

# **A SKETCH OF THE MINISTRY OF JESUS**

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## Introduction



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Before sketching the three years of Jesus ministry on earth which began with his baptism and anointing by the Spirit and ended with his death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, it is appropriate to say a few words about our primary sources, the Gospels. None of the Gospels purports to be a history of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. The Gospel writers seek to tell us about Jesus, not because they are interested in his life as such, but because Jesus was the Messiah and his works and teachings reveal to us the Gospel of God's grace to sinful man. In the culminating death and resurrection the Gospels lay the historical foundation for the Gospel of substitutionary atonement which would be preached throughout the world by the apostles. Each Gospel writer, however, speaks of Jesus from his own perspective and with his own goals in view. Any sketch of Jesus' ministry must therefore take account of the distinctives of the four Gospels before attempting to present a chronological account of this part of Jesus' life. In the following paragraphs I give a brief summary of the different approaches taken by the four Gospel writers.

### ***Mark***

According to a tradition going back to Papias (a disciple of the apostle John), Mark functioned as secretary to the apostle Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13). The Latin prologue to this Gospel (possibly dating to the late second century) states that Mark wrote the Gospel in Italy and that Peter himself gave it his personal approval. Mark's Gospel is the shortest of the four, a fact governed by his simple narrative of Jesus' ministry, beginning from the ministry of John the baptist (cf. Acts 1:21-22). Mark does not include any extended summaries of Jesus' teaching as the other Gospels do. His descriptions of events are vivid, often including small details glossed over by others. It would appear that Mark was writing for a predominantly non-Jewish audience, going by his deliberate explanation of Jewish customs (cf. 7:3-4). Mark provides a good starting point for an outline of Jesus' ministry.

### ***Luke***

The Gospel of Luke (the frequent fellow-traveller with Paul) is of course the first volume of a two-part book: Luke-Acts (compare Luke 1:1-4 with Acts 1:1-3). Volume one, as he states in Acts 1, has to do with what Jesus began to do and teach while he was on earth. Luke's emphases are slightly different than the other Gospels. He chooses to highlight the genuine piety of many individuals in Israel, instead of just focusing on what was evil. This shows up especially in what he chooses to tell of Jesus' infancy (contrast Matthew), but is also apparent in the rest of the Gospel which often highlights the genuine faith in certain individuals. Luke's Gospel helps our understanding in a unique way with respect to a number of matters. I mention only a few. He specifically shows us that the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus after his baptism was his anointing to office. The Spirit equipped Jesus for his ministry (see Luke 3:21-22; 4:1, 14, 16-22). Luke also shows us that the 12 apostles sent out into the villages of Galilee were not the only apostles. Jesus also

commissioned another 70 apostles to canvas the towns of Samaria when heading to Jerusalem for the last time. These 82 apostles were with him at the ascension and received the mandate to go out into all the world. They were also present at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Finally, Luke also helps us to understand the symbolism of Jesus' prophecy on the Mt. of Olives overlooking the temple several days before his crucifixion. Luke makes it quite clear that Jesus is referring to the destruction of the city and its temple in the Jewish war of AD 66-70 (see appendix two). The basic narrative structure of Luke's Gospel is similar to that of Mark, except that Luke specifically includes a separate account of Jesus' final journey to Jerusalem, where Jesus deliberately chooses a route through Samaria (not generally travelled by Jewish pilgrims). This journey, beginning at 9:51 and closing with the triumphant entry into Jerusalem in 19:28ff is interrupted by a lengthy section of stories, many of which we know from other Gospels. This section appears to be a collection of stories for which Luke was not able to determine an exact chronological sequence. He thus places them together between 11:1 and 17:10.

### ***Matthew***

Matthew's Gospel is the most highly structured of them all. Apart the first two introductory chapters<sup>1</sup> and the final section on the crucifixion and resurrection, there are a series of five sets of narrative followed by discourse, each set closing with a similar statement.

3:1 – 4:25 Narrative

5:1 – 7:27 Sermon on the Mount

7:28-29 Closing statement

“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”

8:1 – 9:35 Narrative

9:36 – 10:42 Discourse

11:1 Closing statement

“When Jesus had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and preach in their cities.”

11:2 – 12:50 Narrative

13:1 – 52 Discourse in parables

13:53 Closing statement

“And when Jesus had finished these parables, he went away from there”

13:54 – 17:21 Narrative

17:22 – 18:35 Discourse

19:1 Closing statement

“Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan.”

19:2 – 22:46 Narrative

23:1 – 25:46 Discourse on Eschatology

26:1 Closing statement

“When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples”

The narratives themselves are often ordered not so much chronologically, but by subject or theme, particularly as they relate to ten fulfilment quotations. Apart from the Old Testament quotations which Jesus or others in the Gospel referred to, Matthew himself introduces 10 distinct quotations with a formulaic introduction referring to the fulfilment of Scripture (1:23; 2:15, 18, 23; 4:15-16; 8:17; 12:18-21; 13:35; 21:5; 27:9-10). That the narrative is shaped in order to show these fulfilments can be made clear by the example of chapter 8:1-17. Here various healing stories are put together in no particular chronological order in order to illustrate the fulfilment of Isa. 53:4. Matthew says in 8:17:

*that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.”*

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<sup>1</sup> Just as with Mark, the actual Gospel account (after the introductory chapters) begins with John the baptist, cf. Acts 1:21-22).

### ***“Synoptic” Gospels***

The first three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke, are often called the “synoptic” Gospels. The word “synoptic” means ‘seeing things together’, that is, in the same way. Indeed the focus of all three Gospels is on Jesus’ ministry up North in the region of Galilee. The only detailed account of what Jesus said and did down South in Jerusalem is the record of Jesus’ final week before the crucifixion. This contrasts significantly with the Gospel of John as we shall see. Furthermore, these three Gospels are often extremely similar in their retelling of the various actions and words of Jesus, although it is particularly with respect to the words of Jesus that they are often virtually identical. Exactly how to account for the similarities and differences between them has been the subject of scholarly debate for centuries. There is no easy answer. Whether it was a common oral tradition that each of them built upon, or some kind of literary dependency of one upon the other, perhaps with some additional source of Jesus’ sayings no longer extant. We must admit that no final answer can be given.<sup>2</sup> It is also not essential for us to know exactly *how* the Gospels were written. We are thankful that the Lord in his providence has given us these Gospels. After all, it was the Lord Jesus himself who promised to give the apostles his Holy Spirit who would bring to remembrance all that he had said (John 14:26).<sup>3</sup>

### ***John***

If the first three Gospels follow Jesus’ ministry in the Northern regions of Galilee, John’s focus is almost wholly devoted to the teaching and actions of Jesus in the South, particularly Jerusalem. It is also John’s Gospel which gives us the materials for forming an adequate *chronology* of the three years of Jesus’ ministry. In fact, if we only had the first three Gospels, we might be led to think that the whole of Jesus’ earthly ministry took place within the space of twelve months culminating in a single trip to Jerusalem when he was crucified! These Gospels are not concerned to mention Jesus’ regular pilgrimages, together with many Jews, to the various feasts celebrated in Jerusalem.

John is the only Gospel that informs us of Jesus’ activities in the first 10 months or so in the trans-Jordan. Thereafter he dedicates his Gospel to Jesus’ teaching, particularly in Jerusalem. The only real exception is 6:1 – 7:9 where Jesus is teaching in Galilee. In this respect it is clear that John desires to focus on those aspects of Jesus’ ministry that are not covered in the synoptic Gospels.<sup>4</sup> In his opening, John therefore focuses on Jesus’ eternal divinity as the Word which became flesh. In the emphasis on teaching we see Jesus taking up certain dominant themes such as light, love, life and truth. While John certainly tells us much about the Last Supper, especially Jesus’ conversation and teaching there, he completely excludes what the other Gospels have already adequately explained, such as the institution of the Lord’s Supper. John is also the only Gospel to take us through the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in the forty days between resurrection and ascension. Despite the emphasis on Jesus’ teaching, it is interesting to note that in stating the purpose of his Gospel, John appears to put the emphasis elsewhere:

*20:30-31 And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.*

There is one element of John’s Gospel which readers have all too often overlooked. John uses the word “Jews” to mean “Judeans”, that is Jews from the South in Judea. This is of course also the origin of the word “Jew” (a fact that is perhaps more apparent in Greek). In this way John shows us that the main opposition to Jesus’ ministry came from the South.

### ***An Overview***

When we take a bird’s eye view of the three years of Jesus’ ministry on earth we are able to see a certain

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2 The fact, for example, that Luke does not appear to realise that the storm on the sea occurred on the same day as the first sermon in parables (cf. Mk. 4:35), but records it happening ‘on some or other day’ strongly suggests that he did not have Mark’s Gospel at hand when writing.

3 Much of the modern scholarly literature on how the recollection of Jesus’ deeds and sayings ultimately came to be recorded in the Gospels refuses to take account of this promise and the work of the Holy Spirit. In a recent book rehearsing many modern theories of the oral tradition between Jesus’ time on earth and the first Gospel accounts, this promise is not even mentioned *once!* (E. Eve, *Behind the Gospels: Understanding the Oral Tradition* [Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2014]).

4 Compare John 11:2 where he refers to the story of the anointing of Jesus’ feet as something clearly known to the readers (presumably from Matthew and Mark), a story which he himself will only retell in chapter 12.

progression. Jesus began at around 30 years old by preaching in the Southern Trans-Jordan next to John the baptist. Jesus' disciples were baptising in the same way as John was, encouraging the people to repent because God's kingdom was coming. Only after John was arrested did Jesus move away to the safety of the Northern regions of Galilee, a move that was also a fulfilment of prophecy as Matthew explains. Jesus made his new home in Capernaum and from there began a preaching tour of the towns in Galilee. Once again Jesus was preaching on the coming of the kingdom. He himself was to be the new king. Only as Passover neared, once a full year had passed since the beginning of his ministry, did Jesus begin to slowly introduce the fact that there was more to him than merely a Davidic king. When the paralytic man was let through the roof into Jesus' house, he chose to make this point by forgiving his sins instead of healing him. Jesus only healed the man to prove his divine authority to forgive sins. In Jerusalem at the passover he deliberately provoked a confrontation with the Jewish leaders and made quite plain to them his unique relationship as Son to the heavenly Father. The Jewish leaders understood all too well that he was claiming to be God. Back in Galilee, after the feast, the confrontations continue as Jesus insists on healing on the sabbath day. Finally, the last straw in this confrontation is reached when Pharisees from Jerusalem argue that Jesus is only able to work miracles by the power of the devil. Jesus accuses them of being close to committing blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which cannot be forgiven. From that moment on he no longer preaches openly in public. His public preaching is completely veiled in parables. The parables are explained to his followers in the evenings. Shortly thereafter he sends out the 12 to preach in the towns of Galilee instead of himself. By the time the next Passover rolls along the battle lines have clearly been drawn and the Jewish leaders of Jerusalem desire to get rid of this Jesus. We do not even know if Jesus attended Passover that year. His final year of ministry is characterised by the preparations for the end. He takes his disciples up North to prepare them for the final journey to Jerusalem and begins to teach them that he will suffer and be crucified only to rise again on the third day. Jesus takes his time with this final journey, which proceeds over a period of many months. As they go through Samaria he sends another 70 apostles out to preach to the towns in Samaria. Finally there is the triumphant entry into Jerusalem surrounded by thousands of pilgrims from the North who hail him as the new king. The Gospels provide us with much information concerning Jesus' teaching in this last week. He is ultimately of course betrayed by Judas, tried by the Sanhedrin and handed over to Pilate for crucifixion. The Southern Jews cry out "crucify him". On the third day, however, he defies death by rising from the grave!

The following table provides a broad outline:

<i>the glory year</i>	<i>the year of opposition</i>	<i>the year of preparation for the end</i>
<b>First year</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• baptism and anointing</li> <li>• 10 months preaching near John the baptist</li> <li>• flight to Galilee</li> <li>• preaching tour of Galilee</li> </ul>	<b>Second year</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passover (Jews wish to kill him)</li> <li>• opposition in Galilee</li> <li>• preaching in parables</li> <li>• 12 apostles sent throughout Galilee</li> </ul>	<b>Third year</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with the 12 up North</li> <li>• last journey to Jerusalem</li> <li>• 70 apostles sent into Samaria</li> <li>• crucifixion, resurrection</li> </ul>

***Progression in Jesus' works (miracles)***

A certain progression in Jesus' miracles can be noted as summarised below:

**Year one (glory)**

- Cana (water in wine)
- Jerusalem ("miracles")
- Galilee = healings, exorcisms (also on the sabbath)
- royal official's son healed *long distance*
- just before Passover: *bed-through-the-roof-man* = divine forgiveness

**Year two (opposition)**

- Passover: sabbath healings engender opposition
- resurrection of the son of the widow in Nain

**Year three** (preparation for the end)

- transfiguration on the Mt., announcement of coming suffering
- personal resurrection from the dead

## A Synopsis of Jesus' Ministry

<p>Mk.1:9-11 Lk.3:21-23 Mt.3:13-17 Jn.1:32-34</p>	<p><i>Jesus' baptism and anointing</i></p> <p>Jesus comes to be baptised by John in the Jordan. John initially refuses, but Jesus insists (Mt).<sup>5</sup> While Jesus is praying the Spirit descends like a dove/pigeon (and remains, Jn) upon him and God the Father speaks from heaven confirming Jesus as his Son.</p>
<p>Mk.1:12-13 Lk.4:1-13 Mt.4:1-11</p>	<p><i>Fasting in the wilderness</i></p> <p>The Spirit sends Jesus into the wilderness beyond the Jordan where he fasts for 40 days<sup>6</sup> during which he is tempted by the devil. Three of the temptations are recorded. Following the temptations, angels minister to him.</p>
<p>Jn.1:19-51</p>	<p><i>Jesus' Messiahship becomes known</i></p> <p>John describes 4 successive days at least about 6 weeks after Jesus' baptism.<sup>7</sup> On day 1 John is interrogated in Bethany beyond the Jordan by priests and Levites from Jerusalem sent by the Pharisees about his baptising. On day 2 he sees Jesus whom he had earlier baptised. John's statement gives the distinct impression that this is the first time he saw Jesus after his baptism. John identifies him to others as the Messiah (using the Messianic title 'son of God'). On day 3 John with two of his disciples (one of whom is Simon Peter's brother, Andreas) meet Jesus and the two disciples follow Jesus to his lodging. Andreas later brings his brother Simon, telling him that they have found the Messiah. Jesus names Simon 'rock' (i.e. Peter). On day 4, Jesus wishes to depart for Galilee, taking Philip (possibly the second disciple of John from the previous day<sup>8</sup>), and by implication Andreas and Simon, with him. Philip informs Nathaniel about Jesus.</p>
<p>Jn.2:1-12</p>	<p><i>A wedding and vacation in Galilee</i></p> <p>3 days later they are at Cana in Galilee for a wedding, where Jesus performs his first miracle.<sup>9</sup> Thereafter Jesus, his mother and brothers as well as the (four) disciples spend a few days in Capernaum.</p>
<p>Jn.2:13 – 3:21</p>	<p><b>1<sup>st</sup> Passover</b></p> <p>Jesus (presumably with the disciples) goes up to Jerusalem for the Passover where he cleanses the temple, driving the animals out with a whip. The Jews ask Jesus for a sign of his authority to do this. He replies that that if they destroy 'this temple' (Jesus refers to his body) he will raise it up in three days (these words would be used at his trial three years later). Many come to faith in Jesus who works miracles in Jerusalem. At night he meets with Nicodemus (a Pharisaic leader) who accepts (on the basis of the miracles) that Jesus must be a teacher, but does not recognise him as Messiah. Jesus therefore speaks of need to be born again (<i>or</i> 'conceived from above') by water and Spirit in order to enter God's kingdom.</p>

5 While it is often thought that John refused because he knew Jesus to be the Messiah, this is in fact not explicitly stated. John shows that, although we know Jesus and he were related, he did not realise that Jesus was the Messiah until he saw the fulfilment of a prophecy specifically given to him, namely that when he saw the Spirit descending and remaining on a person he baptised, that person would be the Messiah. This leads us to conclude that the reason for John's refusal may well have been the fact that, as a relative, he did know him well enough to judge that he was a more righteous man than himself.

6 The fact that Jesus under the direction of the Spirit fasts (i.e. in order to pray), shows that he was consciously preparing himself for the difficult ministry (culminating in his ultimate death) ahead. He did not deliberately go into the wilderness in order to be tempted.

7 Given that he sees Jesus on day 2, Jesus must have already returned from his 40 days in the wilderness.

8 This is implied by the plural "we have found" in v.45.

9 The Romans reckoned upon averaging 20 (Roman) miles a day by foot (*Travel & Geography in the Roman Empire*, citing *Digest*. 11.1.1) which equates to 30km. This equation was used for allowing people reasonable time to attend a summons. Cana from across the Jordan would be about 120km = 4 days travel. Cana to Capernaum is about 1 full day's journey.

Jn.3:22-36	<p><i>ca. 10 months of preaching and baptising in the South</i></p> <p>Jesus spends time with his disciples in the Judean country. His disciples engage in baptising.<sup>10</sup> John meanwhile is baptising in Aion and reassures his disciples that Jesus is not a rival to him, but God's son.</p>
Mk.1:14-15 Lk.4:14 Mt.4:12-17 Jn.4:1-45	<p><i>John's arrest and Jesus' retreat to Galilee</i></p> <p>John's arrest (for criticising Herod Antipas' marriage to his brother's wife) leads to Jesus' retreat to the region of Galilee.<sup>11</sup> On the way he passes through Samaria and meets the woman at the well (Jn). He reveals to Samaritans that he is the Messiah and stays 2 days. Jesus makes a new home in Capernaum (Mt).<sup>12</sup></p>
Jn.4:46-54	<p>At some point when in Cana (possibly <i>en route</i> during the move from Nazareth to Capernaum)<sup>13</sup> a royal official from Capernaum asks Jesus to heal his son. Jesus tells him the son is healed and his slaves confirm this as he travels home.</p>
Mk.1:16-20 Lk.5:1-11 Mt.4:18-22	<p>During the first week after his move to Capernaum, he teaches the people from one of Simon's boats by the shore of Gennesaret, after which he tells him to put into deep water to fish (despite Simon not having caught anything the night before). There is a large catch and Jesus uses the moment to summon the following disciples from Simon's fishing partnership to follow him full-time: the brothers Simon and Andrew, and James and John.<sup>14</sup></p>
Mk.1:21-38 Lk.4:31-43 Mt.8:14-17	<p><i>First sabbath in Capernaum</i></p> <p>Jesus teaches with authority in the synagogue of Capernaum and when accosted by an unclean spirit, he exorcises it.<sup>15</sup> The people are amazed and the report of Him spreads throughout Galilee. After the service Jesus, together with James and John, goes to the home of Peter and Andrew and heals Peter's mother in law. After sundown many sick and demon-possessed are brought to him for healing. Early the next morning Jesus goes out to a solitary place to pray and when found by the disciples declares that he will begin his preaching tour.</p>
Mk.1:39 Lk.4:44 Mt.4:23-25	<p><i>Jesus' preaching tour of Galilee</i></p> <p>Jesus makes a preaching tour of the villages in Galilee.</p>
Mk.1:40-45 Lk.5:12-16 Mt.8:2-4	<p>The cleansing of a leper, who runs and tells everyone against Jesus' wishes, marks the end of this tour. Jesus stays in the country to receive the crowds.</p>
Mk.2:1-12 Lk.5:17-26 Mt.9:2-8	<p><i>Bed-through-the-roof-man</i></p> <p>Jesus returns to Capernaum (probably for refreshment and to prepare himself for the journey to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover). Crowds assemble at his door and four men lower a paralytic through the roof before him. Jesus uses the occasion to allude to his divinity by announcing</p>

10 Van Bruggen, *Christ on Earth* suggests a period of 10 months between Jesus' baptism and the retreat to Galilee.

11 John gives as motive, the fact that the Pharisees heard that Jesus was making more disciples than John. These two motivating factors do not need to be mutually exclusive.

12 Herod Antipas was ruler in Galilee and Perea (transjordan). But the point of Jesus' retreat seems to have been to get out of Perea where it was more dangerous. It would seem that Herod was in residence there at the time, given that John was imprisoned in that region.

13 John records this as "a second miracle" of Jesus. It would seem Jesus visited Cana on the way to Capernaum from Nazareth.

14 Luke provides the details, but Mark shows that the disciples were called shortly before what was presumably the first sabbath day after the move to Capernaum (going by the fact that the villagers only realise on that day that Jesus can heal people).

15 This is the first recorded exorcism of Jesus. Rev. 12:1-4 shows how at Jesus' birth the Satan swept a third of his angels (the demons, symbolised by stars) to the earth. No actual demon possession is recorded among Jews before the time of New Testament.

	that he forgives the paralytic's sins. As proof of his authority to do this, he heals the man. <sup>16</sup>
Mk.2:13-17 Lk.5:27-32 Mt.9:9-13	<i>A tax-collector becomes full-time disciple</i> Calling of Matthew (= Levi) from the tax office with whom Jesus later dines (the Pharisees question Jesus' eating with tax collectors and sinners). <sup>17</sup>
Mk.2:18-22 Lk.5:33-39 Mt.9:14-17	<i>Why don't Jesus' disciples fast?</i> John the baptist's disciples, who like the Pharisees fast regularly (while making entreaties, Lk), ask Jesus why his disciples do not fast. <sup>18</sup>
Jn.5	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Passover</b> At the Passover <sup>19</sup> Jesus anonymously (and so deliberately) heals a sick man by the pool of Bethesda on the sabbath. The 'Jews' seek to kill him for breaking the sabbath and calling God his personal Father. Jesus announces that he will do the works of his Father, including resurrecting the dead. He also deliberately alludes to his authority to judge (as king) from Daniel 7 as 'the son of man'. <sup>20</sup>
Mk.2:23-27 Lk.6:1-5 Mt.12:1-8	<i>Sabbath provocations in Galilee</i> Jesus' disciples pluck grain on the sabbath (assuming this was wheat, it probably indicates the month of April). At the Pharisees' rebuke Jesus reasons that man's basic needs trump sabbath observance. He, as 'the son of man', is also lord of the sabbath. <sup>21</sup>
Lk.14:1-24	Jesus dines in the house of a Pharisaic ruler on the sabbath, heals a man and engages in teaching to both guests and host. <sup>22</sup>
Mk.3:1-12 Lk.6:6-11 Mt.12:9-21	On another sabbath, a man with a withered hand is in the synagogue and the Scribes and Pharisees bait Jesus, asking him if it is permissible to heal on the sabbath. Jesus heals him in anger and pain at their hardness of heart. The Pharisees walk out and together with the Herodians plot to kill him. Jesus therefore retreats to the sea to preach and heal and asks the disciples to have a small boat ready for him since crowds from <i>everywhere</i> have come to hear and see him.

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- 16 For the synoptic Gospels this is the first reference Jesus makes of himself as the "son of man" (an allusion to Daniel 7). However, according to John he had also used this title earlier.
- 17 It is clear that Jesus is slowly gathering a group of young men as permanent disciples. He had taken first four (the 2 sets of brothers) on the Galilean tour. Now he deliberately calls a tax-collector. This seems to be the first sign of Jesus being deliberately provocative.
- 18 The Pharisees fasted (for prayer) two fixed evenings a week. Jesus (in Mt) appropriately connects prayers when fasting with mourning. It is probable that the Pharisees did this regularly because of Israel's political situation, i.e. domination by the Romans and lack of their own Davidic king.
- 19 This Passover should probably be dated before the plucking of grain on the sabbath, possibly even before the calling of Matthew. The need to prepare for the trip to Jerusalem for the Passover may have determined the end of the Galilean tour and return to Capernaum.
- 20 John does not specifically call this feast the Passover, but both the content and his chronology of Passovers make this very probable. In addition, many mss of John 5:1 refer to "*the feast*" which can only be the Passover. It is interesting that John seems only to tell us about what happened on one certain day of this feast. We do not know whether Jesus taught the crowds in the temple, or whether he needed to clear the market out again. We are not even told if his disciples were with him on the day described or what the reaction of the Jews was to his defence.
- 21 Following upon Jesus' use of the sabbath in Jerusalem to provoke a confrontation, the Pharisees seem to be on the alert for this issue. Given that the Pharisees here are not initially out to kill him, we may theorise that the Pharisees in Jerusalem tipped those in Galilee off to pay particular attention to this Jesus, especially with regard to the sabbath.
- 22 This story comes from the section of extra undated material in Luke. Given the fact that the Pharisees are silent when Jesus asks them whether it is lawful to heal on the sabbath, this dinner probably took place before the healing of the man with the withered hand. For similar reasons the parables of Luke 15 and 16 probably also belong to this period.

<p>Mk.3:13-19 Lk.6:12-49 (cf. 11:1-13; 12:13-34, 54-59<sup>23</sup>) Mt.5-7</p>	<p><i>Calling and preparation of the 12</i> Jesus goes to the mountainside and (after a night of prayer) calls his disciples<sup>24</sup> to him and chooses 12 (who are paired in twos) in order to begin preparations to send them out.<sup>25</sup> He walks down the mount with them toward the plain and delivers the “sermon on the plain/mount” Although the crowds from everywhere are there, he addresses himself specifically to the 12.</p>
<p>Lk.7:1-10 Mt.8:5-13</p>	<p>Jesus returns to Capernaum and heals the slave of a centurion who had built the synagogue. He wonders at his faith and notes that many Gentiles will sit at table with Abraham and many Jews will be thrown out of the kingdom unto punishment.</p>
<p>Lk.7:11-17</p>	<p><i>The first resurrection miracle</i> ‘Thereafter’<sup>26</sup> comes the visit to Nain and the resurrection of the widow’s son there. The report of this spreads abroad. This is Jesus’ first known resurrection.</p>
<p>Lk.7:18-35 Mt.11:2-19</p>	<p><i>John’s doubt whether Jesus is the Messiah</i> Messengers arrive from John the Baptist enquiring for him whether Jesus really is the Messiah. Jesus points to his fulfilment of prophecy. After they leave he teaches the crowd about John’s place in redemptive history.</p>
<p>Mk.3:22-30 Mt.12:22-45 Lk.11:14-32</p>	<p><i>The Pharisees blame Jesus’ miracles on the devil</i> Pharisaic scribes from Jerusalem come and, having witnessed Jesus’ casting out a demon from a dumb and blind man, claim (to the crowds) that Jesus does this having Beelzebul (in him).<sup>27</sup> Jesus summons them, rebukes them and warns of blasphemy against Holy Spirit. Others also test him, asking for a sign, to which Jesus responds, e.g. with the sign of Jonah.<sup>28</sup></p>
<p>Mk.3:31-35 Lk.8:19-21 Mt.12:46-50</p>	<p><i>Jesus now points to his true family</i> Jesus’ mother and brothers call for Him from outside the house in which he is speaking. He points to those listening to his word as his mother and brothers.<sup>29</sup></p>
<p>Mk.4:1-34 Lk.8:4-18; Mt.13:1-53</p>	<p><i>Jesus preaches in parables</i> On the same day Jesus went out to the shore where a large crowd gathers and he taught in parables (to disguise the message due to the high resistance from the Pharisees) from a boat. Later, when alone, he explains them to his disciples.<sup>30</sup></p>

23 Luke 11ff inserts a number of teaching episodes into the Gospel narrative which have no particular chronological marking. Luke was probably not sure himself exactly where they fitted. It is clear that 11:1-13 belongs to the sermon on the Mount, not only because of the parallel in Matthew, but also because it is described as following about Jesus’ prayer time.

24 Luke speaks of ‘a great number’. If we remember that Jesus would later choose another 70 apostles, we should probably think of at least 100 young men following him. In fact, if we reckon with the 500 males who were witness to the resurrected Jesus in Galilee, a group of 500 is probably closer to the mark (see 1 Cor. 15:6).

25 From this point Mark is supplemented by Luke who shows that the Sermon on the (level ground on the) mount followed upon the same day as the choosing of the 12 and was intended primarily as instruction for them, although the rest of the disciples and crowds listened on. After the sermon Luke adds the following two healing narratives. For an overview of this sermon see appendix one.

26 The phrase ἐν τῷ ἑξῆς means ‘thereafter’ and not ‘on the following day’. It is thus more vague. The location of Nain is not certain. The village in South Galilee is unlikely as it appears never to have been a ‘city’ nor to have had ‘gates’.

27 This incident appears to occur in Jesus’ home in Capernaum from where he later goes to the shore teaching in parables.

28 This appears to be the first hint of Jesus’ impending death and resurrection three days later.

29 Luke transposes this narrative after the parable of the sower, but since he does not provide chronological indicators, Mark’s account is taken as chronologically significant.

30 That is, the whole group, not just the 12, as Mark shows.

Mk.4:35 – 5:20 Lk.8:22-39 Mt.8:23 – 9:1	<p><i>Jesus crosses to the other side of the sea casting demons into swine</i></p> <p>That same evening he departs for the other side of the sea<sup>31</sup>, is woken to calm a storm, and arrives at the land of Geradenes<sup>32</sup>. Here two demoniacs<sup>33</sup>, living in tombs, address him as “son of God” fearful that he has come to torture them<sup>34</sup>. Jesus casts the demons into a herd of swine (far off on a mountainside) who run over a cliff into the sea, upon which he is implored to depart. The demoniac ends up telling of Jesus throughout the Decapolis.</p>
Mk.5:21-43 Lk.8:40-56 Mt. 9:18-26	<p><i>Jairus’ daughter resurrected</i></p> <p>Jesus returns to the other side of the sea (Capernaum). Jairus, a synagogue ruler, implores him to heal his daughter (on the way a haemorrhaged woman touches him and is healed). The daughter dies and Jesus resurrects her (having taken only Peter, James and John). He forbids it to become known, but the report of it spreads through the land.</p>
Mk.6:1-6 Lk.4:14-30 Mt.13:54-58	<p>Jesus leaves for a visit to his home-town (Nazareth) where he is not accepted and can only do a few miracles.<sup>35</sup> Jesus preaches in the villages of this area (South-west Galilee).</p>
Mk.6:7-13 Lk.9:1-6 Mt.10:1-42	<p><i>The 12 are sent to preach in Galilee</i></p> <p>The 12 are given instructions and sent out in pairs (but not all at once, Mk.) to Jewish villages in Galilee.<sup>36</sup> They are not to go to Gentiles or Samaritans (Mt.). They are given the Holy Spirit to heal, cast out demons and resurrect the dead.</p>
Mk.6:14-29 Lk.9:7-9 Mt.14:1-12	<p><i>Herod Antipas hears of Jesus</i></p> <p>Herod Antipas hears of Jesus<sup>37</sup> and fears that John, whom he executed, has arisen. The story of John’s execution is told.</p>
Mk.6:30-46 Lk.9:10-17 Mt.14:13-23a Jn.6:1-15	<p><i>The feeding of the 5,000</i></p> <p>Upon return Jesus and the 12 set out from Tiberias (Herod’s capital) to the region of Bethsaida (outside Herod’s territory) to get away and relax.<sup>38</sup> The people follow on foot. After teaching on God’s kingdom (Lk), Jesus feeds the 5000 men – the Passover is at hand (it is 1 year before Jesus’ death) (Jn)<sup>39</sup>. Upon this miracle, the crowds want to make Jesus king (Jn). Jesus immediately compels the disciples to sail away<sup>40</sup> while He dismisses the crowds and goes to the mountain to pray.</p>

31 Mk. 6:48 clearly implies that the boats used by the disciples were row-boats and not sail-boats. If we optimistically say that they travelled about 3 knots for the 21km route, we need to reckon with a journey of at least 4 hours, probably more. This seems to imply an overnight trip, given that they left in the evening (Mk. 4:35).

32 Mss vary. It may have been the region of Gerasa or Gadara or an otherwise unknown town, Gergesa.

33 Mark and Luke refer to only one man, who must have been the more prominent of the two.

34 Luke explains their fear of torture as a fear of being sent into the (bottomless) pit, i.e. hell.

35 It would seem probable that this narrative is the same as Luke 4:14-30 which Luke displaces to show more clearly the link between Jesus’ baptism with the Spirit as his anointing according to Isaiah 61.

36 While Matt. 10 records Jesus’ detailed instructions to the 12, many of these instructions apply rather to their mission to all of Israel and even beyond. For example, taking up one’s cross after Jesus makes no sense here (v.38), when Jesus has not even begun to warn the disciples that he will suffer. It makes good sense after his resurrection (cf. vs.17-18, 23). Matthew has combined the instructions Jesus gave at this time with those which he gave shortly before his ascension.

37 It is significant that the moment when Jesus stops preaching in public and sends out the 12 instead, Herod Antipas hears of him! It seems that the disciples were making it quite explicit that they were apostles of this Jesus.

38 Only John tells us that they go from Tiberias (John 6:1, cf. v.23). This does fit with Herod’s anxiety. It may suggest that the 12 were sent in the region of Nazareth and that thereafter Jesus returns to the sea of Galilee at Tiberias, possibly deliberately to prick Herod’s conscience. The city had the added advantage of not housing orthodox Jews (since it was built on a cemetery). He immediately escapes to Bethsaida in Phillip’s territory.

39 Mark also mentions that the grass was green, indicating the Spring and complementing John’s comment that there was “much grass”.

40 Mark’s “to Bethsaida” should be read as “across from Bethsaida”. John makes it clear that, although the eventual destination was Gennesaret, they first spent the sabbath in Capernaum. It may be that the immediate dismissal of the disciples and then the crowds was due to the danger of the crowds forcibly making him king (Mt).

<p>Mk.6:47-56 Mt.14:23b-36 Jn.6:16-71</p>	<p><i>Jesus walks on water</i></p> <p>Deep into the night Jesus walks across the water past the disciples struggling to row against the wind. When recognised, Peter asks to walk out to him, but as he walks he develops a fear and begins to sink into the water (Mt). When he and Jesus get into the boat the wind is calmed. They spend the next day<sup>41</sup> in Capernaum where Jesus teaches in the synagogue on Himself as the Son of Man who descended to earth from the Father in heaven and who is the living bread. They must eat his flesh. As a result many disciples choose to withdraw from Jesus (Jn). Jesus and the 12 continue on hereafter to Gennesaret, where they are recognised and sick are brought to be healed.</p>
<p>Mt. 17:24-26</p>	<p><i>Jesus pays the temple tax</i></p> <p>In Capernaum collectors for the temple tax confront Peter to get Jesus to pay the temple tax. Jesus, while disavowing this tax, instructs Peter to catch a fish in which the necessary money for them will be found.<sup>42</sup></p>
	<p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> Passover</b> (no record of Jesus' visit to Jerusalem, did he go at all?)</p>
<p>Lk. 13:1-9<sup>43</sup></p>	<p><i>Report that Pilate has executed Galileans worshipping in the temple</i></p> <p>This report is told to Jesus who responds that was not because they were greater sinners, but that ultimately a similar judgement will come to all who do not repent. He compares the 18 who died from the collapse of a tower in Siloam and tells a parable of a fruitless fig tree.</p>
<p>Mk.7:24-30 Mt.15:21-28</p>	<p><i>Jesus withdraws to the regions of Tyre and Sidon</i></p> <p>From there Jesus withdraws to the regions of Tyre and Sidon, desiring not to be recognised. A Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter is healed as an example to the lost sheep of Israel.</p>
<p>Mk.7:31 – 8:9 Mt.15:29-38</p>	<p>Jesus returns to the sea of Galilee within the region of the Greek Decapolis, where a deaf person is healed. After 3 days with crowds in a deserted place, he feeds the 4000 men.</p>
<p>Mk.8:10-26 Mt.15:39 – 16:12</p>	<p>Departure by boat to Magdala.<sup>44</sup> Pharisees seek a sign from him. Jesus accepts an invitation to lunch by a Pharisee (Lk).<sup>45</sup> He warns of the leaven of the Pharisees and Herod. They journey</p>

- 41 Although John says that they originally headed for Capernaum, Mark notes that they actually anchored at Gennesaret (a little further down the coast). The next day, however, finds Jesus teaching in the synagogue at Capernaum. It may have been a new moon's day (not a regular sabbath, since others arrived by boat in Capernaum on the same day, Jn). If it was new moon, then it may have been the month of Adar or possibly the following month of Nisan, shortly before Passover. This is the last recorded public teaching of Jesus in a Galilean synagogue. It is the only extended account of Jesus' teaching in Galilee given by John, perhaps in lieu of John's silence on Jesus' teaching at the third Passover.
- 42 Matthew seems to record this event out of chronological sequence (probably due to its common theme with the question of who is the greatest in the kingdom, Mt. 18). The temple tax was collected in the month of Adar (Mishnah, *Shekalim* 1.1), that is, the month before Nisan, when Passover is celebrated. See further, *The Question of the Temple Tax: A Reader*, to be found on my website on the page 'Ancient Greek'. The narrative fits better here in any case, given that Jesus arrived at the shore in a boat together with Peter and the narrative of the temple tax occurs without the presence of the other disciples.
- 43 This report follows certain statements in Lk. 12:54-59 which almost certainly come from the sermon on the mount. Luke states that the report occurred in that 'season' (i.e. shorter or longer period of time). Given that it concerns Galileans who brought their own sacrifices in the temple, this must refer to the day before Passover, which was the only time that worshippers were allowed to bring their own sacrifices. It is also the Passover feast that would have required Pilate to be in Jerusalem. If this is correct, it further confirms the suggestion that Jesus himself did not attend this Passover feast.
- 44 The place name does vary somewhat in the mss, e.g. the otherwise unknown "Magadan" or "Dalmuntha". Seeing that the Pharisees find Jesus again, it is likely to be the western shore, so Magdala seems quite possible. It is in any case only a stopping place, before heading on to Bethsaida.
- 45 Much material from this stop seems to be included by Luke in his undated material. In 11:29 – 12:1 he has the request by the Pharisees for a sign and also the warning against their leaven. It would therefore seem that Jesus accepted an invitation to lunch by a Pharisee during this stop (Luke places this within this material).

Lk.11:29 – 12:1	on to Bethsaida (Philip’s territory) where Jesus heals a blind man after taking him outside the village.
Mk.8:27 – 9:1 Lk.9:18-27 Mt.16:13-28	<p><i>Preparation for the final journey to Jerusalem</i></p> <p>The disciples are taken up North to villages around Caesarea Philippi<sup>46</sup> (thus staying out of Herod’s territory), but they are not to preach Jesus as the Christ despite the fact that Peter (on their behalf) confesses him to be such. Jesus begins to warn them of his forthcoming death and resurrection and also that some will not taste death before seeing the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.</p>
Mk.9:2-29 Lk.9:28-43a Mt.17:1-21 2Pet.1:16-21	<p><i>Jesus’ transfiguration</i></p> <p>6-8 days later Jesus takes the 3 leading disciples (Peter, James and John) to a high mountain to pray. There the disciples, tired, fall asleep. Upon waking they see Jesus’ person shining like the sun and his clothes radiating like light. Moses and Elijah are with him, speaking of his impending death. As they depart, Peter suggests that they build 3 shrines for them there. A cloud then envelopes them and God affirms Jesus as his beloved / chosen Son, telling the disciples to heed him. They ‘fall on their faces’ very afraid, but Jesus bids them to rise and is again alone. After the transfiguration they walk back to the others and <i>en route</i> discuss the prophecies of the coming Elijah (John the baptist, cf. Lk. 1:17) and the Messiah (“Son of Man” in ref. to Isa. 53). The others are found debating with a crowd (according to Lk they are already in Galilee). Jesus heals a man’s son who from childhood is thrown, foaming at the mouth (the disciples couldn’t heal him).</p>
Mk.9:30-50 Lk.9:43b-50 Mt.17:22 –23; 18:1-35	<p><i>The final visit in Capernaum</i></p> <p>They return and begin to proceed through Galilee incognito. Jesus teaches the disciples again about his suffering, death and resurrection after 3 days. The significance of this is hidden from them (Lk).<sup>47</sup> At Capernaum Jesus is confronted with the temple tax and pays from a fish so as not to give offence (Mt). He asks what the disciples had been discussing (who is the greatest), and teaches them about the first being last and the last first. He takes a child as an example of childlike faith. More teaching (e.g. if your eye causes you to stumble etc.; parable of the lost sheep, disciplinary process, forgiveness parable).</p>
Jn.7:2 – 10:21	<p><i>Attendance at the Feast of Tabernacles</i></p> <p>Jesus attends the Feast of Tabernacles (arriving late and incognito) (= October). On the last day of the feast he publicly calls himself the living water. The next day he is confronted with the woman “caught in adultery”. On the sabbath Jesus hides in the temple to escape a stoning and on the way out heals a blind man who is eventually excommunicated. John reports much of Jesus’ teaching at this time.</p>
Lk.9:51-62 cf. Mt.8:18-22	<p><i>Journey through Samaria</i></p> <p>Jesus resolutely begins his final journey to Jerusalem and deliberately chooses to journey publicly through Samaria, sending messengers before him.<sup>48</sup> The first Samaritan village rejects him since he is heading for Jerusalem. On the way to the next village disciples begin to make excuses not to follow Jesus now.</p>
Lk.17:11-19	<p><i>Healing of 10 lepers</i></p>

46 A primarily Gentile city, see M. A. Chancey, *The Myth of a Gentile Galilee: The Population of Galilee and New Testament Studies* (Cambridge: University Press, 2002) 123-25.

47 The women were also told of Jesus’ suffering, cf. Lk. 24:7.

48 This was a route which Jews generally avoided, both because they had no dealings with Samaritans and because Samaritans did not appreciate Jews who were heading for Jerusalem. The mission to Samaria is foretold in John 10:16.

	<p>Passing between Samaria and Galilee he heals 10 lepers, only one of whom (a Samaritan) returns with thanks.<sup>49</sup></p>
<p>Lk.10:1-24 Mt.11:20-24</p>	<p><i>70 more apostles sent out in Samaria</i> 70 more (apostles, cf. 9:1-6) are appointed<sup>50</sup> and sent out to the Samaritan villages which Jesus will pass through.<sup>51</sup> Jesus speaks woes against the unbelief of Galilean towns. The 70 return rejoicing at the miracles they have been able to perform. Jesus sees Satan falling like lightning, expresses joy in the Holy Spirit and prays to his Father.</p>
<p>Lk.10:25-37</p>	<p>A lawyer comes, testing Jesus regarding the love-commandments. Parable of the good Samaritan. Hereafter in a certain (Samaritan) village the story of Mary and Martha ensues.</p>
<p>Jn.10:22-39</p>	<p><i>Celebration of the Feast of Hanukkah in Jerusalem</i> Jesus celebrates the feast of Hanukkah in Jerusalem (= December).<sup>52</sup> The Jews demand that he state plainly if he is the Christ. He is threatened again with stoning for making himself out to be God.</p>
<p>Jn. 10:40-42 Mk.10:1-12 Mt.19:1-12</p>	<p><i>Retreat to the region beyond the Jordan: ministry and questioning by Pharisees on divorce</i> Jesus goes to region of Judea and beyond the Jordan (to Jordanian Bethany<sup>53</sup>, where John the baptist first began his ministry) and teaches and heals crowds. Many come to faith.<sup>54</sup> He answers the testing question of the Pharisees on divorce. The disciples continue to question him on this when they are in the house.</p>
<p>Mk.10:13-16 Lk.18:15-17 Mt.19:13-15</p>	<p><i>Jesus insists on blessing babies</i> Children (babies actually, says Luke) are brought to Jesus for a personal blessing, despite attempts of the disciples to prevent this. Jesus again points to receiving the kingdom as a child. He now departs from there.</p>
<p>Mk.10:17-31 Lk.18:18-30 Mt.19:16 – 20:16</p>	<p><i>Encounter with the rich young ruler</i> A rich young ruler runs up to Jesus and addresses him while kneeling. Jesus teaches further on the difficulty of entering the kingdom of heaven for those with wealth. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a landowner who pays the same wage to workers coming at different times (Mt.).</p>
<p>Mk.10:32-45 Lk.18:31-34 Mt.20:17-28</p>	<p>On the way to Jerusalem Jesus again foretells his death and resurrection, this time adding that while the Jews would condemn him to death, they would hand him over to the Gentiles for punishment and execution. The mother of James and John (= possibly Jesus' aunt) requests</p>

49 This story comes from the undated section of Lk 11-18, but Luke tells us when it occurred.

50 The verb ἀναδείκνυμι implies that there were more than 70 disciples with him, and that he 'presented' these to the larger group as appointed. This indicates that the word 'others' refers back, not to the messengers of 9:52, but to the 12 apostles of 9:1-6. The connection between the '12' (symbolic of the 12 tribes) suggests that the choice of '70' may be related to the table of 70 nations in Genesis, representing a Gentile mission. The 70 are not forbidden to go to Gentiles as the 12 were.

51 In contrast to the mission of the 12, there is no command not to bring the Gospel to Gentiles. This mission is no longer to the 'lost sheep of Israel', but to the *territory* of Samaria (where already Herod the Great had settled some 6,000 veterans, including Greeks).

52 Van Bruggen (*Christ on Earth* 3.4) infers wrongly from the word "again" in John 10:40 that Jesus was already in the region of Perea when he went to the feast of Hanukkah. The "again" refers back to the time of Jesus' baptism. Note that this feast could be celebrated anywhere. Jesus specifically *chose* to be in Jerusalem at its celebration.

53 Compare John 10:40 and 1:28.

54 I cannot follow Van Bruggen's reasoning here (*Christ on Earth* 3.5). He thinks that the synoptics state that Jesus came to Judea *via* Perea and that the events mentioned here thus occur in Judea. Luke makes it quite plain that Jesus travelled through Samaria making it not unreasonable that Jesus entered Perea through Judea.

	prominent places for them in the kingdom. The 12 grumble about this.
Mk.10:46-52 Lk.18:35 – 19:10 Mt.20:29-34	<i>Passing through Jericho: Zacchaeus and Bar-Timaeus</i> On the way into Judea, presumably to visit the sick Lazarus (cf. Jn 11), Jesus passes through Jericho. There he lodges at the house of the tax collector Zacchaeus (Lk). Exiting Jericho, Jesus heals the blind Bar-Timaeus (and another blind person, Mt.).
Jn.11	<i>The resurrection of Lazarus</i> In Bethany (near Jerusalem) Jesus resurrects Lazarus from the dead. The Sanhedrin hears of this and makes plans to kill Jesus. He retreats briefly into the village of Ephraim in the desert (of Judea) before going to Jerusalem through Bethany again.
Jn.12:1-11 Mk. 14:3-9 Mt. 26:6-13 Lk.10:38-42; 22:1-2	<i>Dinner in Bethany</i> Six days before the Passover (at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, Mt, Mk) <sup>55</sup> Jesus dines with Lazarus present, Martha serving, and Mary anoints his feet (and head, Mt, Mk) with perfume. Judas, in charge of the purse and a thief, objects (as do other disciples, Mt, Mk). Jesus replies with a reference to his impending burial. Many Judeans come to Bethany to see Jesus and the resurrected Lazarus, believing because of him. The high priests desire to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus. At a certain village (which can only be Bethany near Jerusalem), Luke records the dissension between the sisters Martha and Mary. Presumably this occurred during the same visit to Bethany.
Mk. 14:10-11 Mt. 26:14-16 Lk. 22:3-6	<i>Judas offers to betray Jesus</i> He receives 30 pieces of silver in payment and agrees to seek an opportunity for Jesus' betrayal 'in the absence of the multitude' (Lk). <sup>56</sup>
Mk. 11:1-11 Mt. 21:1-11 Lk. 19:28-44 Jn. 12:12-19	<i>Triumphal entry into Jerusalem</i> On the day after the dinner in Bethany (Jn), Jesus directs two disciples to retrieve an unriden colt from a nearby village <sup>57</sup> which he uses to enter Jerusalem amid acclamation as 'son of David' by his disciples. In doing this he fulfils Zach. 9 (Mt), although the disciples only realise this later (Jn). Nearing the city, Pharisees ask Jesus to rebuke the disciples, but he predicts the destruction of Jerusalem (Lk). The disciples explain to the Jerusalemites that he is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth (Mt). He walks around the temple and then due to the late hour returns to Bethany (Mk). Many in the crowd were also those who had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn).
Mk. 11:12-14 Mt. 21:18-19	<i>The cursed fig tree</i> In the morning <i>en route</i> to the temple, Jesus curses a fig tree which out of season has no fruit. <sup>58</sup>
Mk. 11:15-19 Mt. 21:12-17	<i>Jesus cleanses the temple</i>

55 Both Mark and Matthew relate this incident as background to the desire of the high-priests and scribes to kill Jesus some two days before the Passover. They imply that it was from this formal dinner (the guests reclined implying at the same time a substantial house with a *triclinium*) that Judas left in disgust to offer to betray Jesus.

56 Note that Mt, Mk and Lk all narrate the dinner in Bethany and ensuing offer of betrayal by Judas as background information to the description of the plot to kill Jesus discussed 2 days before Passover. Jn supplies the correct chronology of the dinner.

57 Comparing Mark and Matthew, it would seem that the foal was retrieved from Bethany. The disciples (and Jesus) would therefore have been well-known to the animal's owners. Matthew tells us that its mother was also taken along, probably to lead the foal. It may have been this action that alerted the crowd (who came primarily because of the recent resurrection of Lazarus, Jn. 12:12, 18) to what Jesus was about to do.

58 See further my online *Meditation: Jesus curses a Fig-Tree?*

Lk. 19:45-48; 21:37-38	<p>He overthrows the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those selling doves. He also forbids anyone from carrying things through the sanctuary (Mk). He applies Isa. 56. Jesus also heals the blind and lame. Children praise him as ‘son of David’ and are rebuked by the chief priests and scribes (Mt). Jesus quotes Ps.8 in response. The scribes and chief priests seek to destroy him. At evening Jesus departs the city. This marks his activity for the coming week, teaching during the day in the temple (Lk) and retreating at evening.</p>
Mk. 11:20-26 Mt. 21:19-22	<p><i>The withered fig tree</i> Next morning the cursed fig tree is seen to be completely dried up. Jesus teaches the 12 a lesson in trusting God when pronouncing a curse.</p>
Mk. 11:27-33 Mt. 21:23-27 Lk. 20:1-8	<p><i>Jesus’ authority challenged</i> The chief priests, scribes and elders challenge Jesus’ authority, but he rebuts asking them whether they acknowledge John the baptiser.</p>
Mk. 12:1-12 Mt. 21:28 – 22:14 Lk. 20:9-19	<p><i>Parables of judgment</i> Hereupon Jesus tells at least 3 parables in the hearing of the chief priests etc. (and the crowds, Lk) clearly indicating with increasing intensity the coming judgment upon them and upon the city of Jerusalem.</p>
Mk. 12:13-34 Mt. 22:15-40 Lk. 20:20-40	<p><i>The Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees attempt to trap Jesus in his words</i> The Pharisees and Herodians do this with the question of paying tax to Caesar, the Sadducees with the question about the resurrection. This is followed by a Pharisaic Scribe’s question regarding the first commandment.</p>
Mk. 12:35-40 Mt. 22:41 – 23:39 Lk. 20:41-47	<p><i>Jesus questions the Pharisees on Psalm 110 and roundly condemns them</i> Following this questioning Jesus condemns the scribes. He closes with a lament over Jerusalem (Mt).</p>
Mk. 12:41-44 Lk. 21:1-4	<p><i>A poor widow donating to the temple is observed</i> Jesus observes this with his disciples sitting opposite the temple treasury.</p>
Jn.12:20-36	<p><i>Greeks at the Feast seek Jesus</i> We are not told when or even if Jesus actually met with the Greeks, but the request relayed by Philip and Andrew leads Jesus to connect this with his impending death and <u>glorification</u>. Only in this way will he have much fruit (obviously thinking of the Gospel going out to the world, a thought made explicit in v.32). His disciples must follow him on this path. God answers Jesus like thunder, and the crowd standing by picks this up. It would appear, therefore, that this request is brought during a pause in Jesus’ teaching in the temple. As a result Jesus addresses the crowd who are confused by Jesus and thereafter departs, hiding himself (which suggests that it was approaching evening).</p>
Jn. 12:37-50	<p><i>Unbelief in the crowds, Pharisaic opposition stifles the confession of those who do believe</i> John sees fulfilment of prophecies of Isaiah in the unbelief despite the miracles. There are some believing rulers though, who do not dare to publicly confess their faith. John follows with a statement (presumably to his disciples) on why he personally is not judging those who do not believe.</p>

Mk. 13:1-37 Mt. 24:1 – 25:46 Lk. 21:5-36	<p><i>The eschatological discourse</i></p> <p>Leaving the temple and on the Mt. of Olives the disciples remark on the beauty of the temple, which Jesus indicates will be destroyed. He then answers their 2 questions on when this will take place and what sign indicates the end of the age. He closes with parables on the last judgment (Mt).<sup>59</sup></p>
Mk. 14:1-2 Mt. 26:1-5 Lk. 22:1-2	<p><i>The plot to kill Jesus is organised</i></p> <p>This occurs 2 days before Passover in the palace of the ‘high-priest’ Caiaphas. On the same day Jesus predicts his arrest and crucifixion.</p>
Mk. 14:12-16 Mt. 26:17-19 Lk. 22:7-13	<p><i>Preparation for the Passover</i></p> <p>Jesus instructs Peter and John to prepare the Passover meal in a specific large upper room in the city, which he has previously arranged.<sup>60</sup> As part of the participation, all those partaking would be expected to be ritually clean, and thus have bathed themselves according to regulations (cf. Jn 13:10). The lamb and other parts of the meal also had to be arranged and prepared.</p>
Mk. 14:17-26 Mt. 26:20-30 Lk. 22:14-39 Jn. 13:1 – 18:1 1 Cor. 11:23-25	<p><b>4<sup>th</sup> Passover</b></p> <p>See my online article <i>The Three Great Feasts in the Worship of Israel</i> in the section on ‘Passover in New Testament times’.</p>
Mk. 14:26-31 Mt. 26:30-35 Lk. 22:31-34, 39 Jn. 13:36-38	<p><i>The walk to the Mt of Olives</i></p> <p>Jesus predicts his immediate arrest, death resurrection and the stumbling of the disciples. He tells them to meet him thereafter in Galilee. Peter’s triple denial of him is also predicted.</p>
Mk.14:32-42 Mt. 26:36-46 Lk. 22:40-46	<p><i>Prayers in Gethsemane</i></p> <p>Jesus takes Peter, James and John to pray with him while the others must sit and wait. The 3 disciples, however, keep falling asleep. During the prayer an angel strengthens Jesus, whose sweat is as drops of blood (Lk).</p>
Mk. 14:43-52 Mt. 26:47-56 Lk. 22:47-53 Jn. 18:1-12	<p><i>Betrayal and arrest</i></p> <p>Judas arrives at night (they had torches)<sup>61</sup> with the chief priests, temple guard (armed with swords and clubs) and elders (Pharisees). Jesus goes out (of the garden?) to meet them and when he identifies himself the group steps back and falls over backwards (rather embarrassing!). Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss. Peter cuts off the ear of the high-priest’s slave, Malchus, but Jesus restores it. The disciples then flee, although one initially follows, but when laid hold of he too flees naked.</p>
Mk. 14:53-72 Mt. 26:57-75 Lk. 22:54-71 Jn. 18:13-27	<p><i>Jesus before Annas and Trial before the Sanhedrin at the high-priest’s residence</i></p> <p>Note that Luke provides chronological indicators, while John explains that there were actually 2 separate interviews, a preliminary hearing with Annas, and the actual trial under Caiaphas. Both Annas and his son-in-law, Caiaphas, may well have resided in the same high-priestly palace. John, typically, is very brief about Jesus trial before Caiaphas, given that the other</p>

59 See further appendix two.

60 For the purposes of the Passover, given the number of pilgrims in the city, the Jewish authorities declared the whole city to be an extension of the temple courts and thus holy ground where the Passover meal could be eaten. This meal was festive and thus eaten in a dining room where participants reclined on couches.

61 Given that it was Spring, dusk would have fallen around 6pm, although the arrest would have been a lot later than that given the lengthy Passover meal. The need for torches is interesting, given that it would have been a full moon. Was there a cloudy sky?

	<p>Gospels deal with this. Jesus was first brought to Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas the high-priest. Peter and another disciple (known to the high-priest) follow and thereby Peter is let in. Peter's first denial occurs with the female slave who is doorkeeper. Peter then sits by a kindled charcoal fire with the guards. After questioning, Jesus is bound again and sent to Caiaphas.</p> <p>Peter follows at a distance and again sits by the fire with the guards within view of Jesus. Peter is again recognised as a disciple (including a relative of Malchus), but denies knowledge of Jesus under oath a further 2 times, about an hour apart (Lk). By this time the cock had crowed and the Sanhedrin comes together at daybreak. The trial proceeds with difficulty because witness testimony did not agree (e.g. concerning statement of 3 years ago at temple cleansing that they could destroy 'this temple', but he would build another in 3 days). When adjured to say if he is the Christ, Jesus affirms this and adds a threat from Dan. 7 as 'the Son of man'. He also affirms being the 'Son of God'. He is condemned for blasphemy, sentenced to death and mocked.</p>
<p>Mt. 27:3-10 cf. Acts 1:18-20</p>	<p><i>Judas' remorse</i></p> <p>Judas, remorseful at Jesus' condemnation by the Sanhedrin (as it would seem), returns the 30 pieces of silver and commits suicide.<sup>62</sup> The chief priests use the funds to purchase a field for the burial of strangers.</p>
<p>Mk. 15:1-20 Mt. 27:1-2, 11-31 Lk. 23:1-25 Jn. 18:28 – 19:16</p>	<p><i>Trial before Pilate</i></p> <p>Mt and Mk just mention the trial before Pilate. Lk adds a few details about the accusations and records the hearing before Herod.</p> <p>The Sanhedrin decide to bring Jesus before Pilate.<sup>63</sup> Pilate meets them outside as they refuse to defile themselves in his house (Jn). Jesus is accused by them of treason, claiming to be 'king of the Jews'. Jesus remains silent at this trial. Hearing that he is a Galilean, Pilate sends Jesus to Herod (in Jerusalem for Passover), but Jesus says nothing at his questioning, so Herod sends him back (after being mocked by his soldiers and arrayed in a gorgeous robe). Pilate, recognising Jesus' innocence and the envy of the Sanhedrin (as well as being encouraged by his wife, affected by a dream, Mt) offers to release a prisoner as his traditional Passover amnesty, giving the choice between a notorious murderer Barabbas and Jesus, but the Jews demand Jesus' crucifixion and Barabbas is released. Pilate is threatened with report to Caesar and so publicly washes his hands of the matter. Jesus is whipped and sent away for crucifixion. The soldiers take him inside Pilate's palace where Jesus is mocked in a purple cloak with a wreath of thorns.</p>
	<p><i>Death, resurrection and ascension to heaven</i></p> <p>See the next section for a history of the crucifixion as well as appendix four for an overview of the crucifixion and appendix five for an overview of the resurrection appearances.</p>

62 Putting Mt together with Acts, it appears that Judas had used the 30 shekels to purchase a field. What he actually 'twisted' (the verb in Mt. is rather strange) to the chief priests was the property deed, which they in turn donated as a burial place rather than cashing it in. Note that Mt appears to assume the field in question, speaking not of 'a potter's field', but '*the* potter's field'. Judas at this point would have expected Jesus to be given death by stoning sometime after the sabbath. The fact that the field is later given a permanent purpose, strongly suggests that for some reason it was not attached to any family and was thus exempt from the jubilee laws. Originally only land inside the city walls would have been exempt (cf. Mishn. *Arak.* 9.5), but this 'potter's field' must have been outside the walls for it to function as a burial place. We must surmise that the difficult recent history of Judah (exile, Greek occupation, etc.) meant that not all land was allocated to Jewish families anymore. The low price suggests a small field (cf. prices mentioned in Mishn. *Arak.* 9.2 of 100 or 200 shekels) or perhaps a field unsuitable for crops. With respect to Judas' suicide, it would appear that he hung (lit. 'throttled') himself in this field, but fell off face-downwards splitting open his belly. If the noose had not been adequately tied to the tree or frame, then his convulsions would have been sufficient to cause to this.

63 Given that Friday was the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the feast of unleavened bread and therefore a low sabbath, Jesus could not be executed by Jews that day or the following high sabbath (this is the point of Jn. 18:31). The Sanhedrin was afraid to wait any longer and therefore accuse Jesus of treason before the Roman governor.

## The History of the Crucifixion

If you read the stories of Jesus' crucifixion in the four Gospels one thing immediately becomes apparent. Although they all want to explain all sorts of details and all want to show how terrible it was that Jesus, the Son of God, was crucified, there is not one gospel that provides any application for the reader.

That is food for thought. It is true that Mark mentioned earlier in his Gospel how Jesus said to his disciples that he would soon suffer and die for the sins of many. Nevertheless, when the story of the crucifixion itself is told, this application is never explained.

Now every Christian reader, then as now, understands that the majestic Son of God is here – as an innocent man – terribly humiliated and punished so as to bear the wrath of God against sin. And this is precisely why the evangelists tell the story in this dry manner. You know what it is about. Let it sink in. This is the story of God's incredible love for fallen man.

### *Nailed to the cross*

We see Jesus walking outside the walls of Jerusalem, walking to that ominous place called Golgotha, 'skull'. It is here that people were crucified by the Romans. It is not a place hidden from public view, but out in the open so that all who pass by may see and reflect on the suffering of serious criminals, that they may see and be scared, see and be disgusted at those hanging live on a cross. Skull – that's what his head will soon become.

Jesus walks, exhausted. So exhausted that he, unlike the other two criminals, is no longer carrying his crossbeam. There is a certain Simon who has been compelled by the soldiers to carry it. If you look up at the scene where the crucifixion will take place, you can already see the three vertical poles standing in the ground. That's where it will happen.

It's a *happy* day for some. After all it's not every day that the Syrians who served as Roman soldiers in Jerusalem got to do a crucifixion. That was fun. Especially when it concerned those hated Jews. Immediately upon Jesus' arrival it's time for the first joke. That exhausted Jesus, wouldn't he like a drink before he's hanged? Jesus, who has become fully human, yearns for a drink. He takes it eagerly into his mouth. ... *Bah!* He realises the tasteless joke of the cruel soldiers. Maybe he should have known. He has already been cruelly mocked by soldiers, dressed as a puppet in royal robes with a crown of thorns, then spat at and beaten. The soldiers, you see, have given him perfume to drink, myrrh mixed with wine. It's the taste of bile.

He is hung on the cross. This crucial moment is simply stated by all the evangelists. Not one of them dares to describe it. The readers of those days can all too easily picture what that meant. You had seen it often enough. First, you lie on the ground with your arms spread out and your wrists are nailed to the unattached crossbeam. Then you stand with your back against the crucifixion post as the crossbeam is mounted on it. Finally, your ankles are lifted and nailed to the bottom of the post. You hang, but you're only just off the ground.

Jesus is now hung in public view. The crown of thorns still mocks his head, his face is lacerated by the strokes of the caning which he had earlier received from the soldiers. Do you remember? How they had blindfolded him and cried: *Prophesy then! Who has beaten you now?* Blood and sweat are dripping all over his naked body. Not only from the nail wounds, but especially on his back where the flesh was ripped open by the Roman whipping. A Roman whip had little pieces of metal attached to it.

Jesus, who had been silent before both the high priest and Pilate – the sheep dumb before its shearers – now speaks. At the beginning of the climax of his agony, at the beginning of having to bear God's terrible wrath against sin, he speaks. He speaks to his wrathful Father in heaven while he looks at the taunting soldiers around him: *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.* No, they do not know. Those soldiers from Syria are crucifying the Son of God, the Messiah and King of the world. Jesus prays for them. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.*

### ***Sitting at the cross***

Before the soldiers take their places to keep watch, there are a few things they are eager to do. Jesus now hangs on the cross. Prior to hanging him they had pulled off his clothes. Several pieces of outer garments are divided into quarters, one portion for each of the four soldiers. There remains a one piece linen undershirt. For this they decide to cast lots. That's exciting. Who gets the mocking prize? Yes, the *mocking* prize. It is precisely the undershirt which sat on the bloodied and sweaty body of Jesus the Jew. And while the soldiers are playfully dealing with Jesus' clothes, Jesus engages himself with the fifth commandment.

The fifth commandment: *Honour your father and your mother*. Even hanging from a cross gives Jesus no excuse for setting aside this commandment. Standing a short distance away is his mother, she who had borne him, she who had once stood with her baby in the temple when the aged Simeon had blessed both parents and child. Now she suddenly understands the words of his prophecy: *He will be a sign which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*. From the cross, Jesus speaks a second time. Nodding with his head to the disciple John beside her he says: *Woman, behold your son*. And speaking to John: *Behold your mother*. John understood. The care for one's parents in their old age, which fell primarily to the first-born son, Jesus has transferred to John. The transfer of this task has not gone to one of Jesus' brothers ... where are they? No, to the disciple whom he especially loved, John. John cared for Mary over the course of many years until her death in the city of Ephesus.

When the soldiers of Jesus have finished with his clothes, they complete the work of his crucifixion. On Pilate's orders an inscription has been prepared in three languages. Everyone can see and read it. It is written in Hebrew, Latin and Greek. *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews*. Pilate hangs out to public view in a stinging way what the Jews of Jerusalem had told him. Jesus must be crucified because he wanted to take Caesar's place as king. Despite the strenuous objections of the chief priests, Pilate lets the inscription stand. They wanted to crucify Jesus as king? Then let him be proclaimed king of the Jews in public!

Once the disciples have mounted the inscription, they crucify two criminals on Jesus' right and left. The soldiers take their stations for the guard. Their job is over. Jesus is presented to the world. Here is the king of the Jews with his two counsellors, left and right.

### ***Mocking the cross***

It's 9 o'clock in the morning when the Jewish King Jesus and his two counsellors are hung up to greet the passers by who journey back and forth into town. For three hours we see people shaking their heads and mocking him. These Jews know their psalms. They call out to him: *From God the Lord his cause he would not sever; Let then the LORD be his deliverer and rescue him, if truly He did ever delight in him!* (Ps. 22)

In the city itself, the chief priests and the scribes are sitting. They are angry at Pilate, angry with the inscription, but also glad that the plan of their nefarious Sanhedrin has succeeded. They too sit and mock Jesus. He who dared to declare to the high priest that he as the Son of Man would be coming back on the clouds with divine vengeance, he now hangs on the cross. *He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.* (Ps. 22)

One of the counsellors of this king of Israel picks up the thread. *Are not you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!* Yet, in the midst of this public display of the wrath of God against the sins of men, we see God's Spirit overcome the heart of a hardened criminal. The other criminal admonishes the first: *Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.* He turns to Jesus: *Remember me when you come into your kingdom.* Hear the words of the suffering Saviour, *Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.*

### ***Shrouded in the darkness of the cross***

It is noon. The horror of the following three hours are enclosed in a screaming silence. The sun is obscured. Everything is night. For 3 long hours there is a fearful silence as the full wrath of God, the abandonment of the Son, is felt over the whole country. Everyone is shrouded in the darkness of the cross.

After 3 hours of inhuman suffering – who can fathom the suffering of God's Son under God's wrath? – After

3 hours of silence, Jesus cries out. The words of Psalm 22 come to his lips: *My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me!* Because Jesus speaks Aramaic some bystanders mockingly suggest he is calling to the prophet Elijah.

Jesus having verbalised the painful climax of his punishment addresses the people: *I thirst*. He is given a drink on a sponge at the end of pole, a sponge soaked in a jar of the soldiers' sour wine. For others, the darkness has not yet expelled their mocking attitude. Will Elijah save him?

Then Jesus cries out: *It is finished!* Following this, he cries out yet once more, this time with the words of Psalm 31:5: *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*. He bows his head and breathes his last breath.

### ***Removed from the cross***

The Saviour has died. But what the Lord now allows to happen lifts, for the thoughtful reader, the tip of the veil obscuring these events.

While it is still dark, the temple curtain is torn in two from top to bottom. It is that curtain that separates God's throne room on earth, the sacred chamber where priests are forbidden to tread. Surely this needs no explanation? The divine High Priest, Jesus Christ, will soon have direct access to the throne room of his heavenly Father. The eternal Passover lamb has been sacrificed. He goes to the real temple in heaven, the temple where he, as the living lamb, will break open the seals of the scroll providing him with his royal authorisation.

The earth trembles, and the significance of the miracle of Christ's death for sins already now begins to appear. Saints ascend out of their graves!

Near the cross an even greater miracle takes place. The centurion, the captain of the soldiers, who has experienced the dread of the 3 long hours of darkness, who has gazed upon the suffering of this Jesus, the king of the Jews, takes everything in and before all who stand there as witnesses, speaks out in fear: *This man was truly God's Son!*

## Appendix One: The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew decided to characterise Jesus' preaching after having announced the Galilean preaching tour with a précis of a sermon which we know from Luke 6:20-49 was actually held later, after the calling of the twelve. Luke 11:1-13 (the beginning of a section of episodes in Luke without chronological indicators) also records a portion of this sermon as is clear from both the content and the setting (after Jesus' prayer). Other small portions of the sermon are also to be found in Luke 11 and 12. This undated material in Luke is indicated in italics. It would seem then that Luke not only obtained the précis of the sermon included in chapter 6, but also other snippets based on remembrances of Jesus' teaching, very possibly from the same person. There seem to have been four major sections to Jesus' sermon. He began with a series of blessings and woes, continued with an outline of the kind of righteousness (צדקה) implied by the judgements (משפטים) of God's law, then proceeded to righteousness in terms of deeds of mercy and forgiveness and finally a section on judging and final judgment.

<b>Sermon on the Mount</b>	<b>Sermon on the level place</b>
Spoken to disciples with crowds in background	Spoken to disciples with crowds in background
<b><u>Blessings and woes</u></b>	<b><u>Blessings and woes</u></b>
Blessings	Blessings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor in spirit</li> <li>- mourners</li> <li>- meek</li> <li>- hungering and thirsting for righteousness</li> <li>- merciful</li> <li>- pure in heart</li> <li>- peacemakers</li> <li>- persecuted for sake of righteousness</li> <li>- you when men revile you etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- poor</li> <li>- hungry</li> <li>- weeping (for they will laugh)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- you when men hate you etc.</li> </ul>
	Woes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rich</li> <li>- well-fed</li> <li>- you when men speak well of you</li> </ul>
	<i>[Lk.11:33]</i>
	<b><u>Required righteousness</u></b>
	<i>[partially – Lk.12:57-59]</i>
Salt of the earth	
Light of the world	
<b><u>Required righteousness</u></b>	
Right interpretation of the law	
6th commandment	
7th commandment	
Swearing vows falsely	
Eye for eye, tooth for tooth & love your enemies	Eye for eye, tooth for tooth & love your enemies (golden rule)
<b><u>Deeds of mercy and forgiveness</u></b>	<b><u>Deeds of mercy and forgiveness</u></b>
“Be perfect as your Father is perfect”	“Be merciful as your Father is merciful”
Giving of alms	
Lord's prayer	<i>[Lord's prayer – Lk.11]</i>
	<i>[Explanation on God's fatherly giving – Lk.11]</i>
explanation on forgiveness	
explanation on fasting	
explanation on cares	<i>[Lk.11:34-36; 12:13-34] – includes the parable of the rich fool</i>
<b><u>Judging and final judgment</u></b>	<b><u>Judging and final judgment</u></b>
On judging	On judging (w. additional material)
On giving what is holy to dogs / pearls to swine	
God's answering of prayer & golden rule	
Narrow and broad gate	
False prophets known by fruits	discerning fruits
Not everyone saying 'Lord, Lord' saved	Not everyone saying 'Lord, Lord' saved
House on rock/sand	House on rock/sand
Healing of Leper	
Jesus to Capernaum and heals centurion's slave	Jesus to Capernaum and heals centurion's slave

## Appendix Two: Jesus' Eschatological Discourse

Several days before his crucifixion, Jesus came out of the temple and his disciples came and pointed out to him the temple buildings. Jesus took the opportunity to explain that they would be completely destroyed. On the Mt. of Olives the disciples come to him privately with questions: when will these things be? i.e. what is the sign of your coming and of the completion of the age? The ensuing prophecy is summarised in the following table. Comparing the various summaries of this prophecy helps us to understand the meaning of the Lord Jesus. A tick shows that a similar passage is present and a cross shows its absence.

Matt. 24	Mark 13	Luke 21	2 Thess. 2	Revelation
1. warnings of false christs	✓	✓		
2. wars & famines	✓	✓		first 4 seals (6.1-8)
3. persecution & betrayal by Jews	✓	✓	apostasy (= rebellion)	5th seal, martyrs (6.9-11)
4. "This good news" preached to end of earth, then the end	✓ (tog. w. persecution)	×	that which restrains / he who restrains	
5. the abomination of desolation in the holy place	✓	Jerusalem surrounded by armies	man of lawlessness sits in the temple as god	
6. then flee to the hills	✓	✓		5th seal (6.15)
7. = the great tribulation	✓	= days of vengeance.		martyrs come out of great tribulation, 7 trumpets = vengeance, i.e. coming of Roman armies to destroy Jerusalem (8-11) = kingdom of world is now kingdom of Lord
8. for sake of elect days cut short	✓	×		
9. warnings of false christs	✓	× (see Lk. 17:23-24, 37b)		
10. immediately after "tribulation"	✓	×		
11. ×	×	Jerusalem to be trampled underfoot by Gentiles until times of Gentiles fulfilled		See 11.2
12. - sun/moon darkened, stars fall	✓	✓		6th seal (6.12-17, cf. Joel in Acts 2.20)
13. - sign of Son of Man in the sky	✓	✓		See 14.14-20
14. - the angels gather the elect	✓	×		= sealing of elect (7.1-8)
15. parable of the fig tree	✓	✓		
16. this generation not to pass away	✓	✓		
17. keep on the alert	×	✓ (more expanded)		
18. no one knows <i>that</i> day, be ready a) no one knows that day, even angels b) example of Noah c) × d) 2 men, 1 left & 1 taken etc. e) be alert for the thief f) faithful slave when master returns	✓ ✓ × × × × ✓	× See Lk. 17.22-37 × ✓ - example of Lot ✓ × × (= Lk. 12.41-48)		

### Explanatory Notes

2. A similar prophecy of rumours of wars followed by revolutionary activity is found in Jer. 51:45-46. "Nation against nation" may refer to internal conflicts in the land, cf. 2 Chron. 15:5-6 ("lands" here means "regions" within Israel). "Kingdom against kingdom" may be translated "kingship against kingship" and refer to an internal power struggle (cf. Isa. 19:2 where civil war in Egypt is described as "kingdom against kingdom"). At this point Luke mentions the great signs in the heavens to come later (mentioned again at # 12). The great famine in Jerusalem must be considered here, cf. Acts 11:28; 1 Cor. 16:1-9; 2 Cor. 9.

3. At this point Mark and Luke add that the disciples should not worry what to say in defence for the H. Spirit (Luke = Christ) will give them utterance. Luke surely illustrates this in Stephen's speech (Acts 7). Matthew has already mentioned all this in 10:17-22.

4. The apostolic task to preach the Gospel to the known world is here meant (cf. Acts 17:6; 19:27 for “world” in this sense). That this task was fulfilled before the fall of Jerusalem is clear from Col. 1:6, 23. “The end” in # 3-4 is clearly the end of the woes, cf. Matt. 24:8 (“the beginning of [birth] pangs”).

5. The abomination of desolation (see Dan. 9-12) is explained by Luke as the encirclement of Jerusalem and its temple by armies. Matthew refers explicitly to Daniel, Luke refers to “all that is written”. Although Luke makes it clear that that Jesus was thinking of the armies of the enemy who would besiege the city (Luke 19:43), Van der Wal points out that he does not specifically speak of the armies of the enemy. If the Romans are meant it would make no sense to warn people against entering the city at this point. Van der Wal correctly refers to the armies of Jewish generals who captured the city during the Jewish war in order to make their last stand there against the Romans. In this way the temple became a fortress for the zealots where civil war broke out, the Edomites took over the temple and set up catapults in its courts.

6. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.5.3 records the flight of the Christians in Jerusalem to Pella on the basis of a prophecy.

7. The great tribulation refers to the horrors of the war up until and including the siege. Revelation 7 lays all emphasis on the persecution of Christ’s church (i.e., by unbelieving Jews) throughout the world. The signs in the heavens and the sealing of the elect follow upon the siege. Finally the city is trampled upon. Matthew and Mark state that the enormity of the destruction has not been seen before nor will be seen again, but this consideration is an echo of Ezekiel 5:9 and Daniel 12:1.

9. Jesus makes quite clear that they are not to expect the “visitation” of the Son of Man in all this. He will come on the clouds and gather his elect together, but he himself will not visit the earth. Jesus comes back to the question of the timing of his “visit” in Matt. 24:36ff. That false prophets actually came, leading followers out into the desert, is described by Josephus, *BJ* 2,258-60.

11. The trampling underfoot of Jerusalem is the final act which follows upon the “great tribulation” and the signs in heaven. Luke does not mean to say that these signs occur *after* the trampling. Revelation shows the sequence of events.

12. The falling of the stars should be interpreted in terms of their light failing. The imagery comes from Isa. 13:10 (judgment on Babylon). The Greek translation (Septuagint) of Joel 2:31 (quoted in Acts 2) forms the basis for Rev. 6:12, but the point must surely be the same, i.e. the light-giving function of the heavenly bodies recedes as the darkness of judgment arrives. The same imagery is used in Ezek. 32:7-8 (judgment on Egypt). We may also think of the darkness of the 9<sup>th</sup> plague against Egypt. Compare also Isa. 50:3 where it is stated that when the Lord clothes the heavens with blackness, this is cloak of mourning. See also Josephus *Jewish War* 6.288ff.

The similar imagery in Joel 2 (quoted in Acts 2) must surely refer to the last day of judgment given the context of the rest of the prophecy of Joel.

13. The coming of the Son of man does not refer to the Second coming, cf. Matt. 10:23 which also refers to the destruction of Jerusalem (in Mark and Luke the apostles report back after a time, but this does not have to mean that their task was completed. The task continued even after Pentecost). Matthew speaks of “the sign” of the son of Man coming, indicating that people didn’t actually see him physically.

Clouds are in the Bible a sign of divine presence and symbol of God’s chariot, cf. Ps. 18:12; 104:3; Isa. 19:1. These texts also show that God’s “coming on the clouds” is a sign of his coming to judge his enemies and save his own people. We ought not to think, for example, that the Egyptians actually saw God on a cloud with their bodily eyes (Isa. 19). This would go against God’s own testimony of himself that no one can see God. The Bible uses symbolic language here to describe the fact that God himself has sent this judgment. We should therefore read the sign of the son of Man coming in the same way. It is symbolic language expressing the fact that Jesus Christ is the divine person (clouds as sign of divinity) who is sending the armies against Jerusalem.

The vision of the Son of Man coming with the clouds to the ancient of days in Daniel 7 is a vision of Jesus’ ascent into heaven and reception there of his royal task. This is why Stephen, upon being stoned, can see Jesus as the Son of Man seated at the right hand of God (Acts 7:55-56). He refers at the same time to what Jesus said to Caiaphas at his trial (Mark 14:62).

16. This passage shows that the whole prophecy, at least up to this point, must refer to something which happens in the same generation as Jesus is speaking and not to the last days. Those interpreters who interpret this discourse to be referring to the last day of judgment have great difficulties at this point.

18. At this point (Matt. 24:36) Jesus appears to turn to the second question which the disciples posed to him, namely, the time of the “end of the age.” The disciples, who probably thought that both their questions referred to the same point in time, did in fact ask two separate questions according to Matthew (24:3). Literally they ask first what the “sign” of Christ’s “visitation” is and secondly what the “sign” of the “end of the age” is. In v.36 Jesus emphasises the change of subject with the words “*that day and hour.*”

d) The verb here (vs. 40-41) is “taken alongside” (παρὰ- which goes with *parousia*, i.e. presence). The point is thus not that the one is taken up in the air, whilst the other is left on the ground, but that Jesus will take the one alongside with him and leave the other where he is.

See further: Josephus, *The Jewish War*, esp. the edition translated with commentary by G. Cornfeld (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

## Appendix Three: Jesus' final weeks

	Nisan	
Friday	8	<i>Journey from Jericho to Bethany, at dinner anointed by Maria, lodging there (6 days before Passover)</i>
Saturday	9	<i>Entry into Jerusalem on donkey, back to Bethany in the evening</i>
Sunday	10	<i>In the morning He curses the fig tree on the way to the temple, temple cleansed, people healed in temple, children sing to him Hosanna. In the evening back to Bethany.</i>
Monday	11	<i>Disciples surprised at withered fig tree, teaching in temple. High priests and Pharisees question Jesus' authority. Jesus replies and is tested by Pharisees, Sadducees and Pharisees again to no avail. Jesus teaches the crowds, warns them against the Pharisees and speaks of the fall of Jerusalem and His return. (Info. from synoptics).<sup>64</sup></i>
Tuesday	12	<i>Teaching daily in temple (Mt of Olives at night). Sometime during these days Judas makes his arrangement with the chief priests.</i>
Wednesday	13	<i>Jn. 12:20ff should be placed here. Among other things, the request of the Greeks to see Jesus (= speak to him). Jesus' answer ('the hour has come') must refer to Wednesday.</i>
Thursday	14	<i>Passover with the disciples, institution of Lord's Supper.</i>
Friday	15	<i>Low sabbath: 1<sup>st</sup> day of feast of unleavened bread, crucifixion approx. 9am (Mk, Jn says 12pm), darkness 12pm – 3pm at which time he dies, late but still before the high sabbath the Jews ask for his bones to be broken and ask Joseph to bury the body.</i>
Saturday	16	<i>Sabbath, High priests and Pharisees ask Pilate for a guard and seal over the grave.</i>
Sunday	17	<i>Resurrection, women to the grave to provide extra perfume (unaware of the guard), in the evening 1<sup>st</sup> appearance to 10 disciples (due to unbelief – they should have been going to Galilee)</i>
Monday	18	
Tuesday	19	
Wednesday	20	
Thursday	21	
Friday	22	<i>Low sabbath – last day of the feast of unleavened bread</i>
Saturday	23	<i>Sabbath</i>
Sunday	24	<i>Appearance of Jesus to Thomas</i>
Monday	25	<i>Probable departure of disciples to Galilee</i>

<sup>64</sup> Matt. 26:2 seems to imply that the statement that after two days it will be Passover was made on Monday evening. After Monday we only hear of the story of Jesus' anointing in Bethany (which actually occurred on Friday, 8 Nisan) until Thursday when the Passover meal was prepared. Sometime during these days Judas made his arrangement with the chief priests. Luke 21:37-38 informs us that Jesus continued to teach daily in the temple but spend the nights on the Mount of Olives. From John 12 we learn some of Jesus' teaching from the last week which is not dated, but probably to be placed on Wednesday.

## Appendix Four: Overview of Jesus' crucifixion

Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
Jesus led to Golgotha (place of the skull) by soldiers	Jesus led to Golgotha (place of the skull) by soldiers	Jesus taken to the skull, also 2 criminals	Jesus led to Golgotha (place of the skull) by soldiers
J. refuses wine mixed with myrrh	J. refuses wine mixed with gall after having tasted it	(mentioned later after the mocking)	---
Crucified	Crucified	--- (presupposed)	Crucified
----	----	Jesus says to the soldiers: 'Father, forgive them'	
Clothing divided by lot	Clothing divided by lot. They sit on guard.	Clothing divided by lot	Clothing divided by lot (details)
----	----	----	Women at the cross. Mary's care arranged.
= 3 <sup>rd</sup> hour, inscription: king of the Jews	Inscription placed above his head: 'This is the king of the Jews'	Inscription above him: 'This is the king of the Jews' (told in a different order)	Inscription above him in 3 languages: 'This is the king of the Jews'. Objection by high priests (told in a different order)
2 rebels crucified right and left of him	2 rebels crucified right and left of him	--- (presupposed)	2 rebels crucified right and left of him (told in a different order)
Rebuke of bystanders (Ps.22) and mockery	Rebuke of bystanders (Ps.22) and mockery	Rebuke of bystanders (Ps.22) and mockery	----
Mockery of high priests and scribes (Ps.22)	Mockery of high priests and scribes (Ps.22)	Mockery of rulers (Ps.22)	----
Rebels mock him	Rebels mock him	1 criminal mocks, the other admonishes him & receives promise from Jesus	----
6 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> hours of darkness	6 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> hours of darkness	6 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> hours of darkness	----
9 <sup>th</sup> hour, Jesus cries out Ps.22:1	9 <sup>th</sup> hour, Jesus cries out Ps.22:1	----	----
'He calls Elijah'! Sponge with sour wine	'He calls Elijah'! Sponge with sour wine	----	Sponge received because J. cries 'I thirst' (Ps.69)
With a cry Jesus breathes his last breath	With a cry Jesus breathes his last breath	With the cry of Ps.31:5 Jesus breathes his last	J. cries 'it is finished', bows head and gives up the ghost
Temple curtain tears	Temple curtain tears	Temple curtain tears (told in a different order)	----
----	Earthquake, resurrection of saints	----	----
Centurion confesses him to be God's Son	Centurion confesses him to be God's Son	Centurion confesses him to be God's Son	----
----	----	----	Jews ask that his bones be broken so he can be buried on the (high) sabbath. Jesus is only speared (Ps.22)

## Appendix Five: Overview of Jesus' Resurrection Appearances

Mark (long version)	Matthew	Luke	John	Paul
<p>Mary Magdalene (place unmentioned)</p> <p>2 disciples in “another form”</p> <p>The 11</p>	<p>Mary Magdalene and other Mary (<i>en route</i> to disciples)</p> <p>The 11 (in Galilee)</p> <p><i>Nb. There were multiple women. If we posit that the other women first ran from the grave and Mary Magdalene remained behind a short while, the appearance to her alone can be explained.</i></p>	<p>Emmaus travellers (Cleopas &amp; ?) Simon (= Peter) – unclear whether this was before or after travellers</p> <p>The 11 (+ travellers and others)</p>	<p>Mary Magdalene (at the grave)</p> <p>The disciples without Thomas</p> <p>The disciples with Thomas (week later) Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathaniel, sons of Zebedee, 2 others (in Galilee as 3<sup>rd</sup> appearance)</p>	<p>1. Cephas</p> <p>2. the 12</p> <p>3. more than 500 brothers at once 4. James (Jesus' brother?) 5. all the apostles (incl. de '70'?) 6. Paul (<i>en route</i> to Damascus)</p>