

Tenth Lesson from the Synoptic Gospels

The hidden and Rich meaning behind Jesus' words and sayings in the gospel of Mark

1. Mk 1:44 The cleansing of the leper and certified by the priest

Lev 14:3-7 3: The priest is to go outside the camp and examine them. If they have been healed of their defiling skin disease, the priest shall order that two live clean birds and some cedar wood, scarlet yarn and hyssop be brought for the person to be cleansed. Then the priest shall order that one of the birds be killed over fresh water in a clay pot. 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. Seven times he shall sprinkle the one to be cleansed of the defiling disease, and then pronounce them clean. After that, he is to release the live bird in the open fields.

Two birds are used. One dies (Jesus dies bearing the guilt of the humanity), and one lives (The humanity is saved by the sacrifice of Jesus). The leper, like the living bird, goes free. It is made possible with the blood of the sacrificed. Christ would ultimately cleanse us with his own blood. He dies, we go free. What a glorious picture.

2. **Mk 1:44 Messianic secret** Don't tell this anyone. One of the most predominant themes in Mark's Gospel is the messianic secret. Jesus does not reveal or admit his Messiahship in the first half of Mark's Gospel. In the second half of the Gospel, however, he acknowledges it to the disciples after Peter's confession, but commands them not to tell anybody (8:27-30). The demons realized who he was, but he commanded them to stay silent (1:34; 3:12). Some who were healed by Jesus also knew who he was, yet they too were commanded to keep it to themselves (1:43-45 et al.).

What is the messianic secret? Jesus wanted to hide His identity from His enemies by commanding the disciples to keep silent about His mission on earth and the miracles He performed. Why? In the first century Palestine, people were looking for a Messiah who would be a political revolutionary. They were looking for a king who would come in and release the nation from the Roman domination. They demanded the release of Barabbas, a political zealot, instead of christ (Mt 27:15-23). Their demand shows that they wanted a political savior. They failed to grasp the full role of the Messiah. They failed to grasp the expectations in the prophetic writings (Isaiah 53) that the Messiah would not only be a political ruler but also a suffering servant. Jesus kept his identity hidden so that he would not encourage these incomplete expectations and bring upon himself the wrath of the Roman government before the appointed time

4. Prominent Jewish Religious and Political Groups:

| Name | Description | Agreement with Jesus | Disagreement with Jesus |
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| Pharisees | Strict religious group who advocated obedience to the most minute portion of Jewish law and traditions. Very influential in the synagogues | Respect for law Belief in the resurrection of the dead, spirits and angels | Rejected Jesus as the Messiah because Jesus did not follow all their traditions and they did not like Jesus' association with wicked and sinful people |
| Sadducees | Wealthy, upper class people, Jewish priestly class. They profited from the temple business. Major party of the Jewish council. | Showed respect for the first five books of Moses (Torah or Law books - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). Believed in the sanctity of the temple. | - Rejected the authority of the bible beyond the five books of Moses. - Denied the resurrection of the dead - Denied to believe in Spirits, angels... |
| Scribes or Teachers of the Law | Professional interpreters of the law, stressing the traditions and many teachers of the law were Pharisees | Respect for the law and committed to obeying God | Denied Jesus' authority to reinterpret the law. Rejected Jesus as the Messiah because he did not obey all of their traditions. |
| Herodians | A Jewish political party of King Herod's supporters. Tried to trap Jesus with questions and plotted to kill Jesus | | Saw Jesus a threat to their political future |
| Zealots | Jewish nationalists who were determined to end Roman rule in Israel | Believed in the Messiah but did not recognize Jesus as the One sent by God | Believed that Messiah must be a political leader who would deliver Israel from Roman occupation |
| Essenes | Jewish monastic group practicing ritual purity and personal holiness | Emphasized justice, honesty and commitment | Believed ceremonial rituals made them righteous. |

5. Mark 5: 9: demon said, “My name is legion”.

It is a military term. When Jesus cast out the demons, they entered a herd of pigs. The number of pigs was 2000. This detail suggests that the legion was composed of about 2000 demons. Why to pigs? Pigs were unclean animals in the bible. Mt 7:6 6 “Don’t give what is holy to dogs or throw your pearls to pigs. Lk 15: prodigal son eating the food of the pigs.

6. Mk 6:3 Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him

Did Jesus have brothers and sisters (siblings)? Jesus’ brothers are mentioned in several Bible verses. Matthew 12:46, Luke 8:19, and Mark 3:31 say that Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see Him. Matthew 13:55 tells us that Jesus had four brothers: James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas. The Bible also tells us that Jesus had sisters, but they are not named or numbered (Matthew 13:56). In John 7:1-10, His brothers go on to the festival while Jesus stays behind. In Acts 1:14, His brothers and mother are described as praying with the disciples. Galatians 1:19 mentions that James was Jesus’ brother. The most natural conclusion of these passages is to interpret that Jesus had actual blood half-siblings. But what does the Bible say about Jesus? The bible says that Jesus was the ONLY SON. John 3:16 reads, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life”. The sacrifice of Jesus as ‘the only son’ has been already foreseen and foretold in the OT.

Gen 22:2 Then God said: Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There offer him up as a burnt offering on one of the heights that I will point out to you. Gen 22:12 Do not lay your hand on the boy,” said the angel. “Do not do the least thing to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you did not withhold from me your son, your only one. The author of Hebrews picks up on this expression and writes, “By faith Abraham, when put to the test, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer his only son”.

The Meaning of Brother: The Greek word for brother is ἀδελφός (Transliteration adelphos) which literally means from the womb. The first thing to understand is that the term brother has a broader meaning than blood brothers. It can mean a biological brother if we take the words literally, but it can also mean an extended relative, or even a spiritual brother. For example, take Genesis 13:8 “So Abram said to Lot: “Let there be no strife between you and me, or between your herders and my herders, for we are kindred” Here the word kindred is being used to describe the relationship between Abraham and Lot, who were not biological brothers but uncle and nephew:

A Common Understanding but NOT ENDORSED by the Church: It is commonly understood and accepted by some Christians or Christian churches that these “brothers” were actually Jesus’ cousins, saying that Jesus’ brothers and sisters were the children of Joseph from a previous marriage. An entire theory of Joseph's being significantly older than Mary, having been previously married, having multiple children, and then being widowed before marrying Mary is not in the Bible but in an apocryphal book called the *Protoevangelium of James*, which was written around A.D. 150. It speaks of Mary as a consecrated Virgin since her youth and of St. Joseph as an elderly widower with children who was chosen to be Mary’s spouse for the purposes of guarding and protecting her while respecting her vow of virginity. Most obviously this document is not found in the Sacred Scripture and this information cannot be proved scripturally but it gives us some curiosity and hypothesis about the historical figure Joseph for further investigation. Since this source is very ancient (150 AD), we cannot simply omit information in those sources although the church does not accept those books as canonical books. (Love Is About Choosing To Accept Someone Even If We Can’t Fully Understand Them. “If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, *then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow* - Rachel Carson)

7. Mark 6:7 Jesus sent them two by two. Why?

“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken” (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

The reason is that two people provide a valid witness instead of just one person (Matthew 18:20). The disciples were called to be Jesus’ witnesses to all of His teachings, miracles, etc. They were called and chosen to give a first-person testimony about Jesus' whole ministry. If they went out alone one person's word without a witness would not be acceptable in the things of God (1Corinthians 14:29/ 2 Corinthians 13:1). The word of one person is not enough to establish the validity of anything!

The apostle Paul told his best friend Timothy to not accept an accusation against an older person (whether in or outside the church) unless there were at least two or three witnesses 1Timothy 5:19 says, “Do not accept an accusation against a presbyter unless it is supported by two or three witnesses. The book of Hebrews 10:28 says, “Anyone who rejects the law of Moses is put to death without pity on the testimony of two or three witnesses”.

No person could be convicted of a crime in the Old Testament by the testimony of just one witness. Two or three witnesses were needed to decide whether a person committed a crime or not. A person's honest testimony was taken so seriously that if THEY were found to be a false witness (they lied about what they heard and saw) THEY would receive the same punishment as the one they testified against, even if the

punishment was death! Scripture also says that where there are two or more gathered in His name, then He is there in their midst. His presence is resident most powerfully in the midst of two or more, as the scripture says in Ecclesiastes, "A threefold cord cannot be quickly broken." We are not called to be "Lone Ranger" Christians, Instead we are called to be members of a Body. Although the various parts of our body may have independent functions, every one still relies on the others in order to work successfully. We cannot function properly on our own; we are called to work together in harmony.

8. Mark 7:11 Yet you say, 'If a person says to father or mother, "Any support you might have had from me is qorban" (meaning, dedicated to God).

The word *Corban* is only found in Mark 7:11. The interpretation is given in the same verse: "devoted to God as a gift." The word described something to be offered to God or given to the sacred treasury in the temple. If something was "Corban" it was dedicated and set apart for God's use.

Jesus told the Pharisees that they had rejected the commandment of God in order to keep their own tradition (Mark 7:6-9). Jesus gives the proof of their corruption of the Law by citing their use of "Corban." Moses had instructed God's people to "honor their father and mother" (Exodus 20:12), but the Pharisees negated that command by teaching that they could give money to the temple in lieu of helping their parents in need. Whatever money might have been used to provide for aging parents could be dedicated to the temple treasury instead. Saying, "It is Corban" would exempt a person from his responsibility to his parents. In other words, the Pharisees took a legitimate Corban offering and used it in an illegitimate and devious way to defraud their parents (and enrich themselves). Thus, the Law of God was nullified.

Jesus tells the Pharisees that their misuse of Corban was an evil rationale to avoid doing what they should. God never intended that the good principle of devoting something to the temple should be twisted to dishonor fathers and mothers. Ritual with no love for humanity is a fake religiosity and the Pharisees come under this category. Theirs was a mere ritual show without righteousness and without relationship. Jesus teaches that, without a personal relationship with God, ritual profits nothing.

9. Mark 9:36-37 Taking a child he placed it in their midst, and putting his arms around it he said to them, "Whoever receives one child such as this in my name, receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but the One who sent me."

Lesson from the children: They were not respected in the biblical world. They had neither rights nor position or privileges of their own. They were socially at the bottom rank. They depended on their parents for all their needs very humbly, much like the same in our times. But Jesus had a very different approach towards children. When the disciples prevented the children from coming to Jesus, Jesus took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them and said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children" (Mk10:14). Jesus loved the children.

Why a child? Jesus elevated a little child in the presence of his disciples and placed the child in a privileged position of honor and said, "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; and whoever receives me, receives not me but him who sent me." What is the significance of Jesus' gesture and his words? The child is the answer to the disciples who had an argument on the way about who was the greatest among them. What does Jesus teach to the disciples whose minds were filled with power, envy and jealousy through this symbolic presentation of the child in their midst? The child stands for 'the weakest members' of the community. The message is that those who are humble, meek and lowly of heart like a child are the greatest in the kingdom of God because the children have no ambition of their own. Like Jesus, the disciples were expected to imbibe the spirit of dependance and humility.

10. Mark 10: 38 Can you (James and John) drink the CUP which I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?

The "**CUP**" to which Jesus refers is the suffering He was about to endure. In the garden Jesus prayed to his Father two times, saying, " My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet, not as I will, but as you will" (Matt 26:39). A little later, Jesus prays, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done" (Matt 26:42). These prayers reveal Jesus' mindset just before the crucifixion and His total submission to the will of God.

The cup is a cup of suffering and pain which Jesus will drink (Mark 14:35-36). The baptism of Jesus here is full immersion in humiliation, degradation, pain, and suffering on an unimaginable scale through His betrayal, trial, scourging, and execution (Mark 14:43-15:37)

In days gone by, the monarchs feared that those around them would poison their drinks, so they employed the services of a cupbearer to sample the drink first. If it was poisoned, he died, sparing the king's life. If it was safe, he shared in its refreshing qualities and remained in the king's presence and confidence.

Is 51: 17 reads '*Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, You who have drunk at the hand of the LORD The cup of His fury; You have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, And drained it out.* Jesus does not say "drink the wine," but **drink the cup (Mt 26:27)**. **The cup of trembling** alludes to the ancient custom of killing criminals by a cup of poison. Socrates is well known to have been sentenced by the Areopagus to drink a cup of the juice of hemlock, which killed him.

12. Mark 11:12-14 The next day as they were leaving Bethany he was hungry. Seeing from a distance a fig tree in leaf, he went over to see if he could find anything on it. When he reached it he found nothing but leaves; it was not the time for figs. And he said to it in reply, "May no one ever eat of your fruit again!" And his disciples heard it.

Symbolic meaning of cursing the fig tree: The Fig Tree is a metaphor for Israel. The fig tree is also symbolic of Israel itself. It often symbolized the health of the nation both spiritually and physically. Hosea 9:10 says, " Like grapes in the desert, I found Israel; Like the first fruits of the fig tree, its first to ripen, I looked on your ancestors. But when they came to Baal-peor and consecrated themselves to the Shameful One, they became as abhorrent as the thing they loved". Later, the Bible tells us of the glorious time when "Judah and Israel lived in security, everyone under their own vine and fig tree from Dan to Beer-sheba, as long as Solomon lived" (1 Kings 5:5).

In the New Testament we can also see Jesus using the symbolic fig tree - firstly in the calling of Nathanael who was "*sitting under a fig tree*" like a "*true Israelite*" in John 1:48-50. Later he **curses the fruitless fig tree, representing unfruitfulness** (Mark 11:12-21), and then uses the fig as a metaphor of how we should recognize the signs of the times (Matthew 24:32). This end-times warning system with the fig analogy is picked up again in Revelation 6:13. So from Genesis to Revelation, the fig features strongly in scriptural symbolism.

The Jews were the chosen people of God, called by God to be a blessing to the whole human race. God prepared them to accept Jesus the fullness of revelation through his prophets in the OT but the people turned deaf ears to the messiah. Thus Jesus' cursing of a fig tree is a prophetic action against the faithlessness of those who rejected his message. For faith to be fruitful and productive, it must be nourished with the word of God (2 Timothy 3:16; Colossians 3:16) and be rooted in love (Galatians 5:6). They were called to bear fruit in abundance but they were not productive. Thus they are cursed because of their barrenness, unresponsiveness and unfaithfulness.

13. **Mark 11:15 Cleansing of the temple:** buying and selling of doves, sheep and cattle, money changers. All the four gospels speak about the cleansing of the temple. The temple and the three great feasts, Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, were the holiest of events for the Jewish people when "every able bodied man was commanded by the law of Moses to present himself before the Lord in Jerusalem" (Deuteronomy 16:16). The journey to Jerusalem was often long and arduous and bringing a goat, sheep or cattle (or a dove for the poor) to be slaughtered would have been most difficult.

Money changers: the tax was also being collected from every Israelite who was twenty years old, Exod. 30:11-16. This was due during the month preceding the Passover (17:24, etc.) and was either sent in by those who lived at a distance or paid in person by those who attended the festival, who then, however, had to have Jewish coin, which fact compelled those who came from foreign parts to have their money exchanged.

Dove sellers? The preferred sacrifice to be offered at the temple was a lamb. But a provision is made in the Levitical code for the poor: Leviticus 5.7 "Anyone who cannot afford a lamb is to bring two doves or two young pigeons to the Lord as a penalty for their sin—one for a sin offering and the other for a burnt offering" By going after the dove sellers we see Jesus directly attacking the group who were having economic dealings with the poor. When the poor would go to the temple they would head for the

dove sellers. The point is while Jesus was upset about economic exploitation going on in the temple, his focus on the dove sellers sharpens the message and priorities. Jesus doesn't, for instance, go after the sellers of lambs. Jesus' anger is stirred at the way the poor are being treated and economically exploited. That is what causes Jesus to engage in a protest action that shuts down the financial system of the city during the annual peak of its commercial activity, where he "would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts" during the Passover week. Gentiles' court was occupied by the merchants. Temple money was shekel. Roman coin was denarius which needed to be changed. Moral anger: den of robbers, inequality, commercialization and exploitation.

14. **Mark 12:13-17 Question about paying taxes to Caesar:** The Jews were forced to pay three types of tax to the Roman Emperor: the ground tax, the income tax and the census tax. Here, the question concerned the census tax. According to the census tax, every citizen owes money to the Emperor. But the Jews believed that God was their only Lord and Ruler and therefore taxes or any form of submission, should be made to God alone. Hence, the Pharisees' question "is it lawful to pay census tax to Cesar or not?" was intended to create a very religious and political trouble for him.

If he said that it was unlawful to pay the tax, He will be arrested by the Roman officials as a revolutionary. If he said that it was lawful to pay the tax, he would become unpopular among his followers because they did not like paying tax to the pagan emperor. In other words, he would be branded a traitor if he pays tax. He would become an enemy of Rome if he does not pay tax. Jesus defeated their conspiracy with his practical wisdom.

The wisdom of Jesus: In those days, all secular money was thought to belong to the Emperor. Thus, the Emperor's image was on each secular coin. The money belonged to him and he simply permitted people to use it. If they have a Roman coin, then they should be loyal to Caesar. Jesus, instead of answering their question directly, asked them a question. "Whose image and inscription are these?" they said "Caesar's," Jesus then said, "Give back to Caesar what belongs to Caesar -- and to God what belongs to God." In other words, we give to the Emperor the coin because his image is on it, and we give to God our own selves because we are created in the image of God (Gn 1:26). Jesus' answer acknowledges our obligation as citizens to the state, but affirms our larger obligation to God. We need to be loyal to God and the state.

15. **Mark 12:26 a philosophical question about resurrection.** One woman is married by seven men. Whose wife will she be when she rises? Jesus is in the temple, where the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees try to trick him into error, with one question after another. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection of the dead and asked him about the resurrection. Whose wife will she be who was married to seven men? They argued from Deut 25:5-6

Jesus treats this as two questions and gives two answers. In 12:25, he says that when they rise from the dead they are like angels, neither married nor given in marriage. The answer in 12:26-27 turns the question back on the Sadducees.

The Sadducees think of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as simply dead, which means that when God had said, "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," he was the God of the dead. But Jesus' notion of resurrection means that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are not really dead, but alive, and so God is the God of the living. There is life after death.

It is a carefully constructed philosophical discussion that there is no God of the dead, only of the living. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus has proven his point by showing that the resurrection is real, as confirmed by verse 12:28 ("perceived that he had answered them well"). So, Jesus is able to tell the Sadducees their understanding is greatly in error.

16. Mark 12:29 Shema: Hear O Israel

Deut 6:4- 5 *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"* This is known as Shema in the Old Testament. Shema in Hebrew means Hear. This is the profession of their faith. All their prayers begin with this Shema. Modern Jews recite this prayer both in the morning and evening. Every Jewish child is expected to memorize this prayer. Every Jew has to love God, think constantly about his commandments, teach his commandments to children and they used to tie this on their hands and bind them on their foreheads. We read in Deut 6:6-9

"These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 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. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates".

This shows their sincere love for God. Why all heart, all soul and all mind? The adjective 'all' is an emphasis that our love for God should be full, whole, sincere and undivided with full person. He adds another commandment from Lev 19:18 *"Love Your Neighbor as Yourself"*.

17. Mount of Olives discourse: Mark 13 Jesus talked about two things. The end times and the second coming. Jesus was not trying to encourage his disciples to speculate about exactly when he would return by sharing these prophecies with them. Instead he urges all his followers to be watchful and be prepared for his coming.

Destruction of the temple: In 66 CE the Jewish population rebelled against the Roman Empire. Four years later, in 70 CE, Roman legions under Titus retook and destroyed much of Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

Jesus predicted both near and the future events without any chronological order. Jesus warned his followers about the future so that they could learn to live in present. Many predictions that he spoke about have not yet taken place. They help us to remain spiritually alert. Many come and confuse people in the name of Christ. One clear sign of his return will be his unmistakable appearance in the clouds which will be seen by all people (Mk 13:26/ Rev 1:7)

18. Mark 13:32 No one knows about the day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the son but only the Father.

If Jesus is fully God like the Father, then how is it that He can be ignorant of his own coming? The disciples asked Jesus to tell them when these things would happen, and when the end of the age would come (24:3). Jesus gave many details concerning the last times (24:4ff.). Jesus did not want His disciples to be ignorant of the last times, either, lest they be deceived. While Jesus did not reveal the precise time of His return to His disciples, He did make it clear that the end would not come immediately. He described many of the signs that would precede His return to the earth. If the disciples of our Lord listened carefully to the words of the Master, they would know the "season" of His coming. The specific day of His return was not made known to the apostles, nor to the angels. The wise servant is the one who is watching for the Master's return, and who is working for his Master when He returns.

He is saying, "It is not my place as the Son to determine or to announce the time of my coming "that is an aspect of My Father's role in the Trinity, as the Father." The bottom line is that the disciples have a fixation on knowing the exact time of our Lord's return. Jesus is saying, in effect, "It is none of your business, and in a sense it is not mine to tell you, either. I will come when it is the Father's time for Me to come. For me to announce the time of my coming in advance is to steal the Father's thunder." It is not that He does not know, or cannot know this day, but that this is not consistent with His role as the Son.

19. Mark 16:15 Go and Baptize: The church is a missionary by its essence, making more and more disciples for the church. The early church witnessed that. After Jesus' ascension, the disciples went forth and preached the gospel everywhere and the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word through accompanying signs.

16:17 Special powers: The signs:

1. In my name they will drive out demons (Acts 16:18 Paul)
2. They will speak new languages (Aramaic/ Hebrew/Greek/Latin Acts 2:4/ 10:46/ 19:6/ 1 Cor 12:10/ 1Cor 14: 4-26)
3. They will pick up serpents with their hands (Acts 28:5 Paul).
4. If they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. No biblical proof but tradition helps us to understand this saying. Story about John the evangelist: The painting and symbolism of John the evangelist gives us some idea: John holds the book: The symbol of his Gospel. The symbolism behind the chalice and snake. Chalice points

to the Last Supper of Jesus and Jesus Christ promised James and John that they will both "drink of [His] cup" (Matthew 20:23)

5. They will lay hands on the sick and they will recover (Acts 3: 7-8/ 19:11-12/28:7-10).

Snake on the chalice: There is an old legend that once St. John was given a cup of wine which had been poisoned. Before drinking, he blessed the poisoned wine and by his blessing, the poison came out of it in the form of a snake and John drank the cup unharmed.

The Hidden and Rich meaning behind Jesus' words and sayings in the Gospel of Luke

1. **Luke 1:5 Zechariah** was a priest at the temple teaching the people the scriptures, directing the worship services. There were 20,000 priests throughout the country. They were divided to temple services in different groups numbering about 1000 in each group. : like volunteering military service, Men were chosen to be priests to offer sacrifice to God and the people at the temple. (1 Chro 24:3-10). Zechariah was from the priestly class of Abijah. Each morning a priest is to enter the Holy Place in the temple and burn incense. When Zechariah was decided to go to the Holy Place, he encountered the angel and he was given the message about the birth of John the Baptist.

2. **Luke 1:11 The Angels:** Angels are spiritual creatures who glorify God without ceasing and who serve his saving plans for other creatures: "The angels work together for the benefit of us all" (St. Thomas Aquinas). The angels surround Christ their Lord. They serve him especially in the accomplishment of his saving mission to men. The Church venerates the angels who help her on her earthly pilgrimage and protect every human being.

Christ "with all his angels": Christ is the center of the angelic world. They are his angels: "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him (Mt 25:31) They belong to him because they were created through and for him: "for in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities - all things were created through him and for him."(Col 1:16). They belong to him still more because he has made them messengers of his saving plan: "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?"

Angels have been present since creation and throughout the history of salvation, announcing this salvation from afar or near and serving the accomplishment of the divine plan: they closed the earthly paradise; protected Lot; saved Hagar and her child; stayed Abraham's hand; communicated the law by their ministry; led the People of God; announced births and callings; and assisted the prophets, just to cite a few examples. Finally, the angel Gabriel announced the birth of the Precursor and that of Jesus himself.

From the Incarnation to the Ascension, the life of the Word incarnate (Jesus) is surrounded by the adoration and service of angels. When God "brings the firstborn into the world, he says: 'Let all God's angels worship him.'" Their song of praise at the birth of Christ has not ceased resounding in the Church's praise: "Glory to God in the highest!" They protect Jesus in his infancy, serve him in the desert, and strengthen him in his agony in the garden, when he could have been saved by them from the hands of his enemies as Israel had been. Again, it is the angels who "evangelize" by proclaiming the Good News of Christ's Incarnation and Resurrection. They will be present at Christ's return, which they will announce, to serve at his judgement.

The angels in the life of the Church: The Church benefits from the mysterious and powerful help of angels. In her liturgy, the Church joins with the angels to adore the thrice-holy God. She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy's *In Paradisum deducant te angeli*) "May the angels lead you into Paradise. . ." From our beginning until death, our life is surrounded by their watchful care and intercession. "Beside each believer stands an angel as protector and shepherd leading him to life." Already here on earth the Christian life shares by faith in the blessed company of angels and men united in God.

Archangel Michael is the only named archangel in Scripture in two places (1 Thess 4:16/ Jude 1:9) St. Michael is the chief among them. One of the duties of an archangel, as seen in Daniel 10, is to engage in spiritual warfare.

Gabriel is the most well-known named angel to appear in Scripture. He is seen acting as a messenger to impart wisdom or a special announcement from God. In the book of Daniel, Gabriel appeared to the prophet Daniel in order to explain some visions God gave Daniel about the end times (Daniel 8:15–27; 9:20–27). While Daniel still had trouble understanding the visions, Gabriel's explanations, along with other biblical information about the end times, have allowed us to come to some conclusions about how the end times will play out.

Gabriel also appears in the New Testament. He appears to Zacharias in the temple to herald the news that Zacharias's wife, Elizabeth, would give birth to John. Gabriel also approaches Mary with the announcement of the birth of Christ. Later, Joseph receives guidance in a couple visits from Gabriel. Because of the monumental importance of these history-shaping announcements, it seems likely that Gabriel is one of God's chief messengers.

Raphael as a healer: The angel Raphael does appear in the book of Tobit. In the book of Tobias, Raphael identifies himself as one of seven archangels "who stand before the Lord" (Tobit 12:15). Raphael also offers prayers on Tobias' behalf, and Tobias, in turn, thanks the angel because he is "filled with all good things through him" (Tobit 12:3). The evangelist John sheds some light on the religious notions in the time of Christ. "A great multitude of sick people" are sitting beside a pool in Jerusalem, waiting for "the moving of the water." They believed that an angel would descend from heaven and stir the water, making the pool a place of healing for them. Jesus approaches a man who

had been infirm for 38 years and asks him if he wants to be healed. The man's sad, superstitious reply is that he cannot be healed, because he cannot get into the pool quickly enough. Jesus then bypasses all superstition and shows His power to immediately heal the man (John 5:3-9).

Guardian angels: Matthew 18:10 states "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." These angels are pictured as "always" watching the face of God so as to hear His command to them to help a believer when it is needed. God does use angels in ministering to us. It is scriptural to say that He uses them as He uses us; that is, He in no way needs us or them to accomplish His purposes, but chooses to use us and them nevertheless (Hebrews 1:7).

3. Luke 9:3 He said to them, "Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic. Luke 10:4 Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way

Why they should not carry a walking staff or traveling bag; wear no sandals? In Jesus' day, travelers carried a stick as a defense against snakes and wild animals and they used sandals as an aid in traveling along dusty roads and rocky byways. Likewise, a change of clothing as well as food and drink were thought necessary but Jesus forbade all these. Why? His idea is that his disciples should give up even their basic necessities and have the spirit of detachment. Their spirit of detachment would help them to trust more deeply in Divine Providence and would oblige them to rely humbly on the hospitality of those who are receptive to the Gospel.

Why they should not greet any one along the way? Because their mission was so urgent that nothing should divert them from it. They were to travel in pairs perhaps for mutual support. In their missionary work, they may have to face hostile situation and therefore they should be prepared to face rejection also. He encourages them to trust in God's power and providence in their missionary work.

What is this money belts and bag? The first century Jews used money belts to carry coins for their journey. They also carried a bag for their basic needs in which they brought with them extra clothes. The person who works for people has every right to stay, eat and rest from the sacrifice of his beneficiaries. In other words, the gospel preachers are to be supported by their own hearers voluntarily and joyfully.

4. Luke 12:38 The Second or Third Watch

Jewish time division in the first century AD

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| First watch | Dawn to 8 AM |
| Second watch | 8 to 9 AM |
| Third watch | 9 to 10 AM |
| Fourth watch | 10 to 11 AM |

| | |
|----------------|------------------|
| Fifth watch | 11 to 12 Noon |
| Sixth watch | Noon to 1 PM |
| Seventh watch | 1 to 2 PM |
| Eighth watch | 2 to 3 PM |
| Ninth watch | 3 to 4 PM |
| Tenth watch | 4- 5 PM |
| Eleventh watch | 5-6 PM |
| Twelfth watch | 6 PM to Sun Down |

Mark 15:33 From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over all the land.

Mark 15:34 At the ninth hour, Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" **Luke 23:44** It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness came over all the land until the ninth hour. **John 19:14** It was the day of Preparation for the Passover, about the sixth hour. And Pilate said to the Jews, "Here is your King!" **Acts 3:1** One afternoon Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.

5. Luke 14:26 If any one comes to me without hating his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple

Jesus is meek and humble in heart who calls us to love our enemies. Isaiah calls him the Prince of Peace. He tells his disciples that they will be known by their live. And yet this Jesus is asking me to hate my wife, my children, and my parents? Elsewhere, Scripture commands us to love one’s wife (Eph. 5:25), children (Eph. 6:4), parents (Exod. 20:12).

What could our Savior possibly mean by this incendiary – and seemingly contradictory – ultimatum? In order to be a disciple, we must be willing to give up everything for Jesus. Following Jesus requires commitment and faithfulness. If we have our parents who are not following the Lord, we must be willing to say ‘no’ them. If and when we are faced with the painful choice of loyalty to family Vs loyalty to Jesus, we must choose Jesus. Even if our family members disown us for being Christians, we must follow Christ. It is in this sense that we are “hating” our family. Jesus’ command to “hate father and mother” requires us to prioritize our relationship with Jesus over our relationship with parents, siblings, and other family members.

6. Luke 16: 1-8 The parable of the dishonest steward- For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings

This parable of the dishonest manager is very paradoxical and difficult to explain the meaning. The narration is really shocking externally. St. Augustine said, "I can't believe that this story came from the lips of our Lord." Why this dishonest manager is praised by his boss? The simple reason is that he acted with foresight. Foreseeing his troubles, he cleverly converted the debtors of his master into his own debtors. He bought "friends" with his master's money, and used these "friends" to secure a means of livelihood in his difficult times. Here Jesus is not commending the steward's dishonesty. He is commending only his shrewd resourcefulness.

Then Jesus speaks about the 'The children of this world and the children of the light. The children of this world see and value only the things of this world. They live for this world, concentrate their attention on it, invest everything in it, give the energies of mind and body fully to it, and find in it their entire purpose for living. While the children of light (we believers) are called to see real, eternal, spiritual values as primary and regard temporal values as secondary. The children of this world regard themselves as owners, while we Christians are to regard ourselves as mere stewards of God, viewing everything as blessings and opportunities for God and his people.

7. Luke 17:37 Where the body is, there also the vultures will gather

This verse has a rich meaning about the final judgement. In the bible the image of vulture is compared to the image of God. The image of gathering is an image of final judgment. Vulture is a very majestic bird. Many ancient religions have compared eagle to divinity. (Picture of the eagle in the American Passport). Vulture is very large in size. It lives in rocks. It has the life span upto 40 years. It has the sharpest vision among all the birds and animals. It flies very high in the sky and can face any storm in the sky.

The bible presents God with the image and attributions of vulture. We read in Exo 19:4 Moses saying , "you yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself". The vulture can carry the young ones on its pinions. This is how God brought Israel out of captivity from Egypt and continued to carry them in the wilderness. Vulture is also an image of protection from the enemies. We read in psalm 91:4 "he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler". So God is like a vulture in protecting us and strengthening us in times of difficulties.

What is meaning of this analogy? When the day of the lord comes, everything will be obvious to all because of the presence of the vultures. God will spot out each and every one individually. This is the meaning of this verse "one will be taken and one will be left out". He knows everyone individually and judges accordingly. He knows those who have accepted him and those who have rejected him. Those who have accepted him and lived according to his commandments will be taken and the rest will be left. Those who have rejected God and refused to believe in him will perish on the day of judgment. The day of the lord is sure to come but unexpectedly.