thus does Allah leave astray he who is a transgressor and skeptic."

[40:35](#) Those who dispute concerning the signs of Allah without an authority having come to them - great is hatred [of them] in the sight of Allah and in the sight of those who have believed. Thus does Allah seal over every heart [belonging to] an arrogant tyrant.

[40:36](#) And Pharaoh said, "O Haman, construct for me a tower that I might reach the ways -

[40:37](#) The ways into the heavens - so that I may look at the deity of Moses; but indeed, I think he is a liar." And thus was made attractive to Pharaoh the evil of his deed, and he was averted from the [right] way. And the plan of Pharaoh was not except in ruin.

[40:38](#) And he who believed said, "O my people, follow me, I will guide you to the way of right conduct.

[40:39](#) O my people, this worldly life is only [temporary] enjoyment, and indeed, the Hereafter - that is the home of [permanent] settlement.

[40:40](#) Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except by the like thereof; but whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - those will enter Paradise, being given provision therein without account.

[40:41](#) And O my people, how is it that I invite you to salvation while you invite me to the Fire?

[40:42](#) You invite me to disbelieve in Allah and associate with Him that of which I have no knowledge, and I invite you to the Exalted in Might, the Perpetual Forgiver.

[40:43](#) Assuredly, that to which you invite me has no [response to a] supplication in this world or in the Hereafter; and indeed, our return is to Allah , and indeed, the transgressors will be companions of the Fire.

[40:44](#) And you will remember what I [now] say to you, and I entrust my affair to Allah . Indeed, Allah is Seeing of [His] servants."

[40:45](#) So Allah protected him from the evils they plotted, and the people of Pharaoh were enveloped by the worst of punishment -

[40:46](#) The Fire, they are exposed to it morning and evening. And the Day the Hour appears [it will be said], "Make the people of Pharaoh enter the severest punishment."

[40:47](#) And [mention] when they will argue within the Fire, and the weak will say to those who had been arrogant, "Indeed, we were [only] your followers, so will you relieve us of a share of the Fire?"

[40:48](#) Those who had been arrogant will say, "Indeed, all [of us] are in it. Indeed, Allah has judged between the servants."

[40:49](#) And those in the Fire will say to the keepers of Hell, "Supplicate your Lord to lighten for us a day from the punishment."

[40:50](#) They will say, "Did there not come to you your messengers with clear proofs?" They will say, "Yes." They will reply, "Then supplicate [yourselves], but the supplication of the disbelievers is not except in error."

[40:51](#) Indeed, We will support Our messengers and those who believe during the life of this world and on the Day when the witnesses will stand -

[40:52](#) The Day their excuse will not benefit the wrongdoers, and they will have the curse, and they will have the worst home.

[40:53](#) And We had certainly given Moses guidance, and We caused the Children of Israel to inherit the Scripture

[40:54](#)

As guidance and a reminder for those of understanding.

VII. David, Solomon and Sheba

21:78-82:

[21:78](#) And [mention] David and Solomon, when they judged concerning the field - when the sheep of a people overran it [at night], and We were witness to their judgement.

[21:79](#) And We gave understanding of the case to Solomon, and to each [of them] We gave judgement and knowledge. And We subjected the mountains to exalt [Us], along with David and [also] the birds. And We were doing [that].

[21:80](#) And We taught him the fashioning of coats of armor to protect you from your [enemy in] battle. So will you then be grateful?

[21:81](#) And to Solomon [We subjected] the wind, blowing forcefully, proceeding by his command toward the land which We had blessed. And We are ever, of all things, Knowing.

[21:82](#) And of the devils were those who dived for him and did work other than that. And We were of them a guardian.

27:15-44:

[27:15](#) And We had certainly given to David and Solomon knowledge, and they said, "Praise [is due] to Allah , who has favored us over many of His believing servants."

[27:16](#) And Solomon inherited David. He said, "O people, we have been taught the language of birds, and we have been given from all things. Indeed, this is evident bounty."

[27:17](#) And gathered for Solomon were his soldiers of the jinn and men and birds, and they were [marching] in rows.

[27:18](#) Until, when they came upon the valley of the ants, an ant said, "O ants, enter your dwellings that you not be crushed by Solomon and his soldiers while they perceive not."

[27:19](#) So [Solomon] smiled, amused at her speech, and said, "My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to do righteousness of which You approve. And admit me by Your mercy into [the ranks of] Your righteous servants."

[27:20](#) And he took attendance of the birds and said, "Why do I not see the hoopoe - or is he among the absent?"

[27:21](#) I will surely punish him with a severe punishment or slaughter him unless he brings me clear authorization."

[27:22](#) But the hoopoe stayed not long and said, "I have encompassed [in knowledge] that which you have not encompassed, and I have come to you from Sheba with certain news.

[27:23](#) Indeed, I found [there] a woman ruling them, and she has been given of all things, and she has a great throne.

[27:24](#) I found her and her people prostrating to the sun instead of Allah , and Satan has made their deeds pleasing to them and averted them from [His] way, so they are not guided,

[27:25](#) [And] so they do not prostrate to Allah , who brings forth what is hidden within the heavens and the earth and knows what you conceal and what you declare -

[27:26](#) Allah - there is no deity except Him, Lord of the Great Throne."

[27:27](#) [Solomon] said, "We will see whether you were truthful or were of the liars.

[27:28](#) Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them. Then leave them and see what [answer] they will return."

[27:29](#) She said, "O eminent ones, indeed, to me has been delivered a noble letter.

[27:30](#) Indeed, it is from Solomon, and indeed, it reads: 'In the name of Allah , the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful,

[27:31](#) Be not haughty with me but come to me in submission [as Muslims].' "

[27:32](#) She said, "O eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness [for] me."

[27:33](#) They said, "We are men of strength and of great military might, but the command is yours, so see what you will command."

[27:34](#) She said, "Indeed kings - when they enter a city, they ruin it and render the honored of its people humbled. And thus do they do."

[27:35](#) But indeed, I will send to them a gift and see with what [reply] the messengers will return."

[27:36](#) So when they came to Solomon, he said, "Do you provide me with wealth? But what Allah has given me is better than what He has given you. Rather, it is you who rejoice in your gift."

[27:37](#) Return to them, for we will surely come to them with soldiers that they will be powerless to encounter, and we will surely expel them therefrom in humiliation, and they will be debased."

[27:38](#) [Solomon] said, "O assembly [of jinn], which of you will bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"

[27:39](#) A powerful one from among the jinn said, "I will bring it to you before you rise from your place, and indeed, I am for this [task] strong and trustworthy."

[27:40](#) Said one who had knowledge from the Scripture, "I will bring it to you before your glance returns to you." And when [Solomon] saw it placed before him, he said, "This is from the favor of my Lord to test me whether I will be grateful or ungrateful. And whoever is grateful - his gratitude is only for [the benefit of] himself. And whoever is ungrateful - then indeed, my Lord is Free of need and Generous."

[27:41](#) He said, "Disguise for her her throne; we will see whether she will be guided [to truth] or will be of those who is not guided."

[27:42](#) So when she arrived, it was said [to her], "Is your throne like this?" She said, "[It is] as though it was it." [Solomon said], "And we were given knowledge before her, and we have been Muslims [in submission to Allah].

[27:43](#) And that which she was worshipping other than Allah had averted her [from submission to Him]. Indeed, she was from a disbelieving people."

[27:44](#) She was told, "Enter the palace." But when she saw it, she thought it was a body of water and uncovered her shins [to wade through]. He said, "Indeed, it is a palace [whose floor is] made smooth with glass." She said, "My Lord, indeed I have wronged myself, and I submit with Solomon to Allah , Lord of the worlds."

38:17-40:

[38:17](#) Be patient over what they say and remember Our servant, David, the possessor of strength; indeed, he was one who repeatedly turned back [to Allah].

[38:18](#) Indeed, We subjected the mountains [to praise] with him, exalting [Allah] in the [late] afternoon and [after] sunrise.

[38:19](#) And the birds were assembled, all with him repeating [praises].

[38:20](#) And We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and discernment in speech.

[38:21](#) And has there come to you the news of the adversaries, when they climbed over the wall of [his] prayer chamber -

[38:22](#) When they entered upon David and he was alarmed by them? They said, "Fear not. [We are] two adversaries, one of whom has wronged the other, so judge between us with truth and do not exceed [it] and guide us to the sound path.

[38:23](#) Indeed this, my brother, has ninety-nine ewes, and I have one ewe; so he said, 'Entrust her to me,' and he overpowered me in speech."

[38:24](#) [David] said, "He has certainly wronged you in demanding your ewe [in addition] to his ewes. And indeed, many associates oppress one another, except for those who believe and do righteous deeds - and few are they." And David became certain that We had tried him, and he asked forgiveness of his Lord and fell down bowing [in prostration] and turned in repentance [to Allah].

[38:25](#) So We forgave him that; and indeed, for him is nearness to Us and a good place of return.

[38:26](#) [We said], "O David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between the people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah ." Indeed, those who go astray from the way of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Account.

[38:27](#) And We did not create the heaven and the earth and that between them aimlessly. That is the assumption of those who disbelieve, so woe to those who disbelieve from the Fire.

[38:28](#) Or should we treat those who believe and do righteous deeds like corrupters in the land? Or should We treat those who fear Allah like the wicked?

[38:29](#) [This is] a blessed Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that they might reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding would be reminded.

[38:30](#) And to David We gave Solomon. An excellent servant, indeed he was one repeatedly turning back [to Allah].

[38:31](#) [Mention] when there were exhibited before him in the afternoon the poised [standing] racehorses.

[38:32](#) And he said, "Indeed, I gave preference to the love of good [things] over the remembrance of my Lord until the sun disappeared into the curtain [of darkness]."

[38:33](#) [He said], "Return them to me," and set about striking [their] legs and necks.

[38:34](#) And We certainly tried Solomon and placed on his throne a body; then he returned.

[38:35](#) He said, "My Lord, forgive me and grant me a kingdom such as will not belong to anyone after me. Indeed, You are the Bestower."

[38:36](#) So We subjected to him the wind blowing by his command, gently, wherever he directed,

[38:37](#) And [also] the devils [of jinn] - every builder and diver

[38:38](#) And others bound together in shackles.

[38:39](#) [We said], "This is Our gift, so grant or withhold without account."

[38:40](#) And indeed, for him is nearness to Us and a good place of return.

VIII. Jonah

37:139-148:

[37:139](#) And indeed, Jonah was among the messengers.

[37:140](#) [Mention] when he ran away to the laden ship.

[37:141](#) And he drew lots and was among the losers.

[37:142](#) Then the fish swallowed him, while he was blameworthy.

[37:143](#) And had he not been of those who exalt Allah ,

[37:144](#) He would have remained inside its belly until the Day they are resurrected.

[37:145](#) But We threw him onto the open shore while he was ill.

[37:146](#) And We caused to grow over him a gourd vine.

[37:147](#) And We sent him to [his people of] a hundred thousand or more.

[37:148](#) And they believed, so We gave them enjoyment [of life] for a time.

INDEX OF SELECTED PROVISIONS FROM JEWISH (MOSAIC) LAW
from Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy (Source: NIV Bible)

1. Blasphemy, obedience/rewards/blessings and disobedience/punishments/curses	548
2. The ten commandments	558
3. Personal injury, property, servitude, slavery, commercial law and general laws	563
4. Family law, marriage and sexual relations	578
5. The law of war, the Promised Land and God's will in fighting enemies	585
6. Dietary laws	593
7. Ceremonial and purification laws, sacrifices, rituals, festivals and rules for priests	597

Last page: 651

Blasphemy, obedience/rewards/blessings and disobedience/punishments/curses:

EX 22:18 "Do not allow a sorceress to live.

EX 22:20 "Whoever sacrifices to any god other than the LORD must be destroyed.

EX 22:28 "Do not blaspheme God or curse the ruler of your people.

LEV 26:3 " `If you follow my decrees and are careful to obey my commands, ⁴ I will send you rain in its season, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit. ⁵ Your threshing will continue until grape harvest and the grape harvest will continue until planting, and you will eat all the food you want and live in safety in your land.

LEV 26:6 " `I will grant peace in the land, and you will lie down and no one will make you afraid. I will remove savage beasts from the land, and the sword will not pass through your country. ⁷ You will pursue your enemies, and they will fall by the sword before you. ⁸ Five of you will chase a hundred, and a hundred of you will chase ten thousand, and your enemies will fall by the sword before you.

LEV 26:9 " `I will look on you with favor and make you fruitful and increase your numbers, and I will keep my covenant with you. ¹⁰ You will still be eating last year's harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new. ¹¹ I will put my dwelling place among you, and I will not abhor you. ¹² I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people. ¹³ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you would no longer be slaves to the Egyptians; I broke the bars of your yoke and enabled you to walk with heads held high.

LEV 26:14 " `But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, ¹⁵ and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, ¹⁶ then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. You will plant seed in vain, because your enemies will eat it. ¹⁷ I will set my face against you so that you will be defeated by your enemies; those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee even when no one is pursuing you.

LEV 26:18 " `If after all this you will not listen to me, I will punish you for your sins seven times over. ¹⁹ I will break down your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze. ²⁰ Your strength will be spent in vain, because your soil will not yield its crops, nor will the trees of the land yield their fruit.

LEV 26:21 " `If you remain hostile toward me and refuse to listen to me, I will multiply your afflictions seven times over, as your sins deserve. ²² I will send wild animals against you, and

they will rob you of your children, destroy your cattle and make you so few in number that your roads will be deserted.

LEV 26:23 " `If in spite of these things you do not accept my correction but continue to be hostile toward me, ²⁴ I myself will be hostile toward you and will afflict you for your sins seven times over. ²⁵ And I will bring the sword upon you to avenge the breaking of the covenant. When you withdraw into your cities, I will send a plague among you, and you will be given into enemy hands. ²⁶ When I cut off your supply of bread, ten women will be able to bake your bread in one oven, and they will dole out the bread by weight. You will eat, but you will not be satisfied.

LEV 26:27 " `If in spite of this you still do not listen to me but continue to be hostile toward me, ²⁸ then in my anger I will be hostile toward you, and I myself will punish you for your sins seven times over. ²⁹ You will eat the flesh of your sons and the flesh of your daughters. ³⁰ I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars and pile your dead bodies on the lifeless forms of your idols, and I will abhor you. ³¹ I will turn your cities into ruins and lay waste your sanctuaries, and I will take no delight in the pleasing aroma of your offerings. ³² I will lay waste the land, so that your enemies who live there will be appalled. ³³ I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins. ³⁴ Then the land will enjoy its sabbath years all the time that it lies desolate and you are in the country of your enemies; then the land will rest and enjoy its sabbaths. ³⁵ All the time that it lies desolate, the land will have the rest it did not have during the sabbaths you lived in it.

LEV 26:36 " `As for those of you who are left, I will make their hearts so fearful in the lands of their enemies that the sound of a windblown leaf will put them to flight. They will run as though fleeing from the sword, and they will fall, even though no one is pursuing them. ³⁷ They will stumble over one another as though fleeing from the sword, even though no one is pursuing them. So you will not be able to stand before your enemies. ³⁸ You will perish among the nations; the land of your enemies will devour you. ³⁹ Those of you who are left will waste away in the lands of their enemies because of their sins; also because of their fathers' sins they will waste away.

LEV 26:40 " `But if they will confess their sins and the sins of their fathers--their treachery against me and their hostility toward me, ⁴¹ which made me hostile toward them so that I sent them into the land of their enemies--then when their uncircumcised hearts are humbled and they pay for their sin, ⁴² I will remember my covenant with Jacob and my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham, and I will remember the land. ⁴³ For the land will be deserted by them and will enjoy its sabbaths while it lies desolate without them. They will pay for their sins because they rejected my laws and abhorred my decrees. ⁴⁴ Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely,

breaking my covenant with them. I am the LORD their God.⁴⁵ But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the LORD.' "

LEV 20:22 " `Keep all my decrees and laws and follow them, so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out.²³ You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them.²⁴ But I said to you, "You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey." I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.

LEV 20:27 " `A man or woman who is a medium or spiritist among you must be put to death. You are to stone them; their blood will be on their own heads.' "

LEV 24:10 Now the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father went out among the Israelites, and a fight broke out in the camp between him and an Israelite.¹¹ The son of the Israelite woman blasphemed the Name with a curse; so they brought him to Moses. (His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri the Danite.)¹² They put him in custody until the will of the LORD should be made clear to them.

LEV 24:13 Then the LORD said to Moses:¹⁴ "Take the blasphemer outside the camp. All those who heard him are to lay their hands on his head, and the entire assembly is to stone him.¹⁵ Say to the Israelites: `If anyone curses his God, he will be held responsible;¹⁶ anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD must be put to death. The entire assembly must stone him. Whether an alien or native-born, when he blasphemes the Name, he must be put to death.

DT 4:1 Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.² Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.

DT 4:3 You saw with your own eyes what the LORD did at Baal Peor. The LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor,⁴ but all of you who held fast to the LORD your God are still alive today.

DT 4:5 See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it.⁶ Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."⁷ What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?⁸ And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

DT 4:9 Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them. ¹⁰ Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children." ¹¹ You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens, with black clouds and deep darkness. ¹² Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. ¹³ He declared to you his covenant, the Ten Commandments, which he commanded you to follow and then wrote them on two stone tablets. ¹⁴ And the LORD directed me at that time to teach you the decrees and laws you are to follow in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

DT 4:15 You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, ¹⁶ so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, ¹⁷ or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, ¹⁸ or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. ¹⁹ And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars--all the heavenly array--do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshiping things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven. ²⁰ But as for you, the LORD took you and brought you out of the iron-smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are.

DT 6:1 These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ² so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life. ³ Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

DT 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. ⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. ⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. ⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

DT 6:10 When the LORD your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you--a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, ¹¹ houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and

vineyards and olive groves you did not plant--then when you eat and are satisfied, ¹² be careful that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

DT 6:13 Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. ¹⁴ Do not follow other gods, the gods of the peoples around you; ¹⁵ for the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land. ¹⁶ Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah. ¹⁷ Be sure to keep the commands of the LORD your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you. ¹⁸ Do what is right and good in the LORD's sight, so that it may go well with you and you may go in and take over the good land that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers, ¹⁹ thrusting out all your enemies before you, as the LORD said.

DT 6:20 In the future, when your son asks you, "What is the meaning of the stipulations, decrees and laws the LORD our God has commanded you?" ²¹ tell him: "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²² Before our eyes the LORD sent miraculous signs and wonders--great and terrible--upon Egypt and Pharaoh and his whole household. ²³ But he brought us out from there to bring us in and give us the land that he promised on oath to our forefathers. ²⁴ The LORD commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear the LORD our God, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. ²⁵ And if we are careful to obey all this law before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, that will be our righteousness."

DT 7:11 Therefore, take care to follow the commands, decrees and laws I give you today.

DT 7:12 If you pay attention to these laws and are careful to follow them, then the LORD your God will keep his covenant of love with you, as he swore to your forefathers. ¹³ He will love you and bless you and increase your numbers. He will bless the fruit of your womb, the crops of your land--your grain, new wine and oil--the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks in the land that he swore to your forefathers to give you. ¹⁴ You will be blessed more than any other people; none of your men or women will be childless, nor any of your livestock without young. ¹⁵ The LORD will keep you free from every disease. He will not inflict on you the horrible diseases you knew in Egypt, but he will inflict them on all who hate you. ¹⁶ You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you.

DT 27:14 The Levites shall recite to all the people of Israel in a loud voice:

DT 27:15 "Cursed is the man who carves an image or casts an idol--a thing detestable to the LORD, the work of the craftsman's hands--and sets it up in secret."

Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:16 "Cursed is the man who dishonors his father or his mother."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:17 "Cursed is the man who moves his neighbor's boundary stone."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:18 "Cursed is the man who leads the blind astray on the road."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:19 "Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:20 "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his father's wife, for he dishonors his father's bed."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:21 "Cursed is the man who has sexual relations with any animal."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:22 "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:23 "Cursed is the man who sleeps with his mother-in-law."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:24 "Cursed is the man who kills his neighbor secretly."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:25 "Cursed is the man who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 27:26 "Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out."
Then all the people shall say, "Amen!"

DT 28:1 If you fully obey the LORD your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. ² All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the LORD your God:

DT 28:3 You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country.

DT 28:4 The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock--the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

DT 28:5 Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed.

DT 28:6 You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

DT 28:7 The LORD will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.

DT 28:8 The LORD will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The LORD your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.

DT 28:9 The LORD will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the LORD your God and walk in his ways. ¹⁰ Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they will fear you. ¹¹ The LORD will grant you abundant prosperity--in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground--in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you.

DT 28:12 The LORD will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. ¹³ The LORD will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the LORD your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. ¹⁴ Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them.

DT 28:15 However, if you do not obey the LORD your God and do not carefully follow all his commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

DT 28:16 You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country.

DT 28:17 Your basket and your kneading trough will be cursed.

DT 28:18 The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land, and the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.

DT 28:19 You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.

DT 28:20 The LORD will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking him. ²¹ The LORD will plague you with diseases until he has destroyed you from the land you are entering to possess. ²² The LORD will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation, with scorching heat and drought, with blight and mildew, which will plague you until you perish. ²³ The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. ²⁴

The LORD will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed.

DT 28:25 The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth. ²⁶ Your carcasses will be food for all the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away. ²⁷ The LORD will afflict you with the boils of Egypt and with tumors, festering sores and the itch, from which you cannot be cured. ²⁸ The LORD will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. ²⁹ At midday you will grope about like a blind man in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you.

DT 28:30 You will be pledged to be married to a woman, but another will take her and ravish her. You will build a house, but you will not live in it. You will plant a vineyard, but you will not even begin to enjoy its fruit. ³¹ Your ox will be slaughtered before your eyes, but you will eat none of it. Your donkey will be forcibly taken from you and will not be returned. Your sheep will be given to your enemies, and no one will rescue them. ³² Your sons and daughters will be given to another nation, and you will wear out your eyes watching for them day after day, powerless to lift a hand. ³³ A people that you do not know will eat what your land and labor produce, and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days. ³⁴ The sights you see will drive you mad. ³⁵ The LORD will afflict your knees and legs with painful boils that cannot be cured, spreading from the soles of your feet to the top of your head.

DT 28:36 The LORD will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your fathers. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. ³⁷ You will become a thing of horror and an object of scorn and ridicule to all the nations where the LORD will drive you.

DT 28:38 You will sow much seed in the field but you will harvest little, because locusts will devour it. ³⁹ You will plant vineyards and cultivate them but you will not drink the wine or gather the grapes, because worms will eat them. ⁴⁰ You will have olive trees throughout your country but you will not use the oil, because the olives will drop off. ⁴¹ You will have sons and daughters but you will not keep them, because they will go into captivity. ⁴² Swarms of locusts will take over all your trees and the crops of your land.

DT 28:43 The alien who lives among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. ⁴⁴ He will lend to you, but you will not lend to him. He will be the head, but you will be the tail.

DT 28:45 All these curses will come upon you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the LORD your God and observe the commands and

decrees he gave you. ⁴⁶ They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. ⁴⁷ Because you did not serve the LORD your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, ⁴⁸ therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the LORD sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until he has destroyed you.

DT 28:49 The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, ⁵⁰ a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young. ⁵¹ They will devour the young of your livestock and the crops of your land until you are destroyed. They will leave you no grain, new wine or oil, nor any calves of your herds or lambs of your flocks until you are ruined. ⁵² They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the LORD your God is giving you.

DT 28:53 Because of the suffering that your enemy will inflict on you during the siege, you will eat the fruit of the womb, the flesh of the sons and daughters the LORD your God has given you. ⁵⁴ Even the most gentle and sensitive man among you will have no compassion on his own brother or the wife he loves or his surviving children, ⁵⁵ and he will not give to one of them any of the flesh of his children that he is eating. It will be all he has left because of the suffering your enemy will inflict on you during the siege of all your cities. ⁵⁶ The most gentle and sensitive woman among you--so sensitive and gentle that she would not venture to touch the ground with the sole of her foot--will begrudge the husband she loves and her own son or daughter ⁵⁷ the afterbirth from her womb and the children she bears. For she intends to eat them secretly during the siege and in the distress that your enemy will inflict on you in your cities.

DT 28:58 If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name--the LORD your God-- ⁵⁹ the LORD will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants, harsh and prolonged disasters, and severe and lingering illnesses. ⁶⁰ He will bring upon you all the diseases of Egypt that you dreaded, and they will cling to you. ⁶¹ The LORD will also bring on you every kind of sickness and disaster not recorded in this Book of the Law, until you are destroyed. ⁶² You who were as numerous as the stars in the sky will be left but few in number, because you did not obey the LORD your God. ⁶³ Just as it pleased the LORD to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please him to ruin and destroy you. You will be uprooted from the land you are entering to possess.

DT 28:64 Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods--gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known. ⁶⁵ Among those nations you will find no repose, no resting place for the sole of your foot. There the LORD will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. ⁶⁶ You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day,

never sure of your life. ⁶⁷ In the morning you will say, "If only it were evening!" and in the evening, "If only it were morning!"--because of the terror that will fill your hearts and the sights that your eyes will see. ⁶⁸ The LORD will send you back in ships to Egypt on a journey I said you should never make again. There you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but no one will buy you.

DT 29:1 These are the terms of the covenant the LORD commanded Moses to make with the Israelites in Moab, in addition to the covenant he had made with them at Horeb.

The Ten Commandments:

EX 20:1 And God spoke all these words:

EX 20:2 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

EX 20:3 "You shall have no other gods before me.

EX 20:4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ⁶ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

EX 20:7 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

EX 20:8 "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. ⁹ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁰ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

EX 20:12 "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

EX 20:13 "You shall not murder.

EX 20:14 "You shall not commit adultery.

EX 20:15 "You shall not steal.

EX 20:16 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

EX 20:17 "You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

DT 5:1 Moses summoned all Israel and said:

Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. ² The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³ It was not with our

fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. ⁴ The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. ⁵ (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

DT 5:6 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

DT 5:7 "You shall have no other gods before me.

DT 5:8 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. ⁹ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, ¹⁰ but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

DT 5:11 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

DT 5:12 "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹³ Six days you shall labor and do all your work, ¹⁴ but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

DT 5:16 "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

DT 5:17 "You shall not murder.

DT 5:18 "You shall not commit adultery.

DT 5:19 "You shall not steal.

DT 5:20 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

DT 5:21 "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

DT 5:22 These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

DT 29:9 Carefully follow the terms of this covenant, so that you may prosper in everything you do. ¹⁰ All of you are standing today in the presence of the LORD your God--your leaders and chief men, your elders and officials, and all the other men of Israel, ¹¹ together with your children and your wives, and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water. ¹² You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the LORD your God, a covenant the LORD is making with you this day and sealing with an oath, ¹³ to confirm you this day as his people, that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ¹⁴ I am making this covenant, with its oath, not only with you ¹⁵ who are standing here with us today in the presence of the LORD our God but also with those who are not here today.

DT 29:16 You yourselves know how we lived in Egypt and how we passed through the countries on the way here. ¹⁷ You saw among them their detestable images and idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold. ¹⁸ Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the LORD our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison.

DT 29:19 When such a person hears the words of this oath, he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks, "I will be safe, even though I persist in going my own way." This will bring disaster on the watered land as well as the dry. ²⁰ The LORD will never be willing to forgive him; his wrath and zeal will burn against that man. All the curses written in this book will fall upon him, and the LORD will blot out his name from under heaven. ²¹ The LORD will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for disaster, according to all the curses of the covenant written in this Book of the Law.

DT 29:22 Your children who follow you in later generations and foreigners who come from distant lands will see the calamities that have fallen on the land and the diseases with which the LORD has afflicted it. ²³ The whole land will be a burning waste of salt and sulfur--nothing planted, nothing sprouting, no vegetation growing on it. It will be like the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in fierce anger. ²⁴ All the nations will ask: "Why has the LORD done this to this land? Why this fierce, burning anger?"

DT 29:25 And the answer will be: "It is because this people abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their fathers, the covenant he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. ²⁶ They went off and worshiped other gods and bowed down to them, gods they did not know, gods he had not given them. ²⁷ Therefore the LORD's anger burned against this land, so

that he brought on it all the curses written in this book. ²⁸ In furious anger and in great wrath the LORD uprooted them from their land and thrust them into another land, as it is now."

DT 29:29 The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

DT 30:1 When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, ² and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you. ⁴ Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. ⁵ He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. ⁶ The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. ⁷ The LORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. ⁸ You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today. ⁹ Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, ¹⁰ if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

DT 30:11 Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

DT 30:15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

DT 30:17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

DT 30:19 This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and

that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Personal injury, property, servitude, slavery, commercial law and general laws:

EX 21:1 "These are the laws you are to set before them:

EX 21:2 "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. ³ If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. ⁴ If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free.

EX 21:5 "But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' ⁶ then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.

EX 21:12 "Anyone who strikes a man and kills him shall surely be put to death. ¹³ However, if he does not do it intentionally, but God lets it happen, he is to flee to a place I will designate. ¹⁴ But if a man schemes and kills another man deliberately, take him away from my altar and put him to death.

EX 21:15 "Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death.

EX 21:16 "Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death.

EX 21:17 "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.

EX 21:18 "If men quarrel and one hits the other with a stone or with his fist and he does not die but is confined to bed, ¹⁹ the one who struck the blow will not be held responsible if the other gets up and walks around outside with his staff; however, he must pay the injured man for the loss of his time and see that he is completely healed.

EX 21:20 "If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished, ²¹ but he is not to be punished if the slave gets up after a day or two, since the slave is his property.

EX 21:22 "If men who are fighting hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. ²³ But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

EX 21:26 "If a man hits a manservant or maidservant in the eye and destroys it, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the eye.²⁷ And if he knocks out the tooth of a manservant or maidservant, he must let the servant go free to compensate for the tooth.

EX 21:28 "If a bull gores a man or a woman to death, the bull must be stoned to death, and its meat must not be eaten. But the owner of the bull will not be held responsible.²⁹ If, however, the bull has had the habit of goring and the owner has been warned but has not kept it penned up and it kills a man or woman, the bull must be stoned and the owner also must be put to death.³⁰ However, if payment is demanded of him, he may redeem his life by paying whatever is demanded.³¹ This law also applies if the bull gores a son or daughter.³² If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave, and the bull must be stoned.

EX 21:33 "If a man uncovers a pit or digs one and fails to cover it and an ox or a donkey falls into it,³⁴ the owner of the pit must pay for the loss; he must pay its owner, and the dead animal will be his.

EX 21:35 "If a man's bull injures the bull of another and it dies, they are to sell the live one and divide both the money and the dead animal equally.³⁶ However, if it was known that the bull had the habit of goring, yet the owner did not keep it penned up, the owner must pay, animal for animal, and the dead animal will be his.

EX 22:1 "If a man steals an ox or a sheep and slaughters it or sells it, he must pay back five head of cattle for the ox and four sheep for the sheep.

EX 22:2 "If a thief is caught breaking in and is struck so that he dies, the defender is not guilty of bloodshed;³ but if it happens after sunrise, he is guilty of bloodshed.

"A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.

EX 22:4 "If the stolen animal is found alive in his possession--whether ox or donkey or sheep-- he must pay back double.

EX 22:5 "If a man grazes his livestock in a field or vineyard and lets them stray and they graze in another man's field, he must make restitution from the best of his own field or vineyard.

2

EX 22:6 "If a fire breaks out and spreads into thornbushes so that it burns shocks of grain or standing grain or the whole field, the one who started the fire must make restitution.

EX 22:7 "If a man gives his neighbor silver or goods for safekeeping and they are stolen from the neighbor's house, the thief, if he is caught, must pay back double.⁸ But if the thief is not found, the owner of the house must appear before the judges to determine whether he has laid his

hands on the other man's property. ⁹ In all cases of illegal possession of an ox, a donkey, a sheep, a garment, or any other lost property about which somebody says, 'This is mine,' both parties are to bring their cases before the judges. The one whom the judges declare guilty must pay back double to his neighbor.

EX 22:10 "If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to his neighbor for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, ¹¹ the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the LORD that the neighbor did not lay hands on the other person's property. The owner is to accept this, and no restitution is required. ¹² But if the animal was stolen from the neighbor, he must make restitution to the owner. ¹³ If it was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring in the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal.

EX 22:14 "If a man borrows an animal from his neighbor and it is injured or dies while the owner is not present, he must make restitution. ¹⁵ But if the owner is with the animal, the borrower will not have to pay. If the animal was hired, the money paid for the hire covers the loss.

EX 22:21 "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt.

EX 22:22 "Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. ²³ If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. ²⁴ My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.

EX 22:25 "If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not be like a moneylender; charge him no interest. ²⁶ If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, ²⁷ because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate.

EX 23:1 "Do not spread false reports. Do not help a wicked man by being a malicious witness.

EX 23:2 "Do not follow the crowd in doing wrong. When you give testimony in a lawsuit, do not pervert justice by siding with the crowd, ³ and do not show favoritism to a poor man in his lawsuit.

EX 23:4 "If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. ⁵ If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it.

EX 23:6 "Do not deny justice to your poor people in their lawsuits. ⁷ Have nothing to do with a false charge and do not put an innocent or honest person to death, for I will not acquit the guilty.

EX 23:8 "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds those who see and twists the words of the righteous.

EX 23:9 "Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.

LEV 19:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: `Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.

LEV 19:3 " `Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 19:4 " `Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 19:5 " `When you sacrifice a fellowship offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. ⁶ It shall be eaten on the day you sacrifice it or on the next day; anything left over until the third day must be burned up. ⁷ If any of it is eaten on the third day, it is impure and will not be accepted. ⁸ Whoever eats it will be held responsible because he has desecrated what is holy to the LORD; that person must be cut off from his people.

LEV 19:9 " `When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. ¹⁰ Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 19:11 " `Do not steal.

" `Do not lie.

" `Do not deceive one another.

LEV 19:12 " `Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

LEV 19:13 " `Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him.

" `Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight.

LEV 19:14 " `Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD.

LEV 19:15 " `Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly.

LEV 19:16 " `Do not go about spreading slander among your people.

" `Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD.

LEV 19:17 " `Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt.

LEV 19:18 " `Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

LEV 19:19 " `Keep my decrees.

" `Do not mate different kinds of animals.

" `Do not plant your field with two kinds of seed.

" `Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material.

LEV 19:20 " `If a man sleeps with a woman who is a slave girl promised to another man but who has not been ransomed or given her freedom, there must be due punishment. Yet they are not to be put to death, because she had not been freed. ²¹ The man, however, must bring a ram to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting for a guilt offering to the LORD. ²² With the ram of the guilt offering the priest is to make atonement for him before the LORD for the sin he has committed, and his sin will be forgiven.

LEV 19:23 " `When you enter the land and plant any kind of fruit tree, regard its fruit as forbidden. For three years you are to consider it forbidden; it must not be eaten. ²⁴ In the fourth year all its fruit will be holy, an offering of praise to the LORD. ²⁵ But in the fifth year you may eat its fruit. In this way your harvest will be increased. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 19:26 " `Do not eat any meat with the blood still in it.

" `Do not practice divination or sorcery.

LEV 19:27 " `Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or clip off the edges of your beard.

LEV 19:28 " `Do not cut your bodies for the dead or put tattoo marks on yourselves. I am the LORD.

LEV 19:29 " `Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness.

LEV 19:30 " `Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

LEV 19:31 " `Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 19:32 " `Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the LORD.

LEV 19:33 " `When an alien lives with you in your land, do not mistreat him. ³⁴ The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 19:35 " `Do not use dishonest standards when measuring length, weight or quantity. ³⁶ Use honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt.

LEV 19:37 " `Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the LORD.' "

LEV 20:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Say to the Israelites: `Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. ³ I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. ⁴ If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, ⁵ I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech.

LEV 20:6 " `I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people.

LEV 20:7 " `Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the LORD your God. ⁸ Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

LEV 23:22 " `When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God.' "

LEV 24:17 " `If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death. ¹⁸ Anyone who takes the life of someone's animal must make restitution--life for life. ¹⁹ If anyone injures his neighbor, whatever he has done must be done to him: ²⁰ fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. As he has injured the other, so he is to be injured. ²¹ Whoever kills an animal must make restitution, but whoever kills a man must be put to death. ²² You are to have the same law for the alien and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.' "

LEV 25:14 " `If you sell land to one of your countrymen or buy any from him, do not take advantage of each other. ¹⁵ You are to buy from your countryman on the basis of the number of years since the Jubilee. And he is to sell to you on the basis of the number of years left for

harvesting crops. ¹⁶ When the years are many, you are to increase the price, and when the years are few, you are to decrease the price, because what he is really selling you is the number of crops. ¹⁷ Do not take advantage of each other, but fear your God. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 25:18 " `Follow my decrees and be careful to obey my laws, and you will live safely in the land. ¹⁹ Then the land will yield its fruit, and you will eat your fill and live there in safety. ²⁰ You may ask, "What will we eat in the seventh year if we do not plant or harvest our crops?" ²¹ I will send you such a blessing in the sixth year that the land will yield enough for three years. ²² While you plant during the eighth year, you will eat from the old crop and will continue to eat from it until the harvest of the ninth year comes in.

LEV 25:23 " `The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants. ²⁴ Throughout the country that you hold as a possession, you must provide for the redemption of the land.

LEV 25:25 " `If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold. ²⁶ If, however, a man has no one to redeem it for him but he himself prospers and acquires sufficient means to redeem it, ²⁷ he is to determine the value for the years since he sold it and refund the balance to the man to whom he sold it; he can then go back to his own property. ²⁸ But if he does not acquire the means to repay him, what he sold will remain in the possession of the buyer until the Year of Jubilee. It will be returned in the Jubilee, and he can then go back to his property.

LEV 25:29 " `If a man sells a house in a walled city, he retains the right of redemption a full year after its sale. During that time he may redeem it. ³⁰ If it is not redeemed before a full year has passed, the house in the walled city shall belong permanently to the buyer and his descendants. It is not to be returned in the Jubilee. ³¹ But houses in villages without walls around them are to be considered as open country. They can be redeemed, and they are to be returned in the Jubilee.

LEV 25:32 " `The Levites always have the right to redeem their houses in the Levitical towns, which they possess. ³³ So the property of the Levites is redeemable--that is, a house sold in any town they hold--and is to be returned in the Jubilee, because the houses in the towns of the Levites are their property among the Israelites. ³⁴ But the pastureland belonging to their towns must not be sold; it is their permanent possession.

LEV 25:35 " `If one of your countrymen becomes poor and is unable to support himself among you, help him as you would an alien or a temporary resident, so he can continue to live among you. ³⁶ Do not take interest of any kind from him, but fear your God, so that your countryman may continue to live among you. ³⁷ You must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit. ³⁸ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to give you the land of Canaan and to be your God.

LEV 25:39 " `If one of your countrymen becomes poor among you and sells himself to you, do not make him work as a slave. ⁴⁰ He is to be treated as a hired worker or a temporary resident among you; he is to work for you until the Year of Jubilee. ⁴¹ Then he and his children are to be released, and he will go back to his own clan and to the property of his forefathers. ⁴² Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. ⁴³ Do not rule over them ruthlessly, but fear your God.

LEV 25:44 " `Your male and female slaves are to come from the nations around you; from them you may buy slaves. ⁴⁵ You may also buy some of the temporary residents living among you and members of their clans born in your country, and they will become your property. ⁴⁶ You can will them to your children as inherited property and can make them slaves for life, but you must not rule over your fellow Israelites ruthlessly.

LEV 25:47 " `If an alien or a temporary resident among you becomes rich and one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells himself to the alien living among you or to a member of the alien's clan, ⁴⁸ he retains the right of redemption after he has sold himself. One of his relatives may redeem him: ⁴⁹ An uncle or a cousin or any blood relative in his clan may redeem him. Or if he prospers, he may redeem himself. ⁵⁰ He and his buyer are to count the time from the year he sold himself up to the Year of Jubilee. The price for his release is to be based on the rate paid to a hired man for that number of years. ⁵¹ If many years remain, he must pay for his redemption a larger share of the price paid for him. ⁵² If only a few years remain until the Year of Jubilee, he is to compute that and pay for his redemption accordingly. ⁵³ He is to be treated as a man hired from year to year; you must see to it that his owner does not rule over him ruthlessly.

LEV 25:54 " `Even if he is not redeemed in any of these ways, he and his children are to be released in the Year of Jubilee, ⁵⁵ for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

NU 5:5 The LORD said to Moses, ⁶ "Say to the Israelites: `When a man or woman wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the LORD, that person is guilty ⁷ and must confess the sin he has committed. He must make full restitution for his wrong, add one fifth to it and give it all to the person he has wronged. ⁸ But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the LORD and must be given to the priest, along with the ram with which atonement is made for him. ⁹ All the sacred contributions the Israelites bring to a priest will belong to him. ¹⁰ Each man's sacred gifts are his own, but what he gives to the priest will belong to the priest.' "

NU 35:1 On the plains of Moab by the Jordan across from Jericho, the LORD said to Moses, ² "Command the Israelites to give the Levites towns to live in from the inheritance the Israelites

will possess. And give them pasturelands around the towns.³ Then they will have towns to live in and pasturelands for their cattle, flocks and all their other livestock.

NU 35:4 "The pasturelands around the towns that you give the Levites will extend out fifteen hundred feet from the town wall.⁵ Outside the town, measure three thousand feet on the east side, three thousand on the south side, three thousand on the west and three thousand on the north, with the town in the center. They will have this area as pastureland for the towns.

NU 35:6 "Six of the towns you give the Levites will be cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone may flee. In addition, give them forty-two other towns.⁷ In all you must give the Levites forty-eight towns, together with their pasturelands.⁸ The towns you give the Levites from the land the Israelites possess are to be given in proportion to the inheritance of each tribe: Take many towns from a tribe that has many, but few from one that has few."

NU 35:9 Then the LORD said to Moses:¹⁰ "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When you cross the Jordan into Canaan,¹¹ select some towns to be your cities of refuge, to which a person who has killed someone accidentally may flee.¹² They will be places of refuge from the avenger, so that a person accused of murder may not die before he stands trial before the assembly.¹³ These six towns you give will be your cities of refuge.¹⁴ Give three on this side of the Jordan and three in Canaan as cities of refuge.¹⁵ These six towns will be a place of refuge for Israelites, aliens and any other people living among them, so that anyone who has killed another accidentally can flee there.

NU 35:16 " `If a man strikes someone with an iron object so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death.¹⁷ Or if anyone has a stone in his hand that could kill, and he strikes someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death.¹⁸ Or if anyone has a wooden object in his hand that could kill, and he hits someone so that he dies, he is a murderer; the murderer shall be put to death.¹⁹ The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death; when he meets him, he shall put him to death.²⁰ If anyone with malice aforethought shoves another or throws something at him intentionally so that he dies²¹ or if in hostility he hits him with his fist so that he dies, that person shall be put to death; he is a murderer. The avenger of blood shall put the murderer to death when he meets him.

NU 35:22 " `But if without hostility someone suddenly shoves another or throws something at him unintentionally²³ or, without seeing him, drops a stone on him that could kill him, and he dies, then since he was not his enemy and he did not intend to harm him,²⁴ the assembly must judge between him and the avenger of blood according to these regulations.²⁵ The assembly must protect the one accused of murder from the avenger of blood and send him back to the city of refuge to which he fled. He must stay there until the death of the high priest, who was anointed with the holy oil.

NU 35:26 " `But if the accused ever goes outside the limits of the city of refuge to which he has fled ²⁷ and the avenger of blood finds him outside the city, the avenger of blood may kill the accused without being guilty of murder. ²⁸ The accused must stay in his city of refuge until the death of the high priest; only after the death of the high priest may he return to his own property.

NU 35:29 " `These are to be legal requirements for you throughout the generations to come, wherever you live.

NU 35:30 " `Anyone who kills a person is to be put to death as a murderer only on the testimony of witnesses. But no one is to be put to death on the testimony of only one witness.

NU 35:31 " `Do not accept a ransom for the life of a murderer, who deserves to die. He must surely be put to death.

NU 35:32 " `Do not accept a ransom for anyone who has fled to a city of refuge and so allow him to go back and live on his own land before the death of the high priest.

DT 4:41 Then Moses set aside three cities east of the Jordan, ⁴² to which anyone who had killed a person could flee if he had unintentionally killed his neighbor without malice aforethought. He could flee into one of these cities and save his life. ⁴³ The cities were these: Bezer in the desert plateau, for the Reubenites; Ramoth in Gilead, for the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, for the Manassites.

DT 15:1 At the end of every seven years you must cancel debts. ² This is how it is to be done: Every creditor shall cancel the loan he has made to his fellow Israelite. He shall not require payment from his fellow Israelite or brother, because the LORD's time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. ³ You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your brother owes you. ⁴ However, there should be no poor among you, for in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess as your inheritance, he will richly bless you, ⁵ if only you fully obey the LORD your God and are careful to follow all these commands I am giving you today. ⁶ For the LORD your God will bless you as he has promised, and you will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. You will rule over many nations but none will rule over you.

DT 15:7 If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tightfisted toward your poor brother. ⁸ Rather be openhanded and freely lend him whatever he needs. ⁹ Be careful not to harbor this wicked thought: "The seventh year, the year for canceling debts, is near," so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. ¹⁰ Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. ¹¹ There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I

command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.

DT 15:12 If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. ¹³ And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. ¹⁴ Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. ¹⁵ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.

DT 15:16 But if your servant says to you, "I do not want to leave you," because he loves you and your family and is well off with you, ¹⁷ then take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into the door, and he will become your servant for life. Do the same for your maidservant.

DT 15:18 Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because his service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand. And the LORD your God will bless you in everything you do.

DT 16:18 Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes in every town the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly. ¹⁹ Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous. ²⁰ Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

DT 17:2 If a man or woman living among you in one of the towns the LORD gives you is found doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God in violation of his covenant, ³ and contrary to my command has worshiped other gods, bowing down to them or to the sun or the moon or the stars of the sky, ⁴ and this has been brought to your attention, then you must investigate it thoroughly. If it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done in Israel, ⁵ take the man or woman who has done this evil deed to your city gate and stone that person to death. ⁶ On the testimony of two or three witnesses a man shall be put to death, but no one shall be put to death on the testimony of only one witness. ⁷ The hands of the witnesses must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. You must purge the evil from among you.

DT 17:8 If cases come before your courts that are too difficult for you to judge--whether bloodshed, lawsuits or assaults--take them to the place the LORD your God will choose. ⁹ Go to the priests, who are Levites, and to the judge who is in office at that time. Inquire of them and they will give you the verdict. ¹⁰ You must act according to the decisions they give you at the place the LORD will choose. Be careful to do everything they direct you to do. ¹¹ Act according to the law they teach you and the decisions they give you. Do not turn aside from what they tell

you, to the right or to the left. ¹² The man who shows contempt for the judge or for the priest who stands ministering there to the LORD your God must be put to death. You must purge the evil from Israel. ¹³ All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not be contemptuous again.

DT 17:14 When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us," ¹⁵ be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite. ¹⁶ The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." ¹⁷ He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

DT 17:18 When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites. ¹⁹ It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees ²⁰ and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

DT 19:1 When the LORD your God has destroyed the nations whose land he is giving you, and when you have driven them out and settled in their towns and houses, ² then set aside for yourselves three cities centrally located in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess. ³ Build roads to them and divide into three parts the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, so that anyone who kills a man may flee there.

DT 19:4 This is the rule concerning the man who kills another and flees there to save his life--one who kills his neighbor unintentionally, without malice aforethought. ⁵ For instance, a man may go into the forest with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he swings his ax to fell a tree, the head may fly off and hit his neighbor and kill him. That man may flee to one of these cities and save his life. ⁶ Otherwise, the avenger of blood might pursue him in a rage, overtake him if the distance is too great, and kill him even though he is not deserving of death, since he did it to his neighbor without malice aforethought. ⁷ This is why I command you to set aside for yourselves three cities.

DT 19:8 If the LORD your God enlarges your territory, as he promised on oath to your forefathers, and gives you the whole land he promised them, ⁹ because you carefully follow all these laws I command you today--to love the LORD your God and to walk always in his ways--then you are to set aside three more cities. ¹⁰ Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land, which the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed.

DT 19:11 But if a man hates his neighbor and lies in wait for him, assaults and kills him, and then flees to one of these cities, ¹² the elders of his town shall send for him, bring him back from the city, and hand him over to the avenger of blood to die. ¹³ Show him no pity. You must purge from Israel the guilt of shedding innocent blood, so that it may go well with you.

DT 19:14 Do not move your neighbor's boundary stone set up by your predecessors in the inheritance you receive in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess.

DT 19:15 One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.

DT 19:16 If a malicious witness takes the stand to accuse a man of a crime, ¹⁷ the two men involved in the dispute must stand in the presence of the LORD before the priests and the judges who are in office at the time. ¹⁸ The judges must make a thorough investigation, and if the witness proves to be a liar, giving false testimony against his brother, ¹⁹ then do to him as he intended to do to his brother. You must purge the evil from among you. ²⁰ The rest of the people will hear of this and be afraid, and never again will such an evil thing be done among you. ²¹ Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

DT 21:22 If a man guilty of a capital offense is put to death and his body is hung on a tree, ²³ you must not leave his body on the tree overnight. Be sure to bury him that same day, because anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse. You must not desecrate the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

DT 22:1 If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him. ² If the brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he comes looking for it. Then give it back to him. ³ Do the same if you find your brother's donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it.

DT 22:4 If you see your brother's donkey or his ox fallen on the road, do not ignore it. Help him get it to its feet.

DT 22:5 A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the LORD your God detests anyone who does this.

DT 22:6 If you come across a bird's nest beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the mother with the young. ⁷ You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go well with you and you may have a long life.

DT 22:8 When you build a new house, make a parapet around your roof so that you may not bring the guilt of bloodshed on your house if someone falls from the roof.

DT 22:9 Do not plant two kinds of seed in your vineyard; if you do, not only the crops you plant but also the fruit of the vineyard will be defiled.

DT 22:10 Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

DT 22:11 Do not wear clothes of wool and linen woven together.

DT 22:12 Make tassels on the four corners of the cloak you wear.

DT 23:15 If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand him over to his master. ¹⁶ Let him live among you wherever he likes and in whatever town he chooses. Do not oppress him.

DT 23:19 Do not charge your brother interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest. ²⁰ You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a brother Israelite, so that the LORD your God may bless you in everything you put your hand to in the land you are entering to possess.

DT 23:21 If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. ²² But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. ²³ Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth.

DT 23:24 If you enter your neighbor's vineyard, you may eat all the grapes you want, but do not put any in your basket. ²⁵ If you enter your neighbor's grainfield, you may pick kernels with your hands, but you must not put a sickle to his standing grain.

DT 24:6 Do not take a pair of millstones--not even the upper one--as security for a debt, because that would be taking a man's livelihood as security.

DT 24:7 If a man is caught kidnapping one of his brother Israelites and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you.

DT 24:8 In cases of leprous diseases be very careful to do exactly as the priests, who are Levites, instruct you. You must follow carefully what I have commanded them. ⁹ Remember what the LORD your God did to Miriam along the way after you came out of Egypt.

DT 24:10 When you make a loan of any kind to your neighbor, do not go into his house to get what he is offering as a pledge. ¹¹ Stay outside and let the man to whom you are making the loan bring the pledge out to you. ¹² If the man is poor, do not go to sleep with his pledge in your

possession. ¹³ Return his cloak to him by sunset so that he may sleep in it. Then he will thank you, and it will be regarded as a righteous act in the sight of the LORD your God.

DT 24:14 Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns. ¹⁵ Pay him his wages each day before sunset, because he is poor and is counting on it. Otherwise he may cry to the LORD against you, and you will be guilty of sin.

DT 24:16 Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their fathers; each is to die for his own sin.

DT 24:17 Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. ¹⁸ Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.

DT 24:19 When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow.

²¹ When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. ²² Remember that you were slaves in Egypt. That is why I command you to do this.

DT 25:1 When men have a dispute, they are to take it to court and the judges will decide the case, acquitting the innocent and condemning the guilty. ² If the guilty man deserves to be beaten, the judge shall make him lie down and have him flogged in his presence with the number of lashes his crime deserves, ³ but he must not give him more than forty lashes. If he is flogged more than that, your brother will be degraded in your eyes.

DT 25:4 Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.

DT 25:11 If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes to rescue her husband from his assailant, and she reaches out and seizes him by his private parts, ¹² you shall cut off her hand. Show her no pity.

DT 25:13 Do not have two differing weights in your bag--one heavy, one light. ¹⁴ Do not have two differing measures in your house--one large, one small. ¹⁵ You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁶ For the LORD your God detests anyone who does these things, anyone who deals dishonestly.

Family law, marriage and sexual relations:

EX 21:7 "If a man sells his daughter as a servant, she is not to go free as menservants do. ⁸ If she does not please the master who has selected her for himself, he must let her be redeemed. He has no right to sell her to foreigners, because he has broken faith with her. ⁹ If he selects her for his son, he must grant her the rights of a daughter. ¹⁰ If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. ¹¹ If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money.

EX 21:15 "Anyone who attacks his father or his mother must be put to death.

EX 21:17 "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.

EX 22:16 "If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. ¹⁷ If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins.

EX 22:19 "Anyone who has sexual relations with an animal must be put to death.

LEV 18:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `I am the LORD your God. ³ You must not do as they do in Egypt, where you used to live, and you must not do as they do in the land of Canaan, where I am bringing you. Do not follow their practices. ⁴ You must obey my laws and be careful to follow my decrees. I am the LORD your God. ⁵ Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD.

LEV 18:6 " `No one is to approach any close relative to have sexual relations. I am the LORD.

LEV 18:7 " `Do not dishonor your father by having sexual relations with your mother. She is your mother; do not have relations with her.

LEV 18:8 " `Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife; that would dishonor your father.

LEV 18:9 " `Do not have sexual relations with your sister, either your father's daughter or your mother's daughter, whether she was born in the same home or elsewhere.

LEV 18:10 " `Do not have sexual relations with your son's daughter or your daughter's daughter; that would dishonor you.

LEV 18:11 " `Do not have sexual relations with the daughter of your father's wife, born to your father; she is your sister.

LEV 18:12 " `Do not have sexual relations with your father's sister; she is your father's close relative.

LEV 18:13 " `Do not have sexual relations with your mother's sister, because she is your mother's close relative.

LEV 18:14 " `Do not dishonor your father's brother by approaching his wife to have sexual relations; she is your aunt.

LEV 18:15 " `Do not have sexual relations with your daughter-in-law. She is your son's wife; do not have relations with her.

LEV 18:16 " `Do not have sexual relations with your brother's wife; that would dishonor your brother.

LEV 18:17 " `Do not have sexual relations with both a woman and her daughter. Do not have sexual relations with either her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter; they are her close relatives. That is wickedness.

LEV 18:18 " `Do not take your wife's sister as a rival wife and have sexual relations with her while your wife is living.

LEV 18:19 " `Do not approach a woman to have sexual relations during the uncleanness of her monthly period.

LEV 18:20 " `Do not have sexual relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her.

LEV 18:21 " `Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD.

LEV 18:22 " `Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.

LEV 18:23 " `Do not have sexual relations with an animal and defile yourself with it. A woman must not present herself to an animal to have sexual relations with it; that is a perversion.

LEV 18:24 " `Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. ²⁵ Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants. ²⁶ But you must keep my decrees and my laws. The native-born and the aliens living among you must not do any of these detestable things, ²⁷ for all these things were done by the people who lived in the land before you, and the

land became defiled. ²⁸ And if you defile the land, it will vomit you out as it vomited out the nations that were before you.

LEV 18:29 " `Everyone who does any of these detestable things--such persons must be cut off from their people. ³⁰ Keep my requirements and do not follow any of the detestable customs that were practiced before you came and do not defile yourselves with them. I am the LORD your God.' "

LEV 20:9 " `If anyone curses his father or mother, he must be put to death. He has cursed his father or his mother, and his blood will be on his own head.

LEV 20:10 " `If a man commits adultery with another man's wife--with the wife of his neighbor--both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.

LEV 20:11 " `If a man sleeps with his father's wife, he has dishonored his father. Both the man and the woman must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

LEV 20:12 " `If a man sleeps with his daughter-in-law, both of them must be put to death. What they have done is a perversion; their blood will be on their own heads.

LEV 20:13 " `If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

LEV 20:14 " `If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you.

LEV 20:15 " `If a man has sexual relations with an animal, he must be put to death, and you must kill the animal.

LEV 20:16 " `If a woman approaches an animal to have sexual relations with it, kill both the woman and the animal. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.

LEV 20:17 " `If a man marries his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, and they have sexual relations, it is a disgrace. They must be cut off before the eyes of their people. He has dishonored his sister and will be held responsible.

LEV 20:18 " `If a man lies with a woman during her monthly period and has sexual relations with her, he has exposed the source of her flow, and she has also uncovered it. Both of them must be cut off from their people.

LEV 20:19 " `Do not have sexual relations with the sister of either your mother or your father, for that would dishonor a close relative; both of you would be held responsible.

LEV 20:20 " `If a man sleeps with his aunt, he has dishonored his uncle. They will be held responsible; they will die childless.

LEV 20:21 " `If a man marries his brother's wife, it is an act of impurity; he has dishonored his brother. They will be childless.

NU 5:11 Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `If a man's wife goes astray and is unfaithful to him ¹³ by sleeping with another man, and this is hidden from her husband and her impurity is undetected (since there is no witness against her and she has not been caught in the act), ¹⁴ and if feelings of jealousy come over her husband and he suspects his wife and she is impure--or if he is jealous and suspects her even though she is not impure-- ¹⁵ then he is to take his wife to the priest. He must also take an offering of a tenth of an ephah of barley flour on her behalf. He must not pour oil on it or put incense on it, because it is a grain offering for jealousy, a reminder offering to draw attention to guilt.

NU 5:16 " `The priest shall bring her and have her stand before the LORD. ¹⁷ Then he shall take some holy water in a clay jar and put some dust from the tabernacle floor into the water. ¹⁸ After the priest has had the woman stand before the LORD, he shall loosen her hair and place in her hands the reminder offering, the grain offering for jealousy, while he himself holds the bitter water that brings a curse. ¹⁹ Then the priest shall put the woman under oath and say to her, "If no other man has slept with you and you have not gone astray and become impure while married to your husband, may this bitter water that brings a curse not harm you. ²⁰ But if you have gone astray while married to your husband and you have defiled yourself by sleeping with a man other than your husband"-- ²¹ here the priest is to put the woman under this curse of the oath--"may the LORD cause your people to curse and denounce you when he causes your thigh to waste away and your abdomen to swell. ²² May this water that brings a curse enter your body so that your abdomen swells and your thigh wastes away. "

" `Then the woman is to say, "Amen. So be it."

NU 5:23 " `The priest is to write these curses on a scroll and then wash them off into the bitter water. ²⁴ He shall have the woman drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and this water will enter her and cause bitter suffering. ²⁵ The priest is to take from her hands the grain offering for jealousy, wave it before the LORD and bring it to the altar. ²⁶ The priest is then to take a handful of the grain offering as a memorial offering and burn it on the altar; after that, he is to have the woman drink the water. ²⁷ If she has defiled herself and been unfaithful to her husband, then when she is made to drink the water that brings a curse, it will go into her and cause bitter suffering; her abdomen will swell and her thigh waste away, and she will become accursed among her people. ²⁸ If, however, the woman has not defiled herself and is free from impurity, she will be cleared of guilt and will be able to have children.

NU 5:29 " `This, then, is the law of jealousy when a woman goes astray and defiles herself while married to her husband,³⁰ or when feelings of jealousy come over a man because he suspects his wife. The priest is to have her stand before the LORD and is to apply this entire law to her.

³¹ The husband will be innocent of any wrongdoing, but the woman will bear the consequences of her sin.' "

DT 21:10 When you go to war against your enemies and the LORD your God delivers them into your hands and you take captives,¹¹ if you notice among the captives a beautiful woman and are attracted to her, you may take her as your wife.¹² Bring her into your home and have her shave her head, trim her nails¹³ and put aside the clothes she was wearing when captured. After she has lived in your house and mourned her father and mother for a full month, then you may go to her and be her husband and she shall be your wife.¹⁴ If you are not pleased with her, let her go wherever she wishes. You must not sell her or treat her as a slave, since you have dishonored her.

DT 21:15 If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the wife he does not love,¹⁶ when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the wife he does not love.¹⁷ He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the first sign of his father's strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him.

DT 21:18 If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who does not obey his father and mother and will not listen to them when they discipline him,¹⁹ his father and mother shall take hold of him and bring him to the elders at the gate of his town.²⁰ They shall say to the elders, "This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard."²¹ Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must purge the evil from among you. All Israel will hear of it and be afraid.

DT 22:13 If a man takes a wife and, after lying with her, dislikes her¹⁴ and slanders her and gives her a bad name, saying, "I married this woman, but when I approached her, I did not find proof of her virginity,"¹⁵ then the girl's father and mother shall bring proof that she was a virgin to the town elders at the gate.¹⁶ The girl's father will say to the elders, "I gave my daughter in marriage to this man, but he dislikes her."¹⁷ Now he has slandered her and said, 'I did not find your daughter to be a virgin.' But here is the proof of my daughter's virginity." Then her parents shall display the cloth before the elders of the town,¹⁸ and the elders shall take the man and punish him.¹⁹ They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver and give them to the girl's father, because this man has given an Israelite virgin a bad name. She shall continue to be his wife; he must not divorce her as long as he lives.

DT 22:20 If, however, the charge is true and no proof of the girl's virginity can be found, ²¹ she shall be brought to the door of her father's house and there the men of her town shall stone her to death. She has done a disgraceful thing in Israel by being promiscuous while still in her father's house. You must purge the evil from among you.

DT 22:22 If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

DT 22:23 If a man happens to meet in a town a virgin pledged to be married and he sleeps with her, ²⁴ you shall take both of them to the gate of that town and stone them to death--the girl because she was in a town and did not scream for help, and the man because he violated another man's wife. You must purge the evil from among you.

DT 22:25 But if out in the country a man happens to meet a girl pledged to be married and rapes her, only the man who has done this shall die. ²⁶ Do nothing to the girl; she has committed no sin deserving death. This case is like that of someone who attacks and murders his neighbor, ²⁷ for the man found the girl out in the country, and though the betrothed girl screamed, there was no one to rescue her.

DT 22:28 If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, ²⁹ he shall pay the girl's father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the girl, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

DT 22:30 A man is not to marry his father's wife; he must not dishonor his father's bed.

DT 24:1 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, ² and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, ³ and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, ⁴ then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

DT 24:5 If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

DT 25:5 If brothers are living together and one of them dies without a son, his widow must not marry outside the family. Her husband's brother shall take her and marry her and fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to her. ⁶ The first son she bears shall carry on the name of the dead brother so that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

DT 25:7 However, if a man does not want to marry his brother's wife, she shall go to the elders at the town gate and say, "My husband's brother refuses to carry on his brother's name in Israel. He will not fulfill the duty of a brother-in-law to me." ⁸ Then the elders of his town shall summon him and talk to him. If he persists in saying, "I do not want to marry her," ⁹ his brother's widow shall go up to him in the presence of the elders, take off one of his sandals, spit in his face and say, "This is what is done to the man who will not build up his brother's family line." ¹⁰ That man's line shall be known in Israel as The Family of the Unsandaled.

The law of war, the Promised Land and God's will in fighting enemies:

EX 23:20 "See, I am sending an angel ahead of you to guard you along the way and to bring you to the place I have prepared. ²¹ Pay attention to him and listen to what he says. Do not rebel against him; he will not forgive your rebellion, since my Name is in him. ²² If you listen carefully to what he says and do all that I say, I will be an enemy to your enemies and will oppose those who oppose you. ²³ My angel will go ahead of you and bring you into the land of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites and Jebusites, and I will wipe them out. ²⁴ Do not bow down before their gods or worship them or follow their practices. You must demolish them and break their sacred stones to pieces. ²⁵ Worship the LORD your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you, ²⁶ and none will miscarry or be barren in your land. I will give you a full life span.

EX 23:27 "I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. ²⁸ I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. ²⁹ But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. ³⁰ Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land.

EX 23:31 "I will establish your borders from the Red Sea to the Sea of the Philistines, and from the desert to the River. I will hand over to you the people who live in the land and you will drive them out before you. ³² Do not make a covenant with them or with their gods. ³³ Do not let them live in your land, or they will cause you to sin against me, because the worship of their gods will certainly be a snare to you."

NU 30:16 These are the regulations the LORD gave Moses concerning relationships between a man and his wife, and between a father and his young daughter still living in his house.

NU 31:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites. After that, you will be gathered to your people."

NU 31:3 So Moses said to the people, "Arm some of your men to go to war against the Midianites and to carry out the LORD's vengeance on them. ⁴ Send into battle a thousand men from each of the tribes of Israel." ⁵ So twelve thousand men armed for battle, a thousand from each tribe, were supplied from the clans of Israel. ⁶ Moses sent them into battle, a thousand from each tribe, along with Phinehas son of Eleazar, the priest, who took with him articles from the sanctuary and the trumpets for signaling.

NU 31:7 They fought against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every man. ⁸ Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba--the five kings of Midian. They also

killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.⁹ The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder.¹⁰ They burned all the towns where the Midianites had settled, as well as all their camps.¹¹ They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals,¹² and brought the captives, spoils and plunder to Moses and Eleazar the priest and the Israelite assembly at their camp on the plains of Moab, by the Jordan across from Jericho.

NU 31:13 Moses, Eleazar the priest and all the leaders of the community went to meet them outside the camp.¹⁴ Moses was angry with the officers of the army--the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds--who returned from the battle.

NU 31:15 "Have you allowed all the women to live?" he asked them.¹⁶ "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the LORD in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the LORD's people.¹⁷ Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man,¹⁸ but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.

NU 31:19 "All of you who have killed anyone or touched anyone who was killed must stay outside the camp seven days. On the third and seventh days you must purify yourselves and your captives.²⁰ Purify every garment as well as everything made of leather, goat hair or wood."

NU 31:21 Then Eleazar the priest said to the soldiers who had gone into battle, "This is the requirement of the law that the LORD gave Moses:²² Gold, silver, bronze, iron, tin, lead²³ and anything else that can withstand fire must be put through the fire, and then it will be clean. But it must also be purified with the water of cleansing. And whatever cannot withstand fire must be put through that water.²⁴ On the seventh day wash your clothes and you will be clean. Then you may come into the camp."

NU 31:25 The LORD said to Moses,²⁶ "You and Eleazar the priest and the family heads of the community are to count all the people and animals that were captured.²⁷ Divide the spoils between the soldiers who took part in the battle and the rest of the community.²⁸ From the soldiers who fought in the battle, set apart as tribute for the LORD one out of every five hundred, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep or goats.²⁹ Take this tribute from their half share and give it to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's part.³⁰ From the Israelites' half, select one out of every fifty, whether persons, cattle, donkeys, sheep, goats or other animals. Give them to the Levites, who are responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle."³¹ So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the LORD commanded Moses.

NU 31:32 The plunder remaining from the spoils that the soldiers took was 675,000 sheep,³³ 72,000 cattle,³⁴ 61,000 donkeys³⁵ and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man.

NU 31:36 The half share of those who fought in the battle was:

337,500 sheep, ³⁷ of which the tribute for the LORD was 675;

NU 31:38 36,000 cattle, of which the tribute for the LORD was 72;

NU 31:39 30,500 donkeys, of which the tribute for the LORD was 61;

NU 31:40 16,000 people, of which the tribute for the LORD was 32.

NU 31:41 Moses gave the tribute to Eleazar the priest as the LORD's part, as the LORD commanded Moses.

NU 31:42 The half belonging to the Israelites, which Moses set apart from that of the fighting men-- ⁴³ the community's half--was 337,500 sheep, ⁴⁴ 36,000 cattle, ⁴⁵ 30,500 donkeys ⁴⁶ and 16,000 people. ⁴⁷ From the Israelites' half, Moses selected one out of every fifty persons and animals, as the LORD commanded him, and gave them to the Levites, who were responsible for the care of the LORD's tabernacle.

NU 31:48 Then the officers who were over the units of the army--the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds--went to Moses ⁴⁹ and said to him, "Your servants have counted the soldiers under our command, and not one is missing. ⁵⁰ So we have brought as an offering to the LORD the gold articles each of us acquired--armlets, bracelets, signet rings, earrings and necklaces--to make atonement for ourselves before the LORD."

NU 31:51 Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted from them the gold--all the crafted articles. ⁵² All the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds that Moses and Eleazar presented as a gift to the LORD weighed 16,750 shekels. ⁵³ Each soldier had taken plunder for himself. ⁵⁴ Moses and Eleazar the priest accepted the gold from the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds and brought it into the Tent of Meeting as a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD.

NU 34:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Command the Israelites and say to them: `When you enter Canaan, the land that will be allotted to you as an inheritance will have these boundaries:

NU 34:3 " `Your southern side will include some of the Desert of Zin along the border of Edom. On the east, your southern boundary will start from the end of the Salt Sea, ⁴ cross south of Scorpion Pass, continue on to Zin and go south of Kadesh Barnea. Then it will go to Hazar Addar and over to Azmon, ⁵ where it will turn, join the Wadi of Egypt and end at the Sea.

NU 34:6 " `Your western boundary will be the coast of the Great Sea. This will be your boundary on the west.

NU 34:7 " `For your northern boundary, run a line from the Great Sea to Mount Hor⁸ and from Mount Hor to Lebo Hamath. Then the boundary will go to Zedad,⁹ continue to Ziphron and end at Hazar Enan. This will be your boundary on the north.

NU 34:10 " `For your eastern boundary, run a line from Hazar Enan to Shepham.¹¹ The boundary will go down from Shepham to Riblah on the east side of Ain and continue along the slopes east of the Sea of Kinnereth.¹² Then the boundary will go down along the Jordan and end at the Salt Sea.

" `This will be your land, with its boundaries on every side."

NU 34:13 Moses commanded the Israelites: "Assign this land by lot as an inheritance. The LORD has ordered that it be given to the nine and a half tribes,¹⁴ because the families of the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance.¹⁵ These two and a half tribes have received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan of Jericho, toward the sunrise."

NU 35:33 " `Do not pollute the land where you are. Bloodshed pollutes the land, and atonement cannot be made for the land on which blood has been shed, except by the blood of the one who shed it.³⁴ Do not defile the land where you live and where I dwell, for I, the LORD, dwell among the Israelites.' "

DT 2:31 The LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land."

DT 2:32 When Sihon and all his army came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz,³³ the LORD our God delivered him over to us and we struck him down, together with his sons and his whole army.³⁴ At that time we took all his towns and completely destroyed them--men, women and children. We left no survivors.³⁵ But the livestock and the plunder from the towns we had captured we carried off for ourselves.³⁶ From Aroer on the rim of the Arnon Gorge, and from the town in the gorge, even as far as Gilead, not one town was too strong for us. The LORD our God gave us all of them.³⁷ But in accordance with the command of the LORD our God, you did not encroach on any of the land of the Ammonites, neither the land along the course of the Jabbok nor that around the towns in the hills.

DT 3:1 Next we turned and went up along the road toward Bashan, and Og king of Bashan with his whole army marched out to meet us in battle at Edrei.² The LORD said to me, "Do not be afraid of him, for I have handed him over to you with his whole army and his land. Do to him what you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who reigned in Heshbon."

DT 3:3 So the LORD our God also gave into our hands Og king of Bashan and all his army. We struck them down, leaving no survivors. ⁴ At that time we took all his cities. There was not one of the sixty cities that we did not take from them--the whole region of Argob, Og's kingdom in Bashan. ⁵ All these cities were fortified with high walls and with gates and bars, and there were also a great many unwallled villages. ⁶ We completely destroyed them, as we had done with Sihon king of Heshbon, destroying every city--men, women and children. ⁷ But all the livestock and the plunder from their cities we carried off for ourselves.

DT 3:8 So at that time we took from these two kings of the Amorites the territory east of the Jordan, from the Arnon Gorge as far as Mount Hermon. ⁹ (Hermon is called Sirion by the Sidonians; the Amorites call it Senir.) ¹⁰ We took all the towns on the plateau, and all Gilead, and all Bashan as far as Salecah and Edrei, towns of Og's kingdom in Bashan. ¹¹ (Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites.)

DT 3:12 Of the land that we took over at that time, I gave the Reubenites and the Gadites the territory north of Aroer by the Arnon Gorge, including half the hill country of Gilead, together with its towns. ¹³ The rest of Gilead and also all of Bashan, the kingdom of Og, I gave to the half tribe of Manasseh. (The whole region of Argob in Bashan used to be known as a land of the Rephaites. ¹⁴ Jair, a descendant of Manasseh, took the whole region of Argob as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maacathites; it was named after him, so that to this day Bashan is called Havvoth Jair.) ¹⁵ And I gave Gilead to Makir. ¹⁶ But to the Reubenites and the Gadites I gave the territory extending from Gilead down to the Arnon Gorge (the middle of the gorge being the border) and out to the Jabbok River, which is the border of the Ammonites. ¹⁷ Its western border was the Jordan in the Arabah, from Kinnereth to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea), below the slopes of Pisgah.

DT 3:18 I commanded you at that time: "The LORD your God has given you this land to take possession of it. But all your able-bodied men, armed for battle, must cross over ahead of your brother Israelites. ¹⁹ However, your wives, your children and your livestock (I know you have much livestock) may stay in the towns I have given you, ²⁰ until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, and they too have taken over the land that the LORD your God is giving them, across the Jordan. After that, each of you may go back to the possession I have given you."

DT 3:21 At that time I commanded Joshua: "You have seen with your own eyes all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings. The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going. ²² Do not be afraid of them; the LORD your God himself will fight for you."

DT 7:1 When the LORD your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations--the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you-- ² and when the LORD your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. ³ Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, ⁴ for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the LORD's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you. ⁵ This is what you are to do to them: Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. ⁶ For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

DT 7:7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. ⁸ But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. ¹⁰ But those who hate him he will repay to their face by destruction; he will not be slow to repay to their face those who hate him.

DT 9:1 Hear, O Israel. You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky. ² The people are strong and tall--Anakites! You know about them and have heard it said: "Who can stand up against the Anakites?" ³ But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

DT 11:22 If you carefully observe all these commands I am giving you to follow--to love the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and to hold fast to him-- ²³ then the LORD will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and stronger than you. ²⁴ Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. ²⁵ No man will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go.

DT 11:26 See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse-- ²⁷ the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; ²⁸ the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known. ²⁹ When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings,

and on Mount Ebal the curses. ³⁰ As you know, these mountains are across the Jordan, west of the road, toward the setting sun, near the great trees of Moreh, in the territory of those Canaanites living in the Arabah in the vicinity of Gilgal. ³¹ You are about to cross the Jordan to enter and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you. When you have taken it over and are living there, ³² be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws I am setting before you today.

DT 12:1 These are the decrees and laws you must be careful to follow in the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you to possess--as long as you live in the land. ² Destroy completely all the places on the high mountains and on the hills and under every spreading tree where the nations you are dispossessing worship their gods. ³ Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and burn their Asherah poles in the fire; cut down the idols of their gods and wipe out their names from those places.

DT 20:1 When you go to war against your enemies and see horses and chariots and an army greater than yours, do not be afraid of them, because the LORD your God, who brought you up out of Egypt, will be with you. ² When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. ³ He shall say: "Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them. ⁴ For the LORD your God is the one who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies to give you victory."

DT 20:5 The officers shall say to the army: "Has anyone built a new house and not dedicated it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else may dedicate it. ⁶ Has anyone planted a vineyard and not begun to enjoy it? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else enjoy it. ⁷ Has anyone become pledged to a woman and not married her? Let him go home, or he may die in battle and someone else marry her." ⁸ Then the officers shall add, "Is any man afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his brothers will not become disheartened too." ⁹ When the officers have finished speaking to the army, they shall appoint commanders over it.

DT 20:10 When you march up to attack a city, make its people an offer of peace. ¹¹ If they accept and open their gates, all the people in it shall be subject to forced labor and shall work for you. ¹² If they refuse to make peace and they engage you in battle, lay siege to that city. ¹³ When the LORD your God delivers it into your hand, put to the sword all the men in it. ¹⁴ As for the women, the children, the livestock and everything else in the city, you may take these as plunder for yourselves. And you may use the plunder the LORD your God gives you from your enemies. ¹⁵ This is how you are to treat all the cities that are at a distance from you and do not belong to the nations nearby.

DT 20:16 However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. ¹⁷ Completely destroy them--the Hittites,

Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites--as the LORD your God has commanded you. ¹⁸ Otherwise, they will teach you to follow all the detestable things they do in worshiping their gods, and you will sin against the LORD your God.

DT 20:19 When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting against it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an ax to them, because you can eat their fruit. Do not cut them down. Are the trees of the field people, that you should besiege them? ²⁰ However, you may cut down trees that you know are not fruit trees and use them to build siege works until the city at war with you falls.

DT 23:9 When you are encamped against your enemies, keep away from everything impure. ¹⁰ If one of your men is unclean because of a nocturnal emission, he is to go outside the camp and stay there. ¹¹ But as evening approaches he is to wash himself, and at sunset he may return to the camp.

DT 23:12 Designate a place outside the camp where you can go to relieve yourself. ¹³ As part of your equipment have something to dig with, and when you relieve yourself, dig a hole and cover up your excrement. ¹⁴ For the LORD your God moves about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.

Dietary laws:

EX 22:31 "You are to be my holy people. So do not eat the meat of an animal torn by wild beasts; throw it to the dogs.

EX 23:10 "For six years you are to sow your fields and harvest the crops, ¹¹ but during the seventh year let the land lie unplowed and unused. Then the poor among your people may get food from it, and the wild animals may eat what they leave. Do the same with your vineyard and your olive grove.

LEV 7:19 " `Meat that touches anything ceremonially unclean must not be eaten; it must be burned up. As for other meat, anyone ceremonially clean may eat it. ²⁰ But if anyone who is unclean eats any meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people. ²¹ If anyone touches something unclean--whether human uncleanness or an unclean animal or any unclean, detestable thing--and then eats any of the meat of the fellowship offering belonging to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people.' "

LEV 7:22 The LORD said to Moses, ²³ "Say to the Israelites: `Do not eat any of the fat of cattle, sheep or goats. ²⁴ The fat of an animal found dead or torn by wild animals may be used for any other purpose, but you must not eat it. ²⁵ Anyone who eats the fat of an animal from which an offering by fire may be made to the LORD must be cut off from his people. ²⁶ And wherever you live, you must not eat the blood of any bird or animal. ²⁷ If anyone eats blood, that person must be cut off from his people.' "

LEV 11:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² "Say to the Israelites: `Of all the animals that live on land, these are the ones you may eat: ³ You may eat any animal that has a split hoof completely divided and that chews the cud.

LEV 11:4 " `There are some that only chew the cud or only have a split hoof, but you must not eat them. The camel, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is ceremonially unclean for you. ⁵ The coney, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. ⁶ The rabbit, though it chews the cud, does not have a split hoof; it is unclean for you. ⁷ And the pig, though it has a split hoof completely divided, does not chew the cud; it is unclean for you. ⁸ You must not eat their meat or touch their carcasses; they are unclean for you.

LEV 11:9 " `Of all the creatures living in the water of the seas and the streams, you may eat any that have fins and scales. ¹⁰ But all creatures in the seas or streams that do not have fins and scales--whether among all the swarming things or among all the other living creatures in the water--you are to detest. ¹¹ And since you are to detest them, you must not eat their meat and you must detest their carcasses. ¹² Anything living in the water that does not have fins and scales is to be detestable to you.

LEV 11:13 " `These are the birds you are to detest and not eat because they are detestable: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, ¹⁴ the red kite, any kind of black kite, ¹⁵ any kind of raven, ¹⁶ the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, ¹⁷ the little owl, the cormorant, the great owl, ¹⁸ the white owl, the desert owl, the osprey, ¹⁹ the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.

LEV 11:20 " `All flying insects that walk on all fours are to be detestable to you. ²¹ There are, however, some winged creatures that walk on all fours that you may eat: those that have jointed legs for hopping on the ground. ²² Of these you may eat any kind of locust, katydid, cricket or grasshopper. ²³ But all other winged creatures that have four legs you are to detest.

LEV 11:24 " `You will make yourselves unclean by these; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. ²⁵ Whoever picks up one of their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 11:26 " `Every animal that has a split hoof not completely divided or that does not chew the cud is unclean for you; whoever touches the carcass of any of them will be unclean. ²⁷ Of all the animals that walk on all fours, those that walk on their paws are unclean for you; whoever touches their carcasses will be unclean till evening. ²⁸ Anyone who picks up their carcasses must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening. They are unclean for you.

LEV 11:29 " `Of the animals that move about on the ground, these are unclean for you: the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, ³⁰ the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. ³¹ Of all those that move along the ground, these are unclean for you. Whoever touches them when they are dead will be unclean till evening. ³² When one of them dies and falls on something, that article, whatever its use, will be unclean, whether it is made of wood, cloth, hide or sackcloth. Put it in water; it will be unclean till evening, and then it will be clean. ³³ If one of them falls into a clay pot, everything in it will be unclean, and you must break the pot. ³⁴ Any food that could be eaten but has water on it from such a pot is unclean, and any liquid that could be drunk from it is unclean. ³⁵ Anything that one of their carcasses falls on becomes unclean; an oven or cooking pot must be broken up. They are unclean, and you are to regard them as unclean. ³⁶ A spring, however, or a cistern for collecting water remains clean, but anyone who touches one of these carcasses is unclean. ³⁷ If a carcass falls on any seeds that are to be planted, they remain clean. ³⁸ But if water has been put on the seed and a carcass falls on it, it is unclean for you.

LEV 11:39 " `If an animal that you are allowed to eat dies, anyone who touches the carcass will be unclean till evening. ⁴⁰ Anyone who eats some of the carcass must wash his clothes, and he

will be unclean till evening. Anyone who picks up the carcass must wash his clothes, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 11:41 " `Every creature that moves about on the ground is detestable; it is not to be eaten.

⁴² You are not to eat any creature that moves about on the ground, whether it moves on its belly or walks on all fours or on many feet; it is detestable. ⁴³ Do not defile yourselves by any of these creatures. Do not make yourselves unclean by means of them or be made unclean by them. ⁴⁴ I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean by any creature that moves about on the ground. ⁴⁵ I am the LORD who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.

LEV 11:46 " `These are the regulations concerning animals, birds, every living thing that moves in the water and every creature that moves about on the ground. ⁴⁷ You must distinguish between the unclean and the clean, between living creatures that may be eaten and those that may not be eaten.' "

LEV 17:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: `This is what the LORD has commanded: ³ Any Israelite who sacrifices an ox, a lamb or a goat in the camp or outside of it ⁴ instead of bringing it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to present it as an offering to the LORD in front of the tabernacle of the LORD--that man shall be considered guilty of bloodshed; he has shed blood and must be cut off from his people. ⁵ This is so the Israelites will bring to the LORD the sacrifices they are now making in the open fields. They must bring them to the priest, that is, to the LORD, at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and sacrifice them as fellowship offerings. ⁶ The priest is to sprinkle the blood against the altar of the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and burn the fat as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ⁷ They must no longer offer any of their sacrifices to the goat idols to whom they prostitute themselves. This is to be a lasting ordinance for them and for the generations to come.'

LEV 17:8 "Say to them: `Any Israelite or any alien living among them who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice ⁹ and does not bring it to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting to sacrifice it to the LORD--that man must be cut off from his people.

LEV 17:10 " `Any Israelite or any alien living among them who eats any blood--I will set my face against that person who eats blood and will cut him off from his people. ¹¹ For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life. ¹² Therefore I say to the Israelites, "None of you may eat blood, nor may an alien living among you eat blood."

LEV 17:13 " `Any Israelite or any alien living among you who hunts any animal or bird that may be eaten must drain out the blood and cover it with earth, ¹⁴ because the life of every creature is

its blood. That is why I have said to the Israelites, "You must not eat the blood of any creature, because the life of every creature is its blood; anyone who eats it must be cut off."

LEV 17:15 " `Anyone, whether native-born or alien, who eats anything found dead or torn by wild animals must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be ceremonially unclean till evening; then he will be clean. ¹⁶ But if he does not wash his clothes and bathe himself, he will be held responsible.' "

LEV 20:25 " `You must therefore make a distinction between clean and unclean animals and between unclean and clean birds. Do not defile yourselves by any animal or bird or anything that moves along the ground--those which I have set apart as unclean for you. ²⁶ You are to be holy to me because I, the LORD, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be my own.

DT 14:1 You are the children of the LORD your God. Do not cut yourselves or shave the front of your heads for the dead, ² for you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth, the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession.

DT 14:3 Do not eat any detestable thing. ⁴ These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, ⁵ the deer, the gazelle, the roe deer, the wild goat, the ibex, the antelope and the mountain sheep. ⁶ You may eat any animal that has a split hoof divided in two and that chews the cud. ⁷ However, of those that chew the cud or that have a split hoof completely divided you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the coney. Although they chew the cud, they do not have a split hoof; they are ceremonially unclean for you. ⁸ The pig is also unclean; although it has a split hoof, it does not chew the cud. You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses.

DT 14:9 Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales. ¹⁰ But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean.

DT 14:11 You may eat any clean bird. ¹² But these you may not eat: the eagle, the vulture, the black vulture, ¹³ the red kite, the black kite, any kind of falcon, ¹⁴ any kind of raven, ¹⁵ the horned owl, the screech owl, the gull, any kind of hawk, ¹⁶ the little owl, the great owl, the white owl, ¹⁷ the desert owl, the osprey, the cormorant, ¹⁸ the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat.

DT 14:19 All flying insects that swarm are unclean to you; do not eat them. ²⁰ But any winged creature that is clean you may eat.

DT 14:21 Do not eat anything you find already dead. You may give it to an alien living in any of your towns, and he may eat it, or you may sell it to a foreigner. But you are a people holy to the LORD your God.

Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

Sacred ceremonial and purification laws, sacrifices, rituals, festivals, and rules for priests:

EX 20:22 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Tell the Israelites this: `You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven: ²³ Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold.

EX 20:24 " `Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you. ²⁵ If you make an altar of stones for me, do not build it with dressed stones, for you will defile it if you use a tool on it. ²⁶ And do not go up to my altar on steps, lest your nakedness be exposed on it.'

EX 22:29 "Do not hold back offerings from your granaries or your vats.

"You must give me the firstborn of your sons. ³⁰ Do the same with your cattle and your sheep. Let them stay with their mothers for seven days, but give them to me on the eighth day.

EX 23:12 "Six days do your work, but on the seventh day do not work, so that your ox and your donkey may rest and the slave born in your household, and the alien as well, may be refreshed.

EX 23:13 "Be careful to do everything I have said to you. Do not invoke the names of other gods; do not let them be heard on your lips.

EX 23:14 "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me.

EX 23:15 "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt.

"No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

EX 23:16 "Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field.

"Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field.

EX 23:17 "Three times a year all the men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD.

EX 23:18 "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast.

"The fat of my festival offerings must not be kept until morning.

EX 23:19 "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.

"Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk.

EX 25:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Tell the Israelites to bring me an offering. You are to receive the offering for me from each man whose heart prompts him to give. ³ These are the offerings you are to receive from them: gold, silver and bronze; ⁴ blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ⁵ ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; ⁶ olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; ⁷ and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.

EX 25:8 "Then have them make a sanctuary for me, and I will dwell among them. ⁹ Make this tabernacle and all its furnishings exactly like the pattern I will show you.

EX 25:10 "Have them make a chest of acacia wood--two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. ¹¹ Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it. ¹² Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. ¹³ Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. ¹⁴ Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest to carry it. ¹⁵ The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed. ¹⁶ Then put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.

EX 25:17 "Make an atonement cover of pure gold--two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide. ¹⁸ And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. ¹⁹ Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. ²⁰ The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover. ²¹ Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you. ²² There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.

EX 25:23 "Make a table of acacia wood--two cubits long, a cubit wide and a cubit and a half high. ²⁴ Overlay it with pure gold and make a gold molding around it. ²⁵ Also make around it a rim a handbreadth wide and put a gold molding on the rim. ²⁶ Make four gold rings for the table and fasten them to the four corners, where the four legs are. ²⁷ The rings are to be close to the rim to hold the poles used in carrying the table. ²⁸ Make the poles of acacia wood, overlay them with gold and carry the table with them. ²⁹ And make its plates and dishes of pure gold, as well as its pitchers and bowls for the pouring out of offerings. ³⁰ Put the bread of the Presence on this table to be before me at all times.

EX 25:31 "Make a lampstand of pure gold and hammer it out, base and shaft; its flowerlike cups, buds and blossoms shall be of one piece with it. ³² Six branches are to extend from the sides of the lampstand--three on one side and three on the other. ³³ Three cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms are to be on one branch, three on the next branch, and the same

for all six branches extending from the lampstand.³⁴ And on the lampstand there are to be four cups shaped like almond flowers with buds and blossoms.³⁵ One bud shall be under the first pair of branches extending from the lampstand, a second bud under the second pair, and a third bud under the third pair--six branches in all.³⁶ The buds and branches shall all be of one piece with the lampstand, hammered out of pure gold.

EX 25:37 "Then make its seven lamps and set them up on it so that they light the space in front of it.³⁸ Its wick trimmers and trays are to be of pure gold.³⁹ A talent of pure gold is to be used for the lampstand and all these accessories.⁴⁰ See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.

EX 26:1 "Make the tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim worked into them by a skilled craftsman.² All the curtains are to be the same size--twenty-eight cubits long and four cubits wide.³ Join five of the curtains together, and do the same with the other five.⁴ Make loops of blue material along the edge of the end curtain in one set, and do the same with the end curtain in the other set.⁵ Make fifty loops on one curtain and fifty loops on the end curtain of the other set, with the loops opposite each other.⁶ Then make fifty gold clasps and use them to fasten the curtains together so that the tabernacle is a unit.

EX 26:7 "Make curtains of goat hair for the tent over the tabernacle--eleven altogether.⁸ All eleven curtains are to be the same size--thirty cubits long and four cubits wide.⁹ Join five of the curtains together into one set and the other six into another set. Fold the sixth curtain double at the front of the tent.¹⁰ Make fifty loops along the edge of the end curtain in one set and also along the edge of the end curtain in the other set.¹¹ Then make fifty bronze clasps and put them in the loops to fasten the tent together as a unit.¹² As for the additional length of the tent curtains, the half curtain that is left over is to hang down at the rear of the tabernacle.¹³ The tent curtains will be a cubit longer on both sides; what is left will hang over the sides of the tabernacle so as to cover it.¹⁴ Make for the tent a covering of ram skins dyed red, and over that a covering of hides of sea cows.

EX 26:15 "Make upright frames of acacia wood for the tabernacle.¹⁶ Each frame is to be ten cubits long and a cubit and a half wide,¹⁷ with two projections set parallel to each other. Make all the frames of the tabernacle in this way.¹⁸ Make twenty frames for the south side of the tabernacle¹⁹ and make forty silver bases to go under them--two bases for each frame, one under each projection.²⁰ For the other side, the north side of the tabernacle, make twenty frames²¹ and forty silver bases--two under each frame.²² Make six frames for the far end, that is, the west end of the tabernacle,²³ and make two frames for the corners at the far end.²⁴ At these two corners they must be double from the bottom all the way to the top, and fitted into a single ring;

both shall be like that. ²⁵ So there will be eight frames and sixteen silver bases--two under each frame.

EX 26:26 "Also make crossbars of acacia wood: five for the frames on one side of the tabernacle, ²⁷ five for those on the other side, and five for the frames on the west, at the far end of the tabernacle. ²⁸ The center crossbar is to extend from end to end at the middle of the frames. ²⁹ Overlay the frames with gold and make gold rings to hold the crossbars. Also overlay the crossbars with gold.

EX 26:30 "Set up the tabernacle according to the plan shown you on the mountain.

EX 26:31 "Make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim worked into it by a skilled craftsman. ³² Hang it with gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold and standing on four silver bases. ³³ Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. ³⁴ Put the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place. ³⁵ Place the table outside the curtain on the north side of the tabernacle and put the lampstand opposite it on the south side.

EX 26:36 "For the entrance to the tent make a curtain of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen--the work of an embroiderer. ³⁷ Make gold hooks for this curtain and five posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold. And cast five bronze bases for them.

EX 27:1 "Build an altar of acacia wood, three cubits high; it is to be square, five cubits long and five cubits wide. ² Make a horn at each of the four corners, so that the horns and the altar are of one piece, and overlay the altar with bronze. ³ Make all its utensils of bronze--its pots to remove the ashes, and its shovels, sprinkling bowls, meat forks and firepans. ⁴ Make a grating for it, a bronze network, and make a bronze ring at each of the four corners of the network. ⁵ Put it under the ledge of the altar so that it is halfway up the altar. ⁶ Make poles of acacia wood for the altar and overlay them with bronze. ⁷ The poles are to be inserted into the rings so they will be on two sides of the altar when it is carried. ⁸ Make the altar hollow, out of boards. It is to be made just as you were shown on the mountain.

EX 27:9 "Make a courtyard for the tabernacle. The south side shall be a hundred cubits long and is to have curtains of finely twisted linen, ¹⁰ with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases and with silver hooks and bands on the posts. ¹¹ The north side shall also be a hundred cubits long and is to have curtains, with twenty posts and twenty bronze bases and with silver hooks and bands on the posts.

EX 27:12 "The west end of the courtyard shall be fifty cubits wide and have curtains, with ten posts and ten bases. ¹³ On the east end, toward the sunrise, the courtyard shall also be fifty cubits wide. ¹⁴ Curtains fifteen cubits long are to be on one side of the entrance, with three posts and three bases, ¹⁵ and curtains fifteen cubits long are to be on the other side, with three posts and three bases.

EX 27:16 "For the entrance to the courtyard, provide a curtain twenty cubits long, of blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen--the work of an embroiderer--with four posts and four bases. ¹⁷ All the posts around the courtyard are to have silver bands and hooks, and bronze bases. ¹⁸ The courtyard shall be a hundred cubits long and fifty cubits wide, with curtains of finely twisted linen five cubits high, and with bronze bases. ¹⁹ All the other articles used in the service of the tabernacle, whatever their function, including all the tent pegs for it and those for the courtyard, are to be of bronze.

EX 27:20 "Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning. ²¹ In the Tent of Meeting, outside the curtain that is in front of the Testimony, Aaron and his sons are to keep the lamps burning before the LORD from evening till morning. This is to be a lasting ordinance among the Israelites for the generations to come.

EX 28:1 "Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests. ² Make sacred garments for your brother Aaron, to give him dignity and honor. ³ Tell all the skilled men to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest. ⁴ These are the garments they are to make: a breastpiece, an ephod, a robe, a woven tunic, a turban and a sash. They are to make these sacred garments for your brother Aaron and his sons, so they may serve me as priests. ⁵ Have them use gold, and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and fine linen.

EX 28:6 "Make the ephod of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen--the work of a skilled craftsman. ⁷ It is to have two shoulder pieces attached to two of its corners, so it can be fastened. ⁸ Its skillfully woven waistband is to be like it--of one piece with the ephod and made with gold, and with blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and with finely twisted linen.

EX 28:9 "Take two onyx stones and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel ¹⁰ in the order of their birth--six names on one stone and the remaining six on the other. ¹¹ Engrave the names of the sons of Israel on the two stones the way a gem cutter engraves a seal. Then mount the stones in gold filigree settings ¹² and fasten them on the shoulder pieces of the ephod as memorial stones for the sons of Israel. Aaron is to bear the names on his shoulders as a memorial before the LORD. ¹³ Make gold filigree settings ¹⁴ and two braided chains of pure gold, like a rope, and attach the chains to the settings.

EX 28:15 "Fashion a breastpiece for making decisions--the work of a skilled craftsman. Make it like the ephod: of gold, and of blue, purple and scarlet yarn, and of finely twisted linen. ¹⁶ It is to be square--a span long and a span wide--and folded double. ¹⁷ Then mount four rows of precious stones on it. In the first row there shall be a ruby, a topaz and a beryl; ¹⁸ in the second row a turquoise, a sapphire and an emerald; ¹⁹ in the third row a jacinth, an agate and an amethyst; ²⁰ in the fourth row a chrysolite, an onyx and a jasper. Mount them in gold filigree settings. ²¹ There are to be twelve stones, one for each of the names of the sons of Israel, each engraved like a seal with the name of one of the twelve tribes.

EX 28:22 "For the breastpiece make braided chains of pure gold, like a rope. ²³ Make two gold rings for it and fasten them to two corners of the breastpiece. ²⁴ Fasten the two gold chains to the rings at the corners of the breastpiece, ²⁵ and the other ends of the chains to the two settings, attaching them to the shoulder pieces of the ephod at the front. ²⁶ Make two gold rings and attach them to the other two corners of the breastpiece on the inside edge next to the ephod. ²⁷ Make two more gold rings and attach them to the bottom of the shoulder pieces on the front of the ephod, close to the seam just above the waistband of the ephod. ²⁸ The rings of the breastpiece are to be tied to the rings of the ephod with blue cord, connecting it to the waistband, so that the breastpiece will not swing out from the ephod.

EX 28:29 "Whenever Aaron enters the Holy Place, he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart on the breastpiece of decision as a continuing memorial before the LORD. ³⁰ Also put the Urim and the Thummim in the breastpiece, so they may be over Aaron's heart whenever he enters the presence of the LORD. Thus Aaron will always bear the means of making decisions for the Israelites over his heart before the LORD.

EX 28:31 "Make the robe of the ephod entirely of blue cloth, ³² with an opening for the head in its center. There shall be a woven edge like a collar around this opening, so that it will not tear. ³³ Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. ³⁴ The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe. ³⁵ Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the LORD and when he comes out, so that he will not die.

EX 28:36 "Make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it as on a seal: HOLY TO THE LORD. ³⁷ Fasten a blue cord to it to attach it to the turban; it is to be on the front of the turban. ³⁸ It will be on Aaron's forehead, and he will bear the guilt involved in the sacred gifts the Israelites consecrate, whatever their gifts may be. It will be on Aaron's forehead continually so that they will be acceptable to the LORD.

EX 28:39 "Weave the tunic of fine linen and make the turban of fine linen. The sash is to be the work of an embroiderer. ⁴⁰ Make tunics, sashes and headbands for Aaron's sons, to give them

dignity and honor. ⁴¹ After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests.

EX 28:42 "Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. ⁴³ Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die.

"This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants.

EX 29:1 "This is what you are to do to consecrate them, so they may serve me as priests: Take a young bull and two rams without defect. ² And from fine wheat flour, without yeast, make bread, and cakes mixed with oil, and wafers spread with oil. ³ Put them in a basket and present them in it--along with the bull and the two rams. ⁴ Then bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. ⁵ Take the garments and dress Aaron with the tunic, the robe of the ephod, the ephod itself and the breastpiece. Fasten the ephod on him by its skillfully woven waistband. ⁶ Put the turban on his head and attach the sacred diadem to the turban. ⁷ Take the anointing oil and anoint him by pouring it on his head. ⁸ Bring his sons and dress them in tunics ⁹ and put headbands on them. Then tie sashes on Aaron and his sons. The priesthood is theirs by a lasting ordinance. In this way you shall ordain Aaron and his sons.

EX 29:10 "Bring the bull to the front of the Tent of Meeting, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. ¹¹ Slaughter it in the LORD's presence at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ¹² Take some of the bull's blood and put it on the horns of the altar with your finger, and pour out the rest of it at the base of the altar. ¹³ Then take all the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, and both kidneys with the fat on them, and burn them on the altar. ¹⁴ But burn the bull's flesh and its hide and its offal outside the camp. It is a sin offering.

EX 29:15 "Take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. ¹⁶ Slaughter it and take the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides. ¹⁷ Cut the ram into pieces and wash the inner parts and the legs, putting them with the head and the other pieces. ¹⁸ Then burn the entire ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire.

EX 29:19 "Take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. ²⁰ Slaughter it, take some of its blood and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. Then sprinkle blood against the altar on all sides. ²¹ And take some of the blood on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. Then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated.

EX 29:22 "Take from this ram the fat, the fat tail, the fat around the inner parts, the covering of the liver, both kidneys with the fat on them, and the right thigh. (This is the ram for the

ordination.)²³ From the basket of bread made without yeast, which is before the LORD, take a loaf, and a cake made with oil, and a wafer.²⁴ Put all these in the hands of Aaron and his sons and wave them before the LORD as a wave offering.²⁵ Then take them from their hands and burn them on the altar along with the burnt offering for a pleasing aroma to the LORD, an offering made to the LORD by fire.²⁶ After you take the breast of the ram for Aaron's ordination, wave it before the LORD as a wave offering, and it will be your share.

EX 29:27 "Consecrate those parts of the ordination ram that belong to Aaron and his sons: the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented.²⁸ This is always to be the regular share from the Israelites for Aaron and his sons. It is the contribution the Israelites are to make to the LORD from their fellowship offerings.

EX 29:29 "Aaron's sacred garments will belong to his descendants so that they can be anointed and ordained in them.³⁰ The son who succeeds him as priest and comes to the Tent of Meeting to minister in the Holy Place is to wear them seven days.

EX 29:31 "Take the ram for the ordination and cook the meat in a sacred place.³² At the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, Aaron and his sons are to eat the meat of the ram and the bread that is in the basket.³³ They are to eat these offerings by which atonement was made for their ordination and consecration. But no one else may eat them, because they are sacred.³⁴ And if any of the meat of the ordination ram or any bread is left over till morning, burn it up. It must not be eaten, because it is sacred.

EX 29:35 "Do for Aaron and his sons everything I have commanded you, taking seven days to ordain them.³⁶ Sacrifice a bull each day as a sin offering to make atonement. Purify the altar by making atonement for it, and anoint it to consecrate it.³⁷ For seven days make atonement for the altar and consecrate it. Then the altar will be most holy, and whatever touches it will be holy.

EX 29:38 "This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old.³⁹ Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight.⁴⁰ With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering.⁴¹ Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning--a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire.

EX 29:42 "For the generations to come this burnt offering is to be made regularly at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. There I will meet you and speak to you;⁴³ there also I will meet with the Israelites, and the place will be consecrated by my glory.

EX 29:44 "So I will consecrate the Tent of Meeting and the altar and will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve me as priests.⁴⁵ Then I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God.

⁴⁶ They will know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of Egypt so that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.

EX 30:1 "Make an altar of acacia wood for burning incense. ² It is to be square, a cubit long and a cubit wide, and two cubits high--its horns of one piece with it. ³ Overlay the top and all the sides and the horns with pure gold, and make a gold molding around it. ⁴ Make two gold rings for the altar below the molding--two on opposite sides--to hold the poles used to carry it. ⁵ Make the poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. ⁶ Put the altar in front of the curtain that is before the ark of the Testimony--before the atonement cover that is over the Testimony--where I will meet with you.

EX 30:7 "Aaron must burn fragrant incense on the altar every morning when he tends the lamps. ⁸ He must burn incense again when he lights the lamps at twilight so incense will burn regularly before the LORD for the generations to come. ⁹ Do not offer on this altar any other incense or any burnt offering or grain offering, and do not pour a drink offering on it. ¹⁰ Once a year Aaron shall make atonement on its horns. This annual atonement must be made with the blood of the atoning sin offering for the generations to come. It is most holy to the LORD."

EX 30:11 Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹² "When you take a census of the Israelites to count them, each one must pay the LORD a ransom for his life at the time he is counted. Then no plague will come on them when you number them. ¹³ Each one who crosses over to those already counted is to give a half shekel, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs. This half shekel is an offering to the LORD. ¹⁴ All who cross over, those twenty years old or more, are to give an offering to the LORD. ¹⁵ The rich are not to give more than a half shekel and the poor are not to give less when you make the offering to the LORD to atone for your lives. ¹⁶ Receive the atonement money from the Israelites and use it for the service of the Tent of Meeting. It will be a memorial for the Israelites before the LORD, making atonement for your lives."

EX 30:17 Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹⁸ "Make a bronze basin, with its bronze stand, for washing. Place it between the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and put water in it. ¹⁹ Aaron and his sons are to wash their hands and feet with water from it. ²⁰ Whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting, they shall wash with water so that they will not die. Also, when they approach the altar to minister by presenting an offering made to the LORD by fire, ²¹ they shall wash their hands and feet so that they will not die. This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants for the generations to come."

EX 30:22 Then the LORD said to Moses, ²³ "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane, ²⁴ 500 shekels of cassia--all according to the sanctuary shekel--and a hin of olive oil. ²⁵ Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the

sacred anointing oil. ²⁶ Then use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, ²⁷ the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, ²⁸ the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. ²⁹ You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy.

EX 30:30 "Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. ³¹ Say to the Israelites, `This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. ³² Do not pour it on men's bodies and do not make any oil with the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. ³³ Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from his people.' "

EX 30:34 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Take fragrant spices--gum resin, onycha and galbanum--and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, ³⁵ and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred. ³⁶ Grind some of it to powder and place it in front of the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, where I will meet with you. It shall be most holy to you. ³⁷ Do not make any incense with this formula for yourselves; consider it holy to the LORD. ³⁸ Whoever makes any like it to enjoy its fragrance must be cut off from his people."

EX 31:1 Then the LORD said to Moses, ² "See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, ³ and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts-- ⁴ to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, ⁵ to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of craftsmanship. ⁶ Moreover, I have appointed Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, to help him. Also I have given skill to all the craftsmen to make everything I have commanded you: ⁷ the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony with the atonement cover on it, and all the other furnishings of the tent-- ⁸ the table and its articles, the pure gold lampstand and all its accessories, the altar of incense, ⁹ the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, the basin with its stand-- ¹⁰ and also the woven garments, both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests, ¹¹ and the anointing oil and fragrant incense for the Holy Place. They are to make them just as I commanded you."

EX 31:12 Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹³ "Say to the Israelites, `You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy.

EX 31:14 " `Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. ¹⁵ For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day must be put to death. ¹⁶ The Israelites are to observe the

Sabbath, celebrating it for the generations to come as a lasting covenant. ¹⁷ It will be a sign between me and the Israelites forever, for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day he abstained from work and rested.' "

EX 31:18 When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

EX 34:10 Then the LORD said: "I am making a covenant with you. Before all your people I will do wonders never before done in any nation in all the world. The people you live among will see how awesome is the work that I, the LORD, will do for you. ¹¹ Obey what I command you today. I will drive out before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ¹² Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you. ¹³ Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones and cut down their Asherah poles. ¹⁴ Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

EX 34:15 "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land; for when they prostitute themselves to their gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will eat their sacrifices. ¹⁶ And when you choose some of their daughters as wives for your sons and those daughters prostitute themselves to their gods, they will lead your sons to do the same.

EX 34:17 "Do not make cast idols.

EX 34:18 "Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt.

EX 34:19 "The first offspring of every womb belongs to me, including all the firstborn males of your livestock, whether from herd or flock. ²⁰ Redeem the firstborn donkey with a lamb, but if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem all your firstborn sons.

"No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

EX 34:21 "Six days you shall labor, but on the seventh day you shall rest; even during the plowing season and harvest you must rest.

EX 34:22 "Celebrate the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering at the turn of the year. ²³ Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel. ²⁴ I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your territory, and no one will covet your land when you go up three times each year to appear before the LORD your God.

EX 34:25 "Do not offer the blood of a sacrifice to me along with anything containing yeast, and do not let any of the sacrifice from the Passover Feast remain until morning.

EX 34:26 "Bring the best of the firstfruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God.
"Do not cook a young goat in its mother's milk."

EX 35:1 Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them, "These are the things the LORD has commanded you to do: ² For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the LORD. Whoever does any work on it must be put to death. ³ Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day."

EX 35:4 Moses said to the whole Israelite community, "This is what the LORD has commanded: ⁵ From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the LORD an offering of gold, silver and bronze; ⁶ blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ⁷ ram skins dyed red and hides of sea cows; acacia wood; ⁸ olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; ⁹ and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece.

EX 35:10 "All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the LORD has commanded: ¹¹ the tabernacle with its tent and its covering, clasps, frames, crossbars, posts and bases; ¹² the ark with its poles and the atonement cover and the curtain that shields it; ¹³ the table with its poles and all its articles and the bread of the Presence; ¹⁴ the lampstand that is for light with its accessories, lamps and oil for the light; ¹⁵ the altar of incense with its poles, the anointing oil and the fragrant incense; the curtain for the doorway at the entrance to the tabernacle; ¹⁶ the altar of burnt offering with its bronze grating, its poles and all its utensils; the bronze basin with its stand; ¹⁷ the curtains of the courtyard with its posts and bases, and the curtain for the entrance to the courtyard; ¹⁸ the tent pegs for the tabernacle and for the courtyard, and their ropes; ¹⁹ the woven garments worn for ministering in the sanctuary--both the sacred garments for Aaron the priest and the garments for his sons when they serve as priests."

EX 40:1 Then the LORD said to Moses: ² "Set up the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting, on the first day of the first month. ³ Place the ark of the Testimony in it and shield the ark with the curtain. ⁴ Bring in the table and set out what belongs on it. Then bring in the lampstand and set up its lamps. ⁵ Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the Testimony and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle.

EX 40:6 "Place the altar of burnt offering in front of the entrance to the tabernacle, the Tent of Meeting; ⁷ place the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it. ⁸ Set up the courtyard around it and put the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard.

EX 40:9 "Take the anointing oil and anoint the tabernacle and everything in it; consecrate it and all its furnishings, and it will be holy. ¹⁰ Then anoint the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils; consecrate the altar, and it will be most holy. ¹¹ Anoint the basin and its stand and consecrate them.

EX 40:12 "Bring Aaron and his sons to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and wash them with water. ¹³ Then dress Aaron in the sacred garments, anoint him and consecrate him so he may serve me as priest. ¹⁴ Bring his sons and dress them in tunics. ¹⁵ Anoint them just as you anointed their father, so they may serve me as priests. Their anointing will be to a priesthood that will continue for all generations to come." ¹⁶ Moses did everything just as the LORD commanded him.

LEV 1:1 The LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting. He said, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When any of you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock.

LEV 1:3 " `If the offering is a burnt offering from the herd, he is to offer a male without defect. He must present it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting so that it will be acceptable to the LORD. ⁴ He is to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it will be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him. ⁵ He is to slaughter the young bull before the LORD, and then Aaron's sons the priests shall bring the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁶ He is to skin the burnt offering and cut it into pieces. ⁷ The sons of Aaron the priest are to put fire on the altar and arrange wood on the fire. ⁸ Then Aaron's sons the priests shall arrange the pieces, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar. ⁹ He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to burn all of it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

LEV 1:10 " `If the offering is a burnt offering from the flock, from either the sheep or the goats, he is to offer a male without defect. ¹¹ He is to slaughter it at the north side of the altar before the LORD, and Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. ¹² He is to cut it into pieces, and the priest shall arrange them, including the head and the fat, on the burning wood that is on the altar. ¹³ He is to wash the inner parts and the legs with water, and the priest is to bring all of it and burn it on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

LEV 1:14 " `If the offering to the LORD is a burnt offering of birds, he is to offer a dove or a young pigeon. ¹⁵ The priest shall bring it to the altar, wring off the head and burn it on the altar; its blood shall be drained out on the side of the altar. ¹⁶ He is to remove the crop with its contents and throw it to the east side of the altar, where the ashes are. ¹⁷ He shall tear it open by

the wings, not severing it completely, and then the priest shall burn it on the wood that is on the fire on the altar. It is a burnt offering, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

LEV 2:1 " `When someone brings a grain offering to the LORD, his offering is to be of fine flour. He is to pour oil on it, put incense on it² and take it to Aaron's sons the priests. The priest shall take a handful of the fine flour and oil, together with all the incense, and burn this as a memorial portion on the altar, an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.³ The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.

LEV 2:4 " `If you bring a grain offering baked in an oven, it is to consist of fine flour: cakes made without yeast and mixed with oil, or wafers made without yeast and spread with oil.⁵ If your grain offering is prepared on a griddle, it is to be made of fine flour mixed with oil, and without yeast.⁶ Crumble it and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering.⁷ If your grain offering is cooked in a pan, it is to be made of fine flour and oil.⁸ Bring the grain offering made of these things to the LORD; present it to the priest, who shall take it to the altar.⁹ He shall take out the memorial portion from the grain offering and burn it on the altar as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.¹⁰ The rest of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons; it is a most holy part of the offerings made to the LORD by fire.

LEV 2:11 " `Every grain offering you bring to the LORD must be made without yeast, for you are not to burn any yeast or honey in an offering made to the LORD by fire.¹² You may bring them to the LORD as an offering of the firstfruits, but they are not to be offered on the altar as a pleasing aroma.¹³ Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.

LEV 2:14 " `If you bring a grain offering of firstfruits to the LORD, offer crushed heads of new grain roasted in the fire.¹⁵ Put oil and incense on it; it is a grain offering.¹⁶ The priest shall burn the memorial portion of the crushed grain and the oil, together with all the incense, as an offering made to the LORD by fire.

LEV 3:1 " `If someone's offering is a fellowship offering, and he offers an animal from the herd, whether male or female, he is to present before the LORD an animal without defect.² He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron's sons the priests shall sprinkle the blood against the altar on all sides.³ From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the LORD by fire: all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them,⁴ both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys.⁵ Then Aaron's sons are to burn it on the altar on top of the burnt offering that is on the burning wood, as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

LEV 3:6 " `If he offers an animal from the flock as a fellowship offering to the LORD, he is to offer a male or female without defect. ⁷ If he offers a lamb, he is to present it before the LORD. ⁸ He is to lay his hand on the head of his offering and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. ⁹ From the fellowship offering he is to bring a sacrifice made to the LORD by fire: its fat, the entire fat tail cut off close to the backbone, all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, ¹⁰ both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys. ¹¹ The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made to the LORD by fire.

LEV 3:12 " `If his offering is a goat, he is to present it before the LORD. ¹³ He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it in front of the Tent of Meeting. Then Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood against the altar on all sides. ¹⁴ From what he offers he is to make this offering to the LORD by fire: all the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, ¹⁵ both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys. ¹⁶ The priest shall burn them on the altar as food, an offering made by fire, a pleasing aroma. All the fat is the LORD's.

LEV 3:17 " `This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live: You must not eat any fat or any blood.' "

LEV 4:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Say to the Israelites: `When anyone sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands--

LEV 4:3 " `If the anointed priest sins, bringing guilt on the people, he must bring to the LORD a young bull without defect as a sin offering for the sin he has committed. ⁴ He is to present the bull at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting before the LORD. He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it before the LORD. ⁵ Then the anointed priest shall take some of the bull's blood and carry it into the Tent of Meeting. ⁶ He is to dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle some of it seven times before the LORD, in front of the curtain of the sanctuary. ⁷ The priest shall then put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of the bull's blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁸ He shall remove all the fat from the bull of the sin offering--the fat that covers the inner parts or is connected to them, ⁹ both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys-- ¹⁰ just as the fat is removed from the ox sacrificed as a fellowship offering. Then the priest shall burn them on the altar of burnt offering. ¹¹ But the hide of the bull and all its flesh, as well as the head and legs, the inner parts and offal-- ¹² that is, all the rest of the bull--he must take outside the camp to a place ceremonially clean, where the ashes are thrown, and burn it in a wood fire on the ash heap.

LEV 4:13 " `If the whole Israelite community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though the community is unaware of the matter, they are guilty. ¹⁴ When they become aware of the sin they committed, the assembly must bring a young bull as a sin offering and present it before the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁵ The elders of the community are to lay their hands on the bull's head before the LORD, and the bull shall be slaughtered before the LORD. ¹⁶ Then the anointed priest is to take some of the bull's blood into the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁷ He shall dip his finger into the blood and sprinkle it before the LORD seven times in front of the curtain. ¹⁸ He is to put some of the blood on the horns of the altar that is before the LORD in the Tent of Meeting. The rest of the blood he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁹ He shall remove all the fat from it and burn it on the altar, ²⁰ and do with this bull just as he did with the bull for the sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven. ²¹ Then he shall take the bull outside the camp and burn it as he burned the first bull. This is the sin offering for the community.

LEV 4:22 " `When a leader sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the commands of the LORD his God, he is guilty. ²³ When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering a male goat without defect. ²⁴ He is to lay his hand on the goat's head and slaughter it at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered before the LORD. It is a sin offering. ²⁵ Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ²⁶ He shall burn all the fat on the altar as he burned the fat of the fellowship offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for the man's sin, and he will be forgiven.

LEV 4:27 " `If a member of the community sins unintentionally and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, he is guilty. ²⁸ When he is made aware of the sin he committed, he must bring as his offering for the sin he committed a female goat without defect. ²⁹ He is to lay his hand on the head of the sin offering and slaughter it at the place of the burnt offering. ³⁰ Then the priest is to take some of the blood with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³¹ He shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. In this way the priest will make atonement for him, and he will be forgiven.

LEV 4:32 " `If he brings a lamb as his sin offering, he is to bring a female without defect. ³³ He is to lay his hand on its head and slaughter it for a sin offering at the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered. ³⁴ Then the priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering and pour out the rest of the blood at the base of the altar. ³⁵ He shall remove all the fat, just as the fat is removed from the lamb of the fellowship offering, and the priest shall burn it on the altar on top of the offerings made to the

LORD by fire. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.

LEV 5:1 " `If a person sins because he does not speak up when he hears a public charge to testify regarding something he has seen or learned about, he will be held responsible.

LEV 5:2 " `Or if a person touches anything ceremonially unclean--whether the carcasses of unclean wild animals or of unclean livestock or of unclean creatures that move along the ground--even though he is unaware of it, he has become unclean and is guilty.

LEV 5:3 " `Or if he touches human uncleanness--anything that would make him unclean--even though he is unaware of it, when he learns of it he will be guilty.

LEV 5:4 " `Or if a person thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil--in any matter one might carelessly swear about--even though he is unaware of it, in any case when he learns of it he will be guilty.

LEV 5:5 " `When anyone is guilty in any of these ways, he must confess in what way he has sinned⁶ and, as a penalty for the sin he has committed, he must bring to the LORD a female lamb or goat from the flock as a sin offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him for his sin.

LEV 5:7 " `If he cannot afford a lamb, he is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the LORD as a penalty for his sin--one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.⁸ He is to bring them to the priest, who shall first offer the one for the sin offering. He is to wring its head from its neck, not severing it completely,⁹ and is to sprinkle some of the blood of the sin offering against the side of the altar; the rest of the blood must be drained out at the base of the altar. It is a sin offering.¹⁰ The priest shall then offer the other as a burnt offering in the prescribed way and make atonement for him for the sin he has committed, and he will be forgiven.

LEV 5:11 " `If, however, he cannot afford two doves or two young pigeons, he is to bring as an offering for his sin a tenth of an ephah of fine flour for a sin offering. He must not put oil or incense on it, because it is a sin offering.¹² He is to bring it to the priest, who shall take a handful of it as a memorial portion and burn it on the altar on top of the offerings made to the LORD by fire. It is a sin offering.¹³ In this way the priest will make atonement for him for any of these sins he has committed, and he will be forgiven. The rest of the offering will belong to the priest, as in the case of the grain offering.' "

LEV 5:14 The LORD said to Moses:¹⁵ "When a person commits a violation and sins unintentionally in regard to any of the LORD's holy things, he is to bring to the LORD as a penalty a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value in silver, according to the sanctuary shekel. It is a guilt offering.¹⁶ He must make restitution for what he has failed to

do in regard to the holy things, add a fifth of the value to that and give it all to the priest, who will make atonement for him with the ram as a guilt offering, and he will be forgiven.

LEV 5:17 "If a person sins and does what is forbidden in any of the LORD's commands, even though he does not know it, he is guilty and will be held responsible. ¹⁸ He is to bring to the priest as a guilt offering a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. In this way the priest will make atonement for him for the wrong he has committed unintentionally, and he will be forgiven. ¹⁹ It is a guilt offering; he has been guilty of wrongdoing against the LORD."

LEV 6:1 The LORD said to Moses: ² "If anyone sins and is unfaithful to the LORD by deceiving his neighbor about something entrusted to him or left in his care or stolen, or if he cheats him, ³ or if he finds lost property and lies about it, or if he swears falsely, or if he commits any such sin that people may do-- ⁴ when he thus sins and becomes guilty, he must return what he has stolen or taken by extortion, or what was entrusted to him, or the lost property he found, ⁵ or whatever it was he swore falsely about. He must make restitution in full, add a fifth of the value to it and give it all to the owner on the day he presents his guilt offering. ⁶ And as a penalty he must bring to the priest, that is, to the LORD, his guilt offering, a ram from the flock, one without defect and of the proper value. ⁷ In this way the priest will make atonement for him before the LORD, and he will be forgiven for any of these things he did that made him guilty."

LEV 6:8 The LORD said to Moses: ⁹ "Give Aaron and his sons this command: `These are the regulations for the burnt offering: The burnt offering is to remain on the altar hearth throughout the night, till morning, and the fire must be kept burning on the altar. ¹⁰ The priest shall then put on his linen clothes, with linen undergarments next to his body, and shall remove the ashes of the burnt offering that the fire has consumed on the altar and place them beside the altar. ¹¹ Then he is to take off these clothes and put on others, and carry the ashes outside the camp to a place that is ceremonially clean. ¹² The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. ¹³ The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.

LEV 6:14 " `These are the regulations for the grain offering: Aaron's sons are to bring it before the LORD, in front of the altar. ¹⁵ The priest is to take a handful of fine flour and oil, together with all the incense on the grain offering, and burn the memorial portion on the altar as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁶ Aaron and his sons shall eat the rest of it, but it is to be eaten without yeast in a holy place; they are to eat it in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁷ It must not be baked with yeast; I have given it as their share of the offerings made to me by fire. Like the sin offering and the guilt offering, it is most holy. ¹⁸ Any male descendant of Aaron may eat it. It is his regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire for the generations to come. Whatever touches them will become holy. ' "

LEV 6:19 The LORD also said to Moses, ²⁰ "This is the offering Aaron and his sons are to bring to the LORD on the day he is anointed: a tenth of an ephah of fine flour as a regular grain offering, half of it in the morning and half in the evening. ²¹ Prepare it with oil on a griddle; bring it well-mixed and present the grain offering broken in pieces as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ²² The son who is to succeed him as anointed priest shall prepare it. It is the LORD's regular share and is to be burned completely. ²³ Every grain offering of a priest shall be burned completely; it must not be eaten."

LEV 6:24 The LORD said to Moses, ²⁵ "Say to Aaron and his sons: `These are the regulations for the sin offering: The sin offering is to be slaughtered before the LORD in the place the burnt offering is slaughtered; it is most holy. ²⁶ The priest who offers it shall eat it; it is to be eaten in a holy place, in the courtyard of the Tent of Meeting. ²⁷ Whatever touches any of the flesh will become holy, and if any of the blood is spattered on a garment, you must wash it in a holy place. ²⁸ The clay pot the meat is cooked in must be broken; but if it is cooked in a bronze pot, the pot is to be scoured and rinsed with water. ²⁹ Any male in a priest's family may eat it; it is most holy. ³⁰ But any sin offering whose blood is brought into the Tent of Meeting to make atonement in the Holy Place must not be eaten; it must be burned.

LEV 7:1 " `These are the regulations for the guilt offering, which is most holy: ² The guilt offering is to be slaughtered in the place where the burnt offering is slaughtered, and its blood is to be sprinkled against the altar on all sides. ³ All its fat shall be offered: the fat tail and the fat that covers the inner parts, ⁴ both kidneys with the fat on them near the loins, and the covering of the liver, which is to be removed with the kidneys. ⁵ The priest shall burn them on the altar as an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is a guilt offering. ⁶ Any male in a priest's family may eat it, but it must be eaten in a holy place; it is most holy.

LEV 7:7 " `The same law applies to both the sin offering and the guilt offering: They belong to the priest who makes atonement with them. ⁸ The priest who offers a burnt offering for anyone may keep its hide for himself. ⁹ Every grain offering baked in an oven or cooked in a pan or on a griddle belongs to the priest who offers it, ¹⁰ and every grain offering, whether mixed with oil or dry, belongs equally to all the sons of Aaron.

LEV 7:11 " `These are the regulations for the fellowship offering a person may present to the LORD:

LEV 7:12 " `If he offers it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank offering he is to offer cakes of bread made without yeast and mixed with oil, wafers made without yeast and spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil. ¹³ Along with his fellowship offering of thanksgiving he is to present an offering with cakes of bread made with yeast. ¹⁴ He is to bring one of each kind as an offering, a contribution to the LORD; it belongs to

the priest who sprinkles the blood of the fellowship offerings. ¹⁵ The meat of his fellowship offering of thanksgiving must be eaten on the day it is offered; he must leave none of it till morning.

LEV 7:16 " `If, however, his offering is the result of a vow or is a freewill offering, the sacrifice shall be eaten on the day he offers it, but anything left over may be eaten on the next day. ¹⁷ Any meat of the sacrifice left over till the third day must be burned up. ¹⁸ If any meat of the fellowship offering is eaten on the third day, it will not be accepted. It will not be credited to the one who offered it, for it is impure; the person who eats any of it will be held responsible.

LEV 7:28 The LORD said to Moses, ²⁹ "Say to the Israelites: `Anyone who brings a fellowship offering to the LORD is to bring part of it as his sacrifice to the LORD. ³⁰ With his own hands he is to bring the offering made to the LORD by fire; he is to bring the fat, together with the breast, and wave the breast before the LORD as a wave offering. ³¹ The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons. ³² You are to give the right thigh of your fellowship offerings to the priest as a contribution. ³³ The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offering shall have the right thigh as his share. ³⁴ From the fellowship offerings of the Israelites, I have taken the breast that is waved and the thigh that is presented and have given them to Aaron the priest and his sons as their regular share from the Israelites.' "

LEV 7:35 This is the portion of the offerings made to the LORD by fire that were allotted to Aaron and his sons on the day they were presented to serve the LORD as priests. ³⁶ On the day they were anointed, the LORD commanded that the Israelites give this to them as their regular share for the generations to come.

LEV 7:37 These, then, are the regulations for the burnt offering, the grain offering, the sin offering, the guilt offering, the ordination offering and the fellowship offering, ³⁸ which the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai on the day he commanded the Israelites to bring their offerings to the LORD, in the Desert of Sinai.

LEV 12:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Say to the Israelites: `A woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth to a son will be ceremonially unclean for seven days, just as she is unclean during her monthly period. ³ On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised. ⁴ Then the woman must wait thirty-three days to be purified from her bleeding. She must not touch anything sacred or go to the sanctuary until the days of her purification are over. ⁵ If she gives birth to a daughter, for two weeks the woman will be unclean, as during her period. Then she must wait sixty-six days to be purified from her bleeding.

LEV 12:6 " `When the days of her purification for a son or daughter are over, she is to bring to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young

pigeon or a dove for a sin offering. ⁷ He shall offer them before the LORD to make atonement for her, and then she will be ceremonially clean from her flow of blood.

" `These are the regulations for the woman who gives birth to a boy or a girl. ⁸ If she cannot afford a lamb, she is to bring two doves or two young pigeons, one for a burnt offering and the other for a sin offering. In this way the priest will make atonement for her, and she will be clean.'

LEV 13:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² "When anyone has a swelling or a rash or a bright spot on his skin that may become an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons who is a priest. ³ The priest is to examine the sore on his skin, and if the hair in the sore has turned white and the sore appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious skin disease. When the priest examines him, he shall pronounce him ceremonially unclean. ⁴ If the spot on his skin is white but does not appear to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has not turned white, the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days. ⁵ On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if he sees that the sore is unchanged and has not spread in the skin, he is to keep him in isolation another seven days. ⁶ On the seventh day the priest is to examine him again, and if the sore has faded and has not spread in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a rash. The man must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. ⁷ But if the rash does spread in his skin after he has shown himself to the priest to be pronounced clean, he must appear before the priest again. ⁸ The priest is to examine him, and if the rash has spread in the skin, he shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious disease.

LEV 13:9 "When anyone has an infectious skin disease, he must be brought to the priest.

¹⁰ The priest is to examine him, and if there is a white swelling in the skin that has turned the hair white and if there is raw flesh in the swelling, ¹¹ it is a chronic skin disease and the priest shall pronounce him unclean. He is not to put him in isolation, because he is already unclean.

LEV 13:12 "If the disease breaks out all over his skin and, so far as the priest can see, it covers all the skin of the infected person from head to foot, ¹³ the priest is to examine him, and if the disease has covered his whole body, he shall pronounce that person clean. Since it has all turned white, he is clean. ¹⁴ But whenever raw flesh appears on him, he will be unclean. ¹⁵ When the priest sees the raw flesh, he shall pronounce him unclean. The raw flesh is unclean; he has an infectious disease. ¹⁶ Should the raw flesh change and turn white, he must go to the priest. ¹⁷ The priest is to examine him, and if the sores have turned white, the priest shall pronounce the infected person clean; then he will be clean.

LEV 13:18 "When someone has a boil on his skin and it heals, ¹⁹ and in the place where the boil was, a white swelling or reddish-white spot appears, he must present himself to the priest. ²⁰ The priest is to examine it, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it has turned white, the priest shall pronounce him unclean. It is an infectious skin disease that has broken out where the boil was. ²¹ But if, when the priest examines it, there is no white hair in it and it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for seven days. ²² If

it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is infectious. ²³ But if the spot is unchanged and has not spread, it is only a scar from the boil, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

LEV 13:24 "When someone has a burn on his skin and a reddish-white or white spot appears in the raw flesh of the burn, ²⁵ the priest is to examine the spot, and if the hair in it has turned white, and it appears to be more than skin deep, it is an infectious disease that has broken out in the burn. The priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease. ²⁶ But if the priest examines it and there is no white hair in the spot and if it is not more than skin deep and has faded, then the priest is to put him in isolation for seven days. ²⁷ On the seventh day the priest is to examine him, and if it is spreading in the skin, the priest shall pronounce him unclean; it is an infectious skin disease. ²⁸ If, however, the spot is unchanged and has not spread in the skin but has faded, it is a swelling from the burn, and the priest shall pronounce him clean; it is only a scar from the burn.

LEV 13:29 "If a man or woman has a sore on the head or on the chin, ³⁰ the priest is to examine the sore, and if it appears to be more than skin deep and the hair in it is yellow and thin, the priest shall pronounce that person unclean; it is an itch, an infectious disease of the head or chin. ³¹ But if, when the priest examines this kind of sore, it does not seem to be more than skin deep and there is no black hair in it, then the priest is to put the infected person in isolation for seven days. ³² On the seventh day the priest is to examine the sore, and if the itch has not spread and there is no yellow hair in it and it does not appear to be more than skin deep, ³³ he must be shaved except for the diseased area, and the priest is to keep him in isolation another seven days. ³⁴ On the seventh day the priest is to examine the itch, and if it has not spread in the skin and appears to be no more than skin deep, the priest shall pronounce him clean. He must wash his clothes, and he will be clean. ³⁵ But if the itch does spread in the skin after he is pronounced clean, ³⁶ the priest is to examine him, and if the itch has spread in the skin, the priest does not need to look for yellow hair; the person is unclean. ³⁷ If, however, in his judgment it is unchanged and black hair has grown in it, the itch is healed. He is clean, and the priest shall pronounce him clean.

LEV 13:38 "When a man or woman has white spots on the skin, ³⁹ the priest is to examine them, and if the spots are dull white, it is a harmless rash that has broken out on the skin; that person is clean.

LEV 13:40 "When a man has lost his hair and is bald, he is clean. ⁴¹ If he has lost his hair from the front of his scalp and has a bald forehead, he is clean. ⁴² But if he has a reddish-white sore on his bald head or forehead, it is an infectious disease breaking out on his head or forehead. ⁴³ The priest is to examine him, and if the swollen sore on his head or forehead is reddish-white like an infectious skin disease, ⁴⁴ the man is diseased and is unclean. The priest shall pronounce him unclean because of the sore on his head.

LEV 13:45 "The person with such an infectious disease must wear torn clothes, let his hair be unkempt, cover the lower part of his face and cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'" ⁴⁶ As long as he has the infection he remains unclean. He must live alone; he must live outside the camp.

LEV 13:47 "If any clothing is contaminated with mildew--any woolen or linen clothing, ⁴⁸ any woven or knitted material of linen or wool, any leather or anything made of leather-- ⁴⁹ and if the contamination in the clothing, or leather, or woven or knitted material, or any leather article, is greenish or reddish, it is a spreading mildew and must be shown to the priest. ⁵⁰ The priest is to examine the mildew and isolate the affected article for seven days. ⁵¹ On the seventh day he is to examine it, and if the mildew has spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather, whatever its use, it is a destructive mildew; the article is unclean. ⁵² He must burn up the clothing, or the woven or knitted material of wool or linen, or any leather article that has the contamination in it, because the mildew is destructive; the article must be burned up.

LEV 13:53 "But if, when the priest examines it, the mildew has not spread in the clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or the leather article, ⁵⁴ he shall order that the contaminated article be washed. Then he is to isolate it for another seven days. ⁵⁵ After the affected article has been washed, the priest is to examine it, and if the mildew has not changed its appearance, even though it has not spread, it is unclean. Burn it with fire, whether the mildew has affected one side or the other. ⁵⁶ If, when the priest examines it, the mildew has faded after the article has been washed, he is to tear the contaminated part out of the clothing, or the leather, or the woven or knitted material. ⁵⁷ But if it reappears in the clothing, or in the woven or knitted material, or in the leather article, it is spreading, and whatever has the mildew must be burned with fire. ⁵⁸ The clothing, or the woven or knitted material, or any leather article that has been washed and is rid of the mildew, must be washed again, and it will be clean."

LEV 13:59 These are the regulations concerning contamination by mildew in woolen or linen clothing, woven or knitted material, or any leather article, for pronouncing them clean or unclean.

LEV 14:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "These are the regulations for the diseased person at the time of his ceremonial cleansing, when he is brought to the priest: ³ The priest is to go outside the camp and examine him. If the person has been healed of his infectious skin disease, ⁴ the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the one to be cleansed. ⁵ Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. ⁶ He is then to take the live bird and dip it, together with the cedar wood, the scarlet yarn and the hyssop, into the blood of the bird that was killed over the fresh water. ⁷ Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the infectious disease and pronounce him clean. Then he is to release the live bird in the open fields.

LEV 14:8 "The person to be cleansed must wash his clothes, shave off all his hair and bathe with water; then he will be ceremonially clean. After this he may come into the camp, but he must stay outside his tent for seven days. ⁹ On the seventh day he must shave off all his hair; he must shave his head, his beard, his eyebrows and the rest of his hair. He must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water, and he will be clean.

LEV 14:10 "On the eighth day he must bring two male lambs and one ewe lamb a year old, each without defect, along with three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, and one log of oil. ¹¹ The priest who pronounces him clean shall present both the one to be cleansed and his offerings before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.

LEV 14:12 "Then the priest is to take one of the male lambs and offer it as a guilt offering, along with the log of oil; he shall wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. ¹³ He is to slaughter the lamb in the holy place where the sin offering and the burnt offering are slaughtered. Like the sin offering, the guilt offering belongs to the priest; it is most holy. ¹⁴ The priest is to take some of the blood of the guilt offering and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. ¹⁵ The priest shall then take some of the log of oil, pour it in the palm of his own left hand, ¹⁶ dip his right forefinger into the oil in his palm, and with his finger sprinkle some of it before the LORD seven times. ¹⁷ The priest is to put some of the oil remaining in his palm on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot, on top of the blood of the guilt offering. ¹⁸ The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed and make atonement for him before the LORD.

LEV 14:19 "Then the priest is to sacrifice the sin offering and make atonement for the one to be cleansed from his uncleanness. After that, the priest shall slaughter the burnt offering ²⁰ and offer it on the altar, together with the grain offering, and make atonement for him, and he will be clean.

LEV 14:21 "If, however, he is poor and cannot afford these, he must take one male lamb as a guilt offering to be waved to make atonement for him, together with a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil for a grain offering, a log of oil, ²² and two doves or two young pigeons, which he can afford, one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering.

LEV 14:23 "On the eighth day he must bring them for his cleansing to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, before the LORD. ²⁴ The priest is to take the lamb for the guilt offering, together with the log of oil, and wave them before the LORD as a wave offering. ²⁵ He shall slaughter the lamb for the guilt offering and take some of its blood and put it on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. ²⁶ The priest is to pour some of the oil into the palm of his own left hand, ²⁷ and with his right forefinger sprinkle some of the oil from his palm seven times before the LORD. ²⁸ Some of

the oil in his palm he is to put on the same places he put the blood of the guilt offering--on the lobe of the right ear of the one to be cleansed, on the thumb of his right hand and on the big toe of his right foot. ²⁹ The rest of the oil in his palm the priest shall put on the head of the one to be cleansed, to make atonement for him before the LORD. ³⁰ Then he shall sacrifice the doves or the young pigeons, which the person can afford, ³¹ one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, together with the grain offering. In this way the priest will make atonement before the LORD on behalf of the one to be cleansed."

LEV 14:32 These are the regulations for anyone who has an infectious skin disease and who cannot afford the regular offerings for his cleansing.

LEV 14:33 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ³⁴ "When you enter the land of Canaan, which I am giving you as your possession, and I put a spreading mildew in a house in that land, ³⁵ the owner of the house must go and tell the priest, 'I have seen something that looks like mildew in my house.' ³⁶ The priest is to order the house to be emptied before he goes in to examine the mildew, so that nothing in the house will be pronounced unclean. After this the priest is to go in and inspect the house. ³⁷ He is to examine the mildew on the walls, and if it has greenish or reddish depressions that appear to be deeper than the surface of the wall, ³⁸ the priest shall go out the doorway of the house and close it up for seven days. ³⁹ On the seventh day the priest shall return to inspect the house. If the mildew has spread on the walls, ⁴⁰ he is to order that the contaminated stones be torn out and thrown into an unclean place outside the town. ⁴¹ He must have all the inside walls of the house scraped and the material that is scraped off dumped into an unclean place outside the town. ⁴² Then they are to take other stones to replace these and take new clay and plaster the house.

LEV 14:43 "If the mildew reappears in the house after the stones have been torn out and the house scraped and plastered, ⁴⁴ the priest is to go and examine it and, if the mildew has spread in the house, it is a destructive mildew; the house is unclean. ⁴⁵ It must be torn down--its stones, timbers and all the plaster--and taken out of the town to an unclean place.

LEV 14:46 "Anyone who goes into the house while it is closed up will be unclean till evening. ⁴⁷ Anyone who sleeps or eats in the house must wash his clothes.

LEV 14:48 "But if the priest comes to examine it and the mildew has not spread after the house has been plastered, he shall pronounce the house clean, because the mildew is gone. ⁴⁹ To purify the house he is to take two birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop. ⁵⁰ He shall kill one of the birds over fresh water in a clay pot. ⁵¹ Then he is to take the cedar wood, the hyssop, the scarlet yarn and the live bird, dip them into the blood of the dead bird and the fresh water, and sprinkle the house seven times. ⁵² He shall purify the house with the bird's blood, the fresh water, the live bird, the cedar wood, the hyssop and the scarlet yarn. ⁵³ Then he is to release the

live bird in the open fields outside the town. In this way he will make atonement for the house, and it will be clean."

LEV 14:54 These are the regulations for any infectious skin disease, for an itch, ⁵⁵ for mildew in clothing or in a house, ⁵⁶ and for a swelling, a rash or a bright spot, ⁵⁷ to determine when something is clean or unclean.

These are the regulations for infectious skin diseases and mildew.

LEV 15:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When any man has a bodily discharge, the discharge is unclean. ³ Whether it continues flowing from his body or is blocked, it will make him unclean. This is how his discharge will bring about uncleanness:

LEV 15:4 " `Any bed the man with a discharge lies on will be unclean, and anything he sits on will be unclean. ⁵ Anyone who touches his bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ⁶ Whoever sits on anything that the man with a discharge sat on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:7 " `Whoever touches the man who has a discharge must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:8 " `If the man with the discharge spits on someone who is clean, that person must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:9 " `Everything the man sits on when riding will be unclean, ¹⁰ and whoever touches any of the things that were under him will be unclean till evening; whoever picks up those things must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:11 " `Anyone the man with a discharge touches without rinsing his hands with water must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:12 " `A clay pot that the man touches must be broken, and any wooden article is to be rinsed with water.

LEV 15:13 " `When a man is cleansed from his discharge, he is to count off seven days for his ceremonial cleansing; he must wash his clothes and bathe himself with fresh water, and he will be clean. ¹⁴ On the eighth day he must take two doves or two young pigeons and come before the LORD to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting and give them to the priest. ¹⁵ The priest is to sacrifice them, the one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement before the LORD for the man because of his discharge.

LEV 15:16 " `When a man has an emission of semen, he must bathe his whole body with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ¹⁷ Any clothing or leather that has semen on it must be washed with water, and it will be unclean till evening. ¹⁸ When a man lies with a woman and there is an emission of semen, both must bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:19 " `When a woman has her regular flow of blood, the impurity of her monthly period will last seven days, and anyone who touches her will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:20 " `Anything she lies on during her period will be unclean, and anything she sits on will be unclean. ²¹ Whoever touches her bed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ²² Whoever touches anything she sits on must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening. ²³ Whether it is the bed or anything she was sitting on, when anyone touches it, he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:24 " `If a man lies with her and her monthly flow touches him, he will be unclean for seven days; any bed he lies on will be unclean.

LEV 15:25 " `When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. ²⁶ Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. ²⁷ Whoever touches them will be unclean; he must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he will be unclean till evening.

LEV 15:28 " `When she is cleansed from her discharge, she must count off seven days, and after that she will be ceremonially clean. ²⁹ On the eighth day she must take two doves or two young pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ³⁰ The priest is to sacrifice one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering. In this way he will make atonement for her before the LORD for the uncleanness of her discharge.

LEV 15:31 " `You must keep the Israelites separate from things that make them unclean, so they will not die in their uncleanness for defiling my dwelling place, which is among them.' "

LEV 15:32 These are the regulations for a man with a discharge, for anyone made unclean by an emission of semen, ³³ for a woman in her monthly period, for a man or a woman with a discharge, and for a man who lies with a woman who is ceremonially unclean.

LEV 16:1 The LORD spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they approached the LORD. ² The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover.

LEV 16:3 "This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering. ⁴ He is to put on the sacred linen tunic, with linen undergarments next to his body; he is to tie the linen sash around him and put on the linen turban. These are sacred garments; so he must bathe himself with water before he puts them on. ⁵ From the Israelite community he is to take two male goats for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

LEV 16:6 "Aaron is to offer the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household. ⁷ Then he is to take the two goats and present them before the LORD at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁸ He is to cast lots for the two goats--one lot for the LORD and the other for the scapegoat. ⁹ Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the LORD and sacrifice it for a sin offering. ¹⁰ But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the LORD to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat.

LEV 16:11 "Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make atonement for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering. ¹² He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain. ¹³ He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die. ¹⁴ He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the atonement cover.

LEV 16:15 "He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and take its blood behind the curtain and do with it as he did with the bull's blood: He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. ¹⁶ In this way he will make atonement for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been. He is to do the same for the Tent of Meeting, which is among them in the midst of their uncleanness. ¹⁷ No one is to be in the Tent of Meeting from the time Aaron goes in to make atonement in the Most Holy Place until he comes out, having made atonement for himself, his household and the whole community of Israel.

LEV 16:18 "Then he shall come out to the altar that is before the LORD and make atonement for it. He shall take some of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on all the horns of the altar. ¹⁹ He shall sprinkle some of the blood on it with his finger seven times to cleanse it and to consecrate it from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

LEV 16:20 "When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. ²¹ He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites--all their sins--and put them on the goat's head. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a

man appointed for the task. ²² The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place; and the man shall release it in the desert.

LEV 16:23 "Then Aaron is to go into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen garments he put on before he entered the Most Holy Place, and he is to leave them there. ²⁴ He shall bathe himself with water in a holy place and put on his regular garments. Then he shall come out and sacrifice the burnt offering for himself and the burnt offering for the people, to make atonement for himself and for the people. ²⁵ He shall also burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar.

LEV 16:26 "The man who releases the goat as a scapegoat must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp. ²⁷ The bull and the goat for the sin offerings, whose blood was brought into the Most Holy Place to make atonement, must be taken outside the camp; their hides, flesh and offal are to be burned up. ²⁸ The man who burns them must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water; afterward he may come into the camp.

LEV 16:29 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: On the tenth day of the seventh month you must deny yourselves and not do any work--whether native-born or an alien living among you--³⁰ because on this day atonement will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, before the LORD, you will be clean from all your sins. ³¹ It is a sabbath of rest, and you must deny yourselves; it is a lasting ordinance. ³² The priest who is anointed and ordained to succeed his father as high priest is to make atonement. He is to put on the sacred linen garments ³³ and make atonement for the Most Holy Place, for the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and for the priests and all the people of the community.

LEV 16:34 "This is to be a lasting ordinance for you: Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites."

And it was done, as the LORD commanded Moses.

LEV 21:1 The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them: `A priest must not make himself ceremonially unclean for any of his people who die, ² except for a close relative, such as his mother or father, his son or daughter, his brother, ³ or an unmarried sister who is dependent on him since she has no husband--for her he may make himself unclean. ⁴ He must not make himself unclean for people related to him by marriage, and so defile himself.

LEV 21:5 " `Priests must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. ⁶ They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God. Because they present the offerings made to the LORD by fire, the food of their God, they are to be holy.

LEV 21:7 " `They must not marry women defiled by prostitution or divorced from their husbands, because priests are holy to their God. ⁸ Regard them as holy, because they offer up the food of your God. Consider them holy, because I the LORD am holy--I who make you holy.

LEV 21:9 " `If a priest's daughter defiles herself by becoming a prostitute, she disgraces her father; she must be burned in the fire.

LEV 21:10 " `The high priest, the one among his brothers who has had the anointing oil poured on his head and who has been ordained to wear the priestly garments, must not let his hair become unkempt or tear his clothes. ¹¹ He must not enter a place where there is a dead body. He must not make himself unclean, even for his father or mother, ¹² nor leave the sanctuary of his God or desecrate it, because he has been dedicated by the anointing oil of his God. I am the LORD.

LEV 21:13 " `The woman he marries must be a virgin. ¹⁴ He must not marry a widow, a divorced woman, or a woman defiled by prostitution, but only a virgin from his own people, ¹⁵ so he will not defile his offspring among his people. I am the LORD, who makes him holy. ' "

LEV 21:16 The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁷ "Say to Aaron: `For the generations to come none of your descendants who has a defect may come near to offer the food of his God. ¹⁸ No man who has any defect may come near: no man who is blind or lame, disfigured or deformed; ¹⁹ no man with a crippled foot or hand, ²⁰ or who is hunchbacked or dwarfed, or who has any eye defect, or who has festering or running sores or damaged testicles. ²¹ No descendant of Aaron the priest who has any defect is to come near to present the offerings made to the LORD by fire. He has a defect; he must not come near to offer the food of his God. ²² He may eat the most holy food of his God, as well as the holy food; ²³ yet because of his defect, he must not go near the curtain or approach the altar, and so desecrate my sanctuary. I am the LORD, who makes them holy. ' "

LEV 21:24 So Moses told this to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites.

LEV 22:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Tell Aaron and his sons to treat with respect the sacred offerings the Israelites consecrate to me, so they will not profane my holy name. I am the LORD.

LEV 22:3 "Say to them: `For the generations to come, if any of your descendants is ceremonially unclean and yet comes near the sacred offerings that the Israelites consecrate to the LORD, that person must be cut off from my presence. I am the LORD.

LEV 22:4 " `If a descendant of Aaron has an infectious skin disease or a bodily discharge, he may not eat the sacred offerings until he is cleansed. He will also be unclean if he touches something defiled by a corpse or by anyone who has an emission of semen, ⁵ or if he touches any crawling thing that makes him unclean, or any person who makes him unclean, whatever the uncleanness may be. ⁶ The one who touches any such thing will be unclean till evening. He must not eat any of the sacred offerings unless he has bathed himself with water. ⁷ When the sun goes down, he will be clean, and after that he may eat the sacred offerings, for they are his food. ⁸ He

must not eat anything found dead or torn by wild animals, and so become unclean through it. I am the LORD.

LEV 22:9 " `The priests are to keep my requirements so that they do not become guilty and die for treating them with contempt. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.

LEV 22:10 " `No one outside a priest's family may eat the sacred offering, nor may the guest of a priest or his hired worker eat it. ¹¹ But if a priest buys a slave with money, or if a slave is born in his household, that slave may eat his food. ¹² If a priest's daughter marries anyone other than a priest, she may not eat any of the sacred contributions. ¹³ But if a priest's daughter becomes a widow or is divorced, yet has no children, and she returns to live in her father's house as in her youth, she may eat of her father's food. No unauthorized person, however, may eat any of it.

LEV 22:14 " `If anyone eats a sacred offering by mistake, he must make restitution to the priest for the offering and add a fifth of the value to it. ¹⁵ The priests must not desecrate the sacred offerings the Israelites present to the LORD ¹⁶ by allowing them to eat the sacred offerings and so bring upon them guilt requiring payment. I am the LORD, who makes them holy.' "

LEV 22:17 The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁸ "Speak to Aaron and his sons and to all the Israelites and say to them: `If any of you--either an Israelite or an alien living in Israel--presents a gift for a burnt offering to the LORD, either to fulfill a vow or as a freewill offering, ¹⁹ you must present a male without defect from the cattle, sheep or goats in order that it may be accepted on your behalf. ²⁰ Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf. ²¹ When anyone brings from the herd or flock a fellowship offering to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or as a freewill offering, it must be without defect or blemish to be acceptable. ²² Do not offer to the LORD the blind, the injured or the maimed, or anything with warts or festering or running sores. Do not place any of these on the altar as an offering made to the LORD by fire. ²³ You may, however, present as a freewill offering an ox or a sheep that is deformed or stunted, but it will not be accepted in fulfillment of a vow. ²⁴ You must not offer to the LORD an animal whose testicles are bruised, crushed, torn or cut. You must not do this in your own land, ²⁵ and you must not accept such animals from the hand of a foreigner and offer them as the food of your God. They will not be accepted on your behalf, because they are deformed and have defects.' "

LEV 22:26 The LORD said to Moses, ²⁷ "When a calf, a lamb or a goat is born, it is to remain with its mother for seven days. From the eighth day on, it will be acceptable as an offering made to the LORD by fire. ²⁸ Do not slaughter a cow or a sheep and its young on the same day.

LEV 22:29 "When you sacrifice a thank offering to the LORD, sacrifice it in such a way that it will be accepted on your behalf. ³⁰ It must be eaten that same day; leave none of it till morning. I am the LORD.

LEV 22:31 "Keep my commands and follow them. I am the LORD. ³² Do not profane my holy name. I must be acknowledged as holy by the Israelites. I am the LORD, who makes you holy ³³ and who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD."

LEV 23:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies.

LEV 23:3 " `There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the LORD.

LEV 23:4 " `These are the LORD's appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times: ⁵ The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. ⁶ On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. ⁷ On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. ⁸ For seven days present an offering made to the LORD by fire. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.' "

LEV 23:9 The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁰ "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When you enter the land I am going to give you and you reap its harvest, bring to the priest a sheaf of the first grain you harvest. ¹¹ He is to wave the sheaf before the LORD so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the day after the Sabbath. ¹² On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the LORD a lamb a year old without defect, ¹³ together with its grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil--an offering made to the LORD by fire, a pleasing aroma--and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. ¹⁴ You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

LEV 23:15 " `From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. ¹⁶ Count off fifty days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the LORD. ¹⁷ From wherever you live, bring two loaves made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, baked with yeast, as a wave offering of firstfruits to the LORD. ¹⁸ Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect, one young bull and two rams. They will be a burnt offering to the LORD, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings--an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁹ Then sacrifice one male goat for a sin offering and two lambs, each a year old, for a fellowship offering. ²⁰ The priest is to wave the two lambs before the LORD as a wave offering, together with the bread of the firstfruits. They are a sacred offering to the LORD for the priest. ²¹ On that same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live.

LEV 23:23 The LORD said to Moses, ²⁴ "Say to the Israelites: `On the first day of the seventh month you are to have a day of rest, a sacred assembly commemorated with trumpet blasts. ²⁵ Do no regular work, but present an offering made to the LORD by fire.' "

LEV 23:26 The LORD said to Moses, ²⁷ "The tenth day of this seventh month is the Day of Atonement. Hold a sacred assembly and deny yourselves, and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. ²⁸ Do no work on that day, because it is the Day of Atonement, when atonement is made for you before the LORD your God. ²⁹ Anyone who does not deny himself on that day must be cut off from his people. ³⁰ I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day. ³¹ You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. ³² It is a sabbath of rest for you, and you must deny yourselves. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your sabbath."

LEV 23:33 The LORD said to Moses, ³⁴ "Say to the Israelites: `On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the LORD's Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. ³⁵ The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. ³⁶ For seven days present offerings made to the LORD by fire, and on the eighth day hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the LORD by fire. It is the closing assembly; do no regular work.

LEV 23:37 (" `These are the LORD's appointed feasts, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing offerings made to the LORD by fire--the burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings required for each day. ³⁸ These offerings are in addition to those for the LORD's Sabbaths and in addition to your gifts and whatever you have vowed and all the freewill offerings you give to the LORD.)

LEV 23:39 " `So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the LORD for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. ⁴⁰ On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days. ⁴¹ Celebrate this as a festival to the LORD for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. ⁴² Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths ⁴³ so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the LORD your God.' "

LEV 23:44 So Moses announced to the Israelites the appointed feasts of the LORD.

LEV 24:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Command the Israelites to bring you clear oil of pressed olives for the light so that the lamps may be kept burning continually. ³ Outside the curtain of

the Testimony in the Tent of Meeting, Aaron is to tend the lamps before the LORD from evening till morning, continually. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. ⁴ The lamps on the pure gold lampstand before the LORD must be tended continually.

LEV 24:5 "Take fine flour and bake twelve loaves of bread, using two-tenths of an ephah for each loaf. ⁶ Set them in two rows, six in each row, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. ⁷ Along each row put some pure incense as a memorial portion to represent the bread and to be an offering made to the LORD by fire. ⁸ This bread is to be set out before the LORD regularly, Sabbath after Sabbath, on behalf of the Israelites, as a lasting covenant. ⁹ It belongs to Aaron and his sons, who are to eat it in a holy place, because it is a most holy part of their regular share of the offerings made to the LORD by fire."

LEV 25:1 The LORD said to Moses on Mount Sinai, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When you enter the land I am going to give you, the land itself must observe a sabbath to the LORD. ³ For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. ⁴ But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards. ⁵ Do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the grapes of your untended vines. The land is to have a year of rest. ⁶ Whatever the land yields during the sabbath year will be food for you--for yourself, your manservant and maidservant, and the hired worker and temporary resident who live among you, ⁷ as well as for your livestock and the wild animals in your land. Whatever the land produces may be eaten.

LEV 25:8 " `Count off seven sabbaths of years--seven times seven years--so that the seven sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. ⁹ Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. ¹⁰ Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. ¹¹ The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields.

LEV 25:13 " `In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property.

LEV 26:1 " `Do not make idols or set up an image or a sacred stone for yourselves, and do not place a carved stone in your land to bow down before it. I am the LORD your God.

LEV 26:2 " `Observe my Sabbaths and have reverence for my sanctuary. I am the LORD.

LEV 26:46 These are the decrees, the laws and the regulations that the LORD established on Mount Sinai between himself and the Israelites through Moses.

LEV 27:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate persons to the LORD by giving equivalent values, ³ set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel; ⁴ and if it is a female, set her value at thirty shekels. ⁵ If it is a person between the ages of five and twenty, set the value of a male at twenty shekels and of a female at ten shekels. ⁶ If it is a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels of silver and that of a female at three shekels of silver. ⁷ If it is a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels and of a female at ten shekels. ⁸ If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, he is to present the person to the priest, who will set the value for him according to what the man making the vow can afford.

LEV 27:9 " `If what he vowed is an animal that is acceptable as an offering to the LORD, such an animal given to the LORD becomes holy. ¹⁰ He must not exchange it or substitute a good one for a bad one, or a bad one for a good one; if he should substitute one animal for another, both it and the substitute become holy. ¹¹ If what he vowed is a ceremonially unclean animal--one that is not acceptable as an offering to the LORD--the animal must be presented to the priest, ¹² who will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, that is what it will be. ¹³ If the owner wishes to redeem the animal, he must add a fifth to its value.

LEV 27:14 " `If a man dedicates his house as something holy to the LORD, the priest will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, so it will remain. ¹⁵ If the man who dedicates his house redeems it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the house will again become his.

LEV 27:16 " `If a man dedicates to the LORD part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it--fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. ¹⁷ If he dedicates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. ¹⁸ But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, the priest will determine the value according to the number of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. ¹⁹ If the man who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the field will again become his. ²⁰ If, however, he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold it to someone else, it can never be redeemed. ²¹ When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD; it will become the property of the priests.

LEV 27:22 " `If a man dedicates to the LORD a field he has bought, which is not part of his family land, ²³ the priest will determine its value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the man must pay its value on that day as something holy to the LORD. ²⁴ In the Year of Jubilee the field will

revert to the person from whom he bought it, the one whose land it was. ²⁵ Every value is to be set according to the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs to the shekel.

LEV 27:26 " `No one, however, may dedicate the firstborn of an animal, since the firstborn already belongs to the LORD; whether an ox or a sheep, it is the LORD's. ²⁷ If it is one of the unclean animals, he may buy it back at its set value, adding a fifth of the value to it. If he does not redeem it, it is to be sold at its set value.

LEV 27:28 " `But nothing that a man owns and devotes to the LORD--whether man or animal or family land--may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the LORD.

LEV 27:29 " `No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; he must be put to death.

LEV 27:30 " `A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. ³¹ If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. ³² The entire tithe of the herd and flock--every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod--will be holy to the LORD. ³³ He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.' "

LEV 27:34 These are the commands the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.

NU 5:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Command the Israelites to send away from the camp anyone who has an infectious skin disease or a discharge of any kind, or who is ceremonially unclean because of a dead body. ³ Send away male and female alike; send them outside the camp so they will not defile their camp, where I dwell among them." ⁴ The Israelites did this; they sent them outside the camp. They did just as the LORD had instructed Moses.

NU 6:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the LORD as a Nazirite, ³ he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins. ⁴ As long as he is a Nazirite, he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skins.

NU 6:5 " `During the entire period of his vow of separation no razor may be used on his head. He must be holy until the period of his separation to the LORD is over; he must let the hair of his head grow long. ⁶ Throughout the period of his separation to the LORD he must not go near a dead body. ⁷ Even if his own father or mother or brother or sister dies, he must not make himself ceremonially unclean on account of them, because the symbol of his separation to God is on his head. ⁸ Throughout the period of his separation he is consecrated to the LORD.

NU 6:9 " `If someone dies suddenly in his presence, thus defiling the hair he has dedicated, he must shave his head on the day of his cleansing--the seventh day. ¹⁰ Then on the eighth day he must bring two doves or two young pigeons to the priest at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ¹¹ The priest is to offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering to make atonement for him because he sinned by being in the presence of the dead body. That same day he is to consecrate his head. ¹² He must dedicate himself to the LORD for the period of his separation and must bring a year-old male lamb as a guilt offering. The previous days do not count, because he became defiled during his separation.

NU 6:13 " `Now this is the law for the Nazirite when the period of his separation is over. He is to be brought to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ¹⁴ There he is to present his offerings to the LORD: a year-old male lamb without defect for a burnt offering, a year-old ewe lamb without defect for a sin offering, a ram without defect for a fellowship offering, ¹⁵ together with their grain offerings and drink offerings, and a basket of bread made without yeast--cakes made of fine flour mixed with oil, and wafers spread with oil.

NU 6:16 " `The priest is to present them before the LORD and make the sin offering and the burnt offering. ¹⁷ He is to present the basket of unleavened bread and is to sacrifice the ram as a fellowship offering to the LORD, together with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 6:18 " `Then at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the Nazirite must shave off the hair that he dedicated. He is to take the hair and put it in the fire that is under the sacrifice of the fellowship offering.

NU 6:19 " `After the Nazirite has shaved off the hair of his dedication, the priest is to place in his hands a boiled shoulder of the ram, and a cake and a wafer from the basket, both made without yeast. ²⁰ The priest shall then wave them before the LORD as a wave offering; they are holy and belong to the priest, together with the breast that was waved and the thigh that was presented. After that, the Nazirite may drink wine.

NU 6:21 " `This is the law of the Nazirite who vows his offering to the LORD in accordance with his separation, in addition to whatever else he can afford. He must fulfill the vow he has made, according to the law of the Nazirite.' "

NU 9:9 Then the LORD said to Moses, ¹⁰ "Tell the Israelites: `When any of you or your descendants are unclean because of a dead body or are away on a journey, they may still celebrate the LORD's Passover. ¹¹ They are to celebrate it on the fourteenth day of the second month at twilight. They are to eat the lamb, together with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ¹² They must not leave any of it till morning or break any of its bones. When they celebrate the Passover, they must follow all the regulations. ¹³ But if a man who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, that person must be cut off from his people because

he did not present the LORD's offering at the appointed time. That man will bear the consequences of his sin.

NU 9:14 " `An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the LORD's Passover must do so in accordance with its rules and regulations. You must have the same regulations for the alien and the native-born.' "

NU 10:1 The LORD said to Moses: ² "Make two trumpets of hammered silver, and use them for calling the community together and for having the camps set out. ³ When both are sounded, the whole community is to assemble before you at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting. ⁴ If only one is sounded, the leaders--the heads of the clans of Israel--are to assemble before you. ⁵ When a trumpet blast is sounded, the tribes camping on the east are to set out. ⁶ At the sounding of a second blast, the camps on the south are to set out. The blast will be the signal for setting out. ⁷ To gather the assembly, blow the trumpets, but not with the same signal.

NU 10:8 "The sons of Aaron, the priests, are to blow the trumpets. This is to be a lasting ordinance for you and the generations to come. ⁹ When you go into battle in your own land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound a blast on the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the LORD your God and rescued from your enemies. ¹⁰ Also at your times of rejoicing--your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals--you are to sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and they will be a memorial for you before your God. I am the LORD your God."

NU 15:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `After you enter the land I am giving you as a home ³ and you present to the LORD offerings made by fire, from the herd or the flock, as an aroma pleasing to the LORD--whether burnt offerings or sacrifices, for special vows or freewill offerings or festival offerings-- ⁴ then the one who brings his offering shall present to the LORD a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil. ⁵ With each lamb for the burnt offering or the sacrifice, prepare a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering.

NU 15:6 " `With a ram prepare a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a third of a hin of oil, ⁷ and a third of a hin of wine as a drink offering. Offer it as an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

NU 15:8 " `When you prepare a young bull as a burnt offering or sacrifice, for a special vow or a fellowship offering to the LORD, ⁹ bring with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with half a hin of oil. ¹⁰ Also bring half a hin of wine as a drink offering. It will be an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹¹ Each bull or ram, each lamb or young goat, is to be prepared in this manner. ¹² Do this for each one, for as many as you prepare.

NU 15:13 " `Everyone who is native-born must do these things in this way when he brings an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁴ For the generations to come, whenever an alien or anyone else living among you presents an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, he must do exactly as you do. ¹⁵ The community is to have the same rules for you and for the alien living among you; this is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You and the alien shall be the same before the LORD: ¹⁶ The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the alien living among you.' "

NU 15:17 The LORD said to Moses, ¹⁸ "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `When you enter the land to which I am taking you ¹⁹ and you eat the food of the land, present a portion as an offering to the LORD. ²⁰ Present a cake from the first of your ground meal and present it as an offering from the threshing floor. ²¹ Throughout the generations to come you are to give this offering to the LORD from the first of your ground meal.

NU 15:22 " `Now if you unintentionally fail to keep any of these commands the LORD gave Moses-- ²³ any of the LORD's commands to you through him, from the day the LORD gave them and continuing through the generations to come-- ²⁴ and if this is done unintentionally without the community being aware of it, then the whole community is to offer a young bull for a burnt offering as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, along with its prescribed grain offering and drink offering, and a male goat for a sin offering. ²⁵ The priest is to make atonement for the whole Israelite community, and they will be forgiven, for it was not intentional and they have brought to the LORD for their wrong an offering made by fire and a sin offering. ²⁶ The whole Israelite community and the aliens living among them will be forgiven, because all the people were involved in the unintentional wrong.

NU 15:27 " `But if just one person sins unintentionally, he must bring a year-old female goat for a sin offering. ²⁸ The priest is to make atonement before the LORD for the one who erred by sinning unintentionally, and when atonement has been made for him, he will be forgiven. ²⁹ One and the same law applies to everyone who sins unintentionally, whether he is a native-born Israelite or an alien.

NU 15:30 " `But anyone who sins defiantly, whether native-born or alien, blasphemes the LORD, and that person must be cut off from his people. ³¹ Because he has despised the LORD's word and broken his commands, that person must surely be cut off; his guilt remains on him.' "

NU 15:32 While the Israelites were in the desert, a man was found gathering wood on the Sabbath day. ³³ Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole assembly, ³⁴ and they kept him in custody, because it was not clear what should be done to him. ³⁵ Then the LORD said to Moses, "The man must die. The whole assembly must stone

him outside the camp." ³⁶ So the assembly took him outside the camp and stoned him to death, as the LORD commanded Moses.

NU 15:37 The LORD said to Moses, ³⁸ "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel. ³⁹ You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. ⁴⁰ Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. ⁴¹ I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God.' "

NU 18:1 The LORD said to Aaron, "You, your sons and your father's family are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the sanctuary, and you and your sons alone are to bear the responsibility for offenses against the priesthood. ² Bring your fellow Levites from your ancestral tribe to join you and assist you when you and your sons minister before the Tent of the Testimony. ³ They are to be responsible to you and are to perform all the duties of the Tent, but they must not go near the furnishings of the sanctuary or the altar, or both they and you will die. ⁴ They are to join you and be responsible for the care of the Tent of Meeting--all the work at the Tent--and no one else may come near where you are.

NU 18:5 "You are to be responsible for the care of the sanctuary and the altar, so that wrath will not fall on the Israelites again. ⁶ I myself have selected your fellow Levites from among the Israelites as a gift to you, dedicated to the LORD to do the work at the Tent of Meeting. ⁷ But only you and your sons may serve as priests in connection with everything at the altar and inside the curtain. I am giving you the service of the priesthood as a gift. Anyone else who comes near the sanctuary must be put to death."

NU 18:8 Then the LORD said to Aaron, "I myself have put you in charge of the offerings presented to me; all the holy offerings the Israelites give me I give to you and your sons as your portion and regular share. ⁹ You are to have the part of the most holy offerings that is kept from the fire. From all the gifts they bring me as most holy offerings, whether grain or sin or guilt offerings, that part belongs to you and your sons. ¹⁰ Eat it as something most holy; every male shall eat it. You must regard it as holy.

NU 18:11 "This also is yours: whatever is set aside from the gifts of all the wave offerings of the Israelites. I give this to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. Everyone in your household who is ceremonially clean may eat it.

NU 18:12 "I give you all the finest olive oil and all the finest new wine and grain they give the LORD as the firstfruits of their harvest. ¹³ All the land's firstfruits that they bring to the LORD will be yours. Everyone in your household who is ceremonially clean may eat it.

NU 18:14 "Everything in Israel that is devoted to the LORD is yours. ¹⁵ The first offspring of every womb, both man and animal, that is offered to the LORD is yours. But you must redeem every firstborn son and every firstborn male of unclean animals. ¹⁶ When they are a month old, you must redeem them at the redemption price set at five shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel, which weighs twenty gerahs.

NU 18:17 "But you must not redeem the firstborn of an ox, a sheep or a goat; they are holy. Sprinkle their blood on the altar and burn their fat as an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ¹⁸ Their meat is to be yours, just as the breast of the wave offering and the right thigh are yours. ¹⁹ Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the LORD I give to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD for both you and your offspring."

NU 18:20 The LORD said to Aaron, "You will have no inheritance in their land, nor will you have any share among them; I am your share and your inheritance among the Israelites.

NU 18:21 "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. ²² From now on the Israelites must not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. ²³ It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offenses against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. ²⁴ Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: 'They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.' "

NU 18:25 The LORD said to Moses, ²⁶ "Speak to the Levites and say to them: 'When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the LORD's offering. ²⁷ Your offering will be reckoned to you as grain from the threshing floor or juice from the winepress. ²⁸ In this way you also will present an offering to the LORD from all the tithes you receive from the Israelites. From these tithes you must give the LORD's portion to Aaron the priest. ²⁹ You must present as the LORD's portion the best and holiest part of everything given to you.'

NU 18:30 "Say to the Levites: 'When you present the best part, it will be reckoned to you as the product of the threshing floor or the winepress. ³¹ You and your households may eat the rest of it anywhere, for it is your wages for your work at the Tent of Meeting. ³² By presenting the best part of it you will not be guilty in this matter; then you will not defile the holy offerings of the Israelites, and you will not die.' "

NU 19:1 The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: ² "This is a requirement of the law that the LORD has commanded: Tell the Israelites to bring you a red heifer without defect or blemish and that has never been under a yoke. ³ Give it to Eleazar the priest; it is to be taken outside the

camp and slaughtered in his presence. ⁴ Then Eleazar the priest is to take some of its blood on his finger and sprinkle it seven times toward the front of the Tent of Meeting. ⁵ While he watches, the heifer is to be burned--its hide, flesh, blood and offal. ⁶ The priest is to take some cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet wool and throw them onto the burning heifer. ⁷ After that, the priest must wash his clothes and bathe himself with water. He may then come into the camp, but he will be ceremonially unclean till evening. ⁸ The man who burns it must also wash his clothes and bathe with water, and he too will be unclean till evening.

NU 19:9 "A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer and put them in a ceremonially clean place outside the camp. They shall be kept by the Israelite community for use in the water of cleansing; it is for purification from sin. ¹⁰ The man who gathers up the ashes of the heifer must also wash his clothes, and he too will be unclean till evening. This will be a lasting ordinance both for the Israelites and for the aliens living among them.

NU 19:11 "Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days. ¹² He must purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third and seventh days, he will not be clean. ¹³ Whoever touches the dead body of anyone and fails to purify himself defiles the LORD's tabernacle. That person must be cut off from Israel. Because the water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on him, he is unclean; his uncleanness remains on him.

NU 19:14 "This is the law that applies when a person dies in a tent: Anyone who enters the tent and anyone who is in it will be unclean for seven days, ¹⁵ and every open container without a lid fastened on it will be unclean.

NU 19:16 "Anyone out in the open who touches someone who has been killed with a sword or someone who has died a natural death, or anyone who touches a human bone or a grave, will be unclean for seven days.

NU 19:17 "For the unclean person, put some ashes from the burned purification offering into a jar and pour fresh water over them. ¹⁸ Then a man who is ceremonially clean is to take some hyssop, dip it in the water and sprinkle the tent and all the furnishings and the people who were there. He must also sprinkle anyone who has touched a human bone or a grave or someone who has been killed or someone who has died a natural death. ¹⁹ The man who is clean is to sprinkle the unclean person on the third and seventh days, and on the seventh day he is to purify him. The person being cleansed must wash his clothes and bathe with water, and that evening he will be clean. ²⁰ But if a person who is unclean does not purify himself, he must be cut off from the community, because he has defiled the sanctuary of the LORD. The water of cleansing has not been sprinkled on him, and he is unclean. ²¹ This is a lasting ordinance for them.

"The man who sprinkles the water of cleansing must also wash his clothes, and anyone who touches the water of cleansing will be unclean till evening. ²² Anything that an unclean person touches becomes unclean, and anyone who touches it becomes unclean till evening."

NU 28:1 The LORD said to Moses, ² "Give this command to the Israelites and say to them: 'See that you present to me at the appointed time the food for my offerings made by fire, as an aroma pleasing to me.' ³ Say to them: 'This is the offering made by fire that you are to present to the LORD: two lambs a year old without defect, as a regular burnt offering each day. ⁴ Prepare one lamb in the morning and the other at twilight, ⁵ together with a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives. ⁶ This is the regular burnt offering instituted at Mount Sinai as a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. ⁷ The accompanying drink offering is to be a quarter of a hin of fermented drink with each lamb. Pour out the drink offering to the LORD at the sanctuary. ⁸ Prepare the second lamb at twilight, along with the same kind of grain offering and drink offering that you prepare in the morning. This is an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the LORD.

NU 28:9 " 'On the Sabbath day, make an offering of two lambs a year old without defect, together with its drink offering and a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil. ¹⁰ This is the burnt offering for every Sabbath, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering.

NU 28:11 " 'On the first of every month, present to the LORD a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. ¹² With each bull there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; with the ram, a grain offering of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; ¹³ and with each lamb, a grain offering of a tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil. This is for a burnt offering, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. ¹⁴ With each bull there is to be a drink offering of half a hin of wine; with the ram, a third of a hin; and with each lamb, a quarter of a hin. This is the monthly burnt offering to be made at each new moon during the year. ¹⁵ Besides the regular burnt offering with its drink offering, one male goat is to be presented to the LORD as a sin offering.

NU 28:16 " 'On the fourteenth day of the first month the LORD's Passover is to be held. ¹⁷ On the fifteenth day of this month there is to be a festival; for seven days eat bread made without yeast. ¹⁸ On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. ¹⁹ Present to the LORD an offering made by fire, a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. ²⁰ With each bull prepare a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; ²¹ and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. ²² Include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you. ²³ Prepare these in addition to the regular morning burnt offering. ²⁴ In this way prepare the food for the offering made by fire every day for seven days as an aroma pleasing to the LORD; it is to be prepared in addition to the regular burnt offering and its drink offering. ²⁵ On the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.

NU 28:26 " `On the day of firstfruits, when you present to the LORD an offering of new grain during the Feast of Weeks, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. ²⁷ Present a burnt offering of two young bulls, one ram and seven male lambs a year old as an aroma pleasing to the LORD. ²⁸ With each bull there is to be a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; ²⁹ and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. ³⁰ Include one male goat to make atonement for you. ³¹ Prepare these together with their drink offerings, in addition to the regular burnt offering and its grain offering. Be sure the animals are without defect.

NU 29:1 " `On the first day of the seventh month hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to sound the trumpets. ² As an aroma pleasing to the LORD, prepare a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. ³ With the bull prepare a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; ⁴ and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. ⁵ Include one male goat as a sin offering to make atonement for you. ⁶ These are in addition to the monthly and daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and drink offerings as specified. They are offerings made to the LORD by fire--a pleasing aroma.

NU 29:7 " `On the tenth day of this seventh month hold a sacred assembly. You must deny yourselves and do no work. ⁸ Present as an aroma pleasing to the LORD a burnt offering of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. ⁹ With the bull prepare a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; with the ram, two-tenths; ¹⁰ and with each of the seven lambs, one-tenth. ¹¹ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the sin offering for atonement and the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

NU 29:12 " `On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. Celebrate a festival to the LORD for seven days. ¹³ Present an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, a burnt offering of thirteen young bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. ¹⁴ With each of the thirteen bulls prepare a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil; with each of the two rams, two-tenths; ¹⁵ and with each of the fourteen lambs, one-tenth. ¹⁶ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 29:17 " `On the second day prepare twelve young bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. ¹⁸ With the bulls, rams and lambs, prepare their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. ¹⁹ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering, and their drink offerings.

NU 29:20 " `On the third day prepare eleven bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. ²¹ With the bulls, rams and lambs, prepare their grain offerings and drink

offerings according to the number specified. ²² Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 29:23 " `On the fourth day prepare ten bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. ²⁴ With the bulls, rams and lambs, prepare their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. ²⁵ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 29:26 " `On the fifth day prepare nine bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. ²⁷ With the bulls, rams and lambs, prepare their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. ²⁸ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 29:29 " `On the sixth day prepare eight bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. ³⁰ With the bulls, rams and lambs, prepare their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. ³¹ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 29:32 " `On the seventh day prepare seven bulls, two rams and fourteen male lambs a year old, all without defect. ³³ With the bulls, rams and lambs, prepare their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. ³⁴ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 29:35 " `On the eighth day hold an assembly and do no regular work. ³⁶ Present an offering made by fire as an aroma pleasing to the LORD, a burnt offering of one bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, all without defect. ³⁷ With the bull, the ram and the lambs, prepare their grain offerings and drink offerings according to the number specified. ³⁸ Include one male goat as a sin offering, in addition to the regular burnt offering with its grain offering and drink offering.

NU 29:39 " `In addition to what you vow and your freewill offerings, prepare these for the LORD at your appointed feasts: your burnt offerings, grain offerings, drink offerings and fellowship offerings. ' "

NU 30:1 Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: "This is what the LORD commands: ² When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

NU 30:3 "When a young woman still living in her father's house makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge ⁴ and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will stand. ⁵ But if her

father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand; the LORD will release her because her father has forbidden her.

NU 30:6 "If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself ⁷ and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. ⁸ But if her husband forbids her when he hears about it, he nullifies the vow that obligates her or the rash promise by which she obligates herself, and the LORD will release her.

NU 30:9 "Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her.

NU 30:10 "If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath ¹¹ and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her and does not forbid her, then all her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. ¹² But if her husband nullifies them when he hears about them, then none of the vows or pledges that came from her lips will stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the LORD will release her. ¹³ Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow she makes or any sworn pledge to deny herself. ¹⁴ But if her husband says nothing to her about it from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or the pledges binding on her. He confirms them by saying nothing to her when he hears about them. ¹⁵ If, however, he nullifies them some time after he hears about them, then he is responsible for her guilt."

DT 11:8 Observe therefore all the commands I am giving you today, so that you may have the strength to go in and take over the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, ⁹ and so that you may live long in the land that the LORD swore to your forefathers to give to them and their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ The land you are entering to take over is not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden. ¹¹ But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven. ¹² It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.

DT 11:13 So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today--to love the LORD your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul-- ¹⁴ then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. ¹⁵ I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

DT 11:16 Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them. ¹⁷ Then the LORD's anger will burn against you, and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will soon perish from the good land the LORD is giving you. ¹⁸ Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as

symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, ²¹ so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

DT 12:4 You must not worship the LORD your God in their way. ⁵ But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go; ⁶ there bring your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, what you have vowed to give and your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks. ⁷ There, in the presence of the LORD your God, you and your families shall eat and shall rejoice in everything you have put your hand to, because the LORD your God has blessed you.

DT 12:8 You are not to do as we do here today, everyone as he sees fit, ⁹ since you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the LORD your God is giving you. ¹⁰ But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, and he will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety. ¹¹ Then to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name--there you are to bring everything I command you: your burnt offerings and sacrifices, your tithes and special gifts, and all the choice possessions you have vowed to the LORD. ¹² And there rejoice before the LORD your God, you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns, who have no allotment or inheritance of their own. ¹³ Be careful not to sacrifice your burnt offerings anywhere you please. ¹⁴ Offer them only at the place the LORD will choose in one of your tribes, and there observe everything I command you.

DT 12:15 Nevertheless, you may slaughter your animals in any of your towns and eat as much of the meat as you want, as if it were gazelle or deer, according to the blessing the LORD your God gives you. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it. ¹⁶ But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. ¹⁷ You must not eat in your own towns the tithe of your grain and new wine and oil, or the firstborn of your herds and flocks, or whatever you have vowed to give, or your freewill offerings or special gifts. ¹⁸ Instead, you are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place the LORD your God will choose--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites from your towns--and you are to rejoice before the LORD your God in everything you put your hand to. ¹⁹ Be careful not to neglect the Levites as long as you live in your land.

DT 12:20 When the LORD your God has enlarged your territory as he promised you, and you crave meat and say, "I would like some meat," then you may eat as much of it as you want. ²¹ If the place where the LORD your God chooses to put his Name is too far away from you, you may slaughter animals from the herds and flocks the LORD has given you, as I have commanded you, and in your own towns you may eat as much of them as you want. ²² Eat them as you would

gazelle or deer. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat. ²³ But be sure you do not eat the blood, because the blood is the life, and you must not eat the life with the meat. ²⁴ You must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water. ²⁵ Do not eat it, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

DT 12:26 But take your consecrated things and whatever you have vowed to give, and go to the place the LORD will choose. ²⁷ Present your burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD your God, both the meat and the blood. The blood of your sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the LORD your God, but you may eat the meat. ²⁸ Be careful to obey all these regulations I am giving you, so that it may always go well with you and your children after you, because you will be doing what is good and right in the eyes of the LORD your God.

DT 12:29 The LORD your God will cut off before you the nations you are about to invade and dispossess. But when you have driven them out and settled in their land, ³⁰ and after they have been destroyed before you, be careful not to be ensnared by inquiring about their gods, saying, "How do these nations serve their gods? We will do the same." ³¹ You must not worship the LORD your God in their way, because in worshiping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the LORD hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods.

DT 12:32 See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

DT 13:1 If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, ² and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," ³ you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. ⁴ It is the LORD your God you must follow, and him you must revere. Keep his commands and obey him; serve him and hold fast to him. ⁵ That prophet or dreamer must be put to death, because he preached rebellion against the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery; he has tried to turn you from the way the LORD your God commanded you to follow. You must purge the evil from among you.

DT 13:6 If your very own brother, or your son or daughter, or the wife you love, or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods that neither you nor your fathers have known, ⁷ gods of the peoples around you, whether near or far, from one end of the land to the other), ⁸ do not yield to him or listen to him. Show him no pity. Do not spare him or shield him. ⁹ You must certainly put him to death. Your hand must be the first in putting him to death, and then the hands of all the people. ¹⁰ Stone him to death, because he tried to turn you

away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. ¹¹ Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and no one among you will do such an evil thing again.

DT 13:12 If you hear it said about one of the towns the LORD your God is giving you to live in ¹³ that wicked men have arisen among you and have led the people of their town astray, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods" (gods you have not known), ¹⁴ then you must inquire, probe and investigate it thoroughly. And if it is true and it has been proved that this detestable thing has been done among you, ¹⁵ you must certainly put to the sword all who live in that town. Destroy it completely, both its people and its livestock. ¹⁶ Gather all the plunder of the town into the middle of the public square and completely burn the town and all its plunder as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God. It is to remain a ruin forever, never to be rebuilt. ¹⁷ None of those condemned things shall be found in your hands, so that the LORD will turn from his fierce anger; he will show you mercy, have compassion on you, and increase your numbers, as he promised on oath to your forefathers, ¹⁸ because you obey the LORD your God, keeping all his commands that I am giving you today and doing what is right in his eyes.

DT 14:22 Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year. ²³ Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always. ²⁴ But if that place is too distant and you have been blessed by the LORD your God and cannot carry your tithe (because the place where the LORD will choose to put his Name is so far away), ²⁵ then exchange your tithe for silver, and take the silver with you and go to the place the LORD your God will choose. ²⁶ Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the LORD your God and rejoice. ²⁷ And do not neglect the Levites living in your towns, for they have no allotment or inheritance of their own.

DT 14:28 At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, ²⁹ so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

DT 15:19 Set apart for the LORD your God every firstborn male of your herds and flocks. Do not put the firstborn of your oxen to work, and do not shear the firstborn of your sheep. ²⁰ Each year you and your family are to eat them in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose. ²¹ If an animal has a defect, is lame or blind, or has any serious flaw, you must not sacrifice it to the LORD your God. ²² You are to eat it in your own towns. Both the ceremonially unclean and the clean may eat it, as if it were gazelle or deer. ²³ But you must not eat the blood; pour it out on the ground like water.

DT 16:1 Observe the month of Abib and celebrate the Passover of the LORD your God, because in the month of Abib he brought you out of Egypt by night. ² Sacrifice as the Passover to the LORD your God an animal from your flock or herd at the place the LORD will choose as a dwelling for his Name. ³ Do not eat it with bread made with yeast, but for seven days eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction, because you left Egypt in haste--so that all the days of your life you may remember the time of your departure from Egypt. ⁴ Let no yeast be found in your possession in all your land for seven days. Do not let any of the meat you sacrifice on the evening of the first day remain until morning.

DT 16:5 You must not sacrifice the Passover in any town the LORD your God gives you ⁶ except in the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name. There you must sacrifice the Passover in the evening, when the sun goes down, on the anniversary of your departure from Egypt. ⁷ Roast it and eat it at the place the LORD your God will choose. Then in the morning return to your tents. ⁸ For six days eat unleavened bread and on the seventh day hold an assembly to the LORD your God and do no work.

DT 16:9 Count off seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the standing grain. ¹⁰ Then celebrate the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God by giving a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings the LORD your God has given you. ¹¹ And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you. ¹² Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and follow carefully these decrees.

DT 16:13 Celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. ¹⁴ Be joyful at your Feast--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. ¹⁵ For seven days celebrate the Feast to the LORD your God at the place the LORD will choose. For the LORD your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete.

DT 16:16 Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the LORD empty-handed: ¹⁷ Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the LORD your God has blessed you.

DT 16:21 Do not set up any wooden Asherah pole beside the altar you build to the LORD your God, ²² and do not erect a sacred stone, for these the LORD your God hates.

DT 17:1 Do not sacrifice to the LORD your God an ox or a sheep that has any defect or flaw in it, for that would be detestable to him.

DT 18:1 The priests, who are Levites--indeed the whole tribe of Levi--are to have no allotment or inheritance with Israel. They shall live on the offerings made to the LORD by fire, for that is their inheritance. ² They shall have no inheritance among their brothers; the LORD is their inheritance, as he promised them.

DT 18:3 This is the share due the priests from the people who sacrifice a bull or a sheep: the shoulder, the jowls and the inner parts. ⁴ You are to give them the firstfruits of your grain, new wine and oil, and the first wool from the shearing of your sheep, ⁵ for the LORD your God has chosen them and their descendants out of all your tribes to stand and minister in the LORD's name always.

DT 18:6 If a Levite moves from one of your towns anywhere in Israel where he is living, and comes in all earnestness to the place the LORD will choose, ⁷ he may minister in the name of the LORD his God like all his fellow Levites who serve there in the presence of the LORD. ⁸ He is to share equally in their benefits, even though he has received money from the sale of family possessions.

DT 18:9 When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there. ¹⁰ Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, ¹¹ or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead. ¹² Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD, and because of these detestable practices the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you. ¹³ You must be blameless before the LORD your God.

DT 18:14 The nations you will dispossess listen to those who practice sorcery or divination. But as for you, the LORD your God has not permitted you to do so. ¹⁵ The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. ¹⁶ For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, "Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die."

DT 18:17 The LORD said to me: "What they say is good. ¹⁸ I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. ¹⁹ If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. ²⁰ But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death."

DT 18:21 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" ²² If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or

come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

DT 21:1 If a man is found slain, lying in a field in the land the LORD your God is giving you to possess, and it is not known who killed him, ² your elders and judges shall go out and measure the distance from the body to the neighboring towns. ³ Then the elders of the town nearest the body shall take a heifer that has never been worked and has never worn a yoke ⁴ and lead her down to a valley that has not been plowed or planted and where there is a flowing stream. There in the valley they are to break the heifer's neck. ⁵ The priests, the sons of Levi, shall step forward, for the LORD your God has chosen them to minister and to pronounce blessings in the name of the LORD and to decide all cases of dispute and assault. ⁶ Then all the elders of the town nearest the body shall wash their hands over the heifer whose neck was broken in the valley, ⁷ and they shall declare: "Our hands did not shed this blood, nor did our eyes see it done. ⁸ Accept this atonement for your people Israel, whom you have redeemed, O LORD, and do not hold your people guilty of the blood of an innocent man." And the bloodshed will be atoned for. ⁹ So you will purge from yourselves the guilt of shedding innocent blood, since you have done what is right in the eyes of the LORD.

DT 23:1 No one who has been emasculated by crushing or cutting may enter the assembly of the LORD.

DT 23:2 No one born of a forbidden marriage nor any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation.

DT 23:3 No Ammonite or Moabite or any of his descendants may enter the assembly of the LORD, even down to the tenth generation. ⁴ For they did not come to meet you with bread and water on your way when you came out of Egypt, and they hired Balaam son of Beor from Pethor in Aram Naharaim to pronounce a curse on you. ⁵ However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. ⁶ Do not seek a treaty of friendship with them as long as you live.

DT 23:7 Do not abhor an Edomite, for he is your brother. Do not abhor an Egyptian, because you lived as an alien in his country. ⁸ The third generation of children born to them may enter the assembly of the LORD.

DT 23:17 No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. ¹⁸ You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God to pay any vow, because the LORD your God detests them both.

DT 26:1 When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, ² take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket.

Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name ³ and say to the priest in office at the time, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the land the LORD swore to our forefathers to give us." ⁴ The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. ⁵ Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. ⁶ But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. ⁷ Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. ⁸ So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. ⁹ He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; ¹⁰ and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. ¹¹ And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

DT 26:12 When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. ¹³ Then say to the LORD your God: "I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them. ¹⁴ I have not eaten any of the sacred portion while I was in mourning, nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean, nor have I offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the LORD my God; I have done everything you commanded me. ¹⁵ Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us as you promised on oath to our forefathers, a land flowing with milk and honey."

DT 26:16 The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹⁷ You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him. ¹⁸ And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. ¹⁹ He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honor high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.

DT 31:1 Then Moses went out and spoke these words to all Israel: ² "I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. The LORD has said to me, 'You shall not cross the Jordan.' ³ The LORD your God himself will cross over ahead of you. He will destroy these nations before you, and you will take possession of their land. Joshua also will cross over ahead of you, as the LORD said. ⁴ And the LORD will do to them what he did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, whom he destroyed along with their land. ⁵ The LORD will deliver them to you, and you must do to them all that I have commanded you. ⁶ Be strong and

courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you."

DT 31:7 Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. ⁸ The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

DT 31:9 So Moses wrote down this law and gave it to the priests, the sons of Levi, who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and to all the elders of Israel. ¹⁰ Then Moses commanded them: "At the end of every seven years, in the year for canceling debts, during the Feast of Tabernacles, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose, you shall read this law before them in their hearing. ¹² Assemble the people--men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns--so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law. ¹³ Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

DT 31:14 The LORD said to Moses, "Now the day of your death is near. Call Joshua and present yourselves at the Tent of Meeting, where I will commission him." So Moses and Joshua came and presented themselves at the Tent of Meeting.

DT 31:15 Then the LORD appeared at the Tent in a pillar of cloud, and the cloud stood over the entrance to the Tent. ¹⁶ And the LORD said to Moses: "You are going to rest with your fathers, and these people will soon prostitute themselves to the foreign gods of the land they are entering. They will forsake me and break the covenant I made with them. ¹⁷ On that day I will become angry with them and forsake them; I will hide my face from them, and they will be destroyed. Many disasters and difficulties will come upon them, and on that day they will ask, 'Have not these disasters come upon us because our God is not with us?' ¹⁸ And I will certainly hide my face on that day because of all their wickedness in turning to other gods.

DT 31:19 "Now write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the Israelites and have them sing it, so that it may be a witness for me against them. ²⁰ When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, the land I promised on oath to their forefathers, and when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods and worship them, rejecting me and breaking my covenant. ²¹ And when many disasters and difficulties come upon them, this song will testify against them, because it will not be forgotten by their descendants. I know what they are disposed to do, even before I bring them into the land I promised them on oath." ²² So Moses wrote down this song that day and taught it to the Israelites.

DT 31:23 The LORD gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: "Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you."

DT 31:24 After Moses finished writing in a book the words of this law from beginning to end,
25 he gave this command to the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD: 26
"Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God.
There it will remain as a witness against you. 27 For I know how rebellious and stiff-necked you
are. If you have been rebellious against the LORD while I am still alive and with you, how much
more will you rebel after I die! 28 Assemble before me all the elders of your tribes and all your
officials, so that I can speak these words in their hearing and call heaven and earth to testify
against them. 29 For I know that after my death you are sure to become utterly corrupt and to
turn from the way I have commanded you. In days to come, disaster will fall upon you because
you will do evil in the sight of the LORD and provoke him to anger by what your hands have
made."

About the Commentators

Rudolph C. Barnes, Jr. is a practicing attorney in Little Mountain, SC, and serves on the Board of Governors of the South Carolina Bar. He is a retired United Methodist pastor and a retired colonel in the Army JAGC and recipient of the Legion of Merit. He has written extensively on the legitimacy of military operations, including Military Legitimacy: Might and Right in the New Millennium, Frank Cass, London, 1996, and has led continuing education programs for the South Carolina Bar on religion and the law. He has a B.A. in Political Science from The Citadel, M.P.A. and J.D. degrees from the University of South Carolina and is a graduate of the Army War College.

Waleed El-Ansary is Professor and University Chair of Islamic Studies in Theology at Xavier University. He studied at George Washington University (M.Phil 2005, Ph.D 2006) and was Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Carolina, where he participated in interfaith dialogue activities and provided commentary for this book. He has also been a consultant to the Grand Mufti of Egypt and authored numerous publications in the areas of religion, science and economics, and was co-editor of Muslim and Christian Understanding: Theory and Application of "A Common Word", Palgrave MacMillan, 2010.

James Herbert Nates, Jr. has been a United Methodist pastor for fifty years and is now serving Ashland United Methodist Church in Columbia, S.C. Rev. Nates graduated from the University of South Carolina and Duke Divinity School, attended Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and completed course work for a S.T.M., did post graduate work at Wesley Theological Seminary (American University) and Saint Paul School of Theology and was presented a D.D. by Claflin University. Rev. Nates has served as a staff member of Boards of Education and Christian Social Concerns of the South Carolina United Methodist Conference and has served adult and student ministries on numerous church boards and agencies, and he continues to be active in social justice activities and interfaith dialogue groups.