

The Testament Spectator

JESUSAIC AMALGAMATED FOUR GOSPEL EDITION

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Scriptural Stories Published in Newspaper

Editor's Note

Jesus Christ the Messiah performed many miracles over a three year period.

The Holy Bible reports that He changed 180 gallons of water into wine; healed countless diseased people; exorcised numerous demons; resurrected three from the dead; stopped Sea of Galilee storm; produced coin in fishes' mouth; walked on water; transported ship four miles; fed 5,000 from five loaves and two fish; fed another 4,000 from seven loaves and few fish; withered fig tree; and upended a 600-man posse!

Amazingly, Jesus did more than that. He touched the hearts of people and taught about matters of the heart — loving one another, servicing others, denying flesh, accepting God, Him and the Holy Spirit, sacrificing oneself to God and devoting one's life to Him by becoming a Christian.

Because of His redemptive mission, iconoclastic style and controversial doctrine, Jesus was crucified at 33 — as He, and other prophets before Him, so accurately predicted.

But His life wasn't buried in the grave. Because of His resurrection, ascension, teachings and Christian philosophy, Jesus' life has, is, and will continue to touch the hearts and redeem the lives of millions who choose to accept Him.

Thirty-nine years of personal preparation and more than 28 months in the making, this 48-page "Jesusaic Amalgamated Four Gospel Edition" attempts to report in contemporary newspaper style, the miraculous life, tumultuous times and profound teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Amalgamation, defined in the "Oxford Minireference Dictionary & Thesaurus" as to mix or combine, is the best operative word to describe this Testament Spectator edition: for it represents the amalgamation of Gospels Matthew, Mark, Luke and John's four separate time lines.

This 48-page edition presents 117-authored news, features, character-inspective narratives; including four Tellers To the Editor — one appears on the bottom of page 33, and the other three comprise page 45.

Jesus' famous Temple Courts speech (Mt. 23:2-29, page 26, KJV), end-time prophecy (Mk. 13:5-37, page 27, NIV), and Mount of Olives discourses (recorded in John and found on pages 29-30, NIV), are published verbatim in five "Jesus Christ's Own Words" narratives.

Jesus Christ's sufferings, foretold by King David in the first 21 verses of Psalms 22, appears on page 38. Two Jesus "Quick Reads," the first highlighting His miracles and the second showing His post-resurrection, pre-ascension appearances, are published on page 39 and 46, respectively. (See Table of Contents and Holy Bible References section, on page 48 for entire listing).

Out of respect for reporting on and about the Son of God, Prophesied Messiah, Incarnate Man, Crucified Savior, Resurrected Lord and Ascended King, the author has taken the stylistic prerogative of capitalizing all Jesusaic Names, Titles and References.

The major events of Jesus' life in this Testament Spectator edition are gleaned from "The Life of Christ" outline, displayed on page 1,480 to 1,482 in the HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society. Used by permission by Zondervan Bible Publishers.

— Ronald Owens, Jr.
July 18, 1999

Holy Spirit impregnates chaste maiden with God's only Son

Archangel Gabriel informs Mary of Trinity's plan

It is impossible for a woman to become pregnant without having relations with a man, but Mary, a virgin betrothed to Joseph of Nazareth, claimed that she was impregnated by none other than the Holy Spirit!

To add to this unbelievable story, Mary claims that in a supernatural visit, the Angel Gabriel informed her about her pregnancy and that the baby she would birth would be none other than the Son of God.

"I was told by the Angel Gabriel that I would give birth to a Son and that His name was to be called Jesus," Mary said of the One prophesied to be the King of the Jews.

The Angel Gabriel said my Son will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High," she said.

Finding this very difficult to believe, Mary was greatly troubled at Gabriel's words and wondered how and why she was selected to be the one "highly

avored" among women.

"Gabriel told me to not be afraid and assured me that I have indeed found favor with God," she said humbly of his response.

"I can still remember the Angel's words," Mary told The Testament Spectator.

He said: "The Lord God will give Him [my Son] the throne of his father David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom will never end."

"So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God."

In addition, Gabriel revealed to Mary that her relative, Elizabeth, was also pregnant (see "Archangel Predicts Barren Woman's Pregnancy" below).

"She who was said to be barren is in her sixth month [of pregnancy]. For nothing is impossible with God," the Angel proclaimed boldly.

Mary felt a sense of peace and resignation about her predicament.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God" — Archangel Gabriel

Mary, who didn't seem to grasp the impact of what the Angel told her because she was thinking of her honored betrothal to Joseph, reminded Gabriel that she was a virgin.

"How will this be?" she asked the Angel of the Lord.

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you," He explained to her.

"I am the Lord's servant," she said to the Angel. "May it be to me as you have said."

Now she must tell Joseph about the angelic visitation and her condition. But what would he think? How would he respond? She pondered for a while.

Mary, daughter of Heli, felt that her love for Joseph and his love for her would still weather this storm.

Gabriel predicts barren woman's pregnancy

Temple Priest told their son would prepare the way for coming Messiah

A Levitical Priest, selected by lots to pull temple duty, was told by an Angel of the Lord that his son would prepare a way for the coming Messiah.

The angelic visitation occurred after Zechariah, of the Abijah Priestly sect, was burning incense in the temple one day.

Suddenly there appeared an Angel of the Lord, standing on the right side of the altar of incense, which is the south side of the altar since the holy table faced eastward.

At the time Zechariah saw the magnificent Heavenly Being, the temple priest became troubled and gripped with fear, just like Gideon so long ago when the Angel of the Lord commissioned him to lead 300 men against so many of Israel's enemies.

"Do not be afraid, Zechariah, your prayer has been heard," the Angel of the Lord said to the frightened priest about his wife's barrenness.

"Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord."

The Angel of the Lord said that John was to be a modern-day Nazirite. Strongman Samson, son of Manoah, was a lifelong member of this highly-disciplined priestly sect until he told Delilah of Philistia's Sorek Valley the secret of his great strength.

Just like strongman Samson and other Nazirites, John would be prohibited from

drinking wine or other fermented drink. But unlike anyone else before him, John will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from birth, and would grow up to be a powerful man of God, the Angel of the Lord prophesied.

"Many of the people of Israel will be brought back to the Lord their God," the Heavenly Being declared.

"And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah [the Tishbite], to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous — to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

"I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news..." — the Archangel Gabriel

It seemed like that all these years Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth, a couple that was righteous before the Lord God Almighty, was being rewarded for observing all of the Lord's commandments, ordinances and regulations.

But just like Gideon, son of Joash of the Abiezrite clan from the tribe of Manasseh, Zechariah also doubted the message and the messenger.

"How can I be sure of this," Zechariah asked the Angel Gabriel, "I am an old man and my wife [Elizabeth] is well along in years," he said in unbelief.

"I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news," proclaimed the Angel of the Lord, now identifying himself as the Archangel Gabriel.

While the Angel of the Lord was patient with the timid farmer Gideon — who was reluctant to believe even after he was called a "Mighty Warrior" —

Archangel Gabriel wasn't too tolerant with Zechariah. Unfortunately, the priest would have to pay a price for his unbelief.

"And now you will be silent and not able to speak until the day this happens," Gabriel said, "because you did not believe my words, which will come true at their proper time."

Meanwhile, people were outside waiting for Zechariah, wondering what was taking him so long.

When Zechariah finally emerged from the temple altar area, they noticed he could not speak.

They surmised that he had seen a vision and did not realize that the Archangel Gabriel had actually visited the priest.

Zechariah kept gesturing signs to them because he had become a mute, and remained that way.

When his time of service of pulling temple duty was complete, Zechariah returned home.

After this, Zechariah's wife Elizabeth became pregnant and remained in seclusion for five months.

"The Lord has done this [her pregnancy] for me," said Elizabeth, a direct descendant of the late great Aaron. "In these days He has shown His favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."

Elizabeth's son, sent from the Lord God Almighty, would be a witness to testify concerning Mary's son "as a witness to the Light. The true Light that gives light to every man was coming..."

Elizabeth's unborn son leaps in her womb upon hearing Mary's voice

Baby John knew his Mother visited Jesus' Mom

In the second trimester of Elizabeth's pregnancy, her unborn child jumped vigorously in her womb upon hearing that his mom was in the presence of the mother who was carrying Jesus Christ the Messiah.

Mary, the maiden betrothed to Joseph (the son of Jacob of Nazareth), visited Elizabeth to a town in the hill country of Judea to inform her that she too was inexplicably pregnant.

As Mary, daughter of Heli, entered Zechariah's home and greeted her relative Elizabeth, the unborn John leaped in her womb. Elizabeth, a descendant of the Aaronic line, was instantly filled with the Holy Spirit.

"Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear," Elizabeth exclaimed to Mary in a loud voice.

"But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me," she asked her relative rhetorically.

"As soon as the sound of your greeting

'As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy' — Elizabeth

reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy," she said.

"Blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished," Elizabeth said, invoking blessing on Mary.

Mary responded to Elizabeth's blessing with a song:

"My soul glorifies the Lord and my

spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant. From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me — Holy is His name.

"His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation.

"He has performed mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.

"He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.

"He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.

"He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham

and His descendants forever, even as He said to our fathers."

After the conclusion of Mary's song, they both praised the Lord God Almighty for all that was happening to them.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months — until her relative delivered — and then she returned home.

During Mary's stay with Elizabeth, the daughter of Heli informed her relative about what the Archangel Gabriel's visit. The pregnant maiden told Elizabeth that she was supernaturally impregnated by the Holy Spirit.

Consequently, Mary would give birth to a son and that his name was to be called Jesus, the one prophesied to be the King of the Jews and the one who will be called the Son of the Most High.

The sons of both of these women would change the world forever.

Elizabeth, Zechariah have baby son too

Everyone rejoices with couple and wonders at significance of child's birth

Zechariah and Elizabeth, a couple who has been married for quite a long time now, had finally delivered a son, their relatives and neighbors learned.

Upon hearing the great news, everyone rejoiced with the couple and shared in Elizabeth's joy.

All these years Zechariah, of the Abijah Levitical priestly sect, and his wife Elizabeth, a descendant of the late great Aaron, was righteous before the Lord God Almighty.

They were now being rewarded for observing all of the Lord's commandments, ordinances and regulations, relatives and neighbors atested. The Lord God Almighty had indeed shown the couple great mercy.

After eight days, the time came for John to be circumcised and named. Everyone assumed and thought that he should be named after his father, Zechariah.

"No," Elizabeth said emphatically, when there was a move afoot to give her newborn son his father's name. "He is to be called, John."

"There is no one among your relatives who has that name," they replied to her. Her relatives surmised that Elizabeth was just too euphoric to remember customary practice.

Usurping her matriarchal authority, the men went directly to Zechariah, because they didn't believe that the name Elizabeth had chosen was not approved.

They gestured to her husband Zechariah to find out from him what did he want his son to be named. Zechariah asked for a writing tablet and to everyone's astonishment, the priest, backing up his Elizabeth, etched the four words: "His name is John."

Instantly Zechariah's mouth was opened. After nine months of speechlessness, the priest's tongue was

finally loosened. He began to speak, praise God and gave the following prophecy:

"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because He has come and has redeemed His people.

"He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David (as He said through His holy prophets of long ago), salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us — to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath He swore to our father Abraham:

"To rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

"And you, my child," Zechariah said, holding his son tenderly in his arms, "will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him, to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

After Zechariah delivered his prophecy, he could not stop praising God. They had never seen a priest act like this before.

Upon hearing this anointed prophecy, the couple's relatives and neighbors were filled with awe.

News of the incident spread throughout all of the hill country of Judea. Everyone who heard what happened to Zechariah and Elizabeth wondered about the significance of all of these events.

"What then is this child going to be," they asked one another, sensing that the Lord's hand was indeed upon the young lad.

In due process of time, John grew and became strong in spirit. He lived in the desert until he appeared publicly to Israel.

Doin' the right thing

Should he wed Mary or discreetly break up with her

Joseph, son of Jacob, wanted to do the right thing.

The upright, righteous and honorable Joseph, a man anticipating marrying the daughter of Heli, was shocked to learn that Mary was pregnant, even though she and her family stressed that she was indeed a virgin.

He just didn't understand it. Joseph knew Mary came from an upright family and was chaste. He knew she was honest and wouldn't lie. Mary wasn't the type of person to make up stories either. A virgin woman becoming pregnant was impossible.

"What am I to do now?" Joseph wondered.

According to Mosaic Law, strict penalties can be imposed upon a Jewish woman found pregnant out of wedlock. Joseph was mandated to expose Mary publicly. But this would have certainly brought her shame and death.

Although Joseph felt dishonored, he still loved Mary. Because he couldn't bear to see her hurt, Joseph opted to discreetly break up with her. This noble act, he reasoned, would spare public embarrassment and humiliation to them and their families.

This is what he could do — the honorable, right and proper thing. But Joseph still felt agitated. He continued to wrestle with the matter.

Isn't it ironic, Joseph thought, that the first Jacob in his family (Abraham's grandson), which according to folklore and verified by Mosaic scriptures, also

wrestled with God all night! He didn't want to be so presumptuous. Old Jacob, whom his father was named after, came out ahead when he asked for a blessing, but he also was humbled as he clung to God, and his name was changed to Israel. Joseph thought he might not be so lucky in contesting such a powerful God.

Just the thought of all this made Joseph awfully weary. He decided to sleep. An Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and gave him a mandate: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because the Child who is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.

"She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins," the Angel of the Lord said.

Joseph said the Angel told him that all this was to take place to fulfill what the Lord had already revealed through the prophet: "The virgin will be with Child and will give birth to a Son, and they will call him Emmanuel — God with Us."

Joseph said he awoke with a certain peace. He did what the Angel of the Lord commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.

Joseph no longer wondered nor pondered whether he should go through with his plans of wedding Mary.

As soon as Joseph saw her, he took her in his arms and told her how much he loved her and would stand by her. She melted in his tender embrace.

Just like the patriarch Jacob before him, Joseph had a sense that his actions would also impact his people — perhaps all people!

Angels appear to Bethlehem shepherds...

An Angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in the field near Bethlehem to herald the birth of the King of the Jews, according to shepherds who witnessed the spectacular scene while they were tending their flocks.

"The glory of the Lord was so intense and shone all around us. We were terrified," one shepherd remarked to *The Testament Spectator*.

"But the Angel of the Lord assured

us not to be afraid, because he had good news for us and for all people," another shepherd said.

The Angel told them that in the town of David, a Savior has been born.

"He is Christ the Lord," the Angel said. "This will be a sign for you: You will find a Baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

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King of the Jews born in Bethlehem stable

Jesus Christ is born to Joseph and Mary

The Son of God became the Son of Man when Jesus Christ, the prophesied King of the Jews, was born to a common couple in a Bethlehem stable.

Born to Joseph, son of Jacob (of the Davidic line) and Mary, daughter of Heli, Jesus Christ was supernaturally conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit at the time when Mary, a virgin, was betrothed to Joseph.

No one could explain how a virgin became pregnant.

Although a shocked Mary and a

confused Joseph were initially reluctant to undertake their parental responsibilities, they accepted their roles when God's plan was revealed to them by an Angel of the Lord.

Like any responsible parents, Joseph and Mary had a job to do, and that was to love, nurture and take care of their firstborn Son.

After His birth, the infant Jesus was cleaned, rubbed with salt — to dry, tighten and purify the skin — and wrapped with swaddling clothes.

So tightly was the Baby wrapped with cloths and rags that one couldn't even tell if he had any arms or legs.

A Baby wrapped with swaddling clothes must have looked like an

Egyptian mummy. This child caring practice was Hebrew custom.

Jesus' eyes were the only physical features visible from the tightly-woven bandages. Warm, welcome and radiant as the eastern star that so illuminated His birth, were the eyes which attracted many witnesses to view him lying in a Bethlehem manger.

If Jesus had been born to wealthy Hebrew parents, the bandages swathed around his tiny body would have been fine scarfs or shawls.

The Son of God, who became the Son of Man that day, was born in a Bethlehem stable like an earthly commoner rather than like a heavenly King.

'Jesus' is name given to newborn

Simeon, Anna confirm newborn's destiny on confirmation day

The Baby who had been born just eight days earlier in a Bethlehem manger was given an original name, according to the Boys' parents.

Joseph son of Jacob and his wife Mary daughter of Heli christened their Baby Boy "Jesus," the name given by the Angel of the Lord prior to His conception.

When the period of purification had been completed — 40 days after their Baby's birth — Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Jerusalem Temple.

There, in accordance with Mosaic Law, Jesus would be presented before and consecrated to the Lord God Almighty.

A righteous and devout man from Jerusalem named Simeon had been waiting for the consolation of Israel, which would appear in the personage of Jesus. The Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would not die until he saw the Lord's Christ.

On Jesus' consecration day, Simeon was moved by the Holy Spirit. Just as the time Joseph and Mary were bringing their Baby to be consecrated, Simeon too entered the temple courts.

When Simeon saw the small Baby in Mary's arms, he intuitively knew and immediately recognized that this was indeed the Child he had waited so long to see. As a result of his long wait of setting his eyes on the Messiah, Simeon praised God and begun to pray right there on the spot.

"Sovereign Lord as you have promised, you can now dismiss your servant in peace," he said, after gently taking the Baby from Mary's arms.

"For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel," he said.

Joseph and Mary, who were unalarmed at the stranger's forwardness, marveled at what Simeon said about their Newborn Son.

Simeon blessed the young family and then said to Mother Mary.

"This Child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed," he said.

Simeon said something else that pricked Mary's heart. He said that the Child would "will pierce her own soul, like a sword," a reference to Jesus' death because approximately 33 years later the mother of Jesus would witness her Son's crucifixion.

Simeon's acknowledgment of Jesus and subsequent blessing to Mary was confirmed by yet another.

A woman named Anna, who never left the temple but worshipped, prayed and fasted night and day, too gave thanks to God and spoke highly of the Child.

The 84-year-old widow Anna, daughter of Phanuel of Israel's tribe of Asher, said that many were looking forward to the Child as the one who would redeem Jerusalem. Her prophecy would also be fulfilled.

Astronomical oddity mysteriously appears in the eastern heavens

Radiant star appears both day and night

For some time now, a strange star has mysteriously appeared in the east.

Visible by day and illuminating the sky at night, some say the star is an omen, portending the birth of a King. Some say the world is coming to an end. Others, not as fatalistic, disagree.

Yet everyone seems to have an opinion. The star has caught everyone's attention, including Magi (May-ji), a caste of wise men reported to be from the east who specialize in astrology, medicine and natural science.

"Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews," asked the Magi of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

"For we have seen His star in the east and we have come to worship Him," they said.

When King Herod and Jerusalem's civil and religious elders heard this, they were troubled. Hope in a new King would agitate the people, they reasoned.

Even though Herod the Great was appointed governor of Galilee and King of Judea about 37 years ago, the foreign Idumean needed some background information on the significance of this astronomical phenomenon that attracted so much Jewish attention.

"Where is Christ to be born," asked King Herod after summoning the Chief Priests and Scribes, who were scholarly men conversant with Mosaic Law and

the Scriptures.

"In Bethlehem in Judaea," they replied to the King.

Quoting from old scrolls, one read: "For this is what the prophet has written 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a Ruler who will be the Shepherd of My people Israel.'"

The King views this prophecy that a Shepherd from Israel would be Ruler as an affront to his authority. He has tried everything in his power to keep things running smoothly.

King Herod began remodeling the Temple about 20 years ago because it seemed to pacify the Jews, and plus he loved architecture. Even though there were cost overruns and the Temple was behind schedule, he was committed to seeing it completed.

King Herod acted. He secretly summoned the wise men — rumored to have probably come from Persia or southern Arabia — to find out exactly when the star appeared.

"Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews," the Magi inquired of King Herod. "We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

King Herod didn't want to appear of being afraid nor intimidated about a Jew Toddler, the Magi, or this inexplicable astronomical phenomena.

He asked them as diplomatically as he could for the Magi to go to Bethlehem and search for the young Child.

the east who specialize in astrology, medicine and natural science, were supposed to report to him about the King of the Jews. But they didn't.

"Let it be so decreed that all male children born to Jewish mothers in

"When you find Him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship Him," King Herod said.

Uneasy with their visitation to King Herod's court, the Magi left and continued their pilgrimage, following the star they had seen in the east.

Eventually, the star stopped and shone brightly over a house. The Magi were overjoyed when they saw the Child with His mother Mary.

This young Child exuded more radiance and brilliance than the star they were following and the Magi felt more comfortable in His presence than they did in the palatial splendor of Herod's court.

"Indeed," they said to each other. "This must be the King of the Jews."

Kneeling, worshipping and paying homage to Jesus, the Magi presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Because of the sinister motives they sensed from King Herod, the sight of the Idumean worshipping the Son of God seemed abhorrent to them.

It was time for them to leave. Warned by God in a dream, the Magi and their entourage returned to their country another way from where King Herod expected them to go.

Meanwhile, King Herod waited for the Magi to return with their report. He asked his attendants and spies for their whereabouts. When they told him that the Magi abruptly departed another way, he became very enraged.

King Herod orders Jewish babies slaughtered

Enraged that the Magi outwitted King Herod, a royal proclamation ordered that all boy toddlers were to be immediately executed.

Herod was angry that the Magi, a caste of wise men reported to be from

Bethlehem and all the coasts thereof in the last two years, are henceforth to be immediately executed by the divine wish and sovereign will of Herod The Great," the edict read after not hearing from

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...In the field to herald the birth of the King of the Jews

(Continued from Page 2, Column 4)

The shepherds said that just as quickly as the Angelic messenger appeared, a "great company" of the Heavenly Host also appeared and joined him, praising God.

"I can still recall them saying: 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom His favor rests,'" another shepherd said.

As soon as the Angels left and ascended back to heaven, the shepherds said to one another: "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

Leaving their sheep quickly, the shepherds went to Bethlehem and found Mary and Joseph with their Baby Jesus, lying in a manger just as the Angel of

the Lord announced.

The shepherds couldn't help but spread the word about this Child to others they met. All who heard their story of the birth of Jesus were indeed amazed at the shepherds' report.

Returning to their duties, they glorified and praised God for what the Angel of the Lord allowed them to see and hear.

Jewish babies slaughtered in Bethlehem, and entire region...

(Continued from Page 3, Column 3)

them. "Anyone sheltering, hiding, aiding or abetting those carrying out this edict or even impeding the brave soldiers implementing this royal decree, shall also be summarily executed."

It was a hideous, sad, horrible and nauseating sight to see imposing soldiers slaughter innocent children with daggers, swords and spears.

Wailing mothers tried unsuccessfully to shield their sons from the merciless, murderous attacks of Herod's troops, but the attempts to save their young ones were futile.

Grief-stricken cries of hysterical mothers clutching their bloodstained lifeless children must have disturbed everyone in Bethlehem, but the Jewish men, fearful that further Herodian atrocities may be inflicted on their families, did nothing to openly contest the edict nor did they rise up to defend the children.

Roman officials opted not to interfere with the Herodian edict.

They were indeed puzzled by King Herod and Jerusalem's paranoid fixation on what they viewed as just a phantom Jewish Baby, one who was foretold, according to their sources by superstition, folklore or ancient scrolls, to be the prophesied King of the Jews.

The Romans were no strangers of committing atrocities themselves to

impose civil control over the populace.

They did not believe that a King of the Jews could challenge them or King Herod, their puppet ruler. However, they stayed out of it, surmising the edict would instill fear among the Jews.

Some Roman officials, according to

anonymous sources, were impressed with Herod's ruthlessness and resolve — even to the slaughter of two-year-old babies — to keep things under control.

This infanticidal proclamation must have won King Herod Roman favor. Sources close to the King say the random

two-year age was selected "in accordance with the time given by the Magi" regarding the appearance of the star (see "Astronomical Rarity Appears In Eastern Skies" story on page 3).

Jesus' birth was prophesied, but many that night vividly recalled another prophecy from Jeremiah: "In Ramah, there was a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not."

It seems like history is destined to repeat itself. King Herod's order of slaughtering the babies in Bethlehem was reminiscent of another similar event which occurred long ago.

Threatened by the rapid population increase of the Israelites, Pharaoh ordered midwives to kill male children by drowning them in the Nile River.

Just like then, countless mothers lost their sons, sisters their brothers, and fathers their firstborn sons to extend their lineage.

Coincidentally Egypt's bosom protected baby Moses like the land of the Nile and pyramids would hide Baby Jesus.

For as a safeguard measure to protect their firstborn from King Herod's soldiers, Joseph was angelically directed in a dream to take Mary and the young Child, Jesus, to Egypt until it was safe for them to return later.

Angel of the Lord orders Joseph to return from Egyptian exile

After the death of King Herod the Great, the Toddler Jesus and His parents were allowed to return from their self-imposed exile, an Angel of the Lord told Father Joseph.

"Get up, take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel," the Angel of the Lord said, appearing to Joseph in a dream one evening. "For those who were trying to take the Child's life are dead."

Joseph, son of Jacob and his wife Mary, daughter of Heli, obeyed the Angel. They arose, packed their belongings and left their temporary home in Egypt.

When they arrived in the land of Israel, the couple learned that Herod's son Archelaus had succeeded his father and was now reigning in Judea.

Afraid that Archelaus might issue a similar proclamation to kill male babies just as his father did before him, Joseph was apprehensive in establishing Judea

home. Rather than worrying about what he and Mary should do, Joseph became accustomed in getting direction from the Lord God Almighty while he slept.

Thrice before — when told to wed Mary, take his family to Egypt and then return to Israel again — Joseph got his orders from the Angel of the Lord in his dream. Why should this dilemma be any different?

After Mary and the Boy Jesus were settled for the evening, Joseph laid down to rest. Sleeping very soundly that evening, Joseph was warned in a fourth dream to settle in Nazareth, a small town located in the Galilee District.

Joseph awoke and told Mary his dream. They quickly and quietly left their resting place. This move would fulfill yet another prophecy that his Son "will be called a Nazarene" for hailing from Nazareth.

Year's past and no news was reported about Jesus Christ, the son of Joseph and Mary, until once when the young family went to celebrate the Feast of the Passover at Jerusalem Temple, the son of Jacob and daughter of Heli would face a challenge that would scare any parent.

Child prodigy impresses teachers at Jerusalem Temple

Temple groupies amazed at His maturity and keen intellect

A 12-year-old Jewish Boy has been sitting among the teachers at Jerusalem Temple for the past three days now, asking probative questions and hearing the learned men debate and discuss Mosaic Law.

No one knows the identity of the young Boy, who appeared in the Temple Courts following the Feast of the

Passover. But everyone who has heard this Lad speak has been amazed at His understanding and the answers He gives them.

The Boy, who is quite mature for His age and possesses a keen intellect, must be a Child prodigy.

Temple teachers kept remarking during the time the child was with them that He has a promising future.

The Temple teachers didn't know that His parents caravanned home and journeyed for a day before realizing their Son was still at Jerusalem Temple.

Nor did the Temple teachers know that once His parents discovered their young Son was missing, they frantically searched for Him everywhere, among their relatives and friends.

The Temple teachers were merely enjoying the Boys' contribution to their theological and spiritual discussion when all of the sudden, His mother appeared, called for Him and whisked Him away.

"Son, why have you treated us like this," an astonished Mary was overheard to have said to Jesus, after she and her husband, Joseph, had been hunting for

Him for the past three days now.

"Your Father and I have been anxiously searching for you," she said.

The teenage Jesus was so engrossed in the teachers, He lost all track of time.

"Why were you searching for me," Jesus asked, perplexed that his Mother was worried about where He was and what He was doing. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?"

His parents did not understand what young Jesus was saying to them. But His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

The family settled in Nazareth and the Lad was an obedient Child. Jesus Christ grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God. Meanwhile, the Lord God Almighty allowed Jesus' cousin — John the Baptist — to commence with his ministry. John would be mistaken as the Messiah, but the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth knew that he was but the voice of one calling in the desert to "make straight the way for the Lord."

Religious fanatic preaches controversial doctrine...

Everywhere people have come to hear his fiery rhetoric

A religious fanatic has been preaching the forgiveness of sins and plunging repentant people in the Jordan River.

Residents from Jerusalem and all Judea as well as the whole Jordanian region have gone to see and hear this man, rumored to be none other but the Christ Himself.

"Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven

is near," said the feisty orator, named "John the Baptist" by his followers.

John the Baptist, son of Zechariah (of the Abijah Priestly sect) whose mother Elizabeth is a descendant from the

'Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near' — John the Baptist

Aaronic line, claims to have received a word from the Lord God Almighty to minister to the people.

The masses seemed to be attracted yet all the more to John's brutal, candid and

honest rhetoric. John wasn't even intimidated by the many Pharisees and Sadducees who were in the crowd that day.

"You brood of vipers! Who warned

you to flee from the coming wrath," John said to the crowds, who had come from all around to be baptized by him.

"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say

to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,'" he said.

Gesturing at the rocks strewn at the rivers' banks, John said: "I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

John revealed that his mission was to baptize those penitent ones with water. Squelching the rumor that he was the

(Continued on Page 5, Column 1)

Priests and Levites query John the Baptist

Is he the Messiah, Elijah, or the Prophet?

Priests and Levites were dispatched from Jerusalem to find out about some religious fanatic desert dweller delivering fiery sermons and dunking people in the dirty Jordan River.

Unsubstantiated reports of "John the Baptist" being the son of Zechariah — of the Abijah Priestly sect — whose mother Elizabeth descended from the late great Aaron, had to be verified.

Could this man be the long-awaited Messiah? That's the million dollar question the priest's were asking one another.

Religious officials objected to John's unorthodox style and unconventional message. His uncouth clothes (clad in camel's hair fastened by a leather belt) and unusual diet (locust and wild honey) are somewhat odd, too.

This forgiveness of sins theology and plunging repentant people in the river

was contrary to Mosaic Law. Besides, since John is not licensed — he's not supposed to be even preaching at all!

"I am not the Christ," was John the Baptist's emphatic response when the religious delegation posed the million dollar question to him.

"Then who are you? Are you Elijah," the delegation asked, referring to the Tishbite prophetised to return to Israel prior to Jesus Christ's second coming.

"I am not," John said, shaking his

'I am the voice of one calling in the desert, Make straight the way for the Lord' — John the Baptist

head no.

"Are you the Prophet," another priest asked of the one who Moses, the Servant of the Lord, predicted so long ago.

"Nope," John answered.

"Who are you," they all insisted, pressing his identity and pressuring him to reveal what he was doing here.

"Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say

about yourself," they said, wanting an immediate explanation.

"I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord,'" he said, pointing his long finger at them, not intimidated by their priestly vestments nor their pious air.

The delegation looked at each other with puzzlement. Was this the only explanation they could get out of him? What a futile trip they made, coming all the way out here in the hot sun to

letting the water spill onto the surface.

"But among you stands one you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to tie," he said, rising from his kneeling posture and pointing to their footwear.

Still unsatisfied with John's answer, the delegation returned to Jerusalem so they could report to the priestly community what they'd learned.

After hearing the delegation's report, the religious leaders, considering the fiery preacher to be nothing more than just a flash in the pan, predicted that John the Baptist wouldn't be around much longer to agitate the people.

Not only did John criticize them, but he also rebuked Herod the Tetrarch for all of his evil deeds. What a suicidal move, the priests thought. Their prediction turned out to be true. Eventually, John the Baptist would be arrested and imprisoned — but not until he was privileged to immerse the Expected One.

Jesus Christ invites John to baptize Him

Son of God immersed in the Jordan River

Hundreds of men and women were immersed in the Jordan River, but John the Baptist distinctly remembered the radiant countenance of the one Man who was the Son of God.

John, the man who preached the forgiveness of sins and plunged repentant people in the river, saw Jesus Christ from afar one afternoon.

"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world," said John. Since Elizabeth, John's mother, and Mary, Jesus' mother were relatives, "the Baptist" had actually spotted his own Cousin.

"This is the one I meant when I said, 'A Man who comes after me has surpassed me because He was before me.' I myself did not know Him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that He might be revealed to Israel," John explained to his followers.

Jesus Christ walked toward His cousin. A group of people were waiting to be baptized, but inexplicably, everyone willingly allowed Jesus to move immediately to the front of the line.

"I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me," John said humbly.

"Let it be so now, it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness," Jesus replied.

But Jesus' humility buoyed John the Baptist all the more. He had no choice but to immerse Him in the Jordan River.

John put one hand on Jesus' chest and the other on His back. Slowly John lowered Jesus in the cool water, held Him just under the surface and gently raised Him up again.

When Jesus' face came to the surface, John could see the Christ praying. He too prayed. The Baptist raised his eyes toward the sky and just at that moment, heaven tore open and the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a gentle, white dove.

The dove silhouetted in the blue sky as His wings fluttered and hovered over Jesus' head.

Then suddenly, a powerful voice from heaven spoke the following.

"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased," John heard the voice say, instantly recognizing it as none other but the Lord God Almighty.

Jesus moved very gracefully out of the water and headed toward the Judean Desert.

John the Baptist basked in the Son's rays. Losing sense of time, the Baptist eventually collected himself and baptized the next group of converts.

Bethany, which is on the other side of the Jordan River.

"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet," a disappointed and impatient Pharisee, perspiring from the heat, asked John who was standing knee deep in the cool Jordan River.

"I baptize with water," John replied, kneeling down, cupping his hands and

Judean Desert fast and Satanic temptation tests Nazarene's character

Fourth man in Israel's history to undergo 40-day fast

Prior to Jesus Christ's three-year grueling ministry, the Son of God fasted 40 days in the wilderness, the Christ later revealed to two of His "Apostolic Appointees."

Matthew, son of Alphaeus and brother of James, plus Mark (whose nickname was John) learned that after John the Baptist immersed Jesus Christ in the Jordan River, the Spirit led the Son of God in the wilderness on a pilgrimage and fast.

Luke, a Jewish physician who is familiar with Jesus' life, also corroborated the incident, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

In the intense heat, blistering wind and among the wild animals of the wilderness, Jesus' seclusion, isolation and loneliness only strengthened Him, because the incarnate man yielded to His Lord God Almighty and was full of the Holy Spirit.

But Satan still tempted the Son of God, Matthew, Mark and Luke disclosed. "If You are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread," he said to Jesus. "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of

God," responded Jesus, quoting God's Word.

Taking Jesus to the top of the holy city — which was Herod's Temple Jerusalem — Satan asked Jesus to flaunt His deity and dared Him to jump 700 feet to His death.

"If You are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down, For it is written: 'He will command His angels concerning You, and they will lift You up in their hands, so that You will not strike Your foot against a stone.'"

But Jesus Christ, hungry in body yet strong in spirit, immediately answered. "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only," Jesus said.

In his last effort to get to Jesus, Satan took the Son of God to a very high mountain.

"All this I will give You," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Again, Jesus' response was swift and immediate. "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'"

After this ordeal, the Angels ministered to Jesus, the fourth man (Moses, the Servant of the Lord, Joshua son of Nun and Elijah the Tishbite) recorded in scripture to have fasted 40 days.

...Penitent people plunged in river

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Christ, the Baptist predicted that one will come who is more powerful than he.

"His sandals I am not fit to carry," the Baptist said, pointing to a bystander's footwear.

"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, gathering His wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire," John said.

People from all walks of life convened at the banks of the river that day. There were the wealthy, the middle class like tax collectors and yes even soldiers — all with inquisitive minds, hungry spirits and penitent hearts.

"What should we do then, what should we do," assorted members of the crowd shouted at John the Baptist. Their conscience was indeed pricked by the fiery orator's message.

"The man with two coats should share with him who has none," John the

Baptist answered them.

"And the one who has food should share with the one who doesn't have any," he said.

Tax collectors were told not to collect any more taxes than what is required and soldiers were encouraged to be content with their pay and exhorted not to extort money.

Moved by his message, many converts allowed John to baptize them in the cool, refreshing waters of the Jordan River.

Jesus performs first miracle

Performing His first miracle, Jesus Christ revealed His glory for the first time to His disciples when He transformed 180 gallons of water into vintage wine.

Jesus was invited to a wedding feast at Cana in Galilee and Mother Mary attended. In addition to the disciples Jesus had just recruited, numerous other

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Nazarene turns water into wine...

(Continued from Page 2, Column 4)

wedding guests were also there.

More people attended the wedding — and consequently drank more wine — than what was planned. When the wine was depleted, Mary asked Jesus to intervene.

"They have no more wine," Mother Mary informed Jesus, who was seated in the rear of the banquet hall with His disciples enjoying the fun, fanfare and frivolity.

"Dear woman, why do you involve me," replied Jesus.

He preferred not to draw any attention to Himself at this time and He certainly didn't want to detract from the wedding festivities.

"My time has not yet come," Jesus

said to Mother Mary.

It's quite embarrassing to have run out of wine during a wedding feast. Since Mary knew the wedding party and their families so well, she felt particularly bad about the situation.

With this in mind, Mary solicited Jesus' help, assuming that He wouldn't object.

"Do whatever He tells you," Mary said to the servants, walking away and expecting Jesus to remedy the situation.

Nearby, Jesus noticed there were six stone 30-gallon water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing. Dutifully obeying His mother to remedy the situation, He instructed the servants to fill the jars with water — all the way to the top. They did.

"Now draw some out and take it to

the master of the wedding banquet," Jesus instructed them. They complied.

When the servants took the wine to a surprised wedding banquet master, he quickly sampled it and found the vintage to be quite exquisite.

Jesus could see from afar the man's inquisitive look on his face, probably wondering where such good wine came from.

The wedding banquet master beckoned the bridegroom over to him.

"Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink," he was overheard to say, "but you have saved the best till now."

Thanks to Mother Mary and her Son Jesus, a potentially embarrassing situation was averted.

Nicodemus meets Jesus; Seeks answers during night meeting

Questions Rabbi on His theology and ministry

One of the most influential and wealthiest Jewish men in Jerusalem met Jesus Christ one evening.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin — which is the elite 71-member Jewish ruling council — met with Jesus the Teacher secretly to find out more about Him and His ministry.

What was this Rabbi's theology, the learned Nicodemus was curious to know about the man Jesus, hailed as "miracle worker" by those who He healed and assailed as "temple ransacker" by merchants who felt the sting of His wielding whip because they sold cattle, sheep and doves in Jerusalem Temple.

"Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God," acknowledged Nicodemus, speaking for himself and the rest of his Pharisaical colleagues.

"For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him," the Pharisee said, referring to Jesus healing the people's ailments, sicknesses and diseases in Jerusalem.

Jesus stated to Nicodemus that just as God was with Him, God would be with anyone who accepted Him. But first there must be a transformation. Jesus explained to his visitor in the cover of darkness.

"I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless He is born again," Jesus stressed to Nicodemus.

"How can a man be born when he is old," Nicodemus asked inquisitively. "Surely he cannot enter his or her mother's womb yet a second time and then be born."

Because Nicodemus didn't understand Jesus' symbolic imagery, the Son of God reiterated that no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of the water and the Spirit.

"Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit," Jesus said. "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

One of the most educated men in

Jerusalem was still stupefied.

"How can this be," the bewildered Nicodemus asked Jesus.

"You are Israel's teacher," replied Jesus, "and you do not understand these things? I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony." Jesus declared, referring to the Sanhedrin.

'For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

Jesus told Nicodemus that He has spoken to him in earthly things and he didn't believe. "How then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things," Jesus asked the perplexed Pharisee.

"No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven — the Son of man," He explained. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life."

Nicodemus didn't understand what this eternal life was all about. But before he could ask the question, Jesus continued:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

"For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to

save the world through Him. Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because He has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son."

Although light has come into the world, Jesus said men still loved darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil.

"Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light

Whip-wielding Man ransacks Jerusalem Temple

Drives cattle, sheep and doves from holy building

Angry that Jerusalem Temple had been converted from a worship place to a marketplace, a Man ransacked the holy building.

"Get these out of here," said the Man, identified as Jesus Christ of Nazareth. "How dare you turn my Father's house into a market."

Wielding an impromptu-created-cord-woven-whip, Jesus Christ drove the cattle, sheep and doves from the Temple area. He also scattered the coins of the cashiers and overturned their tables.

Attracted by the commotion Jesus was causing in Jerusalem Temple, the Jews wanted to know who Jesus was and what gave Him the right to expel the businessmen.

"What miraculous sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this," they asked, familiar with the prophecy and wondering if He was truly the Messiah.

"Destroy this Temple, and I will raise it again in three days," said Jesus, responding to their question.

"It has taken 46 years to build this Temple, and you are going to raise it in three days," they said, not knowing that Jesus was referring to His body rather than the Temple Herod the Great constructed 20 years before His birth.

In the following days, many believed in Jesus' authenticity because the Son of God would perform many astounding miracles in Jerusalem.

for fear that his deeds will be exposed," He explained. "But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

Appreciative of his covert meeting with Jesus, Nicodemus left the Son of God in the cover of darkness.

Woman's conversation with Jesus at a well sparks two-day Sychar revival

Nazarene tells her everything she did

A woman's conversation with Jesus Christ and conversion to His teachings sparked a sweeping two-day revival in Sychar, the Samaritan town where the patriarch Jacob had given a plot of land to his son, Joseph.

So excited was her encounter with the Man who identified Himself as the Messiah, that the Samaritan woman left her water jar at Jacob's Well when several men — who had been traveling with Him — returned from a Sychar market with food.

"He told me everything I ever did," the Samaritan woman, thrilled about the transformation she felt after her conversation with Jesus the Savior, testified to the citizens of Sychar.

This is what transpired. It was about noon when the Samaritan woman went to Jacob's Well to fill her jar with water,

as she had done many times before. Sitting near the opening of the well was a stranger, who asked her for a drink because He didn't have anything to drink from.

The woman responded very coolly to His request.

"You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. Why do you ask me for a drink," she questioned, reminding Him that the Jews did not associate with the Samaritans.

But Jesus, deflecting her lukewarm attitude, wasn't going to be thwarted from talking to her. He was aware of the racial animosity that existed between the Jews and Samaritans, but He knew that the woman needed to hear what He had to say.

"If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water," He said, interested in the woman's spiritual well-being and ignoring her statement.

"Sir, you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep," the woman said. "Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our Father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons, flocks and herds?"

Using symbolic imagery as He did during His conversation with Nicodemus a few days before, Jesus told her that everyone who drinks from Jacob's Well would become thirsty. But whoever drinks from the water He gave them, will never thirst again.

"Indeed," Jesus said, "the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Frustrated about her predicament and yearning for something more satisfying in her life, the Samaritan woman asked Jesus to give her this water, "so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water," still not

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Many Samaritians convert because of Jesus' teachings...

(Continued from Page 6, Column 4)

grasping what Jesus was trying to convey to her.

Aware of the Samaritan woman's life, Jesus told her to call her husband. "I have no husband," the woman replied honestly.

"You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband," Jesus said perceptively. "What you have said is quite true."

In all of her dealings with men, the Samaritan woman never met anyone like this man before.

She perceived that Jesus was some sort of holy man. But He was quite young looking, though.

"Sir, I can see that you are a prophet," she said, wanting to ask Him for some religious advice.

"Our father worshipped on this mountain [Mt. Gerizim], but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem," she explained.

Stating that it didn't matter whether

one worshipped on Mt. Gerizim or Jerusalem, Jesus said the hour would come when those who worship the Father would do so anywhere, as long as they worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

"For they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks," Jesus insisted.

"God is a Spirit, and His worshippers must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

*'God is a Spirit, and His worshippers
must worship Him in spirit and in truth'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth*

He reiterated.

Since the Samaritan woman believed that Jesus was but a prophet, she assumed that this man who had asked her for water at Jacob's Well was the one who would precede the Messiah.

"When He comes, He will explain everything to us," the woman said.

"I who speak to you AM HE," Jesus declared to the Samaritan woman with gentle authority, identifying Himself as none other but the Christ.

At that moment, Jesus' disciples

returned from Sychar. They were surprised to see Jesus talking to a woman in public about theological matters. But no one said anything.

Feeling somewhat awkward in their presence, the Samaritan woman left her water jar, ran to town and told the Sycharians in meticulous detail what happened.

Because of the woman's testimony

and their curiosity, a large number of Sycharians went to Jacob's Well to meet Jesus themselves. Just as she said, Jesus and His disciples were still there, talking.

The Sycharian Welcoming Committee, formed to encourage visitors and newcomers alike to stop in their town and patronize local businesses, urged Jesus and His companions to reside for awhile.

Jesus the Evangelist knew that a revival would break out in Sychar because He just got finished telling His

disciples to "open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest."

"Even now the reapers draw his wages," Jesus went on to explain about the many souls who needed to be saved from eternal damnation.

"Even now he harvest the crops for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together," He remarked.

Besides, Jesus told them, they had traveled all the way from Judea (via Galilee) to Samaria.

Since He was weary from the journey, He knew that His disciples were probably famished and fatigue. Jesus accepted their invitation.

The following two days many more Sycharians heard Jesus' message, believed what He said and consequently were converted during the sweeping revival.

"We no longer believe just because of what you said," the Sycharians told the Samaritan woman who went to Jacob's Well that day. "Now we have heard for ourselves and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

Jesus Christ heals Capernaum boy from afar

Royal official's son close to death

A Capernaum boy was healed by Jesus Christ from 12 miles away.

Because of severe fever the lad, who is the son of a royal official, was very close to death.

The boy's father, rumored to be a family member or officer of Herod Antipas, heard that Jesus Christ was evangelizing in Cana of Galilee.

Since it wasn't known whether Jesus and His entourage would swing by Capernaum, the royal official decided to go to Jesus instead.

Because of the boy's prognosis, travel for the sick lad was simply out of the question. Time was of the essence so the royal official hastily departed for Galilee.

Once arriving in Cana, it wasn't difficult for the boy's father to find Jesus the Healer. Because many Galileans were also on their way to see the Man

who has healed many sick people recently, all the royal official had to do was to follow the crowd.

The royal official could see that the Galileans welcomed Jesus, hailing Him as the "miracle worker." The boy's father just hoped and prayed that he too would be so fortunate, as the one's Jesus healed in Jerusalem of their ailments, sicknesses and diseases.

'Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders, you will never believe' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

After spotting Jesus, the royal official was able to work his way through the throng just to get a little closer.

Jesus was addressing the crowd, but the royal official couldn't hear what He was telling them so he moved closer.

Even from some distance away, Jesus exuded and radiated such a warmth that he's never felt before. Because of his position, the man has been in the company of royalty countless times

before, but Jesus' nobility, yet humility, impressed him more than anyone he's ever met.

Once the man got next to Jesus, the proud royal official, desperate for miraculous immediate action, respectfully interrupted Jesus. He knelt humbly and begged the Christ to accompany him to Capernaum to pray for his son's healing.

Jesus was in the middle of a sentence when the royal official approached Him, but He used the man as an example to accentuate His point.

"Unless you people see miraculous signs and wonders," Jesus told the royal official loud enough so the crowd could hear Him, "you will never believe."

"Sir, come down before my child dies," the father said urgently, imploring Jesus' help while the Son of God listened

intently. "You may go," Jesus said, "your son will live."

The royal official visualized Jesus laying hands on his sick son. That scenario was unnecessary. Taking Jesus at His word, the man arose, made his way out of the crowd and departed for Capernaum.

While en route, the royal official met his servants along the road. They told him that his son was healed. When the royal official asked his servants when the lad improved, they verified what he'd already suspected.

"The fever left him yesterday at the seventh hour," the servants said, which is about 1:00 p.m., Capernaum time. That was the moment when Jesus invited the royal official to return home and was the precise time which Jesus told him that "your son will live."

Because of this miracle and the fact that it was spoken by Jesus from Capernaum 12 miles away, the royal official and his household believed.

Nazareth mob attempts to assassinate their 'favorite Son'

Jesus walks right through the crowd

A Nazareth mob, angry that their "favorite Son" compared Himself to prophets Elijah the Tishbite and Elisha son of Shaphat, tried to throw Jesus Christ over a cliff.

But the illusive Jesus, initially hailed as hometown hero because of the many miracles He has performed recently, escaped certain death by passing right through the middle of the mob.

Jesus went to Nazareth Synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was His custom. Because the son of Joseph and Mary has been teaching and healing people of their ailments, sicknesses and diseases, Jesus had become quite popular.

Nazareth Synagogue was very crowded that Sabbath day. After the Priest and then Levite read the scriptures, Jesus, selected to be one of the five ordinary citizens honored to read God's word publicly, was handed the

antiquated scroll.

Out of respect for His Lord God Almighty and His word, Jesus stood up to read from the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. Unrolling it, He found the passage where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

Upon reading it, Jesus rolled back the scroll, returned it respectfully to the attendant and then sat down.

An anticipated silence permeated the room. Everyone at Nazareth Synagogue were staring at Him, waiting for Jesus to say something profound.

"Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your ears," the Nazarene said, causing everyone to speak well of Jesus after His initial remarks.

The citizens of Nazareth, proud of their "favorite Son," were awed and

amazed at the gracious words He spoke. The people anticipated that He would perform many amazing miracles in Nazareth as He did elsewhere.

"Isn't this Joseph's [the carpenter's] son," they asked each other proudly, bragging about their hometown hero.

But before Jesus would conclude his sermonette, the mood among the attendees in Nazareth Synagogue would quickly change.

"Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum,'" He said, aware that they wanted Him to duplicate His exploits.

"I tell you the truth," He continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for 3 1/2 years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel

with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed — only Naaman the Syrian."

After Jesus concluded his remarks, the congregants started murmuring.

The praises and accolades heaped on Jesus just moments before were transformed to contempt and vilification. Now everyone was furious at Jesus.

He had the audacity to suggest that He was greater than Elijah and Elisha — because they couldn't or didn't perform the miracles which He did.

This blasphemy could not be tolerated, not from anybody — even if He was Joseph's and Mary's Son!

The people got up, drove Him out of the hallowed walls of Nazareth Synagogue, through the town streets and then took Him to the top of the hill on which the town was built.

The mob was clamoring for His life. But before they could shove Him over the cliff, Jesus inexplicably and quickly walked right through the crowd — as if He was a Spirit — and went on His way.

Nazarene recruits four fishermen to serve as aides

Families, business interests, responsibilities and belongings left behind

Peter, Andrew, James and John were four fishermen recruited to follow Jesus Christ when the Messiah predicted that their skills would be used to catch men rather than just fish.

While Jesus the Minister was preaching at the water's edge of the Sea of Galilee one morning, He needed some room between Him and the swelling crowd, who came to hear the Christ teach.

Stepping on a docked boat owned by Simon (whose nickname is Peter) and his brother Andrew, Jesus asked the men to pull a little from the shore, so there would be a little distance between Him and the crowd. The two brother's, busy washing their nets at the time, complied

with Jesus' request.

The crowd was so enthralled at Jesus' teaching, they didn't mind Him employing the two fishermen's boat to be used as a sort of floating platform.

When Jesus resumed His teaching, Peter and Andrew stopped working because they too became very much interested with what He was saying.

After awhile, Jesus concluded teaching the word of God and the crowd

nets," said Peter, somehow believing that something could be gained for obeying this strange Man.

Andrew didn't say anything. What could they lose, he thought. The two brother's tossed their nets in the water and after it submerged from the surface, they pulled the net up again.

They couldn't believe their eyes. What a sight! To their amazement, so many fish were flopping in the net that

'From now on you will catch men'

— Jesus Christ of Nazareth to Peter, Andrew, James and John

eventually dispersed. Appreciative for them allowing Him to use their boat, Jesus asked the two fishermen to set sail.

"Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch," Jesus asked Peter and his brother Andrew.

"Master we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the

net began to fray.

Peeling awkward asking Jesus to assist and needing help to handle this great catch, Peter and Andrew signaled to James and John to lend a hand.

When the two brother's — Peter and Andrew's business partners — arrived with their boat, the four men loaded both vessels with the plentiful fish.

There was so much fish loaded in the boat, the craft almost capsized. Yet they were still able to maneuver the two boats back to pier.

After hearing Jesus teach the word of God, Peter was already pricked in his heart. Jesus' message and miracle moved the fisherman. The amount of fish caught was truly an undeserved blessing.

"Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man," the penitent Peter said, falling down on his knees with shame. But Jesus saw potential in the fisherman and would not leave him.

James, son of Zebedee and his brother John, were also astonished at catching so much fish.

"Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men," Jesus told them all.

Impressed with Jesus, the four men immediately left their nets and followed Him, leaving behind their respective families, business interests, responsibilities and their belongings.

Capernaum citizens benefit from Jesus Christ's ministry

Healings, exorcisms are performed

Not only did Jesus Christ of Nazareth heal the ailments, sicknesses and diseases of many Capernaum citizens, the Messiah cast out demons from those who were possessed.

"You are the Son of God!" shouted many demons when Jesus cast them out from countless people.

The demons were reluctant to leave their human host but when confronted with the power of the Lord God Almighty as wielded by His only begotten Son, they were forced to scurry cowardly in the sunset.

Rebuking the demons because He didn't want them to blow His cover, Jesus prohibited them from speaking. He knew they knew that He was the Christ.

These healings and exorcisms occurred after Jesus left the Synagogue and went to Peter's house, the Son of God, disciples and citizens of Capernaum confirmed.

Accompanied with James, John, Peter and Andrew, Jesus arrived at the house. Peter's mother-in-law was laying in bed suffering from a high fever.

They told Jesus about her prognosis and when He went to the bedroom to check on her condition, the Christ bent over, rebuked the fever and immediately it departed from the woman's body. He then took her hand and helped her up.

Peter's mother-in-law felt so good that rather than lay back down and recuperate, she instead arose, showered and then prepared a meal for them all.

Through word-of-mouth, the Capernaumites heard that Jesus was at Peter's and Andrew's house.

By sunset, the people brought Him all of the sick of Capernaum to heal and the demon-possessed to exorcize.

The entire members of the town were congregated at the door.

Even though there wasn't enough room to allow everyone entry, Jesus moved among the masses, laying His hands on each one of them and healed them all.

Miracle-worker draws large crowds

Word-of-mouth even attracts Decapolis' citizens

Crowds from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea plus the region across Jordan were attracted to the provocative teachings, powerful preaching and spectacular healings of Jesus Christ.

Word-of-mouth about Jesus' miracle-working deeds even allured people from the Decapolis, a confederacy of 10 Greek-cultured cities which stretched from the northeast of the Sea of Galilee to southward of Philadelphia.

Teaching in numerous synagogues and preaching the good news of the Kingdom of the Lord God Almighty, Jesus healed every ailment, sickness and disease He encountered among the people.

The intense evangelistic campaign began after Jesus left Capernaum. While there He rebuked a high fever from Peter's mother-in-law, healed droves of sick people and cast out demons from many Capernaum citizens who were brought to Him.

These miraculous Capernaum healings and shocking exorcisms were performed in just a single evening!

Rather than sleep in — like most prophets, ministers, evangelists or faith healers would have done — Jesus arose early the following morning while it was still dark to spend some quality

time with His Heavenly Father.

Agitated to find Jesus missing from His cot after a hard night's work, Peter and his companions went out to search for Him.

Neither locked Synagogue nor closed buildings prevented Jesus from finding a private place to commune with His Heavenly Father.

Because of Jesus' solitary nature, it was customary for Him to want to worship God beyond church walls. The disciples looked for and finally found Him in the most likely site — the nearby meadows.

"Everyone is looking for you," they said to Jesus, finding Him praying earnestly.

They attempted to persuade Jesus from leaving them, but the Nazarene, being drawn by the Holy Spirit to expand His ministry past Capernaum, wanted to regionalize His missionary work.

"Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also," Jesus told them. "This is why I have come."

Because news about Jesus spread throughout the region, people brought Him all who were ill and had contracted various diseases.

Those suffering severe pain, people possessed by demons, those afflicted by seizures and even the paraplegic and quadriplegic were healed by Jesus, the Healer.

Infamous tax collector joins Jesus' crew

Matthew, son of Alphaeus, invited to follow Nazarene

A tax collector abruptly resigned his civil service post and became a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Jesus the Minister was walking and teaching, He saw a tax collector named Matthew (Levi), son of Alphaeus, sitting at his booth collecting toll from

tax collector's friends were also guests of Matthew.

This prompted the Pharisees to criticize because tax collectors, who were generating funds for Rome through her surrogate (Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great), were generally loathed and despised by the Jewish people.

"Why does your teacher eat and with tax collectors and sinners?" they asked

'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?'

traffickers using the highway.

"Follow me," Jesus said to the toll collector, employed by King Herod Antipas, The Tetrarch (Rome's puppet ruler) of Galilee and Perea.

Impressed with this man's directness, Matthew left his official duties and immediately got up and followed Jesus.

A few hours later Jesus was seen having dinner at Matthew's house. The

Jesus' disciples, wanting to avoid direct confrontation with Him.

The Pharisees didn't criticize Jesus directly but the Nazarene still heard their negative remarks.

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick," He replied. "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Twelve apostles appointed

From the many disciples who the Lord Jesus Christ recruited or either followed Him on their own, the Nazarene appointed 12 to assist the Messiah in ministry.

Jesus Christ must have received direction from His Lord God Almighty as to the 12 men who would serve as His ministerial aides.

Because the evening before, the Nazarene spent the entire night praying on the mountainside, presumably seeking guidance on who would be selected to become His "12 Apostolic Appointees."

The "12 Apostolic Appointees" are:

Simon (whose nickname is Peter); James, son of Zebedee and his brother, John (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means "Sons of Thunder"); Andrew; Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew, (Levi), son of Alphaeus, and brother James; Thomas; Lebbaeus (whose nickname is Thaddaeus); Simon the Canaanite and Judas Iscariot who would betray Him.

The "12 Apostolic Appointees" would serve as His attendants, be dispatched to preach and be granted spiritual authority to drive out demons from the afflicted. Jesus the Teacher told His followers upon making the announcement.

People challenged to do more than just obey the law during sermon on the mount

Jesus Christ of Nazareth challenges congregates to live a moral, ethical life

After imparting nine blessings to the people congregated at a mountainside near Capernaum, Jesus Christ of Nazareth challenged them to transcend the law codified by Moses, the Servant of the Lord.

One is truly living a morally-pure and righteous life when one addresses whether they have a heart to do the right thing, the Nazarene insisted during His sermon on the mount.

It takes more than just obeying Mosaic laws and performing religious rituals to be a good person, Jesus suggested, noting what a person thinks and how they treat others is more important.

In an attempt to accentuate this revolutionary, quite different, higher-standard theology, Jesus sermonized on a variety of familiar subjects rooted in Mosaic law.

Regarding the Mosaic Commandment prohibiting murder, Jesus equaled "anger" as killing someone. Most people don't murder, the Nazarene intimated, but all have allowed the venom of their anger to be just as potent.

Regarding the Mosaic Commandment prohibiting adultery, Jesus said a man has already committed sexual infidelity in his heart when he "looks at a woman lustfully." The implication drawn from this postulation was that more men have cheated on their wives by imagination, than by acting out the offense.

The thrust of the Nazarene's teachings was to demand from the people a higher moral standard in which religious teachers heretofore had not required of them, because in part the scribes and Pharisees have too committed murder and adultery, as well as other sins.

The Nazarene had an opinion on a variety of other Mosaic directives, from divorce, oaths and forbidding one from retaliating against an enemy, to stressing the importance of loving an enemy, the proper method of giving, praying, forgiving and fasting.

But before Jesus talked on the "nuts and bolts" of how one can begin to live a pure motive and ethically-clean thought life, He started with His remarks by blessing the crowds gathered to hear the Nazarene teach and preach.

Positioning Himself in a teaching posture, the crowds ceased their talking as Jesus opened His mouth and said:

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

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

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

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

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

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

"Blessed are you when people insult

you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.

"Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Also during the sermon Jesus used imagery to communicate His message. For example, He characterized His followers as "salt of the earth.

"But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men," Jesus said.

For those who required further elucidation on this theme, Jesus continued: "You are the light of the

'You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

The Nazarene had an opinion on a variety of issues:

On Murder:

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder,' but anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell."

On Adultery:

"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it

away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."

On Divorce:

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."

On Oaths:

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you,

trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

On Prayer:

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

A Model Prayer:

"Our Father which are in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

"Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

"Give us this day our daily bread.

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

"For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen."

On Forgiveness:

"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."

On Fasting:

"When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show men they are fasting. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to men that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

Quotes: Jesus Christ of Nazareth

Nain woman seeks forgiveness

Her public penitence makes Simon and dinner guests feel uncomfortable

To whom little is forgiven — the same loves a little, is the simple yet profound lesson Jesus Christ of Nazareth taught guests at a dinner party while visiting the city of Nain.

Jesus of Nazareth made that poignant point while He was eating dinner at the house of a Pharisee from Nain, a village which is located about 21 miles southwest from Capernaum.

"Her many sins have been forgiven — for she loved much," Jesus the Savior said to Simon the Pharisee of the sinful woman, who had come to seek forgiveness from the Nazarene.

"But he who has been forgiven little, loves little," Jesus said, absolving the

woman of her sins, declaring that her faith has saved her and sending the Nain woman peacefully away.

For healing people and casting out demons, Jesus had become immensely popular, but His theology had become rather controversial, too.

"Who is it that forgives sins also," Simon's influential dinner guests asked themselves, referring to Jesus acquitting the Nain woman without her going through any rituals or offering sacrifices.

Simon the Pharisee invited many rich and influential men to his house that evening. But the sinful woman was an uninvited guest.

Crashing the dinner party after learning that Jesus was at the Pharisee's house, the sinful woman went straight to Simon's dining room.

Inside Jesus and the other dinner guests were reclined on their left side,

the customary posture for supping.

As Jesus laid on His pillow, the sinful woman, holding some perfume encased in a white alabaster jar, stood behind Him reverently and wept contritely.

Everyone ceased talking when she humbly knelt in respect, soaked His feet with her own tears, wiped them with her long hair and then kissed them very tenderly.

The sinful woman picked up the soft white marble colored jar of perfume which she brought with her, and then affectionately poured the ointment all over Jesus' feet.

Since the public knew the repentant woman's reputation, she was seeking, in a humbling fashion, forgiveness from her sins publicly.

But Simon was uncomfortable that

(Continued on Page 10, Column 1)

Women travel with Jesus

Three women, in addition to the 12 men named as the "12 Apostolic Appointees," traveled with Jesus Christ as He evangelized one town and village after another.

Mary (called Magdalene) who was delivered from seven demons, Joanna the wife of Cuza — manager of Herod's household — and Susanna, helped to support Jesus as He proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God.

The "12 Apostolic Appointees" who were under Jesus' direct ministerial tutelage were Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew and brother James, Thomas, Thaddaeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot.

These 15 individuals, as well as countless, unnamed others, comprised Jesus' entourage during the mid-period of the Nazarene's grueling three-year ministry.

Woman seeks...

(Continued from Page 9, Column 4)

the repentant woman was ruining his dinner party and he objected to her public penitence.

He was also was concerned that as a Holy Man, Jesus was being blemished by this sinful woman continually fondling over Him.

"If this man were a prophet, He would know who is touching Him and what kind of woman she is — that she is a sinner," the Pharisee said to himself.

Jesus perceived in His spirit what Simon the Pharisee was thinking.

"Simon, I have something to tell you," He said.

"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him \$85, and the other \$8.50. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more," Jesus asked.

Simon paused, thought about the question and stroked his long beard. "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled," the Pharisee replied, employing simple logic.

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

"Do you see this woman," asked Jesus, turning toward her and speaking to the dinner host.

"I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, and she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet."

Jesus stated that Simon did not anoint His head with oil nor did he pour perfume on His feet.

"Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven," Jesus said, "for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

But the repentant woman (who was forgiven much) loving Jesus more than the righteous guests (who didn't ask for His forgiveness) seemed to be a spiritual principle lost by the dinner guests in the theological controversy whether Jesus could actually forgive sins.

Jesus quells Sea of Galilee storm

Even the wind and the waves obey Him

In an awesome command over the powerful forces of nature, Jesus Christ of Nazareth rebuked the winds and the waves of the Sea of Galilee, completely calming a squall that suddenly transformed the placid waters into a tumultuous storm.

"Peace! Be still," Jesus commanded the raging waters, which filled the boat so much that the vessel nearly began to sink.

Instantly the furious storm, arising without warning from the west, subsided and meteorological conditions became calm again.

"What kind of Man is this," asked Jesus' disciples, thinking they had seen it all when witnessing His healings and exorcisms.

But now they have seen Jesus do something else miraculous — that was wielding His power over nature!

"Even the wind and the waves obey Him," they said in fear and amazement.

It was nearly evening when Jesus, leaving the crowd on shore behind Him, got into an awaiting boat, so He could transport to the other side of the Sea of Galilee and resume ministering to the

people the following day.

Shortly after they set sail on their approximate eight-mile crossing, Jesus fell asleep on a cushion in the stern of the boat. Other boats were sailing with them. But eventually they lost track of the accompanying crafts.

Out of nowhere the storm suddenly hit. Initially the disciples thought that they could handle things because Jesus needed rest. He was sleeping so comfortably, despite the turbulent sea and the raging storm.

'You of little faith, why are you so afraid? Where is your faith?'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth

They tried to navigate best as they could, but when the waves started filling up the boat, someone suggested what they were all thinking. Awake Jesus so He could literally bale them out!

The disciples were hesitant to bother Jesus. But if they didn't, their boat would soon capsize and they would all perish in the storm.

The disciples went down into the stern to wake Him. "Lord, save us! We're going to drown," they said.

"Teacher, don't you care if we drown," one disciple asked frantically. Jesus awoke from His restful sleep.

He got up, went on deck and saw the raging storm. He was so unafraid. Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves so casually. He then calmed the sea.

It must have been some sort of supernatural attack that was behind the squall, the disciples speculated later to *The Testament Spectator*. The storm must have been a satanic or demonic attempt to try to kill Jesus before His time.

This theory was based on two observations, the disciples say. Firstly, the sea was so calm when they initially

embarked and the squall arose out of nowhere. Secondly, witnessing Jesus rebuke the winds and the waves was similar to Him rebuking the many demons when He exorcised them from their human hosts.

"You of little faith, why are you so afraid? Where is your faith?" He asked them, insinuating that one of the 12 disciples and not Him should have been the one to rebuke the wind and waters.

The attempt on Jesus' life was thwarted by a stronger power.

What is to be feared, the actual storm or the Man who quells it!

Woman's determination results in cure of 12-year bleeding disorder

Touching Jesus' clothes results in immediate healing

Determined to be cured from a 12-year bleeding disorder, a woman suffering greatly was healed instantly when she came up behind Jesus Christ and touched the hem of His robe.

At this point the desperate woman, under the care of many physicians, spent all the money she had and rather than getting better, her prognosis worsened.

While returning to Capernaum on the west side of the Sea of Galilee, the Nazarene was requested by Jarius, president of the influential Synagogue Elders Association, to visit his house so Jesus the Healer could lay hands on his gravely ill daughter.

Immediately, Jesus and His entourage started walking with the Jewish ruler back to his home.

Such a large number of people accompanied them and were crowding against the Nazarene so much, they almost crushed Him.

The unidentified woman with her persistent bleeding disorder heard about Jesus' fame and healing reputation.

"If I can just touch His clothes, I will be healed," she said, waiting at the juncture where she anticipated Jesus would pass.

It didn't take long for the crowd on the street to quickly swell. Suddenly, the woman saw Him.

With all the strength she had, the woman earnestly moved closer to Jesus. The intense press, impolite to the physical condition of an ill woman, was buffeting her around so much she just about lost her footing.

She tenaciously worked her way ever closer to Jesus and just at the moment

she was about ready to reach out to touch His robe, someone knocked her over.

Undaunted, the woman reached out in faith and touched one of the four blue tassels which were dangling from each corner of the Nazarene's outer garment.

At that moment, her bleeding stopped. She was freed from 12 years of suffering. Arising from the ground, she dusted herself off, walked across the street so she could lean against the wall.

Considering the ordeal she had just gone through, the woman felt amazingly

restful and felt quite peaceful. Looking up toward the blue sky, she invoked thanks to the Lord God Almighty for Jesus instantly healing her.

Meanwhile Jesus, acutely sensitive to the spiritual dynamics around Him, realized at once that His power had gone from Him.

"Who touched me," Jesus asked, stopping, turning around while His penetrating eyes searched the large crowd. "Who touched my clothes," He asked again.

The "12 Apostolic Appointees" were a little befuddled at Jesus' question.

"You see the people crowding against you," they answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me,'" they said sarcastically.

But Simon Peter, a little more sensitive to his Master's spirituality than the others, tried to ascertain where Jesus was coming from.

"Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you," the fisherman said, realizing that many people in need were vying for Jesus' virtue. Perhaps Jesus meant them?

Jesus knew someone reached out in faith. What He felt was not the touch associated with being in the middle of a crowd. Nor was it the touch of an unbeliever. Someone tapped His power with belief.

Jesus still searched to see who had touched Him, so He could validate that person's act of faith.

"Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me," Jesus insisted.

The healed woman, still basking in the

'Someone touched me: I know that power has gone out from me'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth

Jarius' daughter revived from the dead; Nazarene rumored to have caused miracle

Synagogue ruler pleads for girl's life; Jesus undaunted even after she dies

A Jewish ruler's daughter died and was mysteriously revived, according to her family, a miraculous story corroborated by flautists dispatched by the local funeral director to mourn at the girl's death bed.

The resurrection miracle occurred after Jesus Christ of Nazareth, invited by Jarius to heal his daughter at the Jewish ruler's house, ejected the flautist and other mourners outside.

Shortly after entering Jarius' home with three other men, Jesus quickly exited the rear door.

Amazingly, the girl was seen walking around — and this after she was officially pronounced dead by the family's doctor!

Neither the family nor His followers would confirm or deny that the Nazarene engineered the astounding miracle.

The incredible event happened when Jesus was returning to Capernaum, which is on the west side of the Sea of Galilee. As Jesus was seated, large crowds had gathered to see Him, including Jarius, president of the influential Synagogue Elders Association.

The proud synagogue ruler knelt humbly before Him, pleading the Nazarene to quickly come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about 12-years-old, was gravely ill.

"My daughter is dying. But come and put your hand on her, and she will live," he said to Jesus the Healer.

Jesus got up and went with him, and

so did His disciples.

While Jesus and his entourage was accompanying the Jewish ruler back to his home, more and more people followed and were crowding against the Nazarene so much, they almost crushed Him.

A woman, suffering greatly from a 12-year bleeding disorder, was determined to be cured. She came up behind Jesus and after touching the hem of His robe, she was instantly healed.

Jarius was buoyed by her faith. It was ironic, the synagogue ruler thought, that at the time his daughter was born, the woman's bleeding disorder began. She had suffered so long. He was happy for her. If she could be healed, so could his daughter, Jarius thought.

But while Jesus was still speaking to the unidentified woman who exhibited

*'Why all this commotion and wailing
The child is not dead, but asleep'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth*

such great faith and persistence in obtaining her healing, some men came from Jarius' house with bad news.

"Your daughter is dead," they said. "Why bother the teacher any more?"

Jarius became distraught. Undaunted by the news, Jesus sensed his crushed spirit, turned to him and told the Jewish ruler not to believe the report.

"Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed," Jesus assured Jarius. After Jesus dismissed the healed woman, inviting her to go in peace, they continued on their way to the synagogue ruler's house.

Jesus asked Peter, James and John (the brother of James), to follow Him and told the other's to stay.

A short while thereafter, they arrived at Jarius' house and entered the front door. Inside the flute players were playing their instruments and the mourners were wailing so loudly.

"Why all this commotion and wailing," Jesus asked. "The child is not dead, but asleep."

What an outrageous statement, the mourners said. Instantly, the mood changed.

The mourners ridiculed, scorned and laughed at the Nazarene. Some laughed so hard they actually started to cry again.

"Go away," He commanded them, ordering them to leave.

After the crowds were ejected, He asked Jarius, the mother, as well as Peter, James, and John to come into the child's bedroom with Him.

They walked in. An odor of sickness

entire room.

Immediately, the girl got up and walked around — alive and fully recovered. Jesus told her parents to feed her.

Swearing the astonished Jarius and his joyful, yet emotionally-drained wife to secrecy, Jesus ordered them not to tell anyone what happened.

The Nazarene along with Peter, James and John, departed out the back door of the synagogue ruler's house.

Despite Jesus' gag order, word of the miracle leaked out anyway by the mourners and flautists who, like hungry black desert vultures, were still hovering around Jarius' front door waiting for scraps of information about what was really going on inside.

They weren't disappointed. News of the resurrected 12-year-old girl spread throughout the region, making Jesus more popular than ever.

Just the night before, there were unconfirmed reports by His "12 Apostolic Appointees" that the Nazarene actually quelled a storm, which arose without warning on the west.

These reports could not be officially corroborated, but local authorities noted in their weather logs that the sudden cessation of last night's squall was somewhat uncanny.

Now there are unsubstantiated rumors of Jesus Christ bringing the dead back to life.

Up to this point, Jesus has been credited for healing people and exorcising demons from human hosts. But as of late, His miracles — quelling storms and now reviving the Jewish ruler's dead daughter — have certainly reached a new level.

What can't He do?

Twelve apostles dispatched to preach 'to lost sheep of Israel'

Evangelistic campaign launched

A new evangelistic campaign was launched when Jesus Christ of Nazareth dispatched the "12 Apostolic Appointees" to proclaim "to the lost sheep of Israel" the good news of the Kingdom of God.

"Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons," said Jesus, instructing them to minister only to the Jews.

"Freely you have received, freely give," He added, empowering them with authority to emulate His miracle-working ministry.

Jesus characterized a lack of workers during harvest time as the reason why He was sending them out to duplicate His ministerial exploits.

"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few," He said.

Jesus the Teacher instructed them not to accept monetary payment or gifts, and to travel lightly.

"Take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff," the Nazarene said.

When they come to a town or village, Jesus told them to identify someone willing to provide them lodging. If there is resistance by the locals "shake the dust

off your feet" when they leave.

Traveling has its perils, Jesus said, acknowledging that as their tutor, He was actually sending out sheep among wolves. He cautioned them to be alert. "Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and yet as innocent as doves."

He predicted that the local councils would flog them in their synagogues and that they may be brought before governors and kings on His account.

"But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it," Jesus said. "At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."

The good news message would be controversial among the Jews, Jesus admitted, predicting that families would betray one another.

"All men will hate you because of me," He said, telling them not to be afraid. "But he who stands firm to the end will be saved."

The "12 Apostolic Appointees" dispatched to preach the gospel that people should repent were: Peter, James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew and brother James, Thomas, Thaddaeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot.

The 12 exorcised many demons from their human hosts and healed countless sick people after anointing them with oil.

John unsure whether the Messiah had indeed come

The Baptist dispatches his disciples to verify Jesus' identification

After a visit from his disciples, John the Baptist, imprisoned for offending Herod Antipas and his royal family, wanted to be assured that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was the Expected One.

John's disciples told him about the miracle-working reputation of Jesus healing the sick, exorcising demons from their human hosts and resurrecting dead people. Upon hearing this, the Baptist called two of his trusted disciples and sent them to the Nazarene to ask specifically: "Are You the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else?"

When the men arrived where Jesus was preaching, they repeated verbatim what John instructed them to say.

"John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are You the One who was to come, or should we expect someone else,'" they inquired of the Nazarene.

Jesus knew that John had been arrested for assailing Herod of his evil deeds and for criticizing the King for committing adultery. Languishing in

Herod's prison for several months now, Jesus also was aware that John the Baptist needed encouragement and to be reassured that his ministry was not in vain.

"Go back and report to John what you hear and see," Jesus told John's two trusted disciples.

"Tell him that the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor," He said.

As the Baptist's disciples were departing, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about the importance of John's ministry.

To those gathered around him, it was almost as if Jesus the Prophet knew that John the Baptist would be executed, and it necessitated that He publicly acknowledge the prophet's role while he was still alive.

"What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes and indulge in luxury are in kings' palaces," Jesus said.

"Then what did you go out to see? A

(Continued on Page 12, Column 1)

Is Jesus Christ of Nazareth truly the Messiah...

(Continued from Page 11, Column 4)
prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you," Jesus said.

Jesus told the people that day that among those born of women there has

not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist.

"Yet he who is least in the Kingdom of heaven is greater than he. From the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you are

willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. He who has ears, let him hear."

Jesus continued: "To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:

"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a song of

mourning, and you did not mourn."

"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners."'

"But wisdom is proved right by her actions," He concluded.

John the Baptist executed by Herod

Queen Herodias requests John's head as gift for daughter's dance

John the Baptist, considered a prophet to believers and a religious fanatic and political agitator to critics, was beheaded in prison by King Herod Antipas.

The unexpected execution, requested by Princess Salome on behalf of her mother Queen Herodias, was ordered by a reluctant Herod (The Tetrarch), Rome's puppet ruler of Galilee and Perea.

John was initially imprisoned because the prophet assailed Herod of his evil deeds and criticized the King for committing adultery.

"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife," John the Baptist was documented by spies to have said many times to congregates who would come hear him preach or be immersed in the Jordan River.

Herod Antipas' marriage with

Herodias, wife of King Herod Philip II (Tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis) was adulterous and therefore immoral. John the Baptist declared unabashedly.

The Tetrarch issued an arrest warrant on John, charging that his public statements about the monarch and royal family were offensive. The prophet was

'I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist' — Salome

placed under arrest, bound and incarcerated in prison.

Initially, Herod Antipas wanted to execute John, but he feared the popular prophet. Beside things were running so smoothly, he didn't want any rioting. Eventually Herod, puzzled by The Baptist yet liked to listen to his fiery rhetoric, protected John from Herodias, realizing that he was a righteous and holy man.

But Herodias, seething at John the

Baptist's accusatory statements, nursed a grudge against the prophet. In due process of time Queen Herodias, a patient and calculating woman, would milk her revenge at a birthday party, a most opportune time indeed.

Herod Antipas threw a banquet for all of his high officials, military

asked Queen Herodias.

"The head of John the Baptist," Herodias replied without hesitation.

Salome hurried in to the king with the request. Rather than accept Galilee or Perea as a reward for her seductive dance, the beautiful Salome (goaded by Herodias) wanted something quite grotesque, Herod Antipas would soon learn.

"I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter," she insisted.

The King was very distressed, but he was honor-bound to comply with the young girl's request because the oath was made in front of his influential dinner guests. Herod dispatched an executioner and ordered John the Baptist be decapitated.

After John's head was brought in the banquet room on a platter, the grotesque gift was presented to Salome, who in turn handed it over to a pleased Herodias.

A Testament Spectator tribute to John the Baptist

John the Baptist, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, was beheaded in prison by King Herod Antipas.

Arrested and imprisoned for his outspoken moral views and unorthodox ministry, John died for his beliefs, the Baptist's disciples, converts and followers told *The Testament Spectator*.

The Archangel Gabriel told Zechariah (of the Abijah priestly sect) that his barren wife, Elizabeth — a descendant from the late great Aaron — would become pregnant.

Even from birth, John was full of the Holy Spirit. John was a modern-day Nazirite, a highly-disciplined priestly sect who were prohibited from eating fruit from the vine, drinking wine nor consuming fermented drink.

A man who wore camel's hair fastened by a leather belt and ate locust with wild honey, John the Baptist characterized himself as a forerunner of the Messiah.

"I am the voice of one crying in the desert. 'Make straight the way for the Lord,'" he said, referring to the coming of Jesus Christ.

The unlicensed cleric wasn't even supposed to be ministering to the people, according to the Jewish religious establishment, who objected to John preaching this controversial forgiveness of sins theology and disagreed with him plunging repentant people in the dirty Jordan River!

He was labeled a political agitator by Herod the Tetrarch, who was the

target of John's fiery, oratorical rhetoric. The Baptist accused the King of committing evil deeds and for being involved in an adulterous relationship.

"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife," John the Baptist said many times to people who would come hear him preach. He was referring to Herod Antipas marrying his brother's Philip's wife, Herodias.

As a result of John's offensive rhetoric against the monarch and royal family, Herod issued an arrest warrant, bound and incarcerated the prophet in the prison.

The calculating Herodias nursed a grudge against the prophet and requested from Herod that the prophet's head be placed on a platter as a reward of her daughter Salome's dance.

Upon hearing the news of John the Baptist's execution, the prophet's disciples came to Herod's prison, took his body and laid the corpse in an undisclosed tomb.

John is survived by Jesus Christ of Nazareth, a cousin who is six months younger than him, as well as many family, friends, and converts alike.

John, a man sent from the Lord God Almighty, came to witness and testify concerning that Light [Jesus Christ], so that through him all men might believe. Repeatedly denying that he was not the Light, John came only as a witness to the Light. The true Light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

People suspect Jesus Christ of Nazareth is John reincarnated

Herod Antipas believes John the Baptist was raised from the dead

Even though the popular and controversial John the Baptist was executed by King Herod Antipas, many believed that the fiery prophet had somehow been resurrected.

"John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in Him," some people said, explaining why Jesus Christ of

"I beheaded John," Herod said with certainty.

Herod was convinced that it was the prophet's head he saw hideously laying motionless in the platter, when it was handed to Princess Salome and Queen Herodias as a reward for the girl's dance during the King's birthday banquet.

Because Herod missed John — the King had gotten used to the idea of having John the Baptist reside in his prison — part of him wanted to believe that the righteous, holy man had indeed returned from the dead.

'John the Baptist, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead' — Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea

Nazareth was able to perform such astounding miracles.

"He is Elijah [the Tishbite]," said others.

"He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago," others claimed, referring to the one Moses, the Servant of the Lord, predicted so long ago.

Even King Herod, The Tetrarch (Rome's puppet ruler) of Galilee and Perea, offered an opinion on who he thought was this popular miracle-worker.

"John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead," explained Herod, after hearing Jesus' miracle-working reputation of healing the sick, exorcising demons, quelling a Sea of Galilee storm and resuscitating a dead 12-year-old girl.

If it wasn't John, who was it?

Herod sent his spies for a report and upon their return, they didn't bring him much information.

"Who, then is this I hear such things about," Herod asked his spies, expecting a comprehensive dossier on the Nazarene after they returned from their reconnaissance mission.

Herod became dissatisfied when no information was provided. Curious about this dilemma, Herod tried to see Jesus for himself. But the Tetrarch wouldn't be successful until about a year later when the Nazarene, following after the footsteps of his six month older cousin John the Baptist, would too be arrested and executed.

Thousands fed from five loaves and two fish

Feeding operation was highly organized, impeccably systemized, superbly orchestrated assembly line

Jesus Christ of Nazareth created, multiplied, divided and distributed five small barley loaves and two tiny fish to feed 5,000 men plus an untold number of hungry women and children.

That's the news from the many who ate the impromptu-prepared dinner after Jesus' disciples bristled at His suggestion that they buy food for all of them.

The story would have been but an unbelievable tale if it just wasn't corroborated by everyone from the Bethsaida mountainside whose stomachs were full from their meal, prepared by none other than Jesus Christ.

This Man is renown for healing the sick and casting out demons. But recently His miracle-working exploits include quelling a storm and, according to rumors, raising the daughter of a Jewish ruler from the dead. Now this!

Many of the 5,000 men plus an incalculable number of satiated women and children affectionately characterized Jesus as a "Master Chef" because He produced more bread and fish from a paltry serving than anyone in history.

Somehow Jesus created, multiplied and divided the food while His disciples distributed the meal to literally thousands who had initially come — after news of John the Baptist's death — to hear the Nazarene preach, teach and heal.

Now with just one "prophet" milling around the region, people seemed to flock to see Jesus all the more, especially since it was rumored that the Nazarene could have been John the Baptist reincarnated.

Jesus Christ was too sad to learn about the execution of John the Baptist by the hand of Herod Antipas.

The unfortunate incident happened during the time Jesus dispatched His "12 Apostolic Appointees" to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God "to [only] the lost sheep of Israel."

When they returned from their evangelistic campaign, Jesus the Minister was anxious to hear His apostles' stories about the many positive reports.

But it was difficult for Him to listen to them because so many people were coming and going at the site where they were having their debriefing session.

"Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest," Jesus said, suggesting that they get something to eat as well.

Traveling by boat to a town called Bethsaida, Jesus and His followers found a quiet spot on the mountainside.

The 12 gathered around their Master to eat, relax and debrief Him about what they had all accomplished and taught.

But the crowds, witnessing Jesus Christ's many miraculous signs He had performed on the sick, learned where the Nazarene and His entourage disembarked from the shore of the Sea of Galilee. The multitude followed on foot after them.

As Jesus and His apostles were seated on the Bethsaida mountainside, He saw the droves coming to be with Him. He felt empathy for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

Interestingly enough, it seemed as if Jesus converted His grief which He felt for John the Baptist into compassion.

Welcoming them warmly, Jesus the Teacher shared many things, including the Kingdom of God. He also healed those who needed healing.

By this time it was late in the day. The disciples came to Him and said, "This is a remote place and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away, so they can go to the surrounding villages and buy themselves some food and book lodging."

But Jesus said the people needed sustenance before leaving.

"Where shall we buy bread for these

the lad to bring the victuals to Him. The lad gave Jesus the food gladly. He told the 12 to seat the people on the green grass in groups of hundreds and fifties. The disciples did so and everyone sat down obediently and waited patiently.

Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus gave thanks to His Lord God Almighty and broke the loaves. He gave the bread and fish to the disciples, and in turn the disciples gave the items to set before the people.

From that portion Jesus created,

'But how far will five small barley loaves and two small fish go among so many?'

— Andrew, Simon Peter's brother

people to eat," Jesus asked Philip, to test Him. (He already had in mind what He was going to do, the 12 apostles later confirmed to *The Testament Spectator*.)

"Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite," said an exasperated Philip. "Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?"

Andrew, another disciple who was Simon Peter's brother, said there was a boy who had five small barley loaves and two small fish.

"But how far will they go among so many? There are 5,000 men here," he said, not including the women and children.

Jesus Christ directed Andrew to ask

multiplied and then divided the bread and fish, giving it to the disciples who in turn distributed the food to the first group of 50.

When His disciples returned, Jesus created, multiplied and then divided the bread and fish and gave it to them to set before the first group of 100.

After the disciples returned again, Jesus created, multiplied, divided and then distributed yet another portion of barley bread and fresh fish so they could set before the second group of 50.

The process repeated itself — over, and over, and over again. One set of 50 were fed and then another set of 100. Returning from setting the food to a group of people, Jesus created,

Jesus walks on Sea of Galilee; Almost speeds by disciples' boat

Peter steps out on water too, but fear nearly sinks him

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who fed thousands of people from five loaves and two fish just a few hours before, was sighted speedwalking on the Sea of Galilee early the next morning, according to eyewitness accounts from His apostles.

The supernatural power of feeding 5,000 men plus an untold number of hungry women and children, has now been translated into walking four miles on water, they verified after anchoring at Gennesaret, which is located at the west side of the north shore of the Sea of Galilee.

After witnessing the wonders and partaking the meal of the Bethsaida mountainside feeding operation, people wanted to crown Jesus as King by force.

Seeking to avoid this coronation by any means necessary plot, Jesus immediately dismissed the people and instructed His disciples to set sail across the lake for Capernaum. Meanwhile, He went to the mountainside to pray.

Darkness had long settled by time the disciples set sail. Although Jesus had not joined them yet, no one protested leaving without Him. Their hearts were still hardened at the spectacle of seeing Jesus feed so many people with paltry provisions. They just couldn't believe what they had witnessed and participated in. As the disciples started rowing the boat, everyone was in a quiet, contemplative mood.

Even though the winds billowed and waters became choppy, conditions

weren't as serious as it was when Jesus quelled the sea. Still, the waves were buffeting the boat, which was by now only half way across the lake.

Straining at their oars, the disciples were only able to row three to 3 1/2 miles, because the wind was blowing against them. About the fourth watch — between 3:00 to 6:00 a.m. — Jesus was sighted by the lookout coming out to them, not by boat nor by swimming, but speedwalking on the surface of the water!

The disciples all jumped from their oar stations, went to the edge of the boat

multiplied, divided and distributed yet more bread and fish so His disciples could disburse and serve more.

The Bethsaida mountainside feeding operation was a highly organized, impeccably systemized, superbly orchestrated assembly line.

From the lad's five small barley loaves and two tiny fish, Jesus duplicated, replicated and arithmetically rationed — creating, multiplying, dividing and distributing; creating, multiplying, dividing and distributing; creating, multiplying, dividing and distributing — until all the people seated on the green meadows of the Bethsaida mountainside were full.

An unlimited supply of bread and fish materialized in Jesus Christ's hands, Bethsaida eyewitnesses say. The fresh bread and fish was so tasty, some people characterized Jesus as a "Master Chef."

When they all had enough to eat, Jesus said to His disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted."

Twelve baskets of broken pieces of bread and fish were left. The 5,000 men plus an untold number of hungry women and children all ate and were satisfied.

"Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world," the people said, after they saw this miraculous deed.

But His disciples, amazed at Jesus creating, multiplying and dividing the food, couldn't believe what they had seen and participated in. Consequently, their hearts were hardened.

courageous Peter with authority, His powerful voice overpowering the sound of the wind and waves as the unattended oars floundered violently in the circular wooden oarlocks.

The disciple hurriedly and excitedly climbed over the edge of the boat and scaled down the net, which was hanging over the side of the vessel.

The remaining eleven, beginning to believe that this apparition appearing in the stormy night before them was in fact Jesus Christ, were just too petrified to follow Peter's lead. The fisherman colleague would just have to go it alone.

'Take courage. It is I; don't be afraid'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth

and peered over the side to get a better look. To their unbelieving eyes, the Nazarene was indeed sighted walking on the water!

Jesus was moving so quickly and fluidly across the surface of the tumultuous waves that He almost walked by them. The disciples, wishing that He had passed, were absolutely terrified.

"It's a ghost! It's a ghost! It's a ghost," they yelled out fearfully. This phantom Jesus look-alike was but an omen portending their certain demise, they thought.

"Take courage. It is I; don't be afraid," Jesus said when He stopped, attempting to eliminate this superstitious belief, allay their fear and reassure them it was indeed Him.

"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied with uncertainty, "tell me to come to you on the water."

"Come," Jesus beckoned to the

When Peter assuredly put his foot on the surface of the choppy waters, the fisherman had the same sensation as if he were but walking on land.

The fisherman took his first step then his second, and then slowly started walking toward Jesus, one foot right after another. Even though the waters were so fluidly unstable around him, every step Peter took instantly coagulated the waters beneath that foot.

Check this out — Peter couldn't believe that he was actually walking on water!

Then suddenly Peter became enveloped by fear because his senses reminded him where he was, standing on the surface of the water in the middle of the Sea of Galilee during a squall!

The choppy waters didn't bother the fisherman, but seeing the boisterous wind most certainly did. This same wind,
(Continued on Page 14, Column 1)

Simon Peter walks on Sea of Galilee, too...

(Continued from Page 13, Column 4) impeding their rowing and preventing them from arriving at Gennesaret, was now saturating his faith and triggering a most frenetic fear.

The coagulated waters beneath Peter's feet became fluid again and consequently — right at the time when the fisherman was beginning to sink, he cried out to Jesus for help.

"Lord, save me," the fisherman desperately yelled to the Savior.

Immediately, Jesus reached out His hand and caught the fisherman before he sank.

Peter clung on to Jesus for dear life. Feeling the strength of the Nazarene lift him on the surface, the fisherman began

to feel that same assured buoyancy which he felt prior to seeing the wind.

Again, the waters beneath Peter's feet coagulated.

"You of little faith," Jesus said, while they were still standing quite a distance from land in the midst of the billowing wind and choppy waters.

"Why did you doubt," He asked Peter, who remained speechless.

The remaining 11 on the boat watched the whole episode with awe and amazement. They knelt on their knees and worshipped Him saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Jesus and Peter climbed into the boat and the wind ceased. The disciples were completely amazed, for their hearts were

still hardened how Jesus could create, multiply, divide and distribute five loaves of bread and two fish to feed so many. Now this!

Later they asked Jesus how did He know where to rendezvous with them. He said that He could see them in the boat straining at their oars.

But how could He spot them from the mountainside four miles away in total darkness? There was no explicable answer. They simply accepted Jesus Christ as none other but the Son of God — capable of doing anything!

Another miraculous thing happened during that early stormy morning. After Jesus and Peter boarded, they instantly arrived at the Gennesaret shore.

Jesus invoked power to somehow move the boat and them in it across the aquatic expanse — defying time, space, matter and requiring no energy in the process.

This instant transport, which began when they were still a considerable distance from land, was just as miraculous as all of the other astounding miracles they had seen Jesus perform to date.

As soon as Jesus and the disciples anchored at Gennesaret, people recognized the Nazarene and brought Him all of their sick.

They begged Him to let the sick just touch the edge of His cloak. All who touched Him were healed.

A Greek mother's plea finally pays off

Jesus grants woman's wish after testing her persistence

It was only after a Greek mother's persistent pleading did Jesus Christ of Nazareth finally deliver the woman's little daughter from a demon.

Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon and to avoid detection, secretly entered a house there.

The Christ didn't want anyone to know where He was, in part so He could refresh Himself. But because of His immense popularity, the Nazarene could not keep His presence secret.

As soon as a Greek mother — the one whose little daughter was possessed by a demon — found out about Jesus' whereabouts, she came to see Him in front of the house and began to intercede for her child.

"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly," she cried.

The Nazarene did not immediately answer her so the Greek mother continually yelled, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. My daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly."

At the time no one knew why Jesus didn't answer the mother.

People witnessing the incident speculated that Jesus didn't respond because He wanted to challenge the woman's faith.

Some thought that maybe Jesus wanted the mother to demonstrate her persistence as an example to others.

The practical-minded weren't attempting to manufacture some profound meaning for Jesus' silence. Perhaps the Man simply refused to answer the Greek mother then because He merely wanted to refresh Himself — nothing more.

Whatever the reason, the Greek mother became more tenacious with her intercession, persistently pleading to the Nazarene outside the house yet all the more.

"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me," the mother begged, "My daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly."

The woman repeated the phrase over, and over, and over again.

But still Jesus, emerging from the washroom and looking quite refreshed, ignored the solitary voice that droned outside and penetrated everyone's ears inside.

"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on

me! My daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly," she implored emphatically.

Her persistent message was irritating Jesus' apostles. They were wondering when was this heckler going to shut up! Something had to be done.

Many times before they had seen Jesus the Healer and the Deliverer immediately perform unbelievable and astounding miracles. Why wouldn't their Master respond to this mother's simple request now, they asked one another.

Even while the disciples were inside the house discussing the matter amongst themselves, they could not escape hearing from the street corner: "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. My

daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly," the disciples said to Jesus, almost mocking the mother whose constant intercession agitated them so.

The disciples attitude precluded them from appreciating the woman's tenacity. And even though they were serving as Jesus' ministerial aides, the disciples did not feel empathy at seeing a mother beg Jesus to deliver her daughter.

Finally Jesus exited the house, allowing the mother to approach Him. Aware that Jesus could exorcise demons from their human hosts, the woman begged the Nazarene to also drive the demon from her little daughter.

"Lord, Son of David, have mercy on

'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me. My daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly' — the Greek Mother

daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly."

Finally Jesus' disciples came to Him and urged that she be dismissed.

This unidentified Greek mother was reminiscent of the woman from Nain, who sought Jesus' forgiveness when she cried on the Nazarene's feet and wiped them with her hair.

The only difference, according to some observers, was the Nain woman just made a scene in front of Simon the Pharisee's influential dinner guests. But the Greek mother did a lot more — she was beginning to disturb the peace!

"Send her away, for she keeps crying out: 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy

me," she asked with a raspy voice. Because of her continued vocal supplication, the Greek mother was hoarse by now.

"My daughter is demon possessed and is suffering terribly," she said a little quieter than when she, across the street and Jesus inside the house, had been separated by the Nazarene for so long, making it difficult for her to plead her case.

But before helping the Greek mother, Jesus presented her the following riddle:

"First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs," Jesus said, inferring that He was sent only to

the save the lost sheep of Israel and not her, a non-Jewish woman born in Syrian Phoenicia.

In an act of homage and respect, the woman humbly knelt at Jesus' feet and worshipped Him.

"Yes, Lord," she retorted, bowing before Him on her knees. "But even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

It seemed as if the Nazarene, impressed with her come back, knew the Greek mother would respond so cleverly to His riddle but still goaded the woman for all to see her faith.

It also appears that those who speculated that Jesus was testing the Greek woman and that's why He initially didn't answer her, were actually correct. She passed the test.

Because Jesus was proud of the woman's persistence and witty response to His riddle, He immediately rewarded her tenacity.

"Woman, you have great faith," Jesus acknowledged to the Greek mother. As the Savior sent to intercede for the plight of people everywhere, the Nazarene could definitely appreciate her role as an intercessor.

"Your request is granted. For such a reply, you may go, the demon has left your daughter," He assured the woman, sending her away.

The Greek mother immediately went home.

After arriving there her child, lying on the bed and fully recovered because the demon which had tormented her departed, was healed that very hour.

Seven loaves and a few small fish feed multitude

**4,000 men, plus
incalculable number of
women, children fed**

From seven loaves and a few small fish, Jesus Christ of Nazareth did the unbelievable again, when He fed 4,000 men plus an incalculable number of hungry women and children.

This latest miracle resembled Jesus' Bethsaida mountainside feeding operation, in which a highly organized, impeccably systemized, superbly orchestrated assembly line fed 5,000 men, not including the women and children who had all come to hear Him

preach, teach and heal.

Then, as He did in this current multitude-feeding miracle, Jesus created, multiplied, divided and, assisted by His disciples, distributed bread and fish to the great crowds who came to Him for help three days before.

It shouldn't be a surprise that the sick-healing, demon-casting, dead-raising, storm-quelling, water-walking Nazarene eclipsed Himself in another multitude-feeding incident. But those who had seen His miracles before were still awed at the sight.

The amount of people fed this time were less than the ones who partook from the "Master Chef" on the Bethsaida

mountainside a few weeks before. But that didn't matter, according to the satisfied recipients of Jesus' dinner.

On a mountainous hill near the Sea of Galilee, the people brought the lame, blind, crippled and mute to Jesus. When those patients, in addition to the many others afflicted with all kinds of diseases, were laid at His feet, Jesus simply healed them all.

So amazed were the people at seeing the mute speak, the crippled made well, the lame walk and the blind see, they praised the God of Israel for Jesus performing all those miracles.

(Continued on Page 15, Column 1)

Blind man healed with Jesus' spittle; Miracle-worker refuses to perform cure in Bethsaida

Muscular degeneration restored; Man's eyes becomes optically-correct

A gross and unusual method for healing a blind man was implemented by Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who refused to perform the miracle in Bethsaida.

Jesus Christ applied His own spittle to the eyes of a blind Bethsaida man, eventually healed only after the Nazarene laid His hands on him not once, but twice.

No one could explain why Jesus, a Man who healed countless people, cast out demons, quelled a storm and rumored to have revived a dead girl by just verbal command, used this coarse, unorthodox ritual to heal someone.

But just as the other astounding healings, the outcome for the blind Bethsaida man was predictable. Jesus healed him and that's all that counts, the Nazarene's apostles and apologists say, attempting to deflect any criticism about His spittle being used to cure someone.

The unidentified blind man was first

brought to Jesus by some people, who begged the Nazarene to heal Him. But Jesus didn't immediately do what they asked. Instead, He took the blind man by the hand, led him inexplicably outside of Bethsaida, spit into his eyes, then laid His hands on him.

"Do you see anything," Jesus asked. "I see men as trees walking," the visually impaired man replied somewhat comically.

Jesus put His hands on the man's eyes again. Instantly the muscular

proficiently and see everything just perfectly.

The man, in addition to the people who initially brought him to Jesus, was happy and excited to be able to see just as well as anyone else.

"Don't go into the village," Jesus warned him, tempering the man's excitement about the man gaining his vision.

Jesus gave this warning because he promised the people of Bethsaida — as well as Chorazin — that He would not

healings, Chorazin and Bethsaida inhabitants still remained stubborn and unrepentant.

Jesus said that if Sodom had been exposed to the same miracles which Chorazin and Bethsaida were recently exposed to, it would still exist today. But Sodom, in addition to Gomorrah plus the entire region, was destroyed many centuries ago with brimstone and fire by the Lord God Almighty.

The two angels who visited Lot, his wife and family before the conflagration, weren't evangelists dispatched to proselytize the wicked. No. The Lord God Almighty sent the two angelic beings as messengers, to warn Lot and his family of the impending destruction.

Unlike the people of Chorazin and Bethsaida, the Sodomites weren't given a chance to repent, Jesus intimated.

"But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you," Jesus warned.

This was why Jesus led the once blind Bethsaida man outside the city, rather than heal him in Bethsaida's city limits.

*'Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida...
But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom
on the day of judgment than for you'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth*

degeneration causing uncontrollable rapid eye movement was restored, and the man's eye's became, as a physician would conclude upon thorough examination, optically-correct.

Eyes opened and sight restored, the Bethsaida blind man's gaze became normal and he was able to rotate his eyes

perform any miracles there.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida," Jesus pronounced a few months earlier to the residents of those two villages, located on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Even after hearing Jesus' teachings, preaching and seeing His miraculous

Simon Peter correctly ID's Jesus as the 'Son of God'

Declares He is 'the Christ, the Son of the living God'

The apostle Simon Peter, one of four fishermen recruited by Jesus Christ along the Sea of Galilee two years earlier, correctly identified the Nazarene as the "Son of God," *The Testament Spectator* learned.

On the way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus and His apostles took a rest stop.

During private prayer time, the Nazarene asked His disciples with Him who did people say that He was, according to those who heard and were involved in the conversation.

"Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life," they fired back at Him.

"But what about you," Jesus asked

them directly. "Who do you say I am?"

But before anyone had a chance to ponder Jesus' question and give a thoughtful response, Simon, who is surnamed Peter, abruptly and correctly gave the right answer.

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," the fisherman answered boldly, whose response pleased Jesus so much, the Nazarene imparted a blessing on him.

"Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

"And I will give unto you the keys of the Kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in the [mid] heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in the [mid] heaven," He said.

Then Jesus strictly warned His disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Christ, inside sources revealed to *The Testament Spectator* on condition of anonymity.

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it.

"What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet loses his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul," Jesus added.

For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done.

"I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming to His Kingdom," Jesus said.

Hungry eat from small amount of food...

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"I have compassion for these people," Jesus said after He called the disciples for a quick meeting.

"They have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way because some of them have come a long distance," He said.

"Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd," His disciples asked, forgetting what miracle Jesus had performed when faced with a similar situation near Bethsaida.

"How many loaves do you have," Jesus asked.

"Seven," they replied, "and a few

small fish."

He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. Taking the seven loaves and the fish, Jesus gave thanks, broke the bread and then gave the food to the disciples. They in turn distributed the created, multiplied and divided fish plus bread

*'I do not want to send them
away hungry'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth*

to the people.

Just like before, the disciples returned to Jesus to receive another portion of fish and bread, created, multiplied, divided from the original amount.

Once when they obtained that portion, the disciples went out to the people and distributed yet another amount. Then

they returned to Jesus again.

The process — Jesus creating, multiplying, dividing and His disciples distributing — repeated itself, over, and over, and over again.

Fish and bread seem to just appear in Jesus' hands, duplicated, replicated and then arithmetically-ratoned to the people, who ate and were satisfied.

Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

More food was collected than what was initially started, Jesus' disciples reported.

After Jesus had sent the crowds away full and rested, He entered a boat and sailed to the vicinity of Magadan, a town which is located on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Nazarene predicts death, resurrection

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, referring Himself as "the Son of Man" to His "Apostolic Appointees," predicted His demise while He was teaching them one day.

Explaining to His followers that soon the Elders, Chief Priests and Mosaic Law Teachers would reject Him, Jesus prophesied that He would also suffer many things at Jerusalem.

"The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men," Jesus explained to His apostles. "They will kill Him, and after three days He will be raised to life."

Eleven of His apostles, who did not understand what Jesus meant, were afraid to ask the Nazarene to explain His prediction in more detail.

But Jesus' prophecy bothered the apostle Peter so much, the same fisherman who courageously walked on the Sea of Galilee with Jesus during a storm again courageously — but some would claim foolishly — challenged Jesus.

Taking the Nazarene aside, the fisherman rebuked the Teacher for saying such morbid and negative things about His future. For what would they do without Him? These past 2 1/2 years has been the most fulfilling in his life and the lives of the other's.

"Never, Lord," Peter insisted, responding to Jesus' prediction. "This shall never happen to you!"

Peter's action and statement prompted a quick retort from Jesus. The Nazarene, immediately turning away from the fisherman, looked at His other apostles and said: "Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Just as the other apostles were too petrified to follow Peter's lead when he stepped out from the boat and nearly sunk beneath the surface of the Sea of Galilee that early morning, they too weren't going to do or say anything that would generate the same verbal rebuke which Jesus leveled at the fisherman. So consequently, they remained silent.

Temple tax coin found in fishes' mouth

No reason to believe this is just a fish tale

A coin was found in a fishes' mouth and used to pay the Capernaum Temple tax, boasted Simon Peter, one of Jesus Christ of Nazareth's 12 apostles.

If the tale is to be believed — due to Jesus' miracle-working reputation there's no reason not to — out of unusual places, objects suddenly appear at the Nazarene's whim.

Three examples can be cited to support this observation, Jesus' pundits say.

First off 180 gallons of water, poured into six empty stone 30-gallon jars normally used for ceremonial washing, was supernaturally transformed by Jesus into vintage wine for guests at a Cana wedding feast.

A potentially-embarrassing situation was averted, thanks to Mother Mary, who requested her Son's help to replenish wine at the Cana wedding party. With all that's happened in Jesus' ministerial career, it's hard to believe the Nazarene performed this miracle two years ago.

Secondly, a whopping 9,000 men were fed on two separate occasions earlier this year, first to 5,000 at a Bethsaida mountainside and then 4,000 others on a mountainous hill near the Sea

of Galilee.

In the Nazarene's hands, a small portion of bread and fish was suddenly created, multiplied, divided and then given to disciples, who in turn distributed to the patient waiting multitude.

The total 9,000 men who partook during these two miraculous feedings are conservative estimates.

This figure doesn't include the incalculable number of women and children who were also there.

With the ratio of women and children — compared to that of men — who normally appear at public gatherings, the estimated crowds for those two days could have been two to three times more! Yet amazingly, there was plenty of food

"Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours" — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

for everyone.

The third example, which could not be confirmed according to pundits, is plucking a coin from a fishes' mouth!

Was the coin supernaturally placed in the mouth of this fish for Simon Peter to find, or did Jesus Christ of Nazareth just know that the silver mint would be there.

Such a question cannot be answered. It's impossible to scientifically explain how a coin was lodged like bait on a

hook in the mouth of a fish.

All Simon Peter said was that the coin in-the-mouth-of-a fish episode was triggered by a Capernaum Temple tax collector, who asked whether he and "his Master" would be paying the annual tariff, required of every male 20 years of age and older.

"Yes, He does," Peter replied. It would be wise for him to report the question to Jesus so as to not upset the locals, who might accuse them of not paying their fair share of taxes.

Interestingly enough, when Peter came into the house where they were lodging, Jesus was the first to raise the issue about how authorities usually levy taxes, even before the fisherman

mentioned his conversation with the temple official.

"What do you think, Simon. From whom do the kings of the earth collect duty and taxes — from their own sons or from others," Jesus the Prophet asked the fisherman in His classic symbolic rhetorical style.

"From others," Peter answered.

Perhaps Peter wasn't too surprised that Jesus asked this question. The Nazarene must have known about the conversation the fisherman just had with the temple tax collector.

"Then the sons are exempt," Jesus said to Peter, comparing Himself as a Minister and the apostles His aides who shouldn't be required to pay the annual tax intended to finance the upkeep of Capernaum Temple.

"But so that we may not offend them,

go to the lake and throw out your line," Jesus ordered the fisherman. "Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma [half-shekel] coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours."

Peter did as Jesus instructed Him. He borrowed some fishing gear, went to the Sea of Galilee and cast the line.

Peter caught a large fish very quickly, the size of which could hold a coin in its mouth. When the fisherman plucked it out of the water, he couldn't hardly wait to make the discovery.

The fish was flopping around, but Peter was still able to pry its mouth open. There it was, partially visible, a circular metallic object glistening before him. It appeared to be a coin.

Peter pulled the object out of the fishes' mouth and inspected it. Not only was the object a silver mint, but low and behold — the coin was indeed the exact four-drachma denomination which Jesus foretold Peter would find.

Since the half-shekel retrieved from the mouth of the fish amounted to approximately two days' wages, perhaps some would have momentarily considered saving the silver coin for themselves, but not Peter. That would have been dishonest.

The coin mint was earmarked for the temple tax and Peter dutifully went back to Capernaum Temple and gave it to the waiting Temple tax collector.

Added to Jesus' sick-healing, demon-casting, dead-raising, storm-quelling, water-walking, multitude-feeding miracle-working ministerial resume, is a prediction that His aide would find a coin in the mouth of the first fish the apostle would catch in the waters of the Sea of Galilee!

Jesus is talk of the town during Feast of Tabernacles week

Whether it be popularity or notoriety, Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the talk of the town.

For over two years since the newsmaking Nazarene burst on the scene with His healings, exorcisms, miracles and controversial teachings, everyone has had an opinion about Him.

The Nazarene has been quite visible during the Jews' Feast of Tabernacles, which celebrates the completion of harvest and commemorates the Lord God Almighty's goodness to the Israelites during their 40-year Sinai Desert wanderings so long ago.

While many agreed with and/or believed in the sick-healing, demon-casting, dead-raising, storm-quelling, water-walking, multitude-feeding, miracle-working Minister, others still did not.

"He is a good man," some said during the seven-day great feast.

"No, He deceives the people," others retorted.

Despite the Jesus debate, no one wanted to say anything publicly, especially not commenting on record to *The Testament Spectator*.

"How did this Man get such learning without having studied" under a prominent rabbi or attended a rabbinic school, some remarked, amazed at His knowledge yet suggesting He still didn't have the credentials to teach on Mosaic Law nor certainly challenge it.

Halfway through the Feast of Tabernacles, the Nazarene was sighted teaching at Jerusalem Temple's courts.

"My teaching is not my own," Jesus declared unabashedly, responding to His critics who challenged His credentials. Pointing His right hand toward the heavens, He added: "It comes from Him who sent Me."

Jesus said if anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether His teaching comes from God, or whether He speaks on His own.

"He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself," Jesus explained. "But he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him."

The congregates didn't know that Jesus was not merely speaking about Himself. Jesus was also referring to those whom would be carrying on His work after the Nazarene's arrest, torture, death, burial, resurrection and ascension.

Insinuating that they were hypocrites, Jesus rhetorically asked if they were so proud to profess that the much-regarded Moses gave them the law, why don't they translate their respect for the Servant of the Lord and keep the law?

Looking into the eyes, perceiving their spirits, examining the hearts of the Jews and quickly sensing an uneasy restlessness among some of them, Jesus then asked, "Why are you trying to kill me?"

The skeptical crowd accused Jesus of being "demon-possessed" for making this baseless accusation.

"Who is trying to kill you," some of them asked, looking at one another, shrugging their shoulders, murmuring among themselves that the Nazarene was paranoid. Yet the conspirators felt a little uncomfortable for being exposed.

But Jesus knew the Jewish religious hierarchy was conspiring to kill Him. In approximately six weeks, He would yield to the Lord God Almighty and allow them to carry out their plans against Him.

Jerusalem Temple radical challenges Sabbath laws

Invalid man healing weeks earlier causes controversy

If a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath, why couldn't an invalid man get healed on that day.

That's the question Jesus Christ of Nazareth posed to congregates gathered to hear Him teach halfway through the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles, a harvest celebration and commemoration of the Lord God Almighty's goodness to the Hebrews during their 40-year Sinai Desert trek so long ago.

Jesus had just been accused by the crowd at Jerusalem Temple for being demon-possessed after disclosing to them during His teachings that there were conspirators who wanted to assassinate Him.

"I did one miracle and you are all astonished," Jesus told them of the invalid man He healed several weeks earlier at Jerusalem's Sheep Gate pool.

"Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath," He said.

Jesus said if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are they angry with Him for healing the whole man on the Sabbath?

"Stop judging by mere appearances,

and make a right judgment," Jesus insisted, inferring that their judgment should be based on common sense and the spirit of the law, rather than a judgment rooted solely on following the strict letter of the law.

The healing controversy particularly upset the Jews because the invalid man, a fixture at Jerusalem's Sheep Gate pool for as long as anybody could remember, was told by the Nazarene to pick up his mat and walk.

Mosaic Law strictly prohibited such physical activity on the Sabbath, according to Jewish religious officials conversant with its tenets, rules and regulations.

"Do you want to get well," Jesus asked the invalid man, who didn't seem to hear Jesus because his answer was that he had no one to help him into the pool when the angel stirred the water.

Dipping himself in the pool at the right time was the only way the invalid man thought he could get healed. He didn't think that physical restoration could come from yet another source.

The invalid man continually encountered a problem with viewing the pool as the only source available to him, because his immobility prevented him from moving ahead of the other disabled people vying for the same thing.

For it was the blind, lame and

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Angry mob causes near riot over Jesus Christ's controversial teachings

Crowd unsuccessful apprehending Nazarene

Jesus Christ's teachings nearly sparked a riot at Jerusalem Temple's courts.

An angry mob, comprised of Jerusalem residents and visitors who went to the Temple, were offended that Jesus compared Himself as the Son of God.

They tried to seize Jesus and drive the Nazarene out of Jerusalem Temple courts, where He had been teaching since midway during the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles.

But for some strange reason the unruly mob were unable to touch Him.

No one knows what the hostile crowd would have done if they'd succeeded apprehending Jesus.

Perhaps this was nothing more but an assassination attempt, bystanders and witnesses speculated.

Although some of the people were impressed with the Nazarene's knowledge of Mosaic Law which He exhibited during these teachings, others considered Him just too radical for their theological taste.

"Isn't this the Man they're trying to kill," some of the people of Jerusalem asked each other of Jesus who has been breaking a lot of religious rules lately.

"Here He is, speaking publicly and they are not saying a word to Him," they repeatedly said to one another during the week long Feast.

Rather than celebrate the Feast of

Tabernacles, many people debated Jesus' controversial teachings, much to the annoyance of religious officials.

"The people are paying too much attention on this Man's radical teachings," a spokesperson for the religious authorities said.

He noted that the people were being distracted by, fixated too much on Jesus, and were missing the true purpose of the Feast.

"They should be thanking the Lord for blessing us and our forefathers while they were wandering in the desert for 40 years," the spokesman said.

Some people, who viewed the

from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where He is from," he further reasoned. He believed that the Expected One would be more low-key than Jesus.

After sensing the inquisitiveness and mood of the people, Jesus addressed the issue while teaching in the Temple Courts.

"Yes, you know me, and you know where I AM from. I AM not here on My own, but He who sent Me is true," Jesus said. "You do not know Him, but I know Him, because I AM from Him and He sent Me."

After this statement a crowd, considering Jesus' remarks nothing more

'Yes, you know me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on My own, but He who sent Me is true. You do not know Him, but I know Him, because I am from Him and He sent me' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

Nazarene as a miracle worker, were also impressed with Jesus healing an invalid man, much to the frustration and consternation of religious authorities, the spokesperson added.

While other people, content with sitting on both sides of the fence, were just interested in the unusual goings-on. To them, this could have been just another boring Feast of Tabernacles!

"Now we have all of this excitement," one unidentified woman said gleefully.

"Have the authorities really concluded that He is the Christ," a man debating another said, referring to the prophecy of the Expected One's coming.

"But we know where this Man is

than blasphemous, tried to seize — and some say attempt to kill — Him. But no one laid a hand on the Nazarene because it just wasn't Jesus' time to die, some of His supporters speculated.

Just like a similar incident in Nazareth two-and-a-half years earlier when a mob there tried to throw their "favorite Son" over a cliff. Then Jesus just seemed to inexplicably walk right through the

Nazareth mob.

Now this time too, somehow the Nazarene was Providentially spared.

Unsuccessful in their attempt to do harm to Jesus this time, the angry mob departed Jerusalem Temple.

Once things calmed down, Jesus resumed His teaching in the temple courts.

Many in the crowd still put their faith in the sick-healing, demon-casting, dead-raising, storm-quelling, water-walking, multitude-feeding, miracle-working Man.

But for some people, Jesus' spectacular exploits still wasn't enough for them to believe in His divinity.

"When the Christ comes, He will do more miraculous signs than this Man," some said, expecting the real "Christ" would liberate them from Rome's yoke, overthrow her puppet rulers and restore Israel to the glory days of King David and early years of King Solomon.

As beneficiaries of the status quo, this expectation certainly didn't make Jerusalem's religious hierarchy too happy.

While the critical questioned Jesus, the receptive just listened and were edified by the Nazarene's teachings at Jerusalem Temple during this years' Feast of Tabernacles.

Plot quickly unravels in Temple arrest effort

Discord, Sabbath healing and blasphemy reasons Priests cite for seizure

Authorities are usually a little bit more organized and secretive when issuing a high-profile arrest order.

However, such wasn't the case during the annual Feast of Tabernacles this year.

Jerusalem residents and visitors who made the pilgrimage to attend the annual Feast, even learned about the plot to arrest and kill Jesus.

The Nazarene was assailed a religious and political agitator and radical by some yet hailed a miracle-worker by others.

Even the press, such as *The Testament Spectator*, learned of the loosely-organized plot to do away with the Nazarene.

According to rumor, Jesus purposely stayed away from Judea because the Jews there were also waiting to take His life.

Then when Jerusalem Temple Guards publicly and abruptly aborted their attempt to arrest Jesus, everyone knew what was going on by then.

Jerusalem's religious leadership, perhaps holding a grudge against the whip-wielding Jesus who ransacked the Temple over two-and-a-half years earlier, were now angry at the Nazarene for causing discord among the people and healing on the Sabbath.

Several weeks ago an invalid man, cured at Jerusalem's Sheep Gate pool, was seen walking around with his mat on the Sabbath. Such physical activity was prohibited, Jewish religious officials conversant with Mosaic Law said.

But try telling that to an elated,

euphoric and excited healed man!

For 38 years, the invalid man tried to be the first to dip himself in the pool when the Angel spontaneously stirred the water. Before he could reach the pool and get healed, he was beat out by yet another. Then the stirring water became placid again and the invalid man had to wait for the next time.

But thanks be to Jesus, the invalid man didn't have to lay in pain and discomfort any more on his worn-torn mat and wait for the Angel to stir the water again.

Jewish religious officials were also miffed at Jesus committing blasphemy. During recent high-profile temple teachings, He had the nerve to refer the Lord God Almighty as His Father, thus making Himself equal to God!

"Yes, you know Me, and you know where I AM from," Temple informants reported to hear Jesus say while answering people who were asking where He hailed.

"I AM not here on My own, but He who sent Me is true," Jesus said. "You do not know Him, but I know Him, because I AM from Him and He sent me."

Jewish religious leadership were so upset that the rituals and activities scheduled during the Feast didn't go on smoothly, they allowed their plans of plotting to kill Him leak out to the public.

Jerusalem Temple officials, the Chief Priests and Pharisees all wanted to squelch the political agitator, especially after hearing the crowd whispering such nice things about Him.

As Jesus was teaching in the Temple

(Continued on Page 18, Column 1)

Sabbath challenged...

(Continued from Page 16, Column 4)

paralyzed who were also at the pool, quickly dipping in the pool ahead of the invalid man when the angel spontaneously stirred the water.

The invalid man has waited at the pool for a long time. Of course not as long since it, along with the 1,700 foot long tunnel which transported the water underground from the Gihon springs, was first constructed so many years ago by Judah's King Hezekiah to satisfy the thirst of Jerusalem's residents during an enemy siege. But to many it certainly seemed so.

Since Jesus the Healer learned that the invalid man has been in this condition for 38 years, the Nazarene didn't want the man to wait any longer for the spontaneous stirring of the pool's water to get relief.

"Get up! Pick up your mat and walk," Jesus said with such authority, aware of the invalid man's 38 years of suffering, frustration and patience.

Immediately the man was cured. He got up, leaned down and picked up his mat and walked away from his place of affliction and misery.

Later on that day, the Jews sighted what appeared to be the invalid man, walking around with his soiled mat. The nerve of him!

"It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat," Jewish religious officials said with disdain, completely ignoring the fact that the man was indeed mobile.

Somewhat puzzled with their

legalistic callousness, the elated, euphoric and excited man explained to them that carrying around his mat on the Sabbath wasn't entirely his fault.

"The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk,'" he said emphatically.

"Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk," they asked him.

He didn't know. The healed man had no idea who it was, for Jesus had melted into the crowd.

Later, Jesus found the once-invalid-now-healed man at Jerusalem Temple.

After 38 years of immobility, pain and suffering the man, walking around the worship place in glee, was praising the Lord God Almighty, bystanders told *The Testament Spectator*.

"See, you are well again," Jesus said, happy for him. "Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you," He added, encouraging the man to live a righteous life.

The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus of Nazareth who had made him well. Because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jews persecuted Him.

"My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working," Jesus explained to them.

But they didn't understand. For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill Him.

Not only was He breaking the Sabbath by healing people, but He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Temple guards abort attempt to arrest Jesus...

(Continued from Page 17, Column 4)

courts, the religious establishment finally sent Temple Guards to arrest Him.

"I AM with you for only a short time, and then I go to the one who sent Me," Jesus said, aware of a move afoot to do away with Him.

"You will look for Me, but you will not find Me; and where I AM, you cannot come," He said.

The Jews looked at one another with puzzlement. They supposed Jesus knew that religious officials were plotting against Him.

"Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find Him," a Temple informant asked, wondering how could Jesus think He could escape from the long arm of the law.

"Will He go where our people live and are scattered among the Greeks and teach the Greeks," another asked, surmising that Jesus' teaching will be accepted by them.

"What did He mean when He said, 'You will look for Me, but you will not find Me,' and 'Where I AM, you cannot come,'" someone else asked.

While the critical questioned Jesus, the receptive just listened and were edified by the Nazarene's teachings.

The much talked about assassination

plot was reduced to a feeble attempt to arrest Jesus Christ of Nazareth, but that even failed, according to temple worshippers.

In plain view of Jesus' enemies, the Nazarene taught at Jerusalem Temple's courts on the last and greatest day of the week long Feast of Tabernacles.

"If anyone is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink," Jesus stood and said in a

emphatically.

Just as there were many supporters, there were many unbelievers.

"How can the Christ come from Galilee," still others asked.

"Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David's family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived," they questioned one another, wanting Jewish religious

mob that knows nothing of the law — there is a curse on them."

Nicodemus, one of the most influential and wealthiest Jewish men in Jerusalem who had gone to visit Jesus earlier, supported the Nazarene.

Because of his night meeting conversation with Jesus and tracking the Nazarene's two-and-a-half year ministry, Nicodemus became a convert and wanted to give this Teacher the opportunity to explain Himself.

"Does our law condemn anyone without first hearing him to find out what he is doing," Nicodemus asked the Chief Priests and Pharisees.

"Are you from Galilee, too," they asked, implying that Nicodemus' judgment was clouded because he and Jesus were from the same District.

But the religious officials were mistaken. Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Although Nazareth, the city where Jesus grew up hence the Nazarene designation, is closer to Galilee than Bethlehem, it wasn't too surprising that the Chief Priests and Pharisees made this error.

"Look into it," they said, urging that the learned man further investigate, "and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee."

'Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in Him? No! But this mob that knows nothing of the law, there is a curse on them' — the Jewish religious hierarchy

loud voice. "Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within Him."

Literal interpreters of Jesus' teachings didn't understand how could water flow from someone. But those with a little more spiritual insight knew that He meant the (Holy) Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive.

Up to that time the (Holy) Spirit had not been given, Jesus explained, since according to the Nazarene, He had not yet been glorified.

"Surely this Man is the Prophet," some said, on hearing Jesus' words.

"He is the Christ," others declared

officials to weigh in on the debate.

Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to seize Him, but still no one laid a hand on Him.

Finally, the Temple Guards, who were dispatched by the Chief Priests and Pharisees some time ago, returned to their superiors without completing the job which they were assigned.

"Why didn't you bring Him in," the Jewish religious hierarchy asked them.

"No one ever spoke the way this Man does," the exasperated guards declared.

"You mean He has deceived you also," The Pharisees asked, "Has any of the rulers or of the Pharisees [their superiors] believed in Him? No! But this

Saliva mudcake, dip in pool heals blind man

Second healing breaks Sabbath law

A blinded-since-birth beggar man was healed by Jesus Christ when the Nazarene packed a saliva mudcake on his eyes and told him to dip in a local pool.

The Jews and Pharisees were already infuriated that Jesus Christ healed an invalid man on the Sabbath several weeks ago. Now there is a report about this second infraction.

This latest healing-on-the-Sabbath-day incident involved spittle as a curing agent, eyewitnesses say.

Jesus performed an identical, coarse, and unorthodox healing procedure on someone else several weeks ago.

Then, an unidentified blind Bethsaida man, initially brought to Jesus by some concerned people, begged the Nazarene to heal him.

Responding to that plea, Jesus spit into his eyes and laid hands on the blind man twice. His eyes became optically-correct.

Throughout Jesus' ministry, ailing, afflicted and demon-possessed people crossed the Nazarene's path every day. He helped them all — even if they do approach Him on the Sabbath.

This time the Nazarene was walking and after seeing a man who was blind from birth, His disciples wondered what caused his disability.

"Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind," they asked.

"Neither this man nor his parents sinned," Jesus said, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life."

Jesus told His followers that as long as it is day, He must do the work of the Lord God Almighty who sent Him.

"Night is coming, when no one can work," Jesus said, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

Jesus knelt toward the ground, lowered His head and spit on an area of

dirt beneath Him.

Rubbing the moistened dirt with His hands, He then fashioned the mud into the shape of a small cake, picked it up gingerly and packed it very gently on the man's eyes.

"Go," Jesus told him, "wash in the Pool of Siloam."

This spittle-application healing

'The Man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam Pool and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see' — the healed blind man

procedure yielded immediate results this instance rather than when Jesus chose to perform His first saliva application miracle.

Rather than acquiring perfect vision after Jesus spit into the Bethsaida blind man's eyes and laying hands on him the first time, the man only saw "men as trees walking."

It was only after the Nazarene laid hands on the Bethsaida blind man yet a second time did his eyes, as a physician would conclude upon thorough examination, become optically-correct.

The blinded-since-birth beggar man was told to complete the healing process by washing his saliva mudcaked eyes in Jerusalem's Pool of Siloam.

The obedient man, unaware how odd he must have appeared to those who saw him hobbling by, went and washed as Jesus instructed. Afterwards, he went home. With eyes opened and vision restored, the healed man saw his parents for the very first time.

The healed blind man's neighbors — and those he had formerly saw him

begging — were all but surprised. They wondered how he was able to now see.

"Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg," they asked one another.

Some claimed that he was. But others said the man they saw just resembled the blinded-since-birth beggar man

"I am the man," the healed man insisted.

"How then were your eyes opened," they asked, demanding an immediate explanation.

"The Man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes," he explained to them. "He told me to go to Siloam Pool and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

"Where is this Man," they asked him.

"I don't know," he said.

What began as a benevolent act by Jesus — healing a blinded-since-birth beggar man on the Sabbath — would very soon erupt into a legal, religious and theological controversy.

Healed blind man intensely interrogated by Jews, Pharisees

Jesus Christ criticized for breaking Sabbath again

Criticized for receiving his sight on the Sabbath, the blinded-since-birth healed man was intensely interrogated and verbally berated by Jerusalem's Jews and Pharisees.

The Jews brought the healed man to the Pharisees and asked him how was he cured.

"He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed in the Siloam Pool as He instructed me, and now I see," he said with guarded jubilation.

The healed man sensed that a miraculous benevolent act performed by the miracle-worker placed him right smack dab in a middle of a legal,

religious and theological controversy.

A vehement debate and loud argument was cast on, and on, and on about Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the Man who healed the blinded-since-birth beggar man on the Sabbath.

Jesus boldly helps hurting people, unhampered by Mosaic Law or any other form of religious legalism of the day.

The Nazarene is purely motivated by compassion, a concept the Jewish religious establishment, as evidenced in their treatment of the healed blind man and the man who was invalid for 38 years, found difficult to fathom.

"This Man is not from God, for He does not keep the Sabbath," some of the Pharisees said, disregarding the healing with legalistic callousness.

There were others who were unwilling to ignore that some good was accomplished here.

"But how can a sinner do such miraculous signs," they quickly retorted.

So they were divided. One faction considered loyalists to Mosaic Law, castigated the act and the other faction commended the deed — albeit critical of the timing. Finally they turned again to the blind man.

"What have you to say about Him? Was it your eyes He opened," the loyalists to Mosaic Law said, seeking to extract more information from the healed man.

"He is a Prophet," the healed man declared emphatically.

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Blind man eventually excommunicated...

(Continued from Page 18, Column 4)

Still not believing that he was blind and had recently received his sight, the Jews dismissed the healed man and sent for the man's parents to get an explanation from them.

"Is this your son," they asked of the healed man upon the parents' arrival. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

Feeling as if they were at an inquisition, the healed man's parents were a little intimidated by the rapid questioning.

"We know he is our son," the parents answered guardedly, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself."

His parents said this because they were afraid.

The Jews already decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be excommunicated.

That was why his parents, seeking to distance themselves from the legal, religious and theological debate that was raging, said what they said.

The healed man was summoned by religious officials yet a second time for further interrogation.

"Give glory to God," they coerced him to say, playing down Jesus' miracle-working involvement in the healed man's miraculous optical restoration. "We know this man is a sinner."

The man replied that whether he is a sinner or not, he doesn't know.

"One thing I do know, I was blind but

impertinence, the religious officials berated him, cussed him out and hurled insults at him.

"You are this Fellow's disciple, we are disciples of Moses," they said proudly. "We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this Fellow, we don't even know where He comes from."

The healed man was holding his own better than his parents under the intense interrogation. He considered it

'Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing' — the healed blind man

now I see," he said.

"What did he do to you," they asked, insinuating that there was some sort of secret formula in Jesus' saliva mudcake that caused a healing reaction when the man's eyes were washed by the Siloam Pool waters.

"How did he open your eyes," the blind man's questioners asked.

"I have told you already and you did not listen," he answered. "Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?"

Angry at the healed man's

remarkable that religious officials didn't know where Jesus comes from.

The healed man, who thought that religious authorities are supposed to know what's going on, exclaimed proudly that his eyes were opened.

"We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing," he said.

"You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us," they replied

arrogantly.

The healed man was thrown out. He was also excommunicated from the Temple for his "obstinacy, impudent attitude and insubordination," religious officials wrote in their report detailing the incident, to be included in Jesus Christ's burgeoning Temple dossier.

When Jesus heard that they had excommunicated the healed man, He found him and asked whether he believed in the Son of Man.

"Who is He, Sir," the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in Him."

"You have not seen Him," Jesus said.

"In fact, He is the one speaking to you." Upon hearing this, the healed man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshipped Him.

"For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind," Jesus remarked.

Some Pharisees who were with him heard Him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind, too?"

Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

Jesus Christ of Nazareth commands Bethany man to return from the dead

Orders: 'Lazarus!'
[to] 'Come forth'

A dead Bethany man, wrapped in burial clothes and entombed in a cave four days ago, was commanded to return from death to life, according to eyewitnesses mourning at the sepulchre.

"Lazarus! Come forth," Jesus Christ of Nazareth called in a loud voice, boldly ordering the deceased Bethany man to awake, arise and advance from the dark stale cave into the warm sunlight and fresh air.

Immediately after issuing the curt command, life-laced energy from Jesus' voice charged throughout the man's body, quickly enveloping him and overtaking the once powerful grip of death which already had a four-day head start.

By verbal command, power from Jesus radiated throughout Lazarus, regenerating, reinvigorating and restoring every organ in the deceased man's body.

Quickly, thoroughly and completely the rigor mortis body of Lazarus was suddenly loosened.

Without hesitation the Bethany man raised his torso, put his feet firmly on the cave floor and stood up decisively.

Restricted by the burial clothes wrapped around him, Lazarus walked deliberately — perhaps even struggling ever so robotically — out of the cave toward the Nazarene, who was standing at the cave's entrance so authoritatively.

Not knowing what to expect, two women, a number of Jews, other mourners plus Jesus' followers covered behind the Nazarene, intensely shocked and utterly befuddled at what they were witnessing on this winter day.

Seeing a dead man being called from his grave caused some to kneel and prompted others to stand and watch in muted awe and disbelief.

When the stone was initially rolled away from Lazarus' sepulchre, everyone (but Jesus) clamped their hands and baggy robes over their noses, certainly expecting to smell the strong stench of death from the four-day-old corpse.

But after sepulchre attendants rolled away the massive rotund-shaped stone, no nauseating embalming fluids nor pungent smell of Lazarus' decomposed

body permeated the air.

From the once-dead-now-alive Lazarus there perfumed the fresh aroma of life, for the glory of the Lord God Almighty enveloped the entire sepulchre site.

Lazarus' eyes weren't visible because of the burial cloth wrapped around his face.

But after Jesus told them to remove

Lazarus' grave clothes, bystanders could see that his eyes were radiant and vibrant with life.

After observing the miraculous spectacle unfolding before them, Martha and Mary's tears of sadness changed into tears of happiness and joy.

How could this be, eyewitnesses and bystanders asked one another in awestruck amazement.

A short prayer and terse three-word vocal command was all it took for Jesus to resurrect a dead man, killed by disease just four days earlier.

By His mere voice the Nazarene targeted enough power to resurrect just one dead man.

But some believe that the divine power and energy emanating from Jesus could have also resurrected every corpse — either recently buried or entombed for some time — in the entire cemetery.

Yet the same power which raised one from his four-day death, probably restrained other countless corpses from following Lazarus' lead.

Raising one from the dead was truly impressive, eyewitnesses and pundits said. But the judicious use of Jesus' power was perhaps even more impressive, they claimed.

If Jesus could raise a man from the dead just think of the possibilities, they speculated.

Such a Man could do anything — and He must have known this.

Some would have preferred that Jesus do more, such as extend His miracle-working ways by liberating them from Rome's yoke, overthrowing her puppet rulers and restoring Israel back to the glory days.

But instead, Jesus chose to selectively, carefully and delicately wield His power. He helped the sick, ailing and brokenhearted, not to gain power for powers sake, but to aid common people like Lazarus, beloved brother of Martha and Mary of Bethany.

In Martha's own words

"I don't know how my Lord Jesus raised my brother Lazarus from the dead. All I know is that it happened, and my sister Mary and I are glad that our brother is back with us.

"Yes, Mary and I told my Lord that if He had been here, Lazarus would not have died in the first place. But I also told Him that even now God will give Him whatever He asked. I believe in Him, that's why I told Him this. I also told my Lord that I knew that Lazarus will rise again in the resurrection — at the last day.

"My Lord Jesus said that He was 'the resurrection and the life.' My Lord also said that 'he who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.' My Lord Jesus asked if I believed this, and I told Him that I was certain that He was indeed the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world.

"After our conversation, I went back to get my sister Mary. She took the death of our brother Lazarus quite hard and was still mourning at the house.

"When I arrived at the same house where just a few weeks before Jesus

settled a dispute between my sister and me, I discreetly told Mary that the Teacher had arrived and asked about her. It was almost as if my Lord Jesus wanted her to witness what was about to happen, and He was waiting for us.

"Mary quickly got up and ran to meet Him. She sensed that my Lord Jesus would somehow make things right again. Many Jews had come from Jerusalem to mourn with us. When they saw us abruptly leave the home, they too followed, supposing my sister Mary and I were going to Lazarus' tomb to mourn there. Rather than come into town, my Lord Jesus stayed at the outskirts of Bethany waiting for us. He didn't want us to look for Him. So thoughtful was my Lord Jesus during this emotionally draining period, He remained in the same place where we first talked.

"When my dear sister Mary and I reached the site where Jesus was patiently waiting for us, she fell at His feet. She told My Lord Jesus what I had also said — that if He had been here, my brother would not have died.

(Continued on Page 20, Column 1)

Editor's note: This fictitious narrative, gleaned from official scriptural records, is Martha's account of how Jesus Christ of Nazareth raised her brother Lazarus from the dead.

'I don't know how my Lord Jesus raised my brother...'

(Continued from Page 19, Column 3)

"My Lord Jesus is a very feeling and compassionate Man. When He saw Mary weeping and the Jews who had followed her also weeping, I could see He was deeply moved in the spirit and was troubled.

"He asked us where we entombed Lazarus. We invited Him to come with us so we could show Him.

"It was then I, Mary, all of us saw my Lord Jesus weep.

"Until that moving moment, I had never seen my Lord weep before. After seeing His tender expression, some Jews mentioned how much My Lord must have loved Lazarus. He did — just like His own brother.

"But some of them said if my Lord Jesus was able to open the eyes of the blind man, why couldn't He have kept Lazarus from dying. We didn't know the answer to that burning question, until later.

"We all came to the sepulchre where our brother was entombed. Once more, Jesus was deeply moved.

"The tomb was a cave with a stone leaning against the entrance. My Lord Jesus instructed some men to roll it away. They hesitated, looking at me for direction.

"I told my Lord Jesus that by this time there would be a bad odor for Lazarus has been dead four days. My Lord told me again to believe and that I would see the glory of God. The men overheard what my Lord told me and proceeded to remove it.

"It took some effort for the men to roll the stone back. I don't know how much time transpired — but it seemed liked such a long time.

"My heart pulsed rapidly. I didn't know what to expect. I was nervous. I was anxious. I was pensive.

"Many more indescribable feelings welled up inside me. Maybe Lazarus was already standing there.

"After they removed the large boulder, my sister and I saw the dark entrance in the face of the cave staring oh so coldly back at us.

"Then My Lord Jesus looked up and

peered into the entrance of the cave and could see my brother Lazarus.

"He raised up. He put his feet firmly on the cave floor and stood. He faced my Lord, who called him from the dead. He then came walking out of the cave.

"How majestic was my Lord Jesus, standing oh so authoritatively in front of the cave's entrance.

"Behind Him my sister and I felt secure. It seemed as though He was a shield between us and the unknown. Lazarus was the only one who was permitted to return from the dead, but

elated! We were euphoric! We were excited! It was exhilarating to see my brother come right toward us.

"Because strips of linen were wrapped so snugly around his hands and feet, my brother Lazarus could hardly walk. In his face I could see the radiance and vibrancy of life behind the cloth.

"My Lord Jesus instructed them to take off the grave clothes which fettered him, and let him go. They did.

"Oh Lazarus, I cried. 'You're alive! You're alive! You're alive!' I yelled over and over and over again.

"Mary and I were awed at seeing Lazarus, alive and standing before us. His stature was so erect, not the sickly, bent down, emaciated figure we last saw. There were no outward signs of disease.

"Mary and I ran to him and hugged him so tightly. We came back to our Lord. We knelt, thanked and praised Him for the miracle He had done.

"My Lord's disciples told us afterwards that my Master planned Lazarus' resurrection as an opportunity to give glory to God and His Son.

"If that's the case, I didn't mind being His humble instrument.

"I don't know how my Lord Jesus raised my brother Lazarus from the dead. All I know is that it happened and Mary and I are glad that he is with us."

'My Master planned Lazarus' resurrection as an opportunity to give glory to God and His Son'
— Martha of Bethany, Lazarus' sister

prayed. This is what He said: 'Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that You sent Me.'

"When He had prayed thus, my Lord called with a loud voice for my brother to come forth.

"I saw and felt some kind of energy pouring out of my Lord Jesus' body. This powerful energy charged through Lazarus. It awakened him instantly.

"I couldn't believe what I was seeing, and yet at the same time I expected to see nothing less than what I saw, because I truly trusted my Lord Jesus so.

"Cowering behind my Lord Jesus, I

there could have been many. My Lord's power was so great, it summoned one dead man yet restrained countless others.

"And even though I knew my Lord had everything under control, I was still afraid. When I felt the presence of God, my fear dissipated.

"It was such an awesome, yet holy moment — not only for Lazarus, my sister and me, but for everyone who witnessed it.

"Just as my Lord Jesus said, we did not smell anything — just a perfume profusely permeating the air. I'd never smelt such a sweet aroma before.

"My tears of sorrow became tears of joy. My sister Mary and I embraced.

"She sobbed. I sobbed. We were

Jesus also revived Capernaum girl and Nain young man from the dead, many eyewitnesses say

But the Bethany incident is still the most dramatic

Raising Lazarus from the dead was Jesus Christ of Nazareth's most public, dramatic and prominent display of His awesome powers people had ever witnessed.

But such a demonstration of Jesus' supernatural power at Bethany's sepulchre happened elsewhere twice before, many eyewitnesses reminded *The Testament Spectator*.

The first resurrection incident was described a discreet miracle by those on the scene because it occurred within a Capernaum home.

A wealthy man named Jarius, president of Capernaum's influential Synagogue Elders Association, approached the Nazarene humbly and beseeched Him to heal his sick 12-year-old daughter.

Moved with compassion, Jesus agreed to go with Jarius to lay hands on his daughter.

While Jesus and the group were en route to Capernaum — located in Northern Israel on the Sea of Galilee — some men came from Jarius' home and told the Jewish ruler that the young girl was officially pronounced dead by the family's doctor.

"Why bother the Teacher any further," the men asked Jarius, after giving the Jewish ruler the bad news. Telling Jarius not to fear but only believe, Jesus ignored them and proceeded to the Jewish ruler's house anyway.

Upon arriving in Capernaum, Jesus asked His apostles Peter, James and John (the brother of James) to come to Jarius' house with Him.

Flautists dispatched by the local funeral director to mourn at the 12-year-old girl's death bed were wailing and crying very loudly.

When Jesus came on the scene and told them that the girl was not dead but asleep, the mourners laughed Him to scorn. They caused so much commotion, that Jesus ejected them all from the premises.

After the crowds were ejected, He asked Jarius, the mother, as well as Peter, James, and John to come into the child's bedroom with Him.

As they entered, the odor of sickness and death permeated the room as the girl lay motionless under the temporary burial shroud.

Jesus lifted up the shroud and said: "Talithacumi" which means "Little girl, I say to you, get up!"

Instantly, her spirit returned and she started to breathe again.

Inquisitive eyewitnesses lurking outside of Jarius' large home saw the silhouette of the young girl walking around in her bedroom.

While most had focused their attention on Jarius and his revived daughter, some spotted Jesus and His followers discreetly exiting the back door of Jarius' palatial home.

Despite Jesus' gag order imposed on the astonished Jarius and his joyful yet emotionally-drained wife, news of the resurrection miracle still spread

throughout the entire region.

Days later, neighbors testified seeing the miraculous physical transformation of the 12-year-old girl, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

The second dead-raising incident occurred in Nain, which is approximately 21 miles southwest of Capernaum.

While Jesus was approaching the town gate to minister there, a funeral procession was coming toward Him.

There in a coffin lay a young man, the only son of an unidentified Nain woman. His body was being carried by pall bearers to be buried.

Again, seeing the woman's grief and sorrow moved Jesus with compassion.

Shortly after telling the grieving Nain mother not to cry, the Nazarene touched the young man's coffin and ordered him to "get up."

The dead man immediately sat up and began to talk.

Witnesses at the scene weren't sure what the young man was talking to Jesus about. Some speculated that he was just thanking and praising Jesus for reviving him.

The Nazarene released the resurrected Nain man in the custody of his grateful, thankful mother.

After witnessing this astounding miracle, the mourners and passersby were all filled with awe and praised the Lord God Almighty for what He has done through this great Man.

"A great prophet has appeared among us," they said then, now knowing that Jesus Christ of Nazareth was indeed the

Messiah. "God has come to help His people."

Unlike the first incident which occurred in the privacy of a young girl's bedroom, this Nain miracle, performed by the Nazarene publicly, was observed by many.

There can be no doubt that Jesus engineered this second astounding miracle, something which could not be corroborated by eyewitnesses when the 12-year-old girl was resurrected.

News about this second dead-raising incident spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country, making Jesus of Nazareth more popular than ever.

Now the Bethany incident — the third time Jesus Christ of Nazareth brought the once dead to life.

Some question whether Jesus, who has become more demonstrative with His resurrection miracles of late, purposely selected Bethany as the site for performing this wonder.

Jerusalem, capital of the Jews' religious establishment, is only about two miles from Bethany, which is located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

By raising Lazarus from the dead there, perhaps Jesus was sending a message to the Jewish religious officials, dissuading them from taking any further attempts on His life.

Perhaps the only motive why Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead was because He just wanted to help people He loved.

No one completely knows for sure what motivated Jesus.

Jesus loved Lazarus and his family

Jesus Christ of Nazareth loved Lazarus of Bethany like a brother, many informed *The Testament Spectator*.

Furthermore, these sources say, Lazarus' two sisters were also very close to the Nazarene, acclaimed for resurrecting the Bethany man at a sepulchre cave site on a cool winters day.

This love which Jesus felt for Lazarus and his siblings was nourished by the Nazarene when He once settled a dispute between the Bethany man's two sisters, sources revealed.

No one is sure how the three Bethanites initially became so close to Jesus. But considering the Nazarene's magnetic personality, it's not too surprising that many, who simply just liked being in Jesus' company, periodically invited Him to lodge with them.

One such family who opened their home to Jesus was Martha and Mary, Lazarus' two sisters. When Jesus and His disciples were en route to minister at another village several weeks before the Lazarus resurrection, they stopped to rest at Bethany.

Martha, described by family and friends as a meticulous woman and excellent hostess, was pleased to open her home to Jesus and His entourage. Jesus taught while she prepared food.

Martha's sister Mary, so enamored by the Nazarene's teachings, sat very attentive at His feet, listening to everything Jesus the Teacher said.

Just like her sister Mary, Martha too would have also preferred to have been edified by Jesus' teaching. But there were many culinary preparations that had to be made.

If Martha abrogated her responsibility like Mary, who would feed Jesus and His followers, an unidentified friend claimed to hear her mutter.

Agitated and frustrated that she wasn't getting any help from her sister, the exasperated Martha came to Jesus and complained vehemently.

"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself," Mary asked Jesus. "Tell her to help me!"

Jesus could obviously see how upset Martha was. He tried to calm her.

"Martha, Martha," the Nazarene said, sympathetic to her predicament and diffusing her frustration.

"You are worried and upset about many things. But only one thing is needed," He said. "Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Martha stopped and pondered at that statement a bit. She could see that Mary was benefitting from hearing Jesus' teachings. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath and accepted Jesus' calming presence.

Resigned to the situation, Martha felt better and went back to work, according to sources who had firsthand knowledge of the incident.

The way Jesus delicately handled this potentially explosive situation by ameliorating a dispute between two sisters caused Lazarus, Martha and Mary to love Him yet all the more. So that's why when their brother Lazarus became gravely ill weeks later, the two sisters had no hesitation seeking Jesus' healing help.

Elite Jewish Ruling Council plot Nazarene's death

Chief Priests, Pharisees call Sanhedrin meeting

After witnessing the Nazarene revive Lazarus from the dead some Jews, probably Temple informants assigned to spy on Jesus Christ, gave a thorough report to Pharisees in Jerusalem.

Jesus was becoming more and more dangerous for disturbing civil tranquility and threatening religious authority, anonymous sources from Jerusalem Temple confirmed.

The Nazarene's high profile teachings, blasphemous preachings and illegal Sabbath healings angered religious officials so much they wanted the Nazarene silenced, these sources say.

They realized that many converts are captivated by Jesus and are unwisely putting too much faith and false hope in the Nazarene.

"Do the people actually think this rabble-rouser's powers can liberate us all from Rome," said one informant.

The social upheaval Jesus was causing in Jerusalem, as illustrated in the Temple Guards failure to arrest Him during the Feast of Tabernacles celebration, was getting out of hand.

The Chief Priests and Pharisees called an emergency meeting. As the Great Sanhedrin, this elite Jewish

ruling council, whose 71 members were arbitrarily appointed by the Romans and King Herod Antipas (Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea), had to act or face expulsion for not taking care of business, pundits surmised.

Shortly after the meeting was called to order, a heated debate immediately ensued. Sanhedrin members argued for quite some time, droning on and on and on about Jesus' identity.

Some members thought Jesus could have been the Messiah. Others surmise He was Elijah (the Tishbite). Many

"...It is expedient for us that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish" — Caiaphas

speculated that He is the prophet which Moses, the Servant of the Lord, predicted long ago. Maybe Jesus was merely John the Baptist reincarnated.

Perhaps He was nothing more than a fraud — albeit a dangerous fraud for inciting the people so.

The Sanhedrin discussed the Nazarene's offenses. They analyzed His affect on the people and deliberated what to do with Him.

The many problems Jesus was causing them seemed to yield no solutions. Although there was disagreement on what course they should

take, the Sanhedrin did agree on one thing: This Man Jesus Christ of Nazareth was undermining their legal, religious and theological authority. This can't be!

"What are we accomplishing," Sanhedrin members asked one another during the course of the long meeting.

"Here is this Man performing many miraculous signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation," they reasoned.

"You don't know what you're talking about," retorted Caiaphas, recently named High Priest this year.

"You do not realize that it is expedient for us that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish," he boldly asserted.

High Priest Caiaphas, an opportunistic and very astute politician, stated that Jesus should die to help bring the Jewish nation and the children of God together as one people.

The Sanhedrin members were quieted. Either they were too exhausted from debating any further or Caiaphas' shrewd statement caused them to reflect on his prophecy.

Appreciating the prophetic word of their High Priest, the Sanhedrin unanimously agreed with Caiaphas that Jesus should be killed. From that day on, they plotted to take His life.

Jesus cleanses ten lepers

Open sores, lumps on their bodies disappeared

Sanhedrin concerns of Jesus mesmerizing the people were rekindled when the Nazarene cleansed 10 lepers of their hideous disease while He traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee.

The Sanhedrin, an elite Jewish Council who feared the miracle-working Jesus so much they plotted to take His life, were worried that everyone would eventually believe in the Nazarene, thus putting themselves in danger of Roman extermination.

This latest healing incident — cleansing and curing the most shunned of all diseased people — just reinforced those fears.

This time Levitical Priests, serving parishioners at the village synagogue near the site where the latest miraculous incident occurred, received word that Jesus instantly cured nine lepers.

"He [Jesus] told us all to 'go show yourselves to the Priests' and we immediately obeyed Him," said one of the lepers, impatiently waiting for Levitical Priests to examine all of them, proclaim the group clean so they could all resume living a normal life.

"But for some unknown reason the Samaritan man who was with us disobeyed and went back to Him," he said.

Prior to their miraculous cleansing, swollen skin made the lepers' faces appear lion-like. Open sores and lumps

covered their entire body, discoloring skin and causing them to smell. While some loss sensation in their fingers, toes (digits), and thumbs, the others suffered amputated appendages.

Cloaked in hooded robes to hide their monstrous appearance, Mosaic Law required that the ten lepers go with their head bare, put a covering on their upper lip and be quarantined from society.

"Unclean! Unclean! Unclean," the lepers were required to cry aloud while walking around, alerting people of their diseased condition and warning passersby to remain at a safe distance.

Then they came upon Jesus. Standing far enough to obey the law, the lepers positioned themselves so they could still be in earshot of the Nazarene while He walked toward Jerusalem.

"Jesus, Master, have pity on us," said the ten lepers, loudly lifting their voices simultaneously after initially crying out in unison the obligatory "Unclean! Unclean! Unclean" verbal warning.

"Go, show yourselves to the Priests," the Nazarene said casually.

Somehow Jesus' supernatural power pierced through their disease-ridden bodies. Their lion-like-leprotic-laced faces were remolded.

In a split second, misshaped foreheads, cheekbones, noses and chins became regenerated from grotesque disfigurements into recognizable human beings.

a newborn baby.

Those in the once-diseased group who lost feelings in their fingers, toes and thumbs instantly acquired sensation again.

The ones who had no digits or thumbs at all were utterly shocked to see their appendages suddenly reappear.

Even their baggy robes and secreted-stained undergarments — which according to Mosaic Law should have been either burned or washed — were freshly dry cleaned!

There was no nauseating odor. Somehow Jesus' healing power made their new bodies pleasantly aromatic.

For the first time in a long time the lepers were healthy and completely whole. No longer social outcasts, the ten could now return to their homes.

The ten lepers were healed instantly as they went on their way to be declared "cleansed" by the Synagogue Priests.

When one of the elated, excited and euphoric cleansed leprotic men saw he was healed, he came back and glorified God with a loud voice.

Running to Jesus, he threw himself at the Nazarene's feet and thanked Him for his healing.

"Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine," Jesus inquired of the man who disclosed that he was a Samaritan.

"Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner," the Nazarene rhetorically asked to those around Him.

Jesus invited the cleansed Samaritan man to rise and go and declared that his faith has made him whole."

Children rebuked by Nazarene's disciples

Jesus chides aides, invites little ones to return

Little children yearning for attention, love and affection from Jesus Christ, were rebuked by the Nazarene's disciples, many onlookers witnessed.

Even though the disciples viewed the children as a nuisance and scolded those who brought them, Jesus still spent time with the young ones.

This all happened while the Nazarene was visiting the coasts of Judea beyond the Jordan River. People brought infants and young children so Jesus could touch and bless them.

But rather than embrace the children the miffed disciples, angry at seeing so many kids coming toward them, rudely sent the young ones away.

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them," said a displeased Jesus, calling their return and taking this opportunity to illustrate that these are the ones who the Kingdom of God belongs.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it," Jesus said. He encouraged His disciples to view kids not as a nuisance but as cherished jewels.

"Hooray! Hooray! Hooray," the

coastal Judean children cheered with exuberant glee after being told by the Nazarene that they could return.

It's quite ironic. While many grown-ups debated and discussed Jesus' identity the children, simply accepting the Nazarene for who and what He is, viewed their miracle-working hero as none other than a playmate.

'I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth

Running full speed to an awaiting, outstretched armed Jesus, some of the children jumped up and down all around Him. Bumping against Jesus, they caused Him to lose His balance, reel over and fall gently on the soft green grass.

The children laughed and laughed and laughed, and Jesus laughed with them. After their adolescent euphoria subsided, the Nazarene instructed the kids to sit down and encircle Him.

Relishing the opportunity to be close to Jesus' bosom, the younger ones sat unabashedly on His lap. Many reached for the Nazarene's warm face, pulling inquisitively at His beard. Some tried to be the fortunate one to affectionately lay their head on His chest.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, a very patient, gentle and warm Man, took His time with them. He talked to the children and in turn they talked to Him.

Before dismissing them, Jesus hugged the children, laid His hands tenderly on them and imparted a blessing on each and every one.

No one knows why the disciples were

intimidated but perhaps His aides felt the heat.

Possibly the disciples, who have followed Jesus up and down the countryside for over two years now, were merely fatigue.

Maybe they feared the future and didn't want to deal with any distractions. They knew their time with Jesus was nearing the end, particularly since the Nazarene has been predicting His death a lot lately and they weren't in the mood to have children around.

Who knows what fueled their rudeness. But whatever the reason the aides had for rebuking the coastal Judean children, Jesus did not tolerate keeping the young ones away.

When Jesus completed ministering to the little children, He left this side of the Jordan River, which is the border between Judea and Perea, and went on His way.

Nazarene's death, resurrection foretold

Disciples fail to understand Jesus' prophecy

Betrayal, condemnation and death awaits Jesus Christ at Jerusalem, the Nazarene forewarned His 12 disciples.

While en route to the "City of David," the disciples were confused and those who followed Jesus and His entourage were afraid about the future.

In an attempt to eliminate any confusion, Jesus decided to yet again inform His aides that the "Son of Man," as He carefully crafted to lessen the shock, was going to die.

"Everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled," Jesus was reported to have told

the trusted 12 after taking them aside.

"The Son of Man will be betrayed to the Chief Priests and the teachers of the law."

With deliberate specificity, Jesus laid out to them what would happen to Him.

The Nazarene said that He would be condemned to death and remanded to the Gentiles (the Romans).

Next He would be mocked, insulted, spat upon, flogged, crucified and then buried.

"[But] on the third day He [the Son of Man] will be raised to life," Jesus said of the good news that could have buoyed the spirits of those who would have understood the Nazarene's plan.

However the disciples did not understand this prophecy. So since its meaning was hidden from them, they did not know what Jesus was talking about.

Young ruler seeks eternal life

Resists giving up worldly possessions

A rich man can inherit eternal life if he sells his most cherished possessions and gives the money to the poor.

That's what Jesus Christ of Nazareth told a young ruler, according to observers who witnessed the conversation.

But rather than listen to Jesus' advice, the rich young ruler went away from the Nazarene looking quite dejected, these observers say.

This salvation through relinquishing worldly possessions exhortation arose after Jesus, who just spent time ministering to coastal Judean children, left this side of the Jordan River, which is between Judea and Perea.

While proceeding on His way, a nice-looking, splendidly-dressed, young wealthy man ran up to the Nazarene, fell on his knees before Him and asked a question.

"Good Teacher, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life," the rich young man said.

"Why do you call me good and ask Me about what is good," Jesus replied. "No one is good — except God alone. He is the only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the Commandments," He said.

"Which ones," the man inquired of the Ten Mosaic Commandments.

"You know them," Jesus replied perceptively.

"Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not give false testimony. Honor your father and mother," and "love your neighbor as yourself," the Nazarene quickly recited six of them.

"Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy," the rich young man said

proudly. "What do I still lack?"

The Nazarene looked at the young rich man with love and said he still needed to do one more thing.

"If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me," Jesus said.

When the rich young man heard this, his countenance fell and he went away from Jesus and His entourage quite sad, because he had great, great wealth. The Testament Spectator later learned.

Jesus looked around and acknowledged to His disciples that it is hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven.

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle [a small narrow gate] than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God," Jesus said.

When the disciples heard this, they were even more bewildered and greatly astonished.

"Who then can be saved," they asked their Teacher.

"With man this is impossible, but not with God. All things are possible with God," Jesus answered.

"We have left everything to follow you," Peter stated, asking Jesus what kind of reward will there be for him and the others.

"I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel," Jesus said.

Everyone who has left their house, family, job and the Gospel for His sake will receive a 100 times as much and will inherit eternal life, Jesus explained.

The Nazarene said that "many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first."

Mother Zebedee's request angers disciples

Asks that her two sons flank Jesus in Heaven

Ten of Jesus Christ of Nazareth's trusted 12 disciples were angry at the other two, inside sources revealed to The Testament Spectator.

This dissent came about after Mother Zebedee, kneeling at Jesus' feet with her sons (James and John), asked a favor.

"What is it you want. What do you want me to do for you," Jesus asked.

"Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom," she said.

"You don't know what you are asking," said Jesus, looking at James and John with her.

"Can you drink the cup I am going to drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with," He asked.

"We can," they answered.

"You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not from me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by

My Father."

When the ten heard what James and John had the nerve to request, they became indignant.

"What about us? What about us," they muttered to one another.

"Sure Mother Zebedee's sons had a big fishing business, but didn't we too sacrifice just as much as James and John," one unidentified disciple said.

"We all left our families, business interests, responsibilities and belongings to follow Jesus," replied another. "Why should James and John be placed over us?"

Jesus called His disciples together to address the issue head on.

"You know that those who rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you," Jesus said.

"Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave — just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many," the Nazarene said, using Him as an example.

Jesus heals determined Bartimaeus

'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me... Rabbi, I want to see!'

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, so impressed with the faith of a blind man that He casually told him to receive his sight, performed yet another astounding miracle outside Jericho today.

The beneficiary of this Jesus-initiated healing was Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, called Blind Bart by Jericho residents who knew the blind beggar man.

Daily Blind Bart was accustomed to begging from people entering and exiting Jericho. But after learning from members of the crowd that "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," he boldly begged for more than just food, water and money.

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," cried Blind Bart, aware of the Nazarene's healing-the-sick, raising-the-dead reputation.

Perhaps Jesus could perform a miracle for him, the blind beggar reasoned. But in order for that to occur he had to get the Nazarene's attention first. Unwilling to risk Jesus passing him by, Bartimaeus

raised his voice even louder.

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," Bartimaeus shouted again toward the direction where all the commotion was coming from.

After three years of ministry, the Nazarene's popularity still attracted throngs. As a result the loud cries of many others almost overshadowed Blind Bart's voice.

Him from a distance.

Impressed with his faith, Jesus commanded Bartimaeus to come. Through word-of-mouth Jesus' summons quickly got to those near Blind Bart.

"Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you," they called to the blind man.

The hopeful Bartimaeus, stiff from sitting on the ground for such a long

'What do you want me to do for you... Go, your faith has healed you' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me," he yelled over and over again a little bit louder.

Bartimaeus was getting everyone's attention now. But upon hearing his repetitive plea, many rebuked Blind Bart for harassing and heckling Jesus.

Those preparing the Nazarene's way in front also told him to be quiet. Yet he still called "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" yet all the more.

Jesus told His vanguard to stop. His eyes spotted a sun-faded turban atop a man's head. There amidst the multitude Jesus saw Blind Bart, boldly shouting at

time, still threw his cloak aside excitedly, leaned on his staff and arose to his feet to meet Jesus the Healer.

It was easy for Bartimaeus to feel his way toward Jesus' direction because he felt God's power so strongly.

While Bartimaeus approached Him some people, whispering encouragement to the blind man along the way, commended his persistence in getting the Nazarene's attention.

Ironically, the same individuals who rebuked Blind Bart just moments earlier tried to ride on his coattails by requesting that he ask the Nazarene to heal them.

Each step Bartimaeus took made him hobble less and less. He moved more fluidly because the warm power emanating from Jesus penetrated his frail body and loosened his stiff joints.

"What do you want me to do for you," Jesus asked the son of Timaeus, now kneeling before Him.

"Rabbi, I want to see," Bartimaeus implored without hesitation.

Moved with compassion, Jesus touched his eyes and casually told Bartimaeus to "Go, your faith has healed you."

Bartimaeus initially squinted his eyes. He was momentarily mesmerized by the bright aura which surrounded Jesus' head and exuded from His radiant countenance. But after Bartimaeus closed and then opened his eyes, he could see.

Bartimaeus praised God for his newly restored sight and all the people who witnessed the miracle praised God with him.

Jesus and His entourage proceeded and Bartimaeus — who would be called Blind Bart no longer — got up and followed them on the highway.

Jericho's chief tax man becomes Nazarene's convert; Vows to repay those he's cheated

Salvation has come to Zacchaeus' house, Jesus says

A feared, despised and wealthy Jericho tax official, so convicted of his sins that he sought to atone for them, vowed donating half of his possessions to the poor and repay those he's cheated.

Jericho's chief tax collector made this oath to Jesus Christ while the Nazarene dined at the wealthy man's home, according to those who witnessed and heard the stunning announcement.

Jesus didn't even know the tax official's name when He met the unpopular man that day.

So how did the Nazarene end up eating dinner at the wealthy man's home? This is what happened, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

When Jesus was passing through Jericho a short-statured man named Zacchaeus, the city's chief tax collector, couldn't see the Nazarene because of the crowd and everyone was taller than him.

But the curious, innovative tax collector decided to climb a sycamore fig tree to see Jesus walking by.

Zacchaeus might have been short, but he was still strong. So scaling up the tree was relatively easy.

The hated tax official perched himself on the branch just in time before the entourage came.

"Zacchaeus," Jesus looked up and called at the unidentified man watching Him from the branches of a sycamore tree.

"Come down immediately. I must stay at your house today," Jesus said.

A surprised yet pleased Zacchaeus, wondering how the Nazarene knew his name in the first place, immediately scampered down the sycamore fig tree so he could personally welcome Jesus to his house.

Jesus abiding at the chief tax collector's palatial Jericho home triggered resentment among the Jews.

Civil servants like Zacchaeus, considered Jewish sellouts for collecting revenue for the despised Romans, were loathed by the people.

"He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner,'" some of the people grumbled with disdain after witnessing Jesus' spontaneous invitation to Zacchaeus.

'Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor. And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount' — Zacchaeus, Jericho's Chief Tax Collector

The Jews complained the same way when about three years earlier Jesus invited another tax collector to dine with Him.

"Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners," they asked Jesus' disciples then, wanting to avoid direct confrontation with the Nazarene.

"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick," He replied. "But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come

to call the righteous, but sinners."

As a result of socializing with Matthew that day, not only did the son of Alphaeus convert to Jesus' teachings but the tax collector also resigned his post and became one of the Nazarene's 12 disciples.

Apparently, Zacchaeus made a similar

conversion because hours after Jesus initially met the wealthy, small-statured man, the chief tax collector made this courageous public announcement:

"Behold, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor," Zacchaeus stood up and said unexpectedly during the dinner party.

"And if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount," he promised.

(According to Mosaic Law, this four-

times-repayment formula was required for one to atone stealing sheep, a definite symbolic reference to the people Zacchaeus has fleeced.)

Those attending the dinner were amazed at Zacchaeus' announcement and shocked that the tax collector confessed what many suspected — that he was corrupt.

Being around Jesus must have really convicted Zacchaeus, many speculated after witnessing the public official's honest admission.

When the ones who resented Jesus staying with Zacchaeus heard about the chief tax collector's public apology and promise to make atonement, they were ashamed of their attitude, the Nazarene's supporters informed *The Testament Spectator*.

"Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham," Jesus said to the penitent Zacchaeus. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Jesus and Lazarus reunited once again

Resurrected Bethany man and family hosts Jesus

The dead Bethany man and the Nazarene who resurrected him were reunited once again.

Six days before the Passover Feast Lazarus, his two sisters Martha and Mary, threw a dinner party in Jesus Christ's honor, a large crowd of Jews apprised *The Testament Spectator*.

These curious Jews came to Bethany, a village located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, to see whether Lazarus, who the Nazarene resurrected from the dead just weeks before, was still alive and healthy.

Their two mile trek from Jerusalem to Bethany must have been worth it

because they were able to see Lazarus eating — along with the other invited dinner guests — the scrumptious feast which Martha served.

Jesus' dead-raising stunt wasn't a fluke after all, one Jewish man remarked after catching a glimpse of Lazarus' head while the Bethany man was eating there at the U-shaped, almost-floor-level dining room table.

Reclining comfortably on his left side atop the soft pillow — the customary posture for supping — Lazarus seemed to be enjoying the feast and the festivities, the unidentified Jewish man said.

Jesus' threat to Jewish religious authorities was now enhanced by Lazarus, a once-dead-now-alive Bethany man who symbolized and truly

personified the Nazarene's awesome, supernatural and death-defying power.

So not only did the Chief Priests continually conspire to arrest and kill Jesus, they also made new plans to kill Lazarus as well, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

For because of this healthy Lazarus, a once disease-ridden and emaciated-looking man, many of the Jews were ill-advisedly defecting to Jesus' side and putting their trust in Him, the Chief Priests and other Jewish religious officials begrudgingly admitted.

Who is more threatening, the Man who resurrected a four-day-old corpse or the actual dead man himself, the conspirators reasoned, attempting to justify the plot to do away with both men.

Judas Iscariot criticizes Mary's use of perfume

Suggests perfume be sold and money given to poor

The once-dead-now-alive Bethany man's sister wasted money when she anointed Jesus the Rabbi with expensive fragrance at a dinner party, according to the opinion of one of the Nazarene's 12 disciples.

As the appointed treasurer in Jesus' ministry Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, bristled at seeing Mary of Bethany pour an excessive amount of costly perfume on the Nazarene's feet during the get-together, the disciples and guests attested.

Following Jesus' return from Jericho — including healing blind Bartimaeus and converting the tax collector Zacchaeus — Mary, Martha and brother Lazarus threw a large dinner party in the Nazarene's honor.

Renown in Bethany for her exquisite food, Martha served a grand feast to guests reclined at their U-shaped, almost-floor-level dining room table.

When the guests finished eating, Mary came in the room, knelt on her knees, took about a pint of pure nard and poured the expensive, quite aromatic perfume, all over Jesus' feet.

This demonstrative expression of love for Jesus reminded many of a similar incident two years earlier.

While the Nazarene was visiting the village Nain — 21 miles southwest from Capernaum — He was invited to eat dinner at the house of Simon the Pharisee.

Simon also invited many rich and

'... It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

influential men that evening. But an unidentified woman, seeking forgiveness from Jesus the Redeemer, crashed the dinner party, the Pharisee's servants now recall.

The Nain woman unexpectedly entered the palatial home, went straight to Simon's dining room, found Jesus and stood reverently behind Him, weeping contritely.

The Nain woman cried softly on Jesus' feet and soaked them with her tears. She wiped His feet with her long hair. Humbly kissing them, she then poured ointment all over His feet from a soft white marble colored jar which she brought with her.

Simon questioned Jesus' authenticity

as a prophet. The Pharisee said to himself that if the Nazarene was truly a Holy Man, He would have known that she was a sinner, and prevented her from touching Him.

The perceptive Jesus defended the Nain woman's public penitent act. Stating that her many sins have been forgiven, for she loved [Him] much,

Jesus went on to say "but he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Unlike the Nain woman two years ago, Mary of Bethany's reputation wasn't as scandalous.

Yet it was evident by those witnessing Mary's expression of affection for Jesus that she, already enamored by the Nazarene's teachings and grateful for resurrecting her beloved brother Lazarus, still loved Him just as much as the Nain woman.

Nevertheless after seeing Mary pour the expensive perfume on Jesus' feet and smelling the fragrance permeate the house, an incensed Judas didn't care how much Mary loved his Master.

Why couldn't she have shown her

appreciation for Jesus by selling the perfume and giving them the much needed money, an unidentified dinner guest heard Judas mutter beneath his breath. He strenuously objected to her wasting the perfume on the Nazarene's dusty feet.

Aware that such a suggestion would be unpopular, Judas artfully altered his recommendation.

"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor," he asked pretentiously, trying to rebound from his annoyance of Mary, yet fearing that his voice failed to mask his true feelings.

"It was worth a year's wages," Judas said, especially in his hometown of Kerioth, a poor village located in the territory where the old tribe of Judah once inhabited.

But Judas did not suggest this because he cared about the poor. The other disciples revealed that as treasurer, Judas was known to be a thief, accustomed to helping himself to what was put into the money bag.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me," Jesus said, foretelling His death once again.

Cheerful crowd hails colt-riding Jesus

Mount of Olives road site of Palm Sunday procession

A very large crowd, rejoicing and praising God with a loud voice for all of the miracles and works they had seen, hailed Jesus Christ "the King of Israel."

"Hosanna! Hosanna," the Jerusalem crowd cried, invoking the Man who was riding on a colt to help and save them.

"Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord," they said during the Palm Sunday procession, which began one mile from Bethany and headed toward Jerusalem at Bethphage village.

In an act of royal homage many members of the masses spontaneously removed their cloaks and placed their colorful garments along the pathway.

Some cut branches from nearby trees and spread them in front of Jesus' colt as the foal made its trek down the hilly and winding Mount of Olives road.

Others who went ahead of Jesus and those following behind Him waved palm branches in the air, repeatedly shouting "Hosanna to the Son of David."

Despite the crowd's merriment there were some critics. This parade was blasphemous because Jesus equated Himself to God, orthodox Jewish religious officials alleged.

They considered the procession an irreverent mimic of a Feast of Tabernacles ritual at which worshippers cried "Hosanna" as they marched around the temple altar waving palms and other branches.

Religious officials also objected that the colt-riding Jesus and His followers were stirring up the inhabitants and pilgrims who had come to Jerusalem to participate in the Passover Feast celebration.

"Who is this," uninformed spectators asked, unfamiliar that Jesus was the talk of the town during the Feast of Tabernacles seven-day celebration just

six weeks before.

An unidentified member of the crowd, pausing just long enough from repeatedly chanting "Blessed is the coming Kingdom of our Father David," identified the man on the colt as none other than Jesus, the Prophet from Nazareth in Galilee.

The supporters of Jesus who were with Him when the Nazarene raised Lazarus of Bethany from the dead a few weeks back continued to spread the word about Him.

"Hosanna to the Son of David," they shouted in praise and adoration. "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

Meanwhile in the crowd some

Pharisees, piously watching along the road side, were agitated that the disciples encouraged the people to worship Jesus.

"Teacher, rebuke your disciples," they insisted, chiding the Nazarene for not controlling His aides.

"I tell you if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out," Jesus replied.

But the lifeless stones didn't have to cry out to Jesus in affection that day because the uproarious crowd were imparted abundant praises on Him.

Many believed in the sick-healing, demon-casting, dead-raising, storm-queuing, water-walking, multitude-feeding miracle-worker and had great expectations of Him.

If Jesus could do all of those miracles,

liberating them from Rome's yoke, overthrowing her puppet rulers and restoring Israel to the glory days of King David and the early days of King Solomon must be a piece of cake.

That's why people spread their coats on the ground and laid branches cut from the trees on the road. They were heralding a conquering hero! To those who had big plans for Jesus, this Palm Sunday procession was nothing more than the beginning of a revolution — hopefully to be followed by a coronation.

"See this is getting us nowhere," the Pharisees said about the Palm Sunday parade, alluding to their failed attempts to kill Jesus. "Look how the whole world has gone after Him."

Does parade fulfill ancient Zechariah prophecy?

Predicts a King will ride gently on donkey

The spectacle of seeing a man sit on a colt riding in Jerusalem was foretold by Prophet Zechariah over 500 years ago, according to those conversant with the Priest's writings.

In his prediction of the coming Messiah, Prophet Zechariah encouraged the daughters of Zion (Jerusalem) to rejoice and not be afraid of the future.

"See, your King comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey," the Prophet Zechariah is quoted in the scroll as telling the people of Judah.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth knew about the antiquated writings of Prophet Zechariah, deliberately selected a colt and manipulated the Palm Sunday parade to make it appear that He was fulfilling the son of Berekliah's ancient prophecy, Jewish religious scholars cynically claim.

Temple informants told their

superiors that Jesus sent two disciples to Bethphage — a village one mile from Bethany toward Jerusalem — to find a donkey and a colt next to it. They were to untie them and bring the foal which no one has ever ridden to Him.

"If anyone asks you, 'Why are you doing this?' Tell him, 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly,'" Jesus was reported to have said.

Just as the Nazarene predicted, the two disciples found the animals tied in the doorway outside in the street. While the disciples united it, some people standing there asked, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"

They answered "the Lord needs it" as Jesus had instructed, and the people let them go. They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and sat Jesus on the foal.

Crowds on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast came to the Mount Olives Road from the surrounding area.

Colorful coats were laid in front of Jesus' colt as the foal clumsily ambled down the perilous road, temple

informants reported. People cut branches and palms. Waving them in the air, they yelled "Hosanna! Hosanna! Hosanna," an irreverent mimic of a Feast of Tabernacles ritual at which worshippers chanted the same phrase as they marched around the temple altar waving palms and other branches.

Aware of His immense popularity and that many wanted to crown Him King, Jesus did not ride in warrior-like fashion on a horse, but rode into Jerusalem peacefully on a colt.

It would appear that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the man prophesied by the Prophet Zechariah, many people along the parade route say, an opinion disputed by Jewish religious scholars. Jesus Christ of Nazareth is but a fraud, they proclaimed.

Yet when asked by *The Testament Spectator* to explain how Jesus healed the sick, expelled demons, raised the dead, stopped storms, walked on water and fed multitudes, religious officials, Jesus' detractors and temple informants alike could not answer.

Jesus mourns for Jerusalem

Predicts they would be attacked and viciously slaughtered

While Jesus Christ of Nazareth approached Jerusalem and saw its inhabitants entering and exiting the bustling city gate, He was suddenly filled with anguish.

Dismounting the colt that He had been riding during the Palm Sunday parade, the Nazarene bowed on the ground with both knees and wept.

The people had never witnessed such a display of grief in public from a man before. His disciples, followers and detractors alike found it very curious. Watching the proud yet humble Jesus cry on His knees appeared to many as if He were mourning the death of a relative or friend.

Some people gathered around Him and gawked in wonder. The women who were moved with compassion at the gut-wrenching scene became teary-eyed. While some of the muted men just scratched their heads and stroked their beards in bewilderment.

One would think that after the Palm Sunday procession — beginning at Bethphage village and proceeding along the serpentine Mount of Olives road — the Nazarene would be in a triumphant and jubilant mood.

Instead something intensely pained

Him, but no one knew what.

Consequently, discussions and debates began between His supporters and critics about why Jesus wept.

Supporters surmised that maybe Jesus the Prophet sensed that Jerusalem was heading for some sort of a catastrophe or natural disaster.

But critics in the crowd claimed that Jesus was too self-absorbed to be concerned about them or their city. He must have been fearful for His personal

*‘...They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you’
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth*

safety, they theorized, suspecting that the true reason why the Nazarene cried was because He believed Jewish religious officials might actually succeed in killing him.

But throughout the time they’ve known their Rabbi, Jesus never showed any selfishness nor did He ever express such fear, the Nazarene’s pundits say.

Unaware of the questions and controversy swirling around Him, Jesus continued to mourn, groan and wail without any inhibition.

Eventually the Nazarene arose from the dusty ground. Glancing at the people surrounding Him, Jesus finally revealed

to them why He wept.

Jesus said to the curious onlookers that if they only knew what would bring them peace today, they would truly accept Him. But unfortunately, His identity and mission was hidden from their eyes.

Then Jesus gave them a chilling warning, predicting that one day they would be attacked by a powerful army and viciously slaughtered.

“Your enemies will build an embankment against you, encircle and hem you in on every side,” Jesus foretold to them so convincingly.

“They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you,” the Nazarene said.

Jesus further prophesied that this was the judgment and suffering which was coming for Jerusalem and its people, and that’s why His heart ached for them.

Mystified at what Jesus was telling them, the people just listened to Him with puzzlement.

Jesus went to Jerusalem Temple and entered the court area.

The Nazarene walked around for a few minutes and looked at the merchants conducting business. But since it was late, He went back with His 12 disciples to lodge at an unknown Bethany location.

Miracle formula revealed

Jesus says prayer must be based on belief

Prayer plus faith minus doubt is the simple, three-component formula for performing miracles, Jesus Christ of Nazareth shared with His disciples.

A fig tree along the Mount of Olives road was “the guinea pig” employed by the Nazarene to make that point, *The Testament Spectator* learned from His disciples.

Following the Palm Sunday procession, Jesus and His entourage spent the night at an unknown Bethany location. While returning to Jerusalem the next morning, Jesus remarked that He was hungry.

The Nazarene saw a fig tree off in the distance. He walked toward it to ascertain whether He could pluck and eat any of the pear-shaped fruit hanging from its leaves. Upon reaching it, Jesus found nothing on it except leaves, because it was not the season for figs.

“May you never bear fruit again and may no one ever eat fruit from you again,” He said to the tree.

Inexplicably, the tree suddenly shivered, rustled and shriveled. The fig trees’ life departed, causing its leaves to wilt and branches droop.

The disciples were amazed at seeing the tree instantly wither.

“What happened,” one disciple questioned.

“How did you do that,” another asked, amazed at what He saw.

“How did the fig tree wither so quickly. How did you do that, Rabbi,” they all asked Him.

“I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and it will be done. If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer,” Jesus explained.

Jesus ejects Temple merchants

Overturns money changers’ tables and dove sellers’ benches

The Palm Sunday colt-riding Man ransacked Jerusalem Temple on Monday.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, hailed the day before by the masses but assailed by Jewish religious officials, boldly entered the Temple area and drove out all who were conducting business there, according to irate merchants.

“It is written,” Jesus was reported to have said, quoting from the ancient scrolls. “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of robbers.”

The sight of an angry Jesus overturning money changers’ tables and knocking over the benches of those selling doves was reminiscent of a similar event.

About three years before, Jesus wielded an impromptu-created-cord-woven whip, driving cattle, sheep and doves from the Temple area. He also scattered the coins of the cashiers and overturned their tables, Temple merchants recall.

The Temple traders and customers alike who heard the crack and felt the sting of the Nazarene’s whip were angered at Jesus’ actions and accused Him of being mean-spirited.

Meanwhile the Jews, challenging Jesus’ ridiculous claim that He could raise the Herodian Temple in three days after it took more than 46 years to construct, asked who gave Him the right to eject the businessmen.

If the miracle-worker wasn’t taken seriously then, He certainly is now. Jesus is more threatening, powerful and popular with the people than ever,

religious officials reluctantly acknowledged.

When the Chief Priests and Mosaic Law Teachers saw Jesus disturb the peace this time, they again looked for a way to kill Him. But they feared the Nazarene because the whole crowd was amazed at His teaching.

And then to complicate matters, countless blind and lame people came (of all places) to the Temple for help. Jesus simply healed them all. The Chief Priests and Mosaic Law Teachers became incensed when they saw the Nazarene’s astounding miracles.

“Hosanna to the Son of David,” the children constantly shouted in the

Temple area, annoying religious officials yet all the more for disturbing the worship place.

“Do you hear what these children are saying,” they asked the Nazarene.

“Yes,” replied Jesus, “have you never read, ‘From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?’”

Befuddled at Jesus’ ability to instantly remember the scriptures, religious authorities considered it sacrilegious that He attempted to tailor the ancient Psalmic scroll to suit His ministry.

Jesus concluded His teachings, left religious officials in the Temple, exited Jerusalem and when evening came, again spent the night in Bethany.

Jewish religious officials challenge Jesus’ authority; He queries them about John

Nazarene deflects intimidation attempt

The Chief Priests, Mosaic Law Teachers and Elders, infuriated that the Nazarene ransacked the Jerusalem Temple and healed countless ailing people the day before, challenged His authority.

“By what authority are you doing these things,” religious officials asked Jesus after He entered Jerusalem Temple Courts, and started teaching the people and preaching the Gospel.

“And who gave you this authority,” they insisted, attempting to intimidate and catch Him off-guard as a delegation of Jewish Priests and Levites tried to do with John the Baptist three years earlier.

The Nazarene replied that He would ask them one question and if they answered correctly, He would then

divulge by what authority He is doing these things.

“John’s baptism — where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men,” Jesus asked, not intimidated by their priestly vestments nor pious air.

The Chief Priests and Elders, taken

*‘John’s baptism — where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or from men?’
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth*

aback by Jesus’ shrewd query, walked over to the side and huddled in a circle to discuss how they would respond.

Religious officials knew that they were put on the defensive. So in order to save face in front of the people, their answer must be a good one.

“If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him,’

one of the Chief Priests whispered to his colleagues during the caucus.

“But if we say, ‘From men’ — we are afraid of the people. They will certainly stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a Prophet,” an Elder mumbled, fearful that they had all been entrapped by Jesus.

No one could suggest anything better. The religious clerics suggested that the best course of action was to admit to Jesus that they didn’t know. Although this would be embarrassing, it was what they would have to tell Him.

They broke huddle and strolled over to a patiently-awaiting Jesus.

“We don’t know where it [John’s baptism] was from,” they answered Jesus.

“Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things,” Jesus quickly replied.

Three groups try to entrap Nazarene

But Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees still astonished at Jesus Christ's teaching

Irritated and confused by Jesus Christ's parable teachings, two religious groups and members of a political party tried to entrap the Nazarene before His Jerusalem Temple audience.

The three sects pretended to seek answers from the Nazarene when on three separate occasions, they questioned Him about tax policy, resurrection marriages and which is the greatest commandment.

But each attempt — involving the anti-Roman Pharisees, the status quo

Herodians and Mosaic Law-abiding Sadducees — resulted in failure, according to Temple onlookers who witnessed the discourse.

First up to bat were the Pharisees, a Jewish religious group who strictly adhered to Mosaic law and customs even though some of their beliefs deviated from scripture. The nationalistic Pharisees, along with the pro-Roman Herodians (followers of Herod the Great) asked Jesus whether they should pay taxes to Caesar.

"Teacher," they said, "we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they

are. Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not," they asked.

"Yeah," an unidentified Herodian voice chimed in sneakily from the back. "Give us a 'yes' or 'no' answer. Should

'You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth

we pay or shouldn't we?"

Aware of their hypocrisy and evil intent, Jesus knew that two groups, who disliked each other and must have temporarily put their differences aside in an attempt to discredit Him, tried to put Him in a vice.

Jesus knew that if He discouraged paying taxes, the Herodians would report Him for treason, a crime punishable by death. But if Jesus encouraged them to pay taxes, He would be denounced as a Jewish traitor.

"You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me," Jesus asked, looking at the Pharisees convened on His left and turning His head at the Herodians clustered to His right. "Bring and show me the coin used for paying the tax."

Wondering with anticipation how Jesus could get Himself out of this one, the Pharisees and Herodians immediately brought Him a denarius as He requested.

The Nazarene held up the coin for all to see and asked them a simple question. "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription," Jesus asked them, pointing to the shiny coin glistening in front of them.

"Caesar's! Caesar's! Caesar's," they all replied.

"Then give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's," Jesus said, lowering the denarius from the air and immediately returning the coin to the man who handed it to Him.

Unable to trap Jesus in what He said in public, the Pharisees and Herodians, amazed and astonished at the Nazarene's astute answer, became silent.

Later on that day the Sadducees, a rationalistic sect who deny the existence of supernatural beings and an afterlife, came to Jesus and asserted that there is no resurrection.

"Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, his brother must marry the widow and have children for him," a member of the delegation explained.

"Now there were seven brothers among us. The first one married and died, and since he had no children, he left his wife to his brother. The same thing happened to the second and third brothers, right on down to the seventh. Finally, the woman died. Now then, at the resurrection, whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?"

Accusing them of being in error because they do not know the Scriptures, Jesus said their question underestimates the power of God.

"When the dead rise at the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage. Instead they will be like the angels in heaven," Jesus explained, convincing many that He had truly been there.

"Now about the resurrection of the dead — have you not read what God said to you in the book of Moses, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?' He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!"

When the crowds heard they, just like the Pharisees and Herodians before them, were astonished at His teaching.

"Well said! Well said! Well said," a collection of Mosaic Law Teachers remarked, nodding their head up and down with approval at Jesus' response to the Sadducees' unlikely scenario of a woman consecutively marrying seven brothers after each of them died.

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees so convincingly, the Pharisees again conspired to entrap Jesus. But this time it was decided that a lawyer, not a regular cleric, would test Him with a legal question.

(Continued on Page 27, Column 1)

Messiah declaration silences Pharisees

Right after Jesus Christ thwarted critics from trying to entrap Him, the Nazarene, quoting from King David's Psalmic scrolls, declared that He is the Messiah!

While the Pharisees were gathered together listening to Jesus teach in the Temple Courts, the Nazarene asked them how is it that the Mosaic Law teachers say that the "Christ" is the "Son of David."

"What do you think about the

'Christ,'" He said. "Whose son is he?"

As members of a Jewish religious group supposed to be conversant in Mosaic Law and customs, they were reluctant to speak up for fear of further embarrassment. Instead, they glanced at one another with blank looks on their faces, waiting for a colleague to answer in His place. Finally, they responded.

"The Son of David," they all replied.

"How is it then that David, declaring in the Book of Psalms and speaking by

the Spirit, calls Him Lord? For He says, 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet,'" He said to them.

"If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can He [the Christ] be the King's son?"

Again the group of Pharisees shrugged their shoulders and looked at each other in bewilderment. No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask Him any more questions.

In Jesus Christ's own words

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: For they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, 'Rabbi, Rabbi,'

"But he not ye called 'Rabbi,' for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your 'father' upon the earth: For one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called 'masters,' for one is your Master, even Christ.

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

"But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: For ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: Therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.

"Woe unto you, ye blind guides,

which say, 'Whosoever shall swear by the Temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the Temple, he is a debtor!'

"Ye fools and blind men: For whether is greater, the gold, or the Temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.

"Ye fools and blind men: For whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the Temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by Him that sitteth thereon.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith: These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.

Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are

Editor's note: Jesus Christ of Nazareth, speaking to the multitudes and His disciples, scolded the Pharisees during a Jerusalem Temple Courts speech.

within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, 'If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.'

"Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.

"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

"Wherefore, behold I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: And some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the altar.

"Verily I say unto you. All these things shall come upon this generation.

"Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

"Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.'"

Entrapment attempted...

(Continued from Page 26, Column 4)

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law," the legal expert asked, expecting to catch Jesus off guard.

"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all of your strength.'" Jesus answered.

"This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Jesus' perceptivity, knowledge of scripture and mental sharpness prevented the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees from entrapping Him.

Widow's offering teaches valuable lesson

Donating money from poverty is more valuable than giving money from wealth, Jesus Christ taught after delivering His passionate Temple Courts speech.

No one challenged Jesus' statement, especially after they witnessed Him denounce the Pharisees, scolding the sect for their hypocrisy, corruption, lying, pretentiousness, self-righteousness and arrogance.

So rather than try to entrap Him like the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees previously attempted to do, the people disbursed, allowing Jesus to sit by Himself opposite the Temple Treasury room.

Visible from Jesus' line-of-vision were the 13 trumpet-shaped offering receptacles, positioned in the Temple Treasury room, commonly known as the Women's Court.

To enable Temple worshippers to allocate their gifts accordingly, nine of the offering receptacles were designated "Legal Dues" and four labeled "Free Will Offerings."

For a period of time, Jesus watched how people donated money. The rich donors put large contributions, but a poor widow humbly gave two mites, the smallest copper coin worth approximately one fifth of a cent.

Calling the disciples over to Him, Jesus directed them to look at the widow. Instinctively they all glanced toward the Temple Treasury room, realizing this was the farthest section in Jerusalem Temple where women were permitted.

There she was, the gaze on the disciples face seemed to affirm. The widow's height ever more dwarfed by the tall row of columns surrounding the 200-foot-squared-Temple Treasury room.

"I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the Temple Treasury than all the others," Jesus remarked to the disciples, giving Him their undivided attention after spotting the widow in line.

"All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything, which was all she had to live on," He said.

After making His point, Jesus arose and exited the Temple and the disciples followed Him.

Temple will be destroyed, Jesus says

'The time will come when every one [stone] will be thrown down'

Jerusalem Temple will be completely demolished, Jesus Christ of Nazareth predicted without disclosing how or when the destruction would occur.

The 15-story high Jewish worship place, which King Herod began remodelling over 50 years earlier, will be razed, Jesus foretold so convincingly to His disciples.

This warning was triggered by His followers admiring the Temple and remarking how beautiful it was adorned with the stones and gifts dedicated to the

Lord God Almighty.

"Look, Teacher! What massive stones," one disciple was overheard to have said, calling Jesus' attention to the buildings while they were all exiting the Temple after a full day ministering.

"Boy, what magnificent buildings," remarked others, directing Jesus' attention to the impressive architectural landscape, a result of Herod's building program.

Unimpressed with the man-made structures surrounding them, Jesus pointed to the great buildings and predicted that in the not-too-distant future, one stone will not be left on another.

"I tell you the truth. As for what you see here, the time will come when every one will be thrown down," the Nazarene said.

Jesus' omen about the destruction of Jerusalem's most holy site wasn't preceded by a public display of grief which onlookers so witnessed after the Palm Sunday parade.

Jesus wept then because He foresaw the destruction of Jerusalem and the slaughter of its inhabitants.

As a result of the people's failure to recognize and acknowledge God's visitation to them in the person of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, it appears that tough times are ahead for all.

In Jesus Christ's own words

"Watch out that no one deceives you.

"For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' or say 'I am he' or predict 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. They will deceive many.

"You will hear of revolutions, wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

"There will be famines, earthquakes, pestilences in various places, as well as fearful events and great signs from Heaven. All these are the beginning of birth pains.

"Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me.

"The Gospel must first be preached to all nations. You must be on your guard. But before all this, they will arrest you and persecute you. They will deliver you to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues and prisons. On account of Me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses. This will result in your being witnesses to them.

"But make up your mind not to worry beforehand about what to say nor how you will defend yourselves. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. For I will give you words and wisdom that none of our adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

"At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

"Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

"Children will rebel against their parents. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. You will be betrayed even by parents, siblings, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.

"All men will hate you because of Me. He who stands firm to the end will be saved. But not a hair of your head will perish. By standing firm you will gain life.

"So when you see standing in the

holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the Prophet Daniel — let the reader understand — then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.

"Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak.

"How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!

"Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again.

"If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

"At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Christ's and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect — if that were possible. See, I have told you ahead of time.

"So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or claim, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

"Immediately after the distress of those days 'the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

"At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

"And He will send His Angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

"Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door.

Editor's note: Jesus Christ of Nazareth reveals to His disciples while they were sitting on the Mount of Olives what will be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age.

"I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. No one knows about that day or hour, not even the Angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away.

"That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.

"But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you did not expect Him.

"Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns.

"I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

"But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, 'My master is staying away a long time,' and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of — whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn.

"If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' Because if he does find him not ready, he will cut him to pieces and assign a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

"So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time. Be on guard! Be alert!"

Bethany woman pours expensive perfume on Jesus; Indignant disciples condemn the act

Second time in four days a woman anoints Nazarene

The unidentified Bethany woman pouring expensive spikenard ointment all over Jesus Christ's head shouldn't be condemned but commended, the Nazarene said to His murmuring disciples.

Even though the perfume could have been sold and money used to help the poor, this woman was doing a good and beautiful thing to Jesus when she anointed Him.

"The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me," the Nazarene said, foretelling His demise.

This was the second time in four days a woman anointed Jesus.

The first anointing, occurring at the Bethany house of the resurrected Lazarus and his two sisters Martha and Mary, happened six days before the Passover Feast.

During the Bethany dinner party —

thrown for Jesus and His disciples — Mary entered the dining room carrying a pint of pure nard. She knelt on her knees and poured the expensive perfume all over Jesus' feet. Instantly the house became filled with the perfume's aroma. Mary then wiped Jesus' feet with her long untied hair.

Already enamored by Jesus'

'... I tell you the truth. Wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

teachings, Mary was grateful that the Nazarene resurrected her beloved brother Lazarus from the dead several weeks before. The humbling and reverent act of anointing Jesus' feet and wiping them with her long hair is the least she could do, even though she knew that custom prohibited respectable women from untying hair in public.

However Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus' disciples who served as treasurer, bristled at seeing Mary pour costly

perfume all over his Master's feet! The son of Simon asserted that the ointment could have been sold and proceeds given to the poor.

Responding to Judas' objection, Jesus told the son of Simon from Kerioth to leave Mary alone.

Now this latest anointing incident, occurring at the dinner party of Simon

almost-floor-level dining room table.

Upon seeing this, Jesus' disciples became indignant, criticizing the woman to one another and rebuking her harshly for applying the perfume all over the Nazarene's head.

"Why this waste of perfume," they asked, echoing Judas' objection when he criticized Mary's use of perfume four days earlier.

"This perfume could have been sold for more than 300 pence [\$51] and the money given to the poor," they said.

Hearing the critical comments that the perfume could have been sold at a high price or for more than a year's wages, Jesus told His followers to leave her alone.

"When she poured this perfume on My Body, she did it to prepare Me for burial," Jesus revealed to the disciples who were present.

"I tell you the truth. Wherever this Gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Jesus' treasurer betrays Nazarene for 30 silver coins

Judas conspires with Jewish religious officials

Jesus Christ of Nazareth was betrayed by one of His own, the Chief Priests and Jerusalem Temple Guard Officers informed *The Testament Spectator*.

The evening before the Nazarene was arrested at the Garden of Gethsemane, Judas Iscariot son of Simon cooperated with Jewish religious officials in plotting Jesus' arrest, these Temple sources say.

Shortly after the astounding resurrection of Lazarus, the 71-member Sanhedrin called an emergency meeting and debated what to do with Jesus.

The Nazarene was causing so much civil unrest among the people that something had to be done, the elite Jewish ruling council concluded. But what should they do about it?

Based upon the sage advice of High Priest Caiaphas that one man should be sacrificed "than the whole nation perish," the Sanhedrin finally decided that the Nazarene should be killed.

Weeks passed, yet no action was taken. Jesus' popularity made it difficult for religious officials to execute a sound plan.

Two days before the Passover, the Chief Priests and Elders of the people assembled again — this time at Caiaphas' palace. They planned and plotted to arrest and kill Jesus in some sly way.

But Jewish religious officials refrained from carrying out any covert action against Jesus during the Feast, "or there may be a riot among the people," an anonymous Temple source informed *The Testament Spectator*.

But a break came in the person of

Judas. Jewish religious officials were relieved, pleased and delighted when they learned that one of Jesus' own disciples stepped forward to assist them in apprehending Jesus.

"What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you," Judas Iscariot was reported to have asked during a covert meeting involving the Chief Priests and Temple Guards.

Perhaps the opportunistic Judas was certain that delivering a high-profile perpetrator would bring him a handsome fee.

As a businessman who served as Jesus' treasurer, Judas prided himself on always getting the upper hand in negotiations.

That wasn't the case this time. Temple coffers were more cunning than the son of Simon anticipated because the amount finally agreed upon was nothing more than 30 pieces of silver — the price of a common slave!

They counted out for Judas one silver coin at a time. At a 64 cents per coin exchange rate, Jesus was betrayed by one of His own for a grand total of \$19.20!

From then on, Temple sources revealed, Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to religious officials when no crowd was present.

That's why the Garden of Gethsemane was the site selected where Jesus would be apprehended, Temple officials confirmed.

What motivated Judas to betray His Master in the first place is unknown. Those believing in Jesus' Messiahship surmised that Satan entered him.

Others familiar with Judas noted that he was a known thief, accustomed to helping himself to what was put into the money bag, and was therefore purely motivated by greed.

the Leper's home, generated the ire of all the disciples, a surprising development since His other apostles probably heard the Nazarene support Mary's action.

The unidentified Bethany woman came to Jesus with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, guests at Simon the Leper's home attested.

She unscrewed the jar and poured the pleasantly fragrant perfume on Jesus' head while He reclined at the U-shaped,

Washing another's feet is love in action

Even though Jesus Christ knew that one would betray Him, another thrice deny Him and the others totally disown Him, the Nazarene still showed His love for them.

Hours before Jesus' arrest, intense interrogation, cruel torture and gruesome execution, the Lord washed His disciples' feet, those closely tracking the Rabbi's movements informed *The Testament Spectator*.

This act of divine love and supreme humbleness, occurring during the serving of the evening Passover meal, was symbolic of what Christianity is all about — love, denial of self translated by service to others, Jesus told His followers.

'Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

But this selfless act of love would be misunderstood and go unappreciated, the disciples later acknowledged.

At that very moment, Jesus knew that Judas Iscariot had already betrayed Him for 30 silver coins and was watching for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to the Chief Priests and Temple Guards when no crowd was present.

Jesus also knew that because of Judas' success, His disciples would desert Him, Simon Peter renounce Him three times and the others hide during the Nazarene's incarceration, suffering and death.

"Do you understand what I have done for you," Jesus asked that evening after He washed their feet, donned His outer clothing and returned to His place at the U-shaped, almost-floor-level dining room table.

Jesus agreed with them. Out of respect, it was right for them to call Him "Teacher" and "Lord" because that is what He is. But more than that, the spiritual and moral authority of a Christian leader is truly legitimate if they have a servants heart, He noted.

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet," the Nazarene said.

"I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him," Jesus said. "Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."

Jesus taught His disciples this lesson on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread when they all partook of the Passover meal together.

While the evening meal was being served, the Nazarene suddenly arose, took off His outer clothing and wrapped a towel around His waist.

He then poured water into a basin and one-by-one-by-one, washed His disciples' feet tenderly, drying them gently with the towel wrapped around Him.

But Simon Peter became uncomfortable at the sight of Jesus humbling Himself in such a servile way.

"Lord, are you going to wash my feet," Peter asked.

"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand," Jesus replied perceptively.

"No," Peter insisted. "You shall never wash my feet!"

"Unless I wash you, you have no part with Me," Jesus retorted.

"Then, Lord, not just my feet but my hands and my head as well," Peter replied, suggesting to Jesus that he was totally unclean.

Jesus said a person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet. Therefore, his entire body is clean.

"And you are clean, though not every one of you," Jesus revealed, aware of one of you," Jesus revealed, aware of one of you." (Continued on Page 29, Column 1)

Footwashing, love in action...

(Continued from Page 28, Column 4)

who was going to betray Him and that not every one of His disciples were clean.

"I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares My bread has lifted up his heel against me,'"

Jesus said.

Also Jesus said that He was forewarning them so that when it (His betrayal) does happen they will believe that "I am He.

"I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts Me; and whoever accepts Me accepts the one who sent Me," He stated.

Because of Jesus' spiritual perceptivity, He knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that He had come from God and would soon

return to God, the disciple John reported.

Jesus also knew the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Him, the Nazarene would soon reveal.

"I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray Me," Jesus said to the shocked disciples, who denied involvement with any entrapment conspiracy.

Jesus identified the conspirator as none other than Judas, the one who was their treasurer.

After dismissing Judas into the night, the Nazarene further predicted that Peter will deny Him, not lay down his life for Him as the fisherman sincerely boasted.

"I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown Me three times," Jesus said to Peter.

In spite of their shortcomings Jesus loved His followers, even though the Nazarene knew that they would not be around when Jewish religious officials arrested Him at the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus Christ exposes Judas Iscariot traitor before Garden of Gethsemane arrest

'Surely not I, Lord!'

Hours before Jesus Christ's arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, the Nazarene identified Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon from Kerioth, as the one who would betray Him, inside sources confirmed.

Judas' betrayal scheme was exposed by Jesus when they all met on day one of the Unleavened Bread Feast to partake of the Passover meal together.

Gathered to eat for the last time at a large upper room which the Nazarene foretold would be furnished for them were Jesus' 12 disciples.

Simon Peter, James and his brother, John; Andrew, Philip and Bartholomew were there, reclined at the U-shaped, almost-floor-level dining room table. Matthew and brother James; Thomas, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite; as well as Judas were also present.

Right after Jesus washed their feet, they resumed eating, leaning on their left side which is the customary posture for supping.

Out of the clear blue sky, Jesus made a startling disclosure.

"I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me — one who is eating with Me," He said.

Where did that come from? No one knows what prompted such a prophetic accusation. But the Nazarene did seem to be troubled in Spirit, some of His disciples now recall.

The disciples stared at one another in silent disbelief. Saddened to hear Jesus testify that "one of the 12" would double-cross Him, they were clearly at a loss to know which one did Jesus mean.

"Not I, Lord," one disciple whispered. "Certainly not me," responded another a little bit louder.

"No way, I'm not the one," someone else said more convincingly.

Befuddled and stupefied, they all just couldn't believe it. One of their very own betrayed the Man they all knew, greatly respected and intensely loved.

Suddenly, there was a choral cascade of collective denials.

"Surely not I, Lord! Surely not I, Lord! Surely not I, Lord," they all began to say one right after the other.

Because John, the one reclining next to the Nazarene, was the disciple whom Jesus loved, Simon Peter motioned him to ask Jesus to reveal the true traitor. He complied.

"Lord, who is it," John questioned.

"The one who will betray Me is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish," Jesus revealed without hesitation.

Silence enveloped the large upper room. Everyone watched Jesus dip the piece of bread and give it to Judas.

At the very moment in which Judas

sheepishly took the bread, Satan entered into him, one anonymous disciple recalled, noticing the son of Simon becoming instantly possessed.

"The Son of Man will go just as it is

'The Son of Man will go just as it is written about Him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

written about Him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Even after Jesus exposed Judas, the son of Simon from Kerioth still denied

that he was a sell out.

"Master, is it I," Judas asked Jesus pretentiously.

"Yes, it is you," the Nazarene responded, knowing that the devil had

already prompted Judas to betray Him.

"What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus instructed him.

But no one at the time truly understood why Jesus said this to him.

Perhaps they were all still in a state

of denial. Since Judas was the treasurer, some thought maybe Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast.

Perhaps Jesus wanted the son of Simon to go give something to the poor, as he had suggested when two different women on two separate occasions anointed Him.

Who knows — but Jesus certainly knew.

As soon as Judas took the bread, he scurried out into the silent night, departing from a Passover meal which would be their last supper before Jesus' death.

New sacrament instituted

Atonement from sin to be accomplished by Jesus' impending death

Forgiveness of sins will now be attained through the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's what Jesus shared with His disciples when He instructed how they are to forevermore proclaim the Nazarene's death before His second coming.

Jesus' impending arrest, intense interrogation, cruel torture and gruesome execution, will complete the symbolic sacrificial lamb offering, currently symbolized in the Passover ritual.

Instituted by the Lord God Almighty, the Passover ritual was intended to commemorate the Egyptians letting the Israelites go after 430 years of slavery.

The evening before their liberation, the Lord, wanting to protect His people from the tenth and final plague, ordered the Hebrews to sprinkle lambs' blood on the top and both sides of their door frames so the Death Angel would "pass over" their Goshen homes.

For it was only when the Death Angel saw the lambs' blood did He instead slay

Egypt's firstborn.

Every Egyptian family lost their firstborn son that eerie evening, from the most prominent and influential to the firstborn son of the slave girl. Even every Egyptian firstborn cattle was slain.

The following day Pharaoh, distraught over the death of his firstborn son, reluctantly released the Hebrews. From that point on, the Passover was celebrated regularly. But things have changed, Jesus told His followers the evening before His painful execution.

It seemed as if the Lord Jesus would not allow symbolic Passover images of lambs' blood, unleavened bread, bitter herbs nor roasted lamb rival the remission of sins through His broken body and shed blood, pundits attempting to understand Jesus' teachings speculate.

This newly-introduced remission of sins sacrament was to be permanently-instituted "in remembrance of Me," the Nazarene explained to His disciples during their last Passover supper together.

Unleavened bread (representing Jesus' body) and wine (symbolizing His blood) were the sanctified elements partaken by the disciples during this new

sacrament.

"Take and eat; this is My Body," Jesus said after taking the bread, giving thanks, breaking and offering it to His disciples.

Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them saying: "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and many — for the forgiveness of sins.

"I tell you," Jesus said to His disciples before singing a hymn and proceeding to the Mount of Olives. "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's kingdom."

Jesus further foretold that He would have to "suffer" in order to redeem man to God. He would be offering Himself as a sacrifice for them, those around the world, and the countless millions who would be born after them.

No longer will penitent Jews nor Gentiles alike be redeemed of their sins through Levitical Priests, animal sacrifices, or the various burnt, grain, fellowship, sin and guilt offerings.

A Trinity-sanctioned, simplified and personalized process of atonement will now replace these current elaborate (and the Passover) rituals.

Jesus Christ's final teachings...

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going."

"How can we know the way?"
— Thomas

"I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him."

"Lord, show us the Father"
— Philip

"Don't you know Me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father?' Don't you

believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in Me? The words I say to you are not just My own. Rather, it is the Father, living in Me, who is doing His work. Believe Me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than
(Continued on Page 30, Column 1)

...Includes Mount of Olives discourse...

(Continued from Page 29, Column 4) these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in My name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it.

Holy Spirit Promised

"If you love Me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever — the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see Me anymore, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in My Father, and you are in Me, and I am in you. Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love Him and show Myself to Him.

"Why do you intend to show yourself to us and not the world?"

— Judas

"If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching. These words you hear are not My own; they belong to the Father who sent Me.

"All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

"You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on Me, but the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has

Editor's note: After their last supper together, Jesus Christ of Nazareth shares with His disciples on the Mount of Olives.

commanded me.

The Vine and the Branches

"I am the true Vine, and My Father is the Gardener. He cuts off every branch in Me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the world I have spoken to you. Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me.

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in Me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples.

"As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you obey My commands, you will remain in My love, just as I have obeyed My Father's commands and remain in His love. I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me; but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. This is my command: Love each other.

The World Will Hate You

"If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the

world hates you. Remember the words I spoke to you: 'No servant is greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of My name, for they do not know the One who sent Me. If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now,

however, they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates me hates My Father as well. If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both Me and My Father. But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.'

"When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, He will testify about Me. And you also must testify, for you have been with Me from the beginning.

"All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. They will do such things because they have not known the Father or Me. I have told you this, so that when the time comes you will remember that I warned you. I did not tell you this at first because I was with you.

The Work of the Holy Spirit

"Now I am going to Him who sent Me, yet none of you asks me, 'Where are you going?' Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see Me no longer; and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned.

"I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will

guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own; He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come. He will bring glory to Me by taking from what is Mine and making it known to you. All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

"In a little while you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me.

Disciples Question Clarified

"Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see Me no more, and then after a little while you will see Me?' I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask Me anything. I tell you the truth, My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name. Until now you have not asked for anything in My name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

"Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about My Father. In that day you will ask in My Name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. No, the Father Himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

"This makes us believe that you came from God"

"You believe at last! But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave Me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for My Father is with me.

"I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

...Plus prayer for Him, disciples and believers

"Father, the time has come. Glorify Your Son, that your Son may glorify You. For you granted Him authority over all people that He might give eternal life to all those you have given Him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do. And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory I had with You before the world began.

"I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world. They were yours; You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your word. Now they know that everything you have given Me comes from You. For I have given them the words You gave Me and they

accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me. I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours. All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine. And glory has come to Me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name — the Name You gave Me — so that they may be one as We are one. While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that Name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the

world, so that they may have the full measure of My joy within them. I have given them Your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more that I am of the world. My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth: Your word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may

believe that You have sent Me. I have given them the glory that You gave Me, that they may be one as We are one. I in them and you in Me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

"Father, I want those you have given Me to be with Me where I am, and see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me before the creation of the world.

"Righteous Father, though the world does not know You, I know You, and they know that You have sent Me. I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known in order the love You have for Me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."

Nazarene hesitant to sacrifice Himself

Still determined to do Father's will

Even though the death of Jesus Christ was self-predicted many times before, the Nazarene was still hesitant to die, according to three disciples who heard Him so pray before His Garden of Gethsemane arrest.

Peter, James and John, the trio who were in earshot of Jesus at the Gethsemane prayer site, heard the Nazarene request God that He not drink of the suffering which was intended for Him.

"If it were possible, may this cup be taken from Me," the Nazarene implored of His Father thrice, only to quickly withdraw the plea each time because of His determination to do God's will.

Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane was a regular routine because the Nazarene had often met

there with His disciples.

Following their last supper together at a large upper room which the Nazarene foretold would be furnished for them, Jesus went out as usual to the Garden of Gethsemane. All of His disciples followed.

Upon reaching the garden prayer site, Jesus asked them to sit down and requested that they too pray to avoid falling into temptation.

Jesus went out further and took with Him Peter, plus James and John, the two sons of Zebedee. The rest stayed back.

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," He said to them. "Stay here and keep watch with Me."

Going about a stone's throw away from the three, Jesus fell with His face to the ground and prayed that if it be possible, let the hour pass from Him.

Praying more intensely, Jesus became deeply distressed, sorrowful and

troubled, Matthew, Mark and Luke so report.

"My Abba, Father," He said, addressing the Lord affectionately. "Everything is possible for You."

Jesus asked His Father that if He was willing, take this cup from Him. "Yet not My will, but Yours be done," Jesus quickly added.

Between Peter, James and John's slumbering stupor, they all remember seeing an Angel appear from Heaven strengthening Jesus, the three disciples later recounted to Luke.

After a while, Jesus returned to His disciples and found them not praying as He requested.

"Are you asleep," He asked Peter. "Could you men not keep watch with Me for one hour? Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation," the Nazarene warned. "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Once more Jesus went away yet a second time and prayed the same thing.

"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done," He was overheard to have said.

Jesus' prayer was so agonizing His sweat was like drops of blood, falling on the ground, the physician Luke reports.

When Jesus came back, He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy and they were exhausted from sorrow. They did not know what to say to Him. So He left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Then Jesus returned to find the disciples again sleeping and said: "Enough! Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes My betrayer!"

Jesus Christ orchestrates His own arrest

Submits to authorities only after displaying awesome power

A 600-man posse might not have been enough if Jesus Christ of Nazareth hadn't willingly submitted to arrest, assert some of the Roman soldiers assigned to Jerusalem's Regional Army Detachment.

Many claim that Jesus allowed Himself to be bound at the Garden of Gethsemane. Because it was only after He invisibly knocked everyone to the ground and reattached a man's ear did the Nazarene allow Himself to be taken into custody, they observed.

Even while the 600-armed-man posse carried lanterns and torches in the night and crossed over the Cedron Brook to ambush the Nazarene at the Garden of Gethsemane, many were concerned whether this would indeed be a routine arrest operation.

Jewish religious officials knew Jesus healed the sick, expelled demons, raised the dead, quelled storms, walked on water and fed multitudes.

Because of these supernatural miracles and other countless feats, capturing the Nazarene might prove difficult, they reluctantly acknowledged.

Even though Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon who served as Jesus' treasurer, assured religious officials that his Rabbi would not resist when taken into custody, it was difficult for them to totally trust and rely on the word of a traitor.

Because of Jesus' immense popularity, religious officials anticipated facing armed confrontation. They just didn't know what to expect. Would the Nazarene's disciples or some of His followers actually come to His defense?

Jesus wouldn't need anybody's help, they would soon learn.

Because what the men experienced that evening still feared many, they secretly admitted to *The Testament Spectator*.

The noise which 600 armed men generated didn't make Jesus' arrest a secret operation.

Mobilizing such a force that time of evening attracted a lot of attention because things were quiet following day one of the Unleavened Bread Feast.

Even though the posse might have wanted to sneak up and surprise Jesus and those who were with Him, the

Nazarene stole their thunder and unexpectedly came forth to meet them.

"Whom seek ye," Jesus asked, appearing out of nowhere.

"Jesus of Nazareth! Jesus of Nazareth," members of the mob sneered with disdain, shouting obscenities at the One who was responsible for causing them to be out this time of evening.

"I AM HE," Jesus declared unabashedly.

Suddenly the power of Jesus identifying Himself with such commanding authority triggered a most unusual reaction, many at the scene attested.

Just like a tossed pebble dropping into a still lake, an invisible force rippled through the cool night air and pushed the men instantly backward.

Dropping lanterns, torches and swords from their hands, all 600 men,

sudden supernatural power hit them.

Jesus asked the same question again: "Whom seek ye?"

Not knowing what to expect this time, they answered "Jesus of Nazareth" with more reverential respect.

"I AM HE," Jesus said calmly, causing them to flinch and duck in fear.

"If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way," Jesus insisted, suggesting the leaders that it was totally unnecessary for them to bring 600-plus men just to arrest Him.

Emboldened at seeing the Nazarene yield to the Roman and Jewish authorities, Judas stepped forward confidently. He went at once to Jesus and kissed Him on each cheek.

"Greetings, Rabbi!" Judas announced superficially for all to hear.

"Friend, do what you came for," Jesus said.

Reacting to the Judas-kissing-Jesus-

'Do you think I cannot call on My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions of Angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

composed of Roman soldiers, in addition to the Chief Priests, Jerusalem Temple captains, the elite Jewish ruling council (the Sanhedrin) and multitude of others, strangely collapsed on the ground.

The powerful energy emanating from Jesus totally upended a 600-man posse and unknown number of others, temporarily paralyzing them all and preventing anyone from attempting to touch or apprehend Him until He was ready.

After they were upended, one-by-one-by-one, each man eventually arose to his feet. Some straightened their crooked turbans and disheveled robes, while others rearranged their armor and retrieved dropped weapons.

Amazingly, no one was burned from their many lanterns and torches, which were now strewn all over the ground.

That same invisible powerful force which toppled them so seemed to quench exposed flame and flying ember from burning themselves or igniting bushes.

As Jesus awaited patiently for them to collect themselves, some men brushed dirt from their robes and the Roman soldiers dutifully assumed their attack stance. No one could explain what

cue, some men suddenly moved toward the Nazarene to arrest Him.

When Jesus' followers standing behind Him saw that the Nazarene was going to acquiesce to the force arrayed in front of Him, they decided to act — albeit indecisively.

"Lord, should we strike with our swords," some of the Nazarene's disciples asked, perhaps expecting Jesus to demonstrate His supernatural power yet again.

But before Jesus could answer, Peter acted. With drawn sword in hand, the son of Jonas clumsily swung his weapon at the head of a nearby man named Malchus, a servant of the High Priest.

Instinctively, Malchus dodged away from Peter but the sharp blade still nicked the right side of his head, slicing his right ear clean off.

As Malchus' ear fell on the ground, blood instantly spurted high like a fountain from his head. The High Priest's servant yelled out in pain and held the right side of his wounded head, which was now bleeding profusely.

"No more of this," Jesus commanded, instantly quelling any more violence which could have erupted.

"Put up thy sword into the sheath," He told Peter calmly. "Those who will live by the sword, will die by the sword."

Turning to the Roman soldiers, He asked them didn't they think He had the ability to call His Father for help?

"He will at once put at My disposal more than 12 legions [72,000] of Angels," Jesus said. "But the Scriptures must be fulfilled. The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

Some looked nervously at the night sky, expecting to see the manifestation of warring Angels as Jesus so alluded. Feeling intimidated, it occurred to them that Jesus was the one in charge of His own arrest, not them.

When the sword-wielding Peter and the other disciples sensed that nothing was going to happen, they became afraid and quickly ran away.

Meanwhile, agitated at seeing the bloody Malchus moan in pain, the Nazarene moved toward him with compassion.

Jesus the Healer asked the injured Malchus if he would permit Him to heal him. The High Priest's servant was so much in agony, his "yes" was immediate.

No one seemed to be surprised at Jesus' benevolent act. The Nazarene picked up Malchus' ear and reattached it to the side of his head, instantly healing it. The open wound quickly cauterized and immediately Malchus pain subsided. He shook his head in disbelief and wonder.

It was ironic that one of the men dispatched to apprehend Jesus was actually healed by Him.

But still, Jesus' compassion did not dissuade the posse from carrying out their arrest mission.

"Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come with swords and clubs," Jesus asked the Roman soldiers, Chief Priests, Jerusalem Temple Captains and the Sanhedrin.

"Every day I was with you in the Temple Courts, and you did not lay a hand on Me. But this is your hour — when darkness reigns," Jesus acknowledged.

Jesus allowed a squad of men seize and led away to be interrogated at the house of the High Priest. The rest of the men were relieved to get out of the Gethsemane Garden alive.

Jesus' blasphemous 'Son of God' testimony deserves death penalty, Jewish leaders say

Judean Governor Pontius Pilate must approve verdict

Jesus Christ of Nazareth is guilty of blasphemy and should be immediately executed, Jewish religious leaders recommended to Judean Governor Pontius Pilate.

This judgement was rendered after the Chief Priests and Sanhedrin, searching for false evidence against the Nazarene so they could quickly condemn Him to death, heard Jesus declare with His own mouth that He was God's Son.

The Chief Priests, Jewish Elders and Mosaic Law Teachers, led by High Priest Caiaphas in a campaign to kill Jesus, didn't have the legal authority to crucify Him.

They remanded Jesus to Pilate so the Judean Governor, visiting Jerusalem from the Mediterranean coastal city of Caesarea, would convict the Nazarene.

However Pilate, distrustful of Jerusalem's Jewish religious leaders, was reluctant to quickly sign-off on Jesus' death warrant without first hearing the charges against Him.

Throughout the night, Jewish religious officials were concocting evidence against the Nazarene long before Jesus' case was adjudicated before Pilate.

Here are the events which resulted in Jesus appearing before the Judean Governor, *The Testament Spectator* learned with the help of anonymous sources.

A 600-man posse was mobilized and dispatched to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.

But it was only after the Nazarene invisibly knocked them all to the ground — reattaching a man's severed ear cut-off by a sword-wielding Peter attempting to protect Jesus — did He allow a detachment of soldiers, along with their commander and Jewish officials, to bind Him.

The detachment first brought Him to Annas, former High Priest and father-in-law of High Priest Caiaphas that year.

Annas questioned Jesus about His disciples and teachings, suggesting the Nazarene was leading an underground religious movement.

"I have spoken openly to the world," was Jesus' response to Annas' allegation that He was plotting some sort of secret revolution.

"I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question Me? Ask those who heard Me. Surely they know what I said," Jesus said.

Abruptly, one of the officials standing nearby stepped forward and in an act probably intended to impress Annas, viciously struck Jesus in the face.

"Is this the way you answer the High Priest," the official demanded.

"If I said something wrong," Jesus replied calmly, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"

The official sheepishly stepped back in his place without answering.

Then Annas, who as a former High Priest didn't have to deal with the controversy of determining what to do with Jesus, sent the Nazarene still bound to Caiaphas' palace.

It was daybreak by then, and all the Chief Priests, Elders and Mosaic Law Teachers were assembled there.

Jewish religious officials were looking for false evidence against Jesus so they could put Him to death. But they did not find any even though many witnesses testified falsely against Him. Since their statements did not agree — as was required by Jewish law — they could not condemn Jesus.

Finally two came forward to offer this false testimony: "We heard Him say, 'I

Sanhedrin during an emergency meeting a few weeks ago that it would be good if one Man died for the people, decided that if he was going to get Jesus, he'd have to question Him. Caiaphas couldn't depend on these bogus witnesses any longer.

Feeling as if he could finally entrap the Nazarene, Caiaphas arose and spoke to Jesus with all the authority which he could muster.

"I charge you under oath by the Living God: Tell us, are you the Christ, the Son

'He [Jesus Christ] has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more testimony or witnesses' — High Priest Caiaphas

will destroy this man-made temple and in three days I will rebuild another, not made by man," he said.

"Yeah, I too heard Jesus make that claim," the other one said. "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God and rebuild it in three days.'"

But Jesus remained silent. It seemed as if the Nazarene didn't have to say anything, because He knew that they offered contradictory testimony.

"Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you," Caiaphas asked.

Jesus still remained silent. Feeling as if he was losing control of the trial, Caiaphas was getting frustrated at Jesus because the reticent Nazarene was somehow getting the best of him.

The shrewd High Priest, advising the

of the Blessed One God," Caiaphas commanded.

Jesus said if He told him, he still wouldn't believe.

"And if I asked you, you would not answer. But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven," He said.

Not satisfied with Jesus' answer, they all asked Him if He was really the Son of God. "Yes, I AM. It is as you say," Jesus replied without hesitation.

Shocked upon hearing what he considered to be Jesus' sacrilegious answer, Caiaphas tore his clothes, demonstrating his outrage as the High Priest.

"He has spoken blasphemy! Why do

we need any more testimony or witnesses," Caiaphas rhetorically asked the others, attempting to convince them to agree with him.

"Look, now you have heard the blasphemy from His own lips. What do you think [now]," Caiaphas added, confirming publicly what they had already decided privately of their intent to kill Him.

"He is worthy of death! He is worthy of death! He is worthy of death," the clenched-fisted Sanhedrin members shouted over and over again.

Reacting to the cue of their Sanhedrin superiors, the men guarding Jesus began to mock and insult Him. Then they spit on Jesus' face.

After they blindfolded Jesus, they too struck Him with their fists, commanding to identify who struck Him since the Nazarene claimed to possess supernatural powers.

"Prophecy to us, Christ," they sneered with venomous hate. "Who hit you?"

Others slapped Jesus around and the guards took Him and beat Him some more.

Eventually, the men became bored and tired of torturing a non-reacting, non-flinching Jesus. He was ordered to be taken to Pilate.

So by the time a battered and beaten Jesus was remanded to Pilate for questioning, the Judean Governor could already see what their preferred recommendation would be.

Trusted disciple disowns Jesus

Peter swears he never even knew Nazarene

A group of people, awaiting the outcome of Jesus Christ's trial at High Priest Caiaphas' palace, recognized a former Sea of Galilee fisherman as one of the Nazarene's 12 disciples.

Simon Peter, the son of Jonas, denied knowing Jesus on three separate occasions, these courtyard eyewitnesses say, even though the ex-fisherman has been one of the Nazarene's disciple for two years now.

When the detachment of soldiers, along with their commander and Jewish officials, led a bound Jesus to Caiaphas' palace for trial that evening, Peter followed the Nazarene from afar, some bystanders recalled.

The ex-fisherman, and an unidentified disciple accompanying him, entered Caiaphas' palace gate. While Peter sat down with the guards, the other disciple went with Jesus inside, presumably to speak on the Nazarene's behalf.

However any attempts of effectuating Jesus' release would soon learn because the Chief Priests, Elders and Mosaic Law Teachers, who were already assembled there, planned that Jesus' crime would warrant the death penalty.

Outside, Peter waited. Because of the cold night, a group of people decided to start a fire in the middle of the courtyard.

Once they ignited the kindling wood, the flames became larger, radiating heat

and attracting those in the courtyard to move closer to it. The heat from the fire felt so good, Peter decided to join them as well.

There was Peter, warming himself along with the others, when suddenly one of the servant girls nearby recognized that the ex-fisherman was also with Jesus of Galilee.

She walked from the doorway and using the flame's flickering glow to illuminate Peter's familiar face, she looked closely at him.

"Aren't you one of His disciples," she asked the ex-fisherman inquisitively.

'I don't know the Man! I don't know what you're talking about' — Simon Peter, son of Jonas

"I am certainly not," Peter insisted loud enough for everyone else to hear. "I don't know what you're talking about."

Peter quickly went out to the gateway. A little later another girl recognized him and said "this fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth" to people nearby.

Peter explained he didn't know nor understand what she was talking about. With an oath he swore to her saying, "I don't know the Man!"

About an hour later, one of Caiaphas' servants — the relative of Malchus whose ear the sword-wielding Peter cut off in the Garden of Gethsemane a few hours before — again challenged Peter.

Those standing nearby heard Malchus' relative ask whether the familiar disciple was the one seen next to Jesus in the olive grove.

"Surely you are one of them, for your

Galilean accent gives you away," he said.

Then Peter began to call down curses on himself and swore to them saying: "I am not. Man, I don't know what you're talking about."

Immediately a rooster crowed and Jesus, being led to Judean Governor Pontius Pilate at that very moment, instantly turned and looked straight at Peter. The ex-fisherman remembered the word of the Lord had spoken to him.

"Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times," Jesus said to a sincere Peter when the ex-fisherman

boasted during their last supper together that he would gladly lay down his life for Him.

And to think that what actually occurred was Peter ended up denying Jesus not once, nor twice, but thrice!

Peter was ashamed of himself. The shameful feeling reminded him when the Nazarene initially recruited him, as well as the ex-fisherman's brother Andrew, plus business partners James and John.

"Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man," Peter said then, trying to rebuff's Jesus' invitation to follow Him.

Peter recalled Jesus telling him and the others that they would catch men, rather than just fish. This seemed so farfetched now.

Peter went outside of Caiaphas' palace courtyard, broke down and wept bitterly.

Dejected disciple commits suicide

Judas Iscariot hangs himself, bloody corpse found near tree

The man who betrayed Jesus Christ of Nazareth for 30 silver coins died violently of an apparent suicide, the Chief Priests and Temple Guards confirmed after finding Judas Iscariot's body near a tree.

A strand of cord was discovered still dangling overhead from one of the tree branches, causing investigators to surmise that Judas hung himself with the waist cord of his own robe.

An initial examination of the site caused investigators to theorize that the suicide must have happened like this: Judas probably fashioned the waist cord from his robe into a noose, wrapped the cord to a branch, put his head through the loop and then jumped from the tree — breaking his neck.

Yet the weight of Judas' body, probably swaying from the noose for an unknown period of time before eventually falling to the ground, could

not have disemboweled itself by gravity alone, investigators concluded upon further examining the grisly suicide scene.

So what happened? It seemed as if someone or something supernaturally turned Judas upside down and from an unknown height, literally dropped him headlong to the ground, a Jerusalem

people. But they wouldn't take the money back.

"I have sinned," confessed Judas, seeking solace from them. "For I have betrayed innocent blood."

"What is that to us," they replied. "That's your responsibility."

Upon hearing their heartless response, a despondent Judas threw the money into

'I have sinned, for I have betrayed innocent blood'
— Judas Iscariot, son of Simon

coroner surmised after analyzing the bloody splash pattern of his corpse.

For the crumpled remains fell on the ground with such great force it bursted Judas' body wide open, spilling out all of his intestines, an investigator reported.

Although there were many chilly, eerie and inexplicable questions regarding Judas' suicide, the answer why he killed himself was clear.

Judas was seized with remorse when he saw that Jesus would be condemned. As a result, he went to Jerusalem Temple and returned the 30 pieces of silver to the Chief Priests and Elders of the

Jerusalem Temple and departed.

Judas must have hung himself shortly thereafter, investigators hypothesize, attempting to reconstruct events which led to his apparent suicide.

After learning what happened to their informant, Jewish religious officials took Judas' money he returned to them and bought the Potter's Field so foreigners could be buried there.

"It is against the law to put this [the 30 silver coins] into the treasury, since it is blood money," the Chief Priests said while gathering the coins Judas threw all over the Temple floor.

Everyone in Jerusalem heard about Judas' death. That's why they called that parcel of land "Akeldama" in Aramaic, which is translated the "Field of Blood."

Jeremiah's ancient prophecy was fulfilled, according to those familiar with the Prophet's ancient writings.

"They took the 30 silver coins, the price set on Him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the Potter's Field, as the Lord commanded me," the Prophet Jeremiah wrote.

A Jewish religious official, scoffing at those attempting to claim that Jeremiah's prophecy was indeed fulfilled, explained that the "Potter's Field" designation was purely coincidental.

But many of Jesus' supporters, forced underground for fear they would too be arrested, dispute that explanation.

It is unknown whether the deceased Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon whose hometown Kerioth is located in the territory where Israel's tribe of Judah once thrived, has any survivors.

No family mourned at Judas' "Potter's Field" grave.

Vocal mob demands Barabbas' release

Pontius Pilate condemns 'King of the Jews'

Jerusalem's most notorious prisoner was the people's choice when they asked Judean Governor Pontius Pilate to do for them what he usually did as a Passover Feast custom.

By popular demand a condemned man named Barabbas, imprisoned recently for insurrection and murder, was chosen to live.

But the Jewish mob pointed thumbs down at Jesus of Nazareth, accused of subverting the nation, opposing taxes and declaring Himself "Christ the King."

As a visitor to Jerusalem from the Mediterranean coastal city of Caesarea, Pilate didn't know too much about the local politics. He did have enough sense to detect that envy motivated the Chief Priests to remand Jesus to him in the first place. Therefore he proceeded cautiously.

Governor Pilate sat at the Judge's seat to adjudicate Jesus' trial. His ruling could pardon the Nazarene, punish Him by flogging or condemn Him to die?

While Pilate fearfully pondered what

to do with the accused Man at the place commonly known as the "Stone Pavement" (or Gabbatha in Aramaic), the Jewish mob reminded him about the condemned man and their Passover Feast custom.

Relegated to merchandise awaiting to be accepted or rejected by opinionated customers at the marketplace, the accused Jesus stood before the assembly on one side of Governor Pilate and the condemned Barabbas stood on his other.

Wrangling about the two men commenced between the crowd and Pilate.

During this time, the Governor received an unexpected message from his wife.

"Don't have anything to do with that innocent Man," Claudia Procula warned. "For I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of Him."

As events would soon reveal the Judean Governor, flustered and taken aback at the angry mob that early morning, wasn't able to heed his wife's counsel. He tried though, initially ruling that Jesus had not committed a crime.

That decision did not set too well with the mob and their leaders, who were

accusing Jesus of many offences.

Upon learning that Jesus' teachings began in Galilee, Pilate cleverly attempted to use King Herod as a buffer.

The Governor shuttled Jesus to King Herod, since Galilee Province is under Herod's jurisdiction.

But after a short period of time, King Herod, who was also visiting Jerusalem to observe the Passover festival, sent Jesus back, wearing an old yet still elegant robe.

The Chief Priests and Elders, sensing that Pilate wanted to release Jesus rather than free Barabbas, stirred up the crowd when the Judean Governor asked them again what should he do with the Nazarene.

"Cru-Ci-Fy Him," the clenched-fisted mob shouted with intense rage.

"Why? What crime has He committed," asked a puzzled Pilate.

"Cru-Ci-Fy Him! Cru-Ci-Fy Him," they continued to shout, ignoring the Judean Governor's question.

Eventually, the throng became tired of shouting "Cru-Ci-Fy Him!" So in an impromptu well-orchestrated attempt to sustain their enthusiasm, the Jewish religious leaders, who had strategically

disburbed themselves in the crowd, whipped them into a frenzy again by chanting another phrase.

"Away With This Man! Release Barabbas To Us," they said.

More and more began to mimic the small group until the entire mob was rhythmically shouting: "Away With This Man! Release Barabbas To Us!"

Gesturing with his hands for silence, Pilate appealed to the people once more. He really wanted to release Jesus because he found no basis for a charge against the Nazarene. But they kept shouting for Jesus' blood.

Some shouted: "Cru-Ci-Fy Him" over and over and others continually chanted: "Away With This Man! Release Barabbas To Us!"

The four-count "Cru-Ci-Fy Him" and 12-count "Away With This Man! Release Barabbas To Us" caused the shell-shocked Pilate to clasp his ears.

Again, Governor Pilate gestured for quiet so he could speak.

"Why? What crime has this Man committed," Pilate yelled to the mob. "I have found in Him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore, I will have Him

(Continued on Page 34, Column 1)

Letter To The Editor

High Priest Caiaphas explains justification for Jesus' crucifixion

Dear Editor: I would like to explain in this letter why I have recommended the execution of a troublemaker among us.

For those who don't know who I'm writing about, His name is Jesus of Nazareth.

Some call Him "the Christ." Others believe Him to be "the Messiah" and that He is some sort of "miracle-worker." There are those who even think He is royalty and erroneously call Him "King of the Jews." I don't believe He's been ordained by God nor vested by man to brandish any of these lofty titles. But I do believe He is a dangerous Man, and

for the sake of our survival the Great Sanhedrin, which I have been appointed High Priest earlier this year, has recommended that our Roman fathers crucify Jesus.

As High Priest I am naturally a man of peace. But I also believe in the law. My recommended verdict, unanimously supported by all the members of this elite Jewish ruling council, is intended to ensure civil peace and to uphold Mosaic Law.

For those who are Jesus of Nazareth's sympathizers, you might rhetorically ask the following: "Why should He be crucified." Let me answer. During the

three years which Jesus has been on the scene, He has repeatedly challenged Mosaic Law, disrespected your religious leaders and most importantly, committed blasphemy by proclaiming that He was none other than the Son of God!

Jesus' disruptive influence on the people — which is jeopardizing peaceful coexistence between us and the Roman Government — has included many illegal Sabbath healings.

Some of His supporters sensationally claim that Jesus is also responsible for casting out demons, stopping storms, walking on water and feeding multitudes. I don't know if a man can do all of that,

now. But what I do know is all of these so-called "miracles" were causing people to raise false expectations that somehow Jesus will liberate us from Rome, overthrow our benevolent rulers and restore the Kingdom of Israel.

My Jewish people, let's be real. The Roman Empire is the dominant power in the world today. Anyone who threatens and undermines her will be annihilated. That's why Jesus must be sacrificed.

As I told the 71 members of the Sanhedrin six weeks ago, it is expedient for us that one man die for the people than the whole nation perish.

(Continued from Page 33, Column 4)

punished and then released," the Governor said, which he reluctantly did. Even after seeing the bloody Jesus wear a crown of thorns and bloodstained white tunic under the purple robe which King Herod's men draped on Him, the mob was driven to kill the Nazarene yet all the more. With loud shouts they insisted that Jesus be crucified.

"Cru-Ci-Fy Him! Cru-Ci-Fy Him," they yelled.

Barabbas' release demanded...

Seeking to arouse the mob even more, a group of Jewish religious leaders then led the people in a new phrase.

"No, Not Him! Give Us Ba-Rab-Bas! No, Not Him! Give Us Ba-Rab-Bas," they chanted of the man who had taken part in the recent rebellion. The chant caught on.

The Judean Governor was exasperated. He tried to reason with them, but this time their shouts prevailed.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere — but that instead an uproar was starting — he took water and ceremoniously washed his hands in front of the crowd.

"I am innocent of this Man's blood," Governor Pilate said. "It is your responsibility!"

Goaded by the religious leaders who were acting like cheerleaders, all the people gave Pilate their answer.

"Let His Blood Be On Us And Our Chil-Dren! Let His Blood Be On Us And Our Chil-Dren," the mob shouted flippantly, not knowing of the curse they were putting on them and their descendants.

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate finally granted their demand. He released Barabbas to them and then handed the Nazarene over to be crucified.

Part One: 'I really didn't want to have anything to do with this Man Jesus' writes Pontius Pilate

"I really didn't want to have anything to do with this Man called Jesus the Christ. And even though Jewish religious leaders accused Him of many things, I was still reluctant to sentence the Nazarene to die.

"The Chief Priests, Elders, Mosaic Law Teachers and the whole Sanhedrin rarely seem to agree on anything. But in the early morning hours following Jesus' arrest, I was told they all reached a decision to

Editor's note: The Testament Spectator learns that Judean Governor Pontius Pilate was reluctant to condemn Jesus of Nazareth to die. This Part One excerpt from Governor Pilate's fictitious diary reveals his thoughts, observations, impressions and conversations with 'this Man Jesus.'

execute Him. A Jewish religious delegation, seeking to avoid ceremonial uncleanness (thus prohibiting them from partaking of the Passover), led the bound and beaten Jesus to the steps of the palace where I had been residing.

"What charges are you bringing

against this Man,' I asked them after emerging from the Judgment Hall where I had been taking care of some administrative affairs.

"Responding to my insinuation that I considered this Man Jesus innocent, the delegation hastily replied that if He were not a criminal, they would not have handed Him over to me in the first place.

"I really didn't want to have anything to do with this case. I told them that they should take this Man Jesus and judge Him by their own law. But the delegation reminded me that they had no right to execute anyone. Not true. They could have stoned Jesus, but Roman law prohibited them from crucifying Him. For some reason they preferred crucifixion over stoning.

"I took a deep breath and noticed that a crowd had been forming — rather quickly I might add. All of these people must have heard about this Man Jesus' arrest the evening before.

"I guess they anticipated that I would adjudicate Jesus' case publicly, because they were all assembling at the 'Stone Pavement,' the place where I would customarily issue a ruling.

"I went back inside the palace to interview this Man Jesus and asked Him if He were the 'King of the Jews.' He said that He was what I asked Him.

"I looked at Him carefully and observed that He didn't appear to be threatening. An aide handed me this Man Jesus' arrest warrant.

"...Among other offenses, this professed miracle-worker is accused of subverting the nation and opposing taxes," part of the warrant read.

"Come on, I muttered to my aide standing nearby. 'Who doesn't like paying taxes.' If I, a Roman appointed Governor, executed everyone who opposed paying Caesar taxes, there wouldn't be any money to collect!

"I went back outside and announced to the Chief Priests and the crowd that I found 'no basis for a charge against this Man.'

"This finding was consistent with what Claudia, my wife, advised me.

"While I was addressing the crowd and their leaders at the Stone Pavement, Claudia, who never interferes with me carrying out my official duties, sent me a really weird message. She warned that I should stay away from this Man Jesus because she had suffered greatly from Him. Her ominous warning caused me to vacillate.

"I imagine those pious priests

detected that I didn't relish condemning this Man Jesus to death. They vehemently insisted that His teachings 'stirs up the people all over Judea,' starting 'in Galilee and has come all the way here.'

"The only ones I saw doing all the stirring up were them! Anyway, while the Chief Priests and the Elders kept babbling on, and on, and on — accusing this Man Jesus of offences I never even knew were illegal, the idea suddenly hit me.

"Wasn't my rival King Herod in town? If this Man Jesus is from Galilee, I'll send Him to King Herod, since Galilee Province is under Herod's jurisdiction. That's what I'll do."

"I ordered Jesus be taken to King Herod. I could tell that Jesus had a rough night. But in spite of His fatigued and battered condition, this authoritative yet gentle-looking Man projected such a powerfully-controlled serenity that day, much different than I, or anyone else, exhibited.

"The Roman soldiers, serving in my detail while I was visiting Jerusalem, roughly whisked the Nazarene away to King Herod.

"Problem solved," I thought. Sending Jesus to Herod would comply with my wife's advice not to 'have anything to do with this innocent man.'

I must honestly confess that I had hoped that King Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, would be able to resolve what to do with Jesus. He's an enterprising fellow with the guts to do what has to be done.

"But before long, the Jesus matter was back on my doorstep. I didn't want King Herod returning Jesus to me — especially so quickly.

"But King Herod appreciated that I sent Jesus to him in the first place. I've been told that he had always wanted to meet this miracle-worker.

"I believe this hard-core Herod was getting soft. For some reason he was haunted by ordering the execution of some desert-dwelling wild man who dunked people in the dirty Jordan River. John the Baptist was his name, if my memory serves me correctly. I just hope that I too won't be so haunted from any decisions made today. Oh well. Rome has entrusted me to carry out my duties, and that's what I must do.

"One positive result from sending this Man Jesus to Herod is it will thaw relations between us. That is what

(Continued on Page 35, Column 1)

King Herod's wish finally comes true

'The Tetrarch' meets Jesus, thanks to Pontius Pilate

The King who executed John the Baptist a year earlier and believed the miracle-worker to be the resurrected prophet, finally met Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

King Herod Antipas, who decapitated John and gave his head (at the behest of Queen Herodias) to Princess Salome on a platter as a gift for her dance during the ruler's birthday party, had always wanted to meet Jesus.

Judean Governor Pontius Pilate facilitated the fulfillment of that wish for King Herod while they were both visiting Jerusalem to observe the Passover festival.

Before Pilate could celebrate the festival, he had to decide whether Jesus, accused of subverting the nation, opposing taxes and declaring Himself "Christ the King," would be condemned to death.

Jesus' accusers during this high-profile, religiously-sensitive, politically-charged and theologically-controversial case included High Priest Caiaphas, the Chief Priests, Jewish Elders and Mosaic Law Teachers.

Once Pilate learned from Jesus' prosecutors that the Nazarene's teachings stirred up the people so — starting "in Galilee and has come all the way here" — the Governor sent Him to the King, since that province is under Herod's jurisdiction.

Sitting at the Judge's seat to adjudicate Jesus' case, Governor Pilate announced to the Chief Priests and the crowd assembled at the place commonly known as the "Stone Pavement" that Jesus had not committed a crime.

"I find no basis for a charge against this Man," Pilate said.

The mob, who asked the Judean Governor to do for them what he usually

did as a Passover Feast custom, wanted the condemned murderer Barabbas to live and insisted the rabble-rouser blasphemous Jesus crucified.

But Pilate, probably recalling the advice of his wife Claudia Procula not to "have anything to do with that innocent Man," was relieved that he could remand Jesus to Herod instead.

Pilate's preferred policy was to let King Herod, the Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, decide Jesus' fate and take the political heat, sources close to the Judean Governor confirmed.

Governor Pilate ordered the soldiers to transport Jesus of Nazareth to King Herod. When he saw Jesus, King Herod was greatly pleased because for a long time he had been wanting to see Him.

From what the King had heard about Jesus' miracle-working exploits, he hoped to see Jesus do just any sick-healing, demon-casting, dead-raising, storm-stopping, water-walking or multitude-feeding tricks.

But Jesus refused to entertain King Herod, the man who killed his six month older cousin John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth.

A curious and disappointed Herod asked Jesus many questions, but Jesus gave him no answers.

Meanwhile the Chief Priests and Mosaic Law Teachers were standing nearby, gleeful at seeing the powerless Jesus and vehemently accusing that He was but a two-bit fraud, bystanders report.

When it became evident that Jesus would not entertain Herod like Princess Salome did with her dinner dance a year earlier, the King allowed his soldiers to ridicule and mock Him. They dressed Him in an elegant robe, and sent Him back to Pilate.

That day King Herod and Governor Pilate became friends. Before this they had been enemies, sources from both rulers confirmed.

(Continued from Page 34, Column 4)
Herod's attendant told one of my aides.
"Anyway, there I was again, staring
this Man Jesus in the face.

"I decided to go with my gut
instinct, listen to my wife and follow
King Herod's lead. This Man Jesus
was innocent, and I was not going to
allow Him to be crucified by a bunch
of bloodthirsty, self-righteous,
religious fundamentalists.

"In an action intended to sanction
my preliminary (and what I thought

Part One: Pilate's diary...

would be my final) ruling, I decided to
announce the verdict at the Stone
Pavement.

"I issued the following statement to
the Chief Priests, the rulers and the
people: 'You brought me this Man as
One who was inciting the people to
rebellion. I have examined Him in your
presence and have found no basis for
your charges against Him. Neither has

Herod, for he sent Him back to us; as
you can see, He has done nothing to
deserve death. Therefore, I will punish
Him and then release Him.'

"After the scribe read the verdict,
all hell broke loose. The ranting and
ravings of all of these Jewish religious
clerics was incessant. Boy, what a
bunch of windbags. They obviously
were not going to accept my

preliminary ruling without protest.

"I retired from the Stone Pavement,
feeling as if I was retreating from
being ambushed in battle.

"I really didn't want to have
anything to do with this Man called
Jesus the Christ, but if I was going to
condemn Him to death — as I feared I
would — I should get to know the
Accused for myself.

"I went inside the palace to the
Judgment Hall where this Man Jesus
was patiently waiting."

Part Two: 'As for me, I found no basis for a charge against Him' writes Pontius Pilate

"I find no basis for a charge
against Him."

"This is what I said on three
separate occasions — after deciding to
get know the Accused for myself — to
those who wanted to execute the Man
Jesus. Everyone heard me, but no one
listened.

"I was but a victim of Jerusalem
mobocracy who was forced by external
pressure and internal fear to kill this
innocent Man. And as I reflect on that
reality, my conscience is now intensely
convicted, pricked if you will, by the
memory of the Man who stood before
me in the Judgment Hall that morning.

"In retrospect, I must honestly
admit. Even clad in that old purple
robe which King Herod's men draped
on Jesus's back to mock 'the King of
the Jews,' this Man still looked rather
composed and stately.

"And even though He might have
been badly beaten, as evident by His
many facial bruises, Jesus' majesty
somehow still penetrated and
illuminated my dark heart. It was as if
He had already known me.

"Somewhat afraid — yet still very
curious — to engage the Man Jesus in
a dialogue, I asked Him what wrong
had He done? Jesus said that He was
'a King,' but His 'Kingdom is not of
this world. If it were,' I recall Him
saying, 'My servants would fight to
prevent My arrest by the Jews. But
now My Kingdom is from another
place.'

"You are a King, then,' I
reaffirmed?

"The Man Jesus said that I was
correct. The purpose for His birth and
coming into the world, He went on to
say, was 'to testify to the truth.
Everyone on the side of truth listens to
Me,' He said.

"What is truth,' I asked Jesus what
philosophers and intellectuals have
attempted to answer since the
beginning of time.

"With the asking of that age-old
question, it suddenly occurred to me.
His accusers were afraid, intimidated
and threatened by Jesus. That's why
they wanted to kill Him.

"Equipped with a new sense of
courage and determination to save
Jesus' life, I rushed back outside to the
Stone Pavement for the first time to
announce to the Jews that I found 'no
basis for a charge against Him.'

"They quickly reminded me about
their custom — releasing one prisoner
of the people's choice during Passover.
Upon hearing this, the new sense of
determination which just swelled
inside me quickly deflated.

"Do you want me to release the
'King of the Jews,' I asked, hoping they
would come to their senses, choose a
self-educated, peaceful Man prone to

Editor's note: 'The Man Jesus' was innocent, this Part Two excerpt from Governor Pilate's fictitious diary reveals.

philosophize about 'truth,' rather than
free a man who commits murder while
leading a rebellion like the condemned
Barabbas was accused of doing.

"No, they didn't want me to release
the Man Jesus. Much to my
disappointment, the mob shouted for
Barabbas instead.

"What was I to do now,' I asked
myself.

"At the risk of killing the Man
Jesus, I could order the soldiers to flog
Him. Perhaps this would please the
crowd, I thought, while at the same
time possibly spare His life. I
reluctantly ordered the brutal flogging.

"The soldiers took Jesus to the
bloodstained scourge post, which was
imbedded in the ground, and tied His
hands at the top. One soldier rudely
removed the purple robe, tossed it
aside on the ground, then stripped
Jesus' tunic to expose His neck and
back to the two floggers who were
impatiently waiting nearby.

"The two who would administer the
punishment positioned themselves
behind Him, one slightly to Jesus' left
and the other on His right. The Roman
commander of the scourge detail gave
the order to proceed.

"Even from off in the distance
outside the Judgment Hall, I turned my
back as I heard the crack of the first
whip, then in quick succession, the
crack of the other.

"The 'SNAP' noise and then
command count 'three,' then another
'SNAP' sound and command count
'four' continued all the way up to the
number '39.' I could not bear to
witness the punishment. Each 'SNAP'
and command count made me even
flinch.

"Some men, unable to endure the
three leather thongs of bone pieces and
metal bits woven through it biting in
their flesh, faint from Roman
scourging. And others simply die. Not
Jesus. He stayed awake as blood and
small pieces of His body flew in the air
with every 'SNAP.'

"Amazingly, the Man Jesus was
strong enough to survive the 39 lashes
of the scourge afflicted on Him, cruelly
lacerating the skin, painfully chiseling
away at muscle and then pricking
away the bone with every 'SNAP.'

"Jesus may have survived this awful
punishment, but His rear torso looked
like pulverized meat, from the back of
His neck clear down to His buttocks.
Skin, muscle and bone tissue were
exposed. One flogger harshly covered
Jesus' white tunic on Him, causing the
garment to instantly fuse to His raw
back.

"Yet even after the cruel flogging,
the soldiers wanted to torture Him

some more. They twisted together a
crown of very sharp thorns and
pressed it on His head. They then gave
Him a reed in His right hand to mimic
a kingly scepter. By then, Jesus' hair
became knotted with the coagulated
blood which had so profusely flowed
from the thorns pierced in His scalp.

"With the purple robe which King
Herod's men initially draped on Jesus'
back, the 600 soldiers, who assembled
at the Common Hall, had Him walk
around the courtyard wearing the
crown of thorns and holding the reed
scepter.

"The Roman soldiers all gathered
around Him, shamefully spitting and
mercilessly slapping Jesus in the face.
Some snatched the reed from Jesus'
hand, used it to strike Him atop His
head. Then quickly returned the reed
back to Him for another to do the
same.

"One right after the other, they
bowed to Jesus, mocked and
sarcastically hailed Him 'King of the
Jews!'

"These seasoned combat veterans,
used to facing and vanquishing Rome's
enemies in battle, relished avenging
themselves against — this, their
solditary Foe. For when Jesus declared
'I AM HE' to the same 600 men at the
Garden of Gethsemane the evening
before, a strange force supernaturally
blew them like toy soldiers all down to
the ground. How quickly they forgot
the fear they felt then. Now it was their
payback time.

"I've never seen a man take such
physical punishment before with so
much resignation, serenity and dignity.
What a pitiful and hideous sight to see
Jesus' face meshed with His own blood
from the continued blows and dripping
with the saliva of 600 men spitting on
Him!

"After the soldiers finished
torturing Him, I came out again and
said to the Jews a second time: 'Look,
I am bringing Him out to you to let you
know that I find no basis for a charge
against Him.'

"I commanded them to bring Jesus
out to the 'Stone Pavement.' The mob
saw the crown of thorns on His head.
Hopefully they would be satisfied at
seeing, beneath that purple robe
draped on His back, Jesus' white tunic,
an undergarment which had now been
discolored by His own blood.

"Here is the Man,' I said to them,
instructing the soldiers to parade Jesus
around the 'Stone Pavement' so the
crowd could see that He had been
sufficiently punished.

"But as soon as the Chief Priests
and their officials saw Him, they still
shouted to 'Crucify' Him. They were

simply unmoved by Jesus' gruesome,
grotesque and tormented ugly
appearance. I commanded the soldiers
to return the Nazarene back to the
Judgment Hall.

"While they led Him away, I told
them to take Jesus and crucify Him
themselves. 'As for me,' I said with
exasperation for the third and final
time, 'I find no basis for a charge
against Him.'

"The Jews insisted that according to
their law, the Man Jesus must die,
because 'He claimed to be the Son of
God.'

"I must confess when I heard this, I
became even more worried and afraid.
I quickly left the 'Stone Pavement'
again and went back inside the palace
to talk to Jesus in the Judgment Hall.

"Where do you come from,' I asked
the Man Jesus. He refused to speak to
me. Although most men in His shape
would have been dead by now — much
less been able to carry on an
intelligent conversation — I sensed
Jesus didn't answer for other reasons.

"Don't you realize I have power
either to free You or to crucify You,' I
said to Him.

"Jesus finally answered that I
wouldn't have no power over Him if it
were not given to me from Above.

"In a statement which appeared to
absolve me from having to condemn
Him to die, Jesus then said that the one
who handed Him over to me is guilty
of a greater sin. I felt just a little
relieved.

"From then on, I tried in earnest to
set Jesus free, but the Jews kept
shouting, 'If you let this Man go, you
are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who
claims to be a King opposes Caesar.'

"I didn't want to be stripped of title
and wealth; then accused, tried,
convicted and punished for treason
myself. So when I heard this, I
immediately commanded the soldiers
to bring Jesus out while I sat back
down at the 'Stone Pavement.'

"Here is your King,' I said to them.
"But they shouted to 'Take Him
Away!' and 'Crucify Him!'

"Shall I crucify your King?' I
asked.

"We have no King but Caesar,' the
Chief Priests responded.

"Therefore on the sixth hour of the
Day of Preparation of Passover Week,
I, Judean Governor Pontius Pilate,
literally, ceremoniously and
figuratively washed my hands of the
matter.

"I handed Jesus of Nazareth (known
as 'the Christ' and called 'King of the
Jews') over to the Chief Priests,
Elders, Mosaic Law Teachers and the
Great Sanhedrin; to be crucified."

Condemned Christ crucified on Golgotha Hill

Simon of Cyrene drags Jesus' cross all the way to 'Place of the Skull'

Like a lamb led to slaughter, the Roman soldiers herded Jesus Christ of Nazareth through the serpentine streets of Jerusalem's bustling market district, then brutally nailed Him naked to a cross on Golgotha Hill.

Even though Pontius Pilate "found no basis for a charge against Him," the Judean Governor still reluctantly ordered Jesus' execution, a decision probably intended to placate Jewish religious leaders and pacify the people.

After departing the "Stone Pavement" where Governor Pilate washed his hands of the matter, the convicted Jesus was handed over to Jewish religious leaders who in turn remanded Him to a Centurion, Roman commander of the 100-man company assigned to the crucifixion detail that day.

Roman Centurion Chronicles Jesus' Crucifixion, Page 37

As a veteran soldier, the Centurion doubted whether this so-called "King of the Jews" could drag the horizontal piece of His own cross-beam to the crucifixion site, which was some distance away.

Jesus had endured quite a bit since His Garden of Gethsemane arrest, the Centurion could see.

Probably awoke at least 12 hours before His arrest, the convicted Man must have been tired, weak, hungry and thirsty.

From evening to the wee hours of the morning, Jesus was shuttled from Annas' house to his father's Caiaphas' palace. The convicted Nazarene was then sent to Governor Pilate, transported to King Herod then returned back to Pilate, sources familiar with Jesus' hastily-convened trial say.

During this period the crown-of-thorns-wearing Jesus serenely and in

some inexplicable kind-of-way, quietly withstood being buffeted, beaten, spat upon, tortured and flogged.

The liquid Jesus' parched palate partook wasn't thirst-quenching water nor medicinal-tasting vinegar, but saliva of the Centurion's 600 comrades, who continuously spat on this Man when they tortured Him so mercilessly at the Judgment Hall.

Many times the Roman Centurion had seen many men walk this road before. But this Man was different, he acknowledged while watching Jesus make the slow, painful, laborious death trek to Golgotha.

For some inexplicable reason, Jesus' slow pace seemed to incite the crowd yet even more.

Responsible for carrying out the crucifixion sentence, the Centurion was

also charged with keeping the peace and if need be, quash any urban discontent that might erupt.

The Roman commander acted. Anxious to get on with the crucifixion so he and his soldiers could get off duty sooner rather than later, the Centurion seized a man watching from the roadside named Simon of Cyrene, who was passing by while traveling from the country.

Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, lifted Jesus' cross-beam from the Nazarene's back and carefully positioned the heavy splintered-laced raw wood on his stronger shoulder.

The Centurion seemed less agitated to see Simon, pulling the cross-beam easier than Jesus, quicken the pace toward Golgotha.

Behind Simon were two other criminals, led out with Him to be executed at the place known in Aramaic as "The Place of the Skull."

Public opinion fickled in Jerusalem

Palm Sunday cheers turn to Friday jeers

It's amazing how quickly public opinion changes in Jerusalem.

Just five days ago a jubilant crowd, aligning both sides of the Mount of Olives road, declared Jesus Christ of Nazareth their hero.

Cutting branches from nearby trees, they laid their colorful garments along the pathway and hailed the colt-riding Jesus for all the works and miracles they had seen.

They wouldn't have imagined then that five days later Roman soldiers would be herding the same Man through the serpentine streets of Jerusalem's bustling market district, then crucify Him on Golgotha Hill.

Many in that same crowd who rejoiced and cried "Hosanna" when Jesus entered Jerusalem during a spontaneous palm Sunday parade were now members of the angry mob.

They cursed and insulted the condemned Nazarene as He, like a lamb led to slaughter, painfully pulled His wooden cross-beam to the Golgotha crucifixion site.

Perhaps Jerusalem's affectionate-throng-transformed-to-mad-mob were angry at what could have been.

Those who had an ax to grind against Rome and witnessed Jesus' astounding miracles knew He could have easily led a victorious revolution and established a Kingdom of Israel by now.

Instead what they saw was their "King of the Jews," humbled like a servant by the hated Romans.

"Why didn't He do something," they questioned, murmuring among themselves.

The people disdained Jesus yet all the more for allowing Himself to be forced by their enemies to drag the horizontal piece of His own cross through Jerusalem's dusty streets.

Perhaps they were beginning to believe the opinion of religious leaders, who convinced them that Jesus was but

an imposter, not their hopeful "Christ" or long-awaited prophesied "Messiah."

After Jesus was nailed to the cross, many of the Nazarene's fans passed by, insulted Him and shook their heads at the bloody Nazarene in disgust.

"So! You are going to destroy Jerusalem Temple and build it in three days, huh," one said sarcastically.

"Save yourself! Save yourself! Save yourself," yelled another man repeatedly.

"Come down from the cross now, if you are the Son of God," said a third man.

In the same way the Chief Priest, Mosaic Law Teachers and Elders also mocked Jesus, pleased at finally seeing their Nemesis die before them.

With balled up fists placed on his hips, a pompous and arrogant Chief Priest piously mocked Jesus.

"He saved others, let Him save Himself if He is the Christ of God, the Chosen One" he said, snorting with unbelief and disdain.

A Mosaic Law Teacher sarcastically said if Jesus would only rescue Himself, he would believe

"Let this Christ, this King of Israel," he said pointing to Jesus, "come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe in Him," the teacher said.

"He trusts in God. Let God rescue Him now if He wants Him, for He said, 'I am the Son of God,'" an Elder said, mocking the Nazarene.

The Roman soldiers even came up and mocked Jesus.

"If you are the 'King of the Jews,' save yourself! Come down from there," one implored as the other offered the Nazarene wine vinegar to ease His pain.

Then there were those curious onlookers hanging around, waiting to see if something supernatural would indeed happen. Will Jesus the miracle-worker somehow pry Himself from the cross or would He just die there in agony?

So the ones who hailed the Nazarene Sunday as if they were heralding a conqueror, scoffed, mocked and cried for His blood on Friday.

Jesus ministers, comforts followers, forgives enemies

Even while the convicted Jesus was herded to Golgotha Hill and slaughtered like a lamb there, the Nazarene still had the sensitivity, mental acuity, spiritual alertness and presence-of-mind to minister to and comfort His followers.

People were everywhere, ridiculing Jesus as He dragged the cross-beam along the bustling streets of Jerusalem. Others gawked at Him in silence while He hung on the cross.

While a majority of the ones heckled the battered, beaten and bloodied Jesus, a small minority — particularly women — cried, lamented and mourned for their beloved Rabbi.

Simon of Cyrene, the father of

"Then 'they will say to the mountains, Fall on us! And to the hills, cover us!' For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Speaking to the women along the road to Golgotha Hill wasn't the only time Jesus talked, many bystanders attested.

While He agonized and suffered on the cross, Jesus asked His "Father [to] forgive them. For they do not know what they are doing," Jesus said to His Lord God Almighty without malice toward anybody.

During another moving moment, Jesus spotted His Mother standing nearby from the cross, as well as the

'Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

Alexander and Rufus, had just stopped for a moment to watch this pitiful condemned Man pull His cross over-slowly through the serpentine streets of Jerusalem, when all of a sudden, he became involved.

The Roman Centurion, who could see that Jesus' waning strength would prevent Him from dragging the cross-beam all the way to Golgotha Hill, looked for a strong man nearby and seized Simon to assist.

Simon, who was just passing by while traveling from the country, had no choice but to comply with the order.

He immediately yet reluctantly stepped forward.

Lifting Jesus' cross-beam from the Nazarene's back, Simon carefully positioned the heavy splintered-laced raw wood on his stronger shoulders and dragged it forward, creating a crease in the dust with every step he took.

The pace quickened, much to the delight of the Centurion and the Roman crucifixion detail under his command.

The women were crying, causing Jesus to turn and speak to them.

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me; Weep for yourselves and for your children," He told them.

"For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!'

disciple whom He loved.

"Dear Woman, here is Your Son," He said to Mother Mary.

"Here is Your Mother," Jesus said to the disciple.

Just about 33 years earlier, a righteous and devout Jerusalem man named Simon prophesied on Jesus' consecration day that when her son became an adult, He would "pierce her own soul, like a sword," an obvious reference to His death.

Mother Mary probably recalled that Simon's prophecy was fulfilled that day, although it pained her — as it would any mother — to see her Son's agonizing execution.

The disciple whom Jesus loved invited Mother Mary into his home and took care of her, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

Not only did Jesus speak to His followers, but after a conversation with one who was crucified with Him, He also forgave a penitent robber.

"Verily, I say unto you," Jesus told the dying man, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

And at the very moment of death, Jesus asked why His Father God has forsaken Him.

"Father, into thy hands, I commend My Spirit," Jesus said when He died, proclaiming that "it [His mission] is finished" before finally expiring.

Roman Centurion crucifies a 'Righteous Man;' Acknowledges Jesus to be 'the Son of God'

Editor's note: The following fictitious first-person narrative graphically describes, from the Roman Centurion's perspective, Jesus Christ of Nazareth's death.

"It was I, a Roman Centurion stationed in Jerusalem, who crucified the Righteous Man Jesus.

"Based upon the word of a Roman officer, I will recount how Jesus Christ of Nazareth suffered and died during the six hours He was nailed to that cross.

"Immediately after Governor Pilate handed Jesus over to us to be crucified, I went to the Common Hall, headquarters of Rome's Regional Army Detachment in Jerusalem, with quickstep gait.

"I mobilized and assembled the 100 Roman soldiers under my command, part of the 600 men which one of Jesus' followers received to aid in this Man's arrest the evening before.

"My comrades in arms already placed a crown of thorns on Jesus' head when they tortured Him at the Common Hall. So I could obviously see that He probably would not be able to bear the cross all the way to Golgotha Hill.

"When my men were in proper formation and Jesus was ready to carry the cross-beam on His shoulders, we slowly marched Him through Jerusalem's market district.

"Based on the recommendation of informants — as evidenced by the near riotous situation Governor Pilate faced at the 'Stone Pavement' — I had already secured reinforcements.

"The five Centurions assigned at the Common Hall with me quickly mobilized their men. As a result of that preparation, 500 helmeted Roman soldiers, standing at parade rest brandishing spears and carrying shields, were deployed in full battle gear along the route toward Golgotha Hill.

"This impressive show-of-Roman-military-force was intended to dissuade those from rioting or crush anyone foolish enough to attempt rescuing Him.

"The crowd was awfully rowdy, yelling and cussing at Jesus along the way.

"I didn't understand why they were so angry at a Man, who in my opinion, appeared to be so peaceful. As a seasoned soldier trained to assess an opponent and size people up, I could clearly see that Jesus wasn't like the other condemned thieves we were ordered to execute that day.

"But my job wasn't to question superiors nor shirk my duty as a Roman officer — just obey orders! And that's what I did."

The Brutal Cross

"Jesus was unable to carry the cross-beam the entire way to Golgotha Hill as it was customarily done. So we forced a man who was watching in the crowd to carry the heavy, splinter-laced wood for Him.

"As a result, we arrived at the crucifixion site a little quicker. I ordered the man to lay the cross-beam on the ground and dismissed him.

"Two of my men tied the cross-beam to the vertical-beam with thick rope. Another soldier stripped Jesus' robe, commanded Him to remove His bloodstained white tunic and then

tossed His garments to the side.

"Jesus stood there naked but very serene, unashamed as we prepared for His execution.

"We laid Jesus on the cross and stretched His arms from one end of the cross-beam to the other. I could see that He was sore, stiff and cramping from the beatings, flogging and torture He endured.

"We positioned Jesus' torso so His buttocks could sit on the piece of wood, protruding like a crude seat halfway down the vertical-beam.

"We pressed one two-inch-diameter-head by seven-inch-long-shaft spike against a thin square piece of wood, and hammered the sharp nail to His left wrist, boring a hole through the cross-beam.

"Each hammer stroke driving the spike through wood, flesh and lumber caused Him to wince in intense agony.

"We pressed a second spike against another piece of wood, and hammered the sharp nail to His right wrist, boring a hole through the cross-beam.

"Each hammer stroke driving the spike through wood, flesh and lumber caused Him to cry with excruciating pain.

"We positioned His feet atop one another, and hammered a third spike to a square piece of wood into His heel, drilling a hole through the vertical-beam.

"Each hammer stroke driving the spike through wood, flesh and lumber caused Him to yell out in anguish.

"I could see that the three spikes boring into Jesus' left wrist, drilling in His right wrist and driving through His heel caused sharp pain throughout His entire body.

"And then there was the constant pressure of that sharp crown of thorns on His head, probably feeling like many daggers piercing into His scalp.

"Four of my men — two on each side — raised the cross with a rope, while two other soldiers steered it in the pre-dug hole where the crosses of other countless convicted men were placed.

"The vibrated thud from the cross quickly descending into the deep hole must have caused Jesus' bones in His arms and legs to disjoint.

"The cross swayed just for a moment — eventually righting itself as it pointed toward the heavens.

"The contravening effect of three spikes restraining Jesus' own body weight stapled to the cross was painfully tortuous. As the cross gently rocked back and forth in the spring breeze, this excruciating pain must have intensified.

"His Blood flowed freely from the cross.

"Jesus' legs, positioned in a squatting posture thus allowing Him to discreetly urinate, pointed toward the right direction of His torso."

Endured The Pain

"We offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh, but He refused to take anything to alleviate the pain.

"As I had seen many crucified men do before, Jesus periodically pushed Himself up toward the top of the cross

to prevent suffocation and ease the pain from His extended arms. Yet this still caused excruciating pain from the spike in His heels."

Pilate's Placard

"Meanwhile, Governor Pilate ordered us to advertise Jesus' charge on a placard and mount it on top of His cross.

"Since Jesus was crucified near Jerusalem, Pilate commanded that we write 'the King of the Jews' inscription in Hebrew, Greek and Latin.

"The religious folks gathered at Golgotha Hill to cheer on Jesus' death objected to 'the King of the Jews' label.

"These Chief Priests and Jews went to Pilate at the Judgment Hall and protested vehemently, but the Governor reportedly told them 'What I have written, I have written.'"

Cheap Entertainment

"While we crucified Jesus and were waiting for Him to die, we entertained ourselves.

"We divided up His clothes into four parts, but only gambled for the undergarment, a seamless exquisite cloth woven in one piece from top to bottom.

"Let's not tear it,' we remarked to one another. 'Let's decide by lot who will get it.'

"We rolled the dice to let chance decide who would own it. It didn't take long for that question to be answered.

"When this cheap form of entertainment was over, we simply sat down — quite bored. We kept watch over Him and from time to time, rustled bystanders away so they wouldn't interfere with the crucifixion.

"Amazingly, Jesus still had the physical strength and presence of mind to talk to His family and friends. He even had a conversation with the other malefactors (one on each side) who were crucified with Him.

"We offered Jesus wine mixed with myrrh a second time, but again He refused to take anything to ease His pain."

'It Is Finished'

"A considerable time transpired — but ever so slowly. It is a terrible thing to watch a man die, especially so slowly.

"At what looked like to have been the moment of death, Jesus said He 'was thirsty.'

"For the third time we offered Jesus something to drink. Someone soaked a sponge in a jar of wine vinegar and lifted it on the stalk of a hyssop plant to His lips.

"Another suggested that we leave Jesus alone to see if some dead Jewish prophet of old named Elijah would supernaturally come and save Him.

"When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, He declared 'It is finished.'

"Even though it was actually midday, it had already become very dark — as dark as midnight. But when Jesus uttered the three words: 'It is

finished,' the darkness seemed more penetrating and the winds suddenly billowed as I have never seen it storm before. The ground shook violently and the rocks split, chasing many bystanders away from Golgotha Hill.

"The loud rippling and cracking noise of uprooted trees toppling over on the ground could be heard and seen everywhere.

"It was as if all of nature was somehow effected by or protesting the misdeeds done to this Man today!

"I tried not to show any fear. But since my men were covering so much in fright they failed to notice that I too for a moment lost my soldierly composure.

"The agonizing and tortuous ordeal of crucifixion, considered by some to be one of the most brutal methods of execution ever devised by man, normally lasts for three days — sometimes even longer. But Jesus survived the cross for just six hours.

"Nature became serene again. I reminded myself that I had to carry on with my duty."

Jesus Was Dead

"I wanted to go back to the barracks and cry, or get drunk, or find a woman — do something to take my mind off of the days events.

"But I sensed that what agitated, disturbed and bothered me so could not be cured by my self-pity, self-absorption nor self-glorification. It seemed as if this dying Man is the only One who would or could truly absolve me from me.

"To hasten the deaths of the crucified men, members of my detail broke their legs and then went to brake Jesus' legs. They saw He had already died.

"However, we were unsure because the darkness and earthquake distracted and feared us.

"To verify whether Jesus was dead or just clinging on to life, another soldier pierced Him in the side with a spear. Blood and water flowed from His heart. It was obvious that Jesus was indeed dead."

He Was 'The Son of God'

"Although from time to time my duty as a Roman Centurion required that I command a crucifixion detail, I still regretted that I was the one in charge of crucifying the condemned Jesus that day.

"And yes I feel remorse, regret and guilt for being part of Jesus' death. But strangely enough even though I was taking orders from my superiors, I believe that I was merely an instrument of some Higher command.

"When I as well as those soldiers guarding 'the King of the Jews' at the crucifixion site with me, saw the earthquake, witnessed what happened and experienced the events which occurred on Golgotha Hill that day, we feared greatly.

"I Praised God. Not only did I remark that this was a Righteous Man, I also acknowledged that truly this was the Son of God!"

Robber seeks, receives forgiveness

First man obtains atonement from sins

A robber was forgiven through Jesus Christ's death, insist His converts after overhearing a conversation between Him and the crucified criminal.

Jesus' sacrificial act, the result of recently-fulfilled events foretold by Israelite prophets in their writings centuries earlier, paved the way for Jew and Gentile alike to seek and attain atonement, these converts assert.

Based upon Mosaic Law, Levitical Priests were considered mediators between God and man. But these consecrated men offering animal sacrifices on behalf of their flock is now useless, Jesus' believers claim.

Furthermore, they state, the burnt, grain, fellowship, sin and guilt offerings, various rituals which heretofore have proven difficult for anyone to comply with, are now unnecessary.

But even before Jesus commended His Spirit — sanctioning a new remission of sins ritual based simply on the penitent asking God forgiveness through His Son — the crucified robber executed with Jesus received complete absolution.

This is how the penitent thief's sins were pardoned that day on Golgotha Hill, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

At the time Jesus suffered on the cross, several convicted robbers were crucified with Him, Roman soldiers, Jewish religious leaders and many others attested.

And in the same way which Jesus' detractors vilified Him so did the malefactors, heaping all kind of insults on the Nazarene, eyewitnesses observed.

One unidentified robber on Jesus' left scoffed at Him.

"Aren't You the Christ," the convicted man was reported to have asked Jesus.

"If so, why don't You save Yourself, and us too," he mocked, gasping in pain while pushing himself up to prevent suffocation.

But the other malefactor on the Nazarene's right seemed to be more penitent of his wrongdoings, bystanders noted. He sharply rebuked the other convict for disrespecting Jesus so.

"Don't you fear God," he asked his partner in crime.

"Since you are under the same sentence, we are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this Man has done nothing wrong," he said, gasping in pain.

The robber who revered and defended Jesus that day also sought absolution and immortality from Him.

"Jesus, remember me when You come into your Kingdom," he requested, an obvious reference to his belief that Jesus could grant converts immortality.

"I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise," Jesus said.

Jesus told disciples countless times that His death would confirm the process whereby those around the world, as well as the countless millions who would come after them, will be able to personally seek and obtain remission of sins.

Based upon this prophecy, the first man to receive forgiveness-of-sins-through-Jesus'-death-doctrine would be but one of many converts.

David foretells Messiah's sufferings

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

"Why are You so far from saving Me, so far from the words of My groaning?"

"O My God, I cry out by day, but You do not answer, by night, and am not silent.

"Yet You are enthroned as the Holy One; You are the praise of Israel.

"In You our fathers put their trust; they trusted and You delivered them.

"They cried to You and were saved; in You they trusted and were not disappointed.

"But I am a Worm and not a Man, scorned by men and despised by the people.

"All who see Me mock Me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads:

"He trusts in the Lord; let the Lord rescue Him. Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him."

"Yet You brought Me out of the womb; You made Me trust in You even at My

Editor's note: The tortuous sufferings of the Messiah, experienced today by the Son of God yet foretold with stunning accuracy centuries earlier when Israelite King David wrote these 21 verses of the 22nd Psalmic Scroll to the Chief Musician, is chronicled here. Jesus Christ of Nazareth, 28th descendant of King David, is that Messiah, many believe after so witnessing all the miracles, hearing His teachings and seeing the Golgotha Hill crucifixion.

Mother's breast.

"From birth I was cast upon You: from My Mother's womb You have been My God.

"Do not be far from Me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

"Many bulls surround Me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle Me.

"Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against Me.

"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint.

"My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within Me.

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to the

roof of My mouth; You lay Me in the dust of death.

"Dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evil men has encircled Me, they have pierced My hands and My feet.

"I can count all My bones; people stare and gloat over Me.

"They divide My garments among them and cast lots for My clothing.

"But You, O Lord, be not far off: O My Strength, come quickly to help Me.

"Deliver My life from the power of the dogs. Rescue Me from the mouth of the lions;

save Me from the horns of the wild oxen..."

Jesus dies in His own time

Yields to death only after completing earthly work

After the interrogations, beatings, torture, floggings, then crucifixion, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who sacrificed Himself for man on a wooden cross, voluntarily yielded up His Spirit.

Inexplicable astronomical, meteorological and seismic events — midday darkness, ferocious winds and a violent earthquake — coincided with His death, Jerusalem residents and visitors alike so witnessed.

For three uninterrupted hours an eerie darkness swallowed the entire land, then suddenly on the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice.

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" He yelled in Aramaic, which means: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

When some of those standing nearby heard this, they said Jesus was calling for one of the dead prophets.

"Listen, He's calling Elijah [the Tishbite]," they speculated.

"I thirst," Jesus gasped.

Immediately one man ran, got a sponge, soaked it in wine vinegar, put it on a stick and lifted it to Jesus' swollen, parched lips.

"Now leave him alone and let's see if Elijah comes to save Him and take Him down," the rest said.

'Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit' — Jesus Christ of Nazareth

When He had received the drink, Jesus declared "it is finished," called out with a loud voice again and said: "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit."

He then bowed His head, breathed His last breath and gave up His Spirit.

All of the sudden a boisterous wind and violent earthquake split rocks, hurled boulders and uprooted trees.

At that very moment, the 60-foot high inner curtain at Jerusalem Temple — separating the "Holy Place" from the "Holy of Holies" — was torn into two

pieces from top of the ceiling to the bottom of the floor, anonymous Temple attendants reported.

When the Centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, and those who were guarding the crucified Nazarene with him, all saw how He died and what had happened that day, they were terrified. Yet they praised God what happened.

"Surely this was a righteous Man," the Centurion said. "Surely He [Jesus] was the Son of God," they all exclaimed.

The people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place. They beat their breasts and went away.

But all those who knew Jesus, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee to care for His needs, watched these things from afar.

In addition to Mary Magdalene, Mary (Mother of James and Joseph) and the Mother of Zebedee's sons, many other women — who had come up with Jesus to Jerusalem — were also there and witnessed the spectacular events on Golgotha Hill.

Jesus' death causes chaos; Religious leaders object to Pilate's placard

Darkness, winds, earthquake, and torn Temple curtains strikes fear in all

An ominous, eerie darkness swallowed the land for three continuous hours this afternoon, coinciding during the time which Jesus Christ of Nazareth was crucified.

No one from the science community could explain why.

At about 3:00 p.m., a violent earthquake, shaking Jerusalem and the surrounding area, split rocks, hurled boulders and uprooted trees, causing minor damages to people's homes, businesses and other building, civil authorities reported.

The 60-foot tall veil in Jerusalem Temple was torn from top to bottom, according to priests on duty then.

No fatalities were reported, just the

condemned men who died on Golgotha Hill.

Jesus was crucified for proclaiming to be the "King of the Jews," a spokesperson from Judean Governor Pontius Pilate office confirmed of the execution which triggered afternoon darkness, earthquakes and torn Temple curtains.

Few, if any, seemed to actually know why Governor Pilate ordered Jesus' execution, accept to please the Jewish religious community and quell urban discontent.

Governor Pilate ordered the Roman Crucifixion Crew to write on a placard and attach to the cross the reason why Jesus was executed.

There was some disagreement among those who witnessed the crucifixion as to what it said.

"The placard read: 'This is Jesus, the

King of the Jews,' said one man.

"No it didn't," replied another. "It read: 'The King of the Jews.'"

One lady said she was closer than the other two. "The placard read: 'This is the King of the Jews,'" she insisted.

Another man said the placard indicated where Jesus hailed. "I saw 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.'"

The only agreement of the four versions spotted was the statement Jesus was "King of the Jews," a phrase which upset the Chief Priests and the Jews.

"Do not write 'King of the Jews,'" they petitioned, since that was what Jesus was pretending to have claimed.

"I have written what I have written," Judean Governor Pontius Pilate said with authoritative resoluteness, dissuading the Priests and Jews — or anyone else for that matter — from pressing the matter any further.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Son of God, Messiah, incarnate Man and loving Son, crucified at 33

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Son of God, prophesied Messiah sent as incarnate Man to sacrifice Himself for all of humanity, died on a Roman cross by the hands of the Jews.

He was 33.

As the 28th descendant of Israelite King David, Jesus was supernaturally conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit at the time His virgin mother Mary (daughter of Heli) was betrothed to Joseph (son of Jacob).

The Baby Jesus was born in a Bethlehem stable and during the early years of His life, resided in Egypt with His parents to escape King Herod's infantical rage.

Following the death of King Herod, Father Joseph was Angelically-directed in a dream to relocate his family and settle at Nazareth — hence the "Nazarene" designation, the city where Jesus grew up.

Maturity Beyond Years

Not much is known about Jesus' childhood — except that His intelligence and maturity were beyond His years. Jerusalem Temple teachers reported, recalling an incident which happened 18 years before the start of His ministry.

When Jesus was 12-years-old, Father Joseph and Mother Mary took Him to Jerusalem to celebrate in that year's Feast of the Passover. At the conclusion of the celebration, Jesus' parents mistakenly returned home without Him, assuming that He was among their relatives and friends.

Once the frantic parents discovered after a day's journey that Jesus was not with the caravan, they returned to Jerusalem and anxiously searched for their Son everywhere.

Unbeknownst to Joseph and Mary, the young Jesus was safe and sound at Jerusalem Temple Courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them probative questions.

Everyone who heard Jesus speak, debate and discourse with the Mosaic Law Teachers back then were amazed at His keen understanding and answers He gave them.

Jesus was perplexed that Mother Mary and Father Joseph searched for Him everywhere else but didn't think to look for Him first at Jerusalem Temple, where He had been for three days.

Ministerial Preparation

Eighteen years transpired until news about Jesus would surface again, during the time John — whose Mother Elizabeth was related to Jesus' Mother Mary — preached and baptized penitent people in the Jordan River.

While John (called the Baptist) was immersing converts in the water one afternoon, he looked up and saw from afar the Nazarene walking toward him.

"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world," John declared, exhorting everyone who was in earshot to acknowledge the deity of his cousin Jesus.

Jesus came closer to the river's edge and asked John to baptize Him. Yet his cousin was initially reluctant to do so. But when the fiery-eyed prophet finally complied, a most amazing thing happened, those who were witnessing the scene testified.

Editor's note: Jesus' conception, birth, maturation, ministerial preparation, miracles, teachings, crucifixion and death is summarized in this panegyric — and exalted written oration of praise — and is not intended to refute His resurrection, an event which would occur three days after death.

As he had done before with many other converts, John lowered Jesus in the Jordan River and raised Him up again. But unlike the others, something inexplicably occurred after Jesus' baptism.

Immediately, heaven tore open and the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a gentle white dove, fluttered His wings and hovered over Jesus' head.

"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased," the voice of the Lord God Almighty was reported to have said.

While bystanders were still enthralled at what they had just witnessed, Jesus was observed walking toward the feared and respected Judean Desert, an arid wasteland renowned for its intense heat, blistering, sand-blinding wind and wild animals.

Facing the elements wasn't the only challenge the 30-year-old Jesus faced. Fasting and praying in the wilderness also came with temptations, sources close to the Nazarene would learn and publicly disclose later.

Banished from heaven as Lucifer aeons ago for conspiring to be like the Lord God Almighty, Satan gleefully tested his nemesis, Jesus.

But the Nazarene emerged from His Judean Desert fast with still His Godlike (yet incarnate-man) character intact, withstanding all which Satan threw at Him.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who like Moses, the Servant of the Lord, Joshua son of Nun and Elijah the Tishbite did before Him, successfully completed His 40-day fast. He was now ready to embark on His predestined and preordained three-year ministry.

The Miracle-Worker

Jesus performed His first miracle during a wedding feast in Cana, the banquet master and guests attested. Amazingly the miracle-worker transformed 180 gallons of water into exquisitely-tasting vintage wine.

During the next few weeks, Jesus became quite popular, healing all kinds of people from their ailments, sicknesses and diseases.

Jesus didn't work alone, though.

During the early period of His ministry, the Nazarene eventually recruited 12 disciples to follow Him, teaching them about theology and spiritual matters as well as having them assist Him in ministry.

Credited for expelling demons from their human hosts, Jesus also resurrected three people from the dead on three separate occasions.

The teenage daughter of Jairus, president of Capernaum's influential Synagogue Elders Association, was the first one Jesus revived.

At the time this dead-raising miracle was but a rumor because Jesus imposed a gag order on Jairus and his wife. But when people witnessed Jesus dramatically resurrect a Nain young man and then Lazarus of Bethany, doubters were finally convinced that Jesus revived Jairus' daughter as well.

Jesus helping the sick, curing the ailing and healing the brokenhearted was not done for His own carnal self-aggrandizement, but to aid common people and demonstrate to others that He truly was the Son of God.

Possessing the power even to control and manipulate the forces of nature, Jesus stopped a storm, speedwalked on water at night and invoked the power to instantly move the disciple-filled fishing boat from the middle of the Sea of Galilee about four miles to the Gennesaret shore.

Jesus also caused a four-drachma coin to inexplicably appear in the mouth of the first fish which disciple Simon Peter was instructed beforehand to catch in the Sea of Galilee.

But one of the miracle of miracles people witnessed and partook in during His three-year ministry involved food!

On two separate occasions, Jesus fed a multitude from just paltry provisions. Five thousand men were fed at a Bethsaida mountainside from five barley loaves and two tiny fish. Weeks later Jesus duplicated this miraculous feat. From just seven loaves and a few small fish, 4,000 men ate on a mountainous hill near the Sea of Galilee.

The 9,000 total men who partook during these two miraculous feedings are conservative estimates. Given the ratio of women and children — compared to that of men — who congregate at public gatherings, the estimated crowds for those two days could have been two to three times more, some surmise.

The Teacher

But Jesus was more than just a miracle-worker, His followers reminded *The Testament Spectator*, referring to the Rabbi regularly teaching the people in parables, short stories intended to illustrate profound moral and spiritual truths.

Self-educated and conversant in Mosaic Law, Jesus frequently challenged Jewish religious tenets, rules and regulations during His teachings and preachings.

Jesus the Rabbi taught that the nature of people's hearts, what they think, how they act and treat others is more significant to the Lord God Almighty than just obeying Mosaic Law.

Jesus' revolutionary, quite different,

higher-standard theology demanded a higher morality from the people. Heretofore religious teachers had not expected their flock — nor themselves for that matter — to meet such a standard.

Many times and on many occasions Jesus' critics, skeptics and detractors alike attacked Him. Not only did they attempt to dominate, manipulate and intimidate Him, but they also tried to discredit His ministry and undermine His message.

But they were unsuccessful. In some cases Jesus made them look quite stupid with His clever comebacks to some of the foolish and fallacious questions they would ask.

Even during the last week of Jesus' life, the Pharisees, Herodians and Sadducees, who were admittedly astonished at His profound teachings, still attempted to entrap the Nazarene time, and time, and time again.

But Jesus' perceptivity, knowledge of scripture, education in Mosaic Law, and mental sharpness prevented the three groups from diminishing Him.

To some, Jesus must have been quite enigmatic; a perfect Man who maintained His perfection in an imperfect world, not succumbing to its corrupting influence; a powerful Man who wielded His power judiciously, never flaunting it; a solitary Man who knew just when to withdraw Himself from the masses and pray privately, in part to tap into His power source and in part to prevent those from manipulating and using Him.

Jesus was a humble, gentle, yet strong and intellectual Man; an emotional and empathetic Man — never hesitant to weep publicly.

Arrested, Tried, Crucified

Hailed "King of the Jews" by followers and assailed a religious and political agitator by Jewish religious leaders, Jesus frequently forewarned His followers that He would be a martyr. But they refused to believe that would happen to Jesus.

The end came as Jesus so foretold when the Nazarene allowed Himself to be taken into custody at the Garden of Gethsemane, where He said He could have put at His disposal more than 12 legions (72,000) of Angels.

Following Jesus' arrest, religious officials accused and charged Him for subverting the nation, opposing taxes and declaring Himself "Christ the King."

Although Pontius Pilate initially ruled that he "found no basis for a charge against Him," the Judean Governor, facing intense mob pressure instigated by determined zealous Jewish clerics, reluctantly sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion.

Even though Jesus was mocked, insulted, spat upon, flogged then crucified, separation from His Father was His most painful moment because He took the sin of the world upon Himself.

At death, Jesus Christ of Nazareth, Son of God, Messiah, incarnate Man and loving Son of Joseph the carpenter, was survived by Mother Mary; Aunt Mary; four half-brothers — James, Joseph, Simon and Judas; several half-sisters; 11 disciples, many friends and innumerable followers.

Quick Read: Jesus Christ's Miracles and Exploits

- Changed 180 Gallons Water to Wine
- Healed Countless Diseased People
- Exorcised Numerous Demons
- Resurrected 3 Dead People
- Stopped Sea of Galilee Storm
- Produced Coin in Fishes' Mouth
- Walked on Sea of Galilee
- Transported Ship 4 Miles
- Fed 5,000 from 5 Loaves, 2 Fish
- Fed 4,000 from 7 Loaves, Few Fish
- Withered Fig Tree
- Upped 600-Man Pass

Joseph of Arimathaea requests Pilate to entomb Jesus

Nicodemus assists burial

A rich and prominent member of the Great Sanhedrin pleaded to bury Jesus Christ of Nazareth, an aide from Judean Governor Pontius Pilate revealed.

The surprising Sanhedrin member who stepped forward and volunteered to lay Jesus to rest after the Nazarene's crucifixion was Joseph from Arimathaea.

It was not surprising that Joseph, described as a good and upright man, risked his reputation as well as his life and offered to bury Jesus, those who knew the influential man say.

As one who believed in the Nazarene's teachings, Joseph waited for the Kingdom of God as Jesus so foretold. But because Joseph feared the Jews, he became Jesus' secret disciple.

The night of Jesus' death happened to be Preparation Day, the eve of the Sabbath.

As one who had not consented with the Sanhedrin's decision and action to execute Jesus, Joseph boldly approached Pilate with a clear conscience.

Joseph asked Pilate that Jesus' Body be released to him, the Judean Governor's aide confirmed.

Considering Joseph's request premature because most men endure crucifixion for at least three days, Governor Pilate requested confirmation from the Roman Centurion in charge of the execution whether Jesus was still alive.

Once Pilate got the official word that Jesus was indeed pronounced dead, he granted permission to Joseph and released the Body to the man from Arimathaea, a Judean village located approximately 20 miles northwest of

Jerusalem in the hill country where the Israelite tribe of Ephraim once inhabited. But Joseph was not alone in the Jesus Christ of Nazareth burial mission, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and one of Jerusalem's most wealthiest and powerful men who questioned Jesus during a nighttime meeting just about three years earlier, was also concerned that Jesus would be unceremoniously buried in a mass grave.

Because of this possibility and the probability that Jesus might still be hanging on the cross during the hallowed Sabbath, Nicodemus decided without hesitation to assist Joseph.

Could the two prominent religious leaders volunteering to bury Jesus mean they have defected from the elite Great Sanhedrin?

Who knows? But High Priest Caiaphas might consider that Joseph and Nicodemus to be deserters.

Apparently it was untrue when High Priest Caiaphas stated in his "Justification For Jesus' Crucifixion" letter (see page 33) that Jesus' execution was "unanimously supported by all the members of the elite Jewish ruling council," pundits surmise.

Joseph was not involved in Jesus' execution and it appears that Nicodemus may have been absent during the Nazarene's trial, one can conclude after examining Sanhedrin attendance records.

When the bound Jesus was being transported to Caiaphas' palace, the disciple Simon Peter followed from afar, bystanders recall.

But one of the two Sanhedrin

members must have been that "unidentified disciple" accompanying the Galilee Sea fisherman, they allege.

Because while Peter stayed in Caiaphas' courtyard, this "unidentified disciple" was seen entering the palace gate, presumably to represent Jesus before the High Priest and Sanhedrin, some speculate, insisting that an outsider would have been prohibited entering a Sanhedrin closed-door meeting.

But no one knows for sure. What is certain is that shortly after Jesus' crucifixion, a man fitting Nicodemus' description, was seen buying 75 pounds worth of myrrh and aloes, a local unidentified merchant confirmed.

And Joseph was sighted purchasing yards of some clean linen cloth, the same merchant said.

How they buried our deceased Lord

"Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus of Jerusalem came to Golgotha Hill and lifted the cross from its pre-dug hole.

"They laid the cross, with our Lord Jesus' Body still stapled on it, to the ground.

"They untangled the crown of thorns from our Lord Jesus' blood-crusted hair and removed it from His head.

"They pruned the spikes from our Lord Jesus' left wrist, His right wrist, and His feet.

"They dislodged our Lord Jesus' Body from the cross.

"They carefully placed our Lord Jesus' Body on a cart with a stretcher,

Editor's note: Two women who accompanied Jesus of Nazareth from Galilee during His ministry and witnessed Him suffer and die, followed Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus of Jerusalem to the tomb. Emotionally drained from the longest, darkest and worst day of their lives, the women sat opposite the garden tomb and watched how their Lord Jesus' Body was laid in it.

which was already attached to it.

"They transported our Lord Jesus' Body to a new tomb, which no one had yet been laid.

"They laid Lord Jesus in the brand new sepulchre.

"They placed a napkin on our Lord Jesus' head, covering His face.

"They wrapped our Lord Jesus' Body in the strips of bandage linen cloth and anointed Him with spices, in accordance

with Jewish burial customs.

"They placed our Lord Jesus' body in Joseph's brand new tomb, which he had just chiseled out of the rock.

"They rolled a big stone in front of the sepulchre, hewn large enough to accommodate several more cadavers.

"The two men departed from the garden tomb in grief."

— Source: Mary Magdalene and Mary, Mother of Jesus

Religious leaders request security at Nazarene's tomb

Four-member Roman Guard to rotate every four hours

For the next three days and nights, a Roman Guard will be posted at Jesus Christ's tomb to prevent the Nazarene's disciples from stealing the Body and then falsely claim He rose from the dead, the Governor's press spokesman announced.

The four-member Roman Guard, scheduled to rotate every three hours, was requested by Jewish religious leaders when they easily convinced Judean Governor Pontius Pilate that it would be prudent ordering the cordoning of Jesus' tomb to prevent intrusion from religious fanatics or political agitators.

"Sir, we remember that while He [Jesus] was still alive that Deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again,'" the Chief Priests and the Pharisees apprised the Governor.

"So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day," the Jewish religious leaders were reported to have suggested to Pilate during this impromptu meeting which they had with the Judean Governor after Preparation Day.

The Jewish religious leaders further feared that Jesus' disciples might steal the Body and tell the people that He has been resurrected.

"This last deception will be worse than when Jesus claimed He was the Messiah," one member of the Jewish religious delegation surmised.

It didn't take much to convince Governor Pilate that this would be the wise thing to do. He recalled the mob scene at the "Stone Pavement" when the people chose Barabbas over Jesus. It would definitely be a problem for him if a Jesus disciple was audacious enough to steal a corpse so as to incite the people again.

Besides, the Governor's press spokesman further claimed while defending this most unusual decision, maintaining civil order was Pilate's top priority.

"Take a guard," Pilate commanded. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how."

Per Pilate precept, the Roman guard went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone in such a way so it would be detected if unauthorized persons entered the gravesite and tampered with or attempted to remove Jesus' Body.

The four Roman sentries, posted immediately after Governor Pilate issued his command, unrolled a thin cord and encircled the front with it around the large stone which encased Jesus' Body.

A small delegation of Chief Priests and Pharisees reluctantly ventured to Jesus' gravesite to inspect Roman security measures and were pleased at seeing the soldiers on guard duty.

"The sentries would dissuade anybody from carrying out any mischief or foul play," one remarked.

Jesus is alive!

Jesus Christ of Nazareth, crucified and entombed in a recently-chiseled cave just three days before, rose from the dead and has vacated His sepulchre.

That's what several women discovered on the first day of the week when they went very early in the morning to complete anointing Jesus' Body.

"He has risen! He is not here," announced one Angel, sitting on the rolled-away stone which was positioned to the right side of the open and empty burial cave.

"See the place where they laid Him," declared the other Angel, looking and pointing where Joseph of Arimathaea

they left very early in the morning to His tomb, transporting spices so they could complete the ritualistic process of anointing His Body.

"We asked each other 'who would roll the stone away from the entrance of the cave,'" one of the women said.

The women acknowledged that they didn't know why no one thought to ask some men to accompany them because the Roman Guards would not assist removing the heavy boulder. But as events would reveal, they didn't need their brethren nor the assistance of soldiers to roll the heavy stone back.

"When we approached the tomb, we saw that the stone had already been

'He has risen! He is not here! See the place where they laid Him'—Angelic Announcement

and Nicodemus of Jerusalem wrapped Jesus' Body in yards of linen and laid Him in the cave 72 hours before.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the Mother of James were astounded by this Angelic announcement, a story corroborated by Salome and Joanna plus several other women.

The women described the Angels as majestic, beautiful and radiant in embodiment. Their garments were so white — the brightness of the white gleamed like intense lightning, they described.

Just a few hours before, the women were mourning, emotionally drained after witnessing Jesus' crucifixion and death. Out of love and devotion for Him,

rolled away," one woman said, puzzled at finding Jesus' burial cave open and vacant.

"Then we entered and saw this young Man, dressed in pure white sitting on the right side of the large stone," she said.

The women weren't only perplexed at seeing two majestic Angels at the cave's opening. Fear enveloped them as well — particularly upon finding the four Roman soldiers not guarding, as they had expected, but laying inexplicably motionless on the ground.

The women entered the cave and bowed down with their faces pressed to the ground.

"Yes, yes, yes," another woman
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Jesus lives...

(Continued from Page 40, Column 4)

recalled. "That's when the two Angels told us not to be alarmed — but we were still afraid," she confessed.

The four-member Roman squad, posted by government and religious officials to ensure security against graverobbers, were cowering so much in fear on the dew-saturated ground they became like dead men.

"Why do you look for the living among the dead," the Angels asked them inquisitively, declaring that "Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified, is not here but risen."

The women said the two Angels reminded what Jesus told them about the Son of Man being arrested, placed "into the hands of sinful men, crucified and on the third day, raised again."

Even though now the women remembered what Jesus told them, they still trembled. Rising from the ground, they started to flee the tomb in bewilderment.

"Tell His disciples and also Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see Him, just as He told you,'" said the other Angel while the women were leaving.

The women departed the premises trembling, yet still very excited and buoyant at witnessing and stumbling upon this miraculous discovery.

"We didn't want to say anything to anybody — because we were so afraid," they confessed. "But we just couldn't keep the news to ourselves very long."

While the women scampered away, they discussed whether the disciples would actually believe in this Angelic-announcement-empty-tomb-Jesus-resurrection story.

Two conflicting stories explain empty tomb

Women claim resurrection, Romans blame graverobbers

It is true that Jesus Christ's Body isn't entombed in the recently-hewn cave, several women and some Roman guards agree.

Yet there are two conflicting versions of how the tomb really became empty, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

The women said they saw and talked with Jesus while the Romans, attempting to propagate a more conspiratorial explanation, blamed the Nazarene's followers for taking Jesus' Body.

"His disciples came during the night while we were asleep and stole Him away," said some Roman soldiers after going into the city, meeting the Chief Priests and Elders and reporting to them

The woman who led that early morning trek to the burial cave and discovered Jesus lives and had vacated His sepulchre was Mary Magdalene.

Jesus exorcised seven demons out of her while ministering in the Sea of Galilee area.

Other women with her were another named Mary, the Mother of James, Salome, Joanna plus several other women.

They peered in the cave and to their awestruck amazement, Jesus wasn't there.

His facial napkin and yards of linen, placed there by the prominent Joseph and the respected Nicodemus, lay undisturbed, the women alertly noticed.

"The Angel of the Lord told us to go quickly and tell His disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see

'For an Angel of the Lord came down from Heaven, went to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it' — One of the women

The women said the Angels appeared like lightning and described their clothes to be white as snow.

The four-member guards were so afraid they shook and became like dead men, the women recalled, refuting the Roman soldiers' claim that they were

Him," the women said, recounting their conversation with the Heavenly Being.

The women said they couldn't help but be afraid — still not as terrified as the Roman soldiers — yet they were still filled with joy.

As the women hurried away from the tomb and proceeded on their way to tell the disciples as Angelically instructed, Jesus Christ of Nazareth met and greeted them, Mary Magdalene claimed.

"We instantly knelt, clasped His feet and worshipped Him," she said after recognizing Jesus.

Telling them not to be afraid, the women said Jesus instructed them to inform the disciples that they were to rendezvous with Him in Galilee.

But when the 11 disciples, still hiding underground in Jerusalem and mourning Jesus' suffering, crucifixion and death, heard this resurrection news, they considered their words like utter nonsense and, to the disappointment of many, did not believe them.

'His disciples came during the night while we were asleep and stole Him away' — Roman soldiers

everything that had happened at Jesus' gravesite.

But the women who were at the sepulchre that early morning to finish anointing Jesus' Corpse with spices, testified seeing the three-day-entombed Christ alive again, after the resurrection was announced by two supernatural Heavenly Beings.

"There was a violent earthquake," recalled one of the women with excitement.

"For an Angel of the Lord came down from Heaven, went to the tomb, rolled back the heavy stone and sat on it," she said.

merely sound sleep.

"We were told by the Angel of the Lord to not be afraid," one woman said.

They revealed the Heavenly Being probably didn't want them to end up laying petrified on the ground like the Roman soldiers.

Pointing to where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of Jerusalem laid the Nazarene to rest three days earlier, the Angels said: "Jesus, who was crucified, is not here! He is risen, just as He said."

The Angels invited them to look inside to verify that Jesus had indeed arisen.

'I have seen the Lord,' says Mary Magdalene

Editor's note: On the third day following Jesus Christ's crucifixion, Mary Magdalene is the first person to see her resurrected "Rabboni." In Mary's fictitious narrative, she shares how she first met Jesus; her life with Him; the sorrow which His suffering and death caused her; the exhilaration she felt upon learning of His resurrection; her doubts; then relief of finally seeing and talking to her Lord.

"I have seen the Lord!

"That's what I told everyone after I saw the Lord Jesus Christ, but when they heard my story, no one believed me — that is until later.

"Maybe you who read my words for the first time will not doubt like they, and believe that Jesus Christ arose and is the Son of God!

"Before I tell my story, permit me to identify who I am and share some background about myself.

"Many of you know me as Mary Magdalene, because I'm from Magdala, a coastal city located about 10 miles south of Capernaum."

'I Am One Of Several...

...women Jesus healed of evil spirits and infirmities when He ministered in the Sea of Galilee area.

"I was so messed up before my powerful Lord cast out seven demons from me. And even though it's been more than two years since I've been set free, I still feel the same inner peace which I felt when my Lord Jesus freed me.

"After that day, I and the other women with me forsook all to serve Jesus. While my Lord ministered to hurting people everywhere, we supported Him by ministering to Him our very substance.

"We served our Lord Jesus and His 12 disciples in any way we could.

"Yes we did the mundane yet important things like cooking, washing and running errands for Him. We also helped Him minister to people. Considering what He did for us, could we do less?"

"We learned a lot from Jesus the Teacher. He taught us many things about Mosaic Law, about the Lord God Almighty, about 'the Comforter' and the Kingdom of God.

"He showed us that His own teachings fulfilled the law. He taught us how to love one another and about treating people right. He taught that we needed to examine our motives.

"I learned that the Lord God Almighty will judge me not on the law nor what rituals I adhere to, but what I think, how I act, how I treat others — that's what counts. I learned that what's in the heart of a man, woman, boy or girl is the true measure of a person.

"Oh, Jesus taught us so much and I learned so much from Him."

'Many Of Us Traveled...

...from town to town with our Lord Jesus.

"But the two women who were very close to me were Joanna, wife of Cuza who was the manager of Herod's household, and Susanna. We were just like sisters — no, closer than sisters

because we were sisters in faith.

"We saw many, many miracles and healings. During this time I saw people that were just like me — healed of evil spirits and infirmities and freed from demons.

"It was a wonderful time. Yes, it was a difficult and tiring time — being around all kinds of afflicted people pulling at you so they could get their needs fulfilled by my Lord. It was a time of learning. It was the best time in my life!

"It seemed as if the past months prepared me to withstand and endure and deal with the events of the past three days.

"Yes it was painful to watch Jesus suffer and die. In His teachings and preachings, my Lord Jesus warned us many, many times about His future. But I guess we just didn't listen and chose not to believe Him.

"I and my other sisters in faith mourned for Him. We felt an obligation to serve Him — even after death.

"That's why we went to the tomb that morning to finish anointing His Body.

"Oh dear, look at how the Lord honored me!

"Who would have imagined that such a scared, sinful young woman from Magdala would have been the first to see Jesus after He arose from the dead?"

"Just think, the Son of God first revealing Himself to me — Mary Magdalene!

"My Lord Jesus calling my name! My Lord Jesus trusting me to carry an important message to the disciples!"

'Before I Get...

...ahead of myself and become overwhelmed with emotion, let me take a deep breath and tell you how I learned that Jesus lives.

"Rather than begin with what is probably the end when I first saw my Lord and thought He was the gardener, I should start at the beginning.

"It was the first day of the week when I met and talked with my Lord Jesus. But yes, this was when I returned to the tomb the second time. (Oh gosh, let me stop, pause and start at the very, very, very beginning.)

"Okay, the first time I went to Jesus' burial cave was with the other women, that's it. It was very early in the morning — still dark.

"While we carried spices to the tomb to anoint our Lord's Body, I recalled us asking one another 'who would roll the stone away.'

"Because our hearts were heavy at seeing Jesus suffer and die, we just weren't thinking clearly. We should have asked some of the brethren to join us, because we knew the Roman guards weren't going to help us roll the heavy stone away from the cave's entrance.

"As we arrived, I felt an earthquake and saw the Roman guards lying like dead men on the ground. We were afraid — very fearful of the quaking earth and the dead-looking guards. There in the open and empty cave, were two Angels. We bowed ourselves in worship.

"They told us not to fear. One of the

(Continued on Page 42, Column 1)

'I have seen the Lord,' — Mary Magdalene...

(Continued from Page 41, Column 4)

two Angels sitting on the large stone said the crucified Jesus 'is not here.' They told us again to not fear.

"The other said Jesus 'is risen as He said.' We were told to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee. We hastily departed the area and returned to the city, right at the time the risen sun was peeping over the horizon."

'While We Were...

...walking back, we expressed fear and hesitancy at sharing with anyone. But after we saw the others, we ended up telling everyone to stop mourning His crucifixion and death.

"He is alive! He is alive! He is alive," we told them over, and over, and over again. But they considered our story to be utter nonsense and did not believe us.

"When Peter and John heard our astounding and wonderful news, they ran swiftly to the tomb, I followed and the other women trailed way behind me. But the two men didn't stay very long at the sepulchre. I arrived just in time to see them look cautiously in the cave. Peter walked in for a closer look, and John followed. They quickly left without saying a word to me. I guess they went back to the Jerusalem home where they had been lodging."

'Was Jesus Really Alive...

...If He was, would Peter, John and the others meet Him at Galilee as the

Angels commanded? Maybe someone stole His Body? These were but some of the questions which came to mind.

"I began to doubt the Angelic messengers. The joy I initially felt upon hearing about Jesus' resurrection, changed to sorrow. I was confused. I asked myself how could Peter and John leave me standing there, crying by myself at the empty tomb?"

"As I reflect, I guess I was a little angry at them. Now I know how Jesus must have felt for those who were so close to Him — including myself — abandoning Him and leaving Him alone.

"I really can't blame them for leaving me. They were mourning our Lord's death, too. Peter felt awfully bad — having denied the Lord three times during the night of Jesus' trial.

"But we probably couldn't have done anything to help Jesus anyway. Everything happened as He so foretold. But that still doesn't change the fact that all of His followers still abandoned Him!

"But as I would soon find out, I wouldn't be alone much longer."

'Even Though I Wept...

...I didn't lose all hope. I peeked inside Jesus' vacated sepulchre again. I don't know what I really expected to see.

"Maybe I envisioned seeing Jesus' dead Body laying as Joseph and Nicodemus had so tenderly and reverently placed Him. I wouldn't have been relieved to see that.

"When I bent over and looked in the tomb, a bright light shone from the inside and between my weeping tears, I saw the very two Angels who appeared to us before.

"Again, there they were, graced in white, one seated at the head where Jesus' Body rested and the other sitting at the foot.

"The Angels glistened so brightly, their garments gleamed like lightning — just like before. They asked why was I crying. I told them someone had taken away my Lord Jesus' Body; and I don't know where they laid Him.

"I sniffed because I detected a very sweet aroma, like perfume filling the air. I then sensed a very warm presence behind me.

"I forgot about the two Angels in the cave. I quickly turned around and saw a Robed Man standing near the open sepulchre, but I did not realize that it was my Lord Jesus. He asked me why I was crying and who I was seeking?"

"I had supposed the Robed Man was just the gardener. Maybe He was someone who was responsible for the disappearance of Jesus' Body.

"I pleaded with Him that if He had carried my Lord Jesus away as I suspected, to tell me please where He had put Him, and I will get Him.

"After I accused Him of being a grave robber, my Lord Jesus identified Himself.

"Mary, my Lord said so gently in a way no one before has ever called me.

"I instantly recognized His voice. I moved closer to Him and said 'Rabboni,' which means 'Master' in Aramaic.

"I couldn't help but cry for joy.

"When I hugged my Lord Jesus so tightly, He told me not to hold onto Him. He said He had not yet returned to the Father. He told me to tell My brothers that He is returning to His Father, who is our Father, and to His God, who is our God."

"I obeyed Him — stepped back and bowed before Him reverently.

"By this time, my sisters in faith who were much farther behind me than I thought finally arrived. They instantly recognized Him, knelt and worshipped Him too.

"We immediately departed and went to the disciples the second time with the news about His resurrection. I told them, 'I have seen the Lord!'

'I Have Seen The Lord...

...I saw Him when He cast seven demons from me. I saw Him heal people, perform miracles, teach and preach. I saw Him in the way He lived. I saw Him how He helped people. Yes, I saw Him when He suffered and died. I saw Him being laid in the garden tomb. And I was the first to see Him when He arose from the dead.

"I, Mary Magdalene, have seen the Lord, but my Lord first saw me."

Simon Peter says he did not see the Lord

Editor's note: On the third day following Jesus Christ's crucifixion, Simon Peter, Son of Jonas, says he did not see his resurrected Lord. In this fictitious narrative, Peter shares — while he and John run to Jesus' tomb — his thoughts; how he first met Jesus; his experiences of the past two years; the guilt he felt at denying Him thrice; the apprehension of facing Jesus yet desire to reconcile with Him.

"Maybe He saw me but unlike Mary Magdalene and the other women, I did not see the Lord.

"But I, Simon Peter, son of Jonas, still believe — oh God I want to really believe — that my Lord Jesus did arise from the dead!

"If He did — He must be the Christ, the Son of the living God, as I correctly answered when He asked us all once who do people say that He is."

'Where Was I...

...the first day of the week when I heard Mary Magdalene and the other women tell us Jesus Christ of Nazareth is resurrected? I was at a Jerusalem home, hiding and mourning my Lord's death, like everyone else.

"They just returned from the tomb and told everything that happened — about going to anoint Jesus, about the earthquake, the Roman guards lying on the ground, the two Angels and the missing Body.

"I'm ashamed to admit it, but I, as well as the 10 disciples and those mourning with us, did not believe Mary nor did we trust the word of the other women.

"Their words seemed like utter nonsense. But I still wanted to believe them and, yes, see for myself.

"I left the house in Jerusalem and sprinted to the tomb. John, son of Zebedee and brother of James, ran quickly with me.

"Because it was still quite early, no one was on the streets. The merchants hadn't opened their shops yet. No pedestrians, shoppers, or horse-drawn

wagons; no cargo-carrying-camels, soldier-mounted-horses nor supply-laden-donkeys got in our way as we darted through Jerusalem's hilly and winding streets."

'I Didn't Recall Until...

...after John and I started running. But Mary Magdalene said in her excitement something to the effect that we were to meet Jesus at Galilee.

"She said the Angels told them to tell the disciples 'and also Peter.'

"Ohhh myyy God! Why did the Angels specifically say my name? Was it because Jesus is angry at me for saying I didn't know Him? Awwww man!

"I wanted to believe that my Lord Jesus is alive, but at the same time I was hesitant, fearful and, yes, especially ashamed of facing Him because I denied Him not once, not twice, but three times!

"Oh Jesus, could you, would you ever forgive me?"

"But I wasn't the only one who abandoned Him. My other brethren ran away when He was arrested. They, like me, were hiding underground during His trial and execution. Sure some of us had the guts to venture to Golgotha Hill that dark and dreary afternoon, but we conveniently blended in the crowd.

"The two Angels at the tomb specifically mentioned me. They didn't mention John nor anybody else — but me.

"Maybe Jesus wanted me to know that He'd forgiven me? These questions filled my mind during this early morning run with John, the disciple who Jesus loved.

"We gradually made our way through Jerusalem's dusty streets. Because I was so out-of-shape, my lungs burned and my legs cramped. I had to slow down, but John was in much better shape than I. He continued the quick pace and went on ahead."

'As I Continued To Jog...

...slowly, my mind reflected on the first time I met Jesus. I and my business partners, John, Andrew and James, were fishing on the Sea of Galilee that morning. Jesus asked to use our boat as a floating platform so He could speak from it. There were so many people, standing on our boat was the only way they could see and hear Him.

"We allowed Jesus to use our boat because we were washing our nets at the time and didn't have much luck fishing anyway.

"While Jesus taught, we stopped working and listened. Jesus was saying some interesting things that caught our attention — teachings about the gospel of the Kingdom of God. And when He finished and the crowd disbursed, He told us to go fishing.

"Even though I told Him that we had been fishing all night but hadn't caught a thing, we complied. There was nothing to lose. We dropped our nets and when we pulled them up again, so much fish was flopping in the net the boat almost capsized.

"I and the others couldn't believe it. We were stunned yet appreciative and thanked Jesus for His help.

"Even from the very beginning, there was something different about this Man Jesus. I began to feel ashamed about the bad things I did in my life. I told Him to leave me alone because 'I am a sinful man.' But Jesus did the opposite. He asked me to follow Him instead — and I did."

'John Put Quite A Distance Between Us...

...but he looked back at me a couple times to see where I was. I could tell he wanted to wait for me but he was just too anxious to get to the tomb as quickly as he could. I don't blame him.

"As I jogged down the dusty road to my Lord's gravesite, I dodged roadside plants and low hanging branches. My mind reflected when Jesus healed my mother-in-law at Capernaum — it was right after I decided to follow Him.

"I remembered other miracles — when Jesus stopped the sea, resurrected Jairus' daughter from the dead, and fed 5,000 men, plus women and children, with just five loaves and two fish!

"I recalled Jesus speedwalking on the Sea of Galilee. And yes, you know that I wouldn't forget asking the Lord to walk on the water with Him. And when He said I could and beckoned me to join Him, I did so excitedly. I was doing pretty good for awhile — that is until I saw the wind and realized that I was walking in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. I stood there and terror gripped me, then I began to sink.

"Everyone who was there would remember me calling out to my Lord to save me from drowning. Of course, He did. Jesus was so patient with me. He just said I had 'little faith.'"

'Jesus Must Have...

...appreciated my attempts to believe in Him, His miracles and His teachings.

"I was the one who correctly identified my Lord as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God!' This all happened while we were on our way toward the villages of Caesarea Philippi about a year ago. "And because of my

(Continued on Page 43, Column 1)

Simon Peter did not see the Lord, but he would...

(Continued from Page 42, Column 4)

revelation, Jesus said that I was a small rock, and upon this larger rock, He would build His church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it! I certainly don't feel like a rock now. I feel like a pebble, blown by a desert wind spewing me in it."

'As My Mind Reflected...

...again about the events of the last two years, I can honestly admit that, sure, I blurted out things when I probably should have remained quiet — like when Jesus predicted His death and resurrection and I rebuked Him. He quickly rebuked Satan that caused me to say those things.

"I guess I can't stop running at the mouth. It's just my personality. The Lord must have loved me in spite of me, because He always wanted me to tag along with Him, despite my shortcomings.

"As I jogged along my mind reflected about the time when we went to a mountain for prayer.

"I should have remained quiet then as well. I guess I can now share this story since the women reported Jesus arising from the dead and He said not to reveal this incident until after His resurrection. If Jesus is alive, I guess I'm not breaking a secret.

"Well anyway, I know that it's kind of hard to believe but somehow the deceased Moses resurrected and the late

Elijah returned from heaven. The two great men supernaturally appeared and talked with Jesus. I didn't know what to say — so I suggested that we build three shelters for them — one for Jesus, another for Moses and a third for Elijah.

"Bad idea. Looking back, I guess I should have remained quiet like James and John did, but I felt like I had to do something, say something, offer something to these three great men.

"Well, I did and because of my forwardness, I disturbed the mood and all of a sudden, Moses and Elijah entered a cloud and disappeared right in front of us.

"Apparently my suggestion didn't totally disturb that holy moment. Because the Lord God Almighty spoke from the clouds and said for us to listen to Jesus for 'This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased.'

"I guess other renown prophets, ordained priests or self-proclaimed holy men would have cheved-me-out, but not Jesus. He was oh so patient with me."

'I Had Slowed Down...

...to a brisk walk by now. John was out-of-sight.

"Panting and gasping for air, I was fatigued and excited; fearful and, yes, curious about what I would encounter, see and find at the tomb.

"Jesus said He would arise again — so that's it. Why doubt? Why disbelieve? He resurrected three others from the dead? I already mentioned Jairus'

daughter, but there was also a young man from Nain and then Lazarus of Bethany.

"He performed all kind of healings and countless miracles — such as causing a coin to appear in a fish's mouth and during His arrest, reattaching a man's ear which I cut off clumsily with my sword in the Garden of Gethsemane in a vain and unnecessary attempt of trying to protect Him.

"Again, as I jogged I reflected on my shortcomings. I should have been more vigilant, rather than fall asleep while Jesus was praying before His arrest.

"I recalled that last evening, Jesus said I would deny Him three times before the cock crowed, because He knew I'd fail Him. Would He still hold it against me?

"No, He's not that kind of Man. Jesus was a man of His word — unlike I who covered in fear when the time came for me to proclaim to those people huddling around Caiaphas' courtyard campfire that I was His disciple. "My God: He's got to be alive!"

'I Finally Came To The....

...tomb. John had already arrived a few moments before. I wasn't too far behind as I initially thought, because he was still panting — probably for the same reasons as I — fatigue, excitement, fear and, yes, curiosity.

"It was true, the large stone had been rolled away as the women so told us. John stood there motionless. I guess he was waiting for me to take the lead.

"I bent over, looked in and saw the strips of linen lying by themselves. But Jesus' Body was not there.

"I didn't know what to think, but I wanted to inspect further. I entered the cave — very respectfully aware that the Son of the Living God had been buried there.

"I noticed that the burial cloth which was supposed to have been around Jesus' head was folded by itself — separate from the linen.

"John finally had the courage to enter the cave and see for himself. He looked inquisitively at the place where Jesus' Body laid.

"We left right at the time Mary Magdalene came running to the scene.

"I guess she had her doubts too, because rather than sticking to her resurrection story, she said they have taken the Lord out of the tomb and she didn't know where they put Him.

"Mary was crying, but we didn't stay to console her. Maybe we should have, but we didn't."

'We Went Away,

Confused, Wondering...

...what had happened. We ran into the other women on our way back.

"Unlike Mary Magdalene and the other women, I Simon Peter, son of Jonas did not see the Lord that morning, as John son of Zebedee would attest.

"But I wanted to see my Lord Jesus so I could ask Him to forgive me and tell Him I'm truly sorry that I denied Him."

Two Emmaus road travelers meet disguised Jesus

Disciples' skepticism perplexes Cleopas and Emmaus dinner group

A Man, who walked at midday with two travelers on the road to Emmaus, vanished during dinner that evening after He was recognized to be the resurrected Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

That's what Emmaus dinner guests say, confirming the report of several women, who, after meeting two Angels flanking the entrance of the open and empty burial cave earlier that morning, were told that Jesus lives.

How the travelers failed to recognize the resurrected Jesus while walking and talking with Him during the midday seven-mile trip from Jerusalem to Emmaus is indeed puzzling, the two men acknowledged.

One of the Emmaus road travelers named Cleopas must have known what Jesus looked like. As the father of James — one of the Nazarene's original 12 disciples — Cleopas was married to Jesus' aunt. How Cleopas didn't realize he was actually talking to his Nephew is mystifying.

The only logical explanation why Jesus' identity was cloaked is that for some inexplicable reason, the resurrected Lord appeared in a different form to them because He didn't want them or anyone in Emmaus to spot Him.

For it wasn't till Jesus took bread, blessed, broke and gave it to everyone reclined in their customary posture for eating — on the left side of a U-shaped, almost floor-level dining room table — that His identity really become known to the Emmaus dinner gathering.

"Our eyes opened and we immediately recognized Him," the

dinner guests said.

As soon as everyone knew it was indeed Jesus, the risen Lord dematerialized within the blink of an eye right in front of them.

Jesus' aura still radiated after He vanished, an Emmaus man alertly observed after patting the pillow ever-so-gingerly with his hand in awe as the cushion gradually inflated back to its non-occupied form.

In an instant moment, Jesus was gone — as if He was never there. But He was, as evident by what they saw, what He told them and, after the risen Lord

'Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He [Jesus] recounted to us what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself' — Cleopas and traveling companion

disappeared into thin air, the peaceful presence that permeated the room.

The men harbored no masculine emotional inhibitions when they saw the alive Jesus that evening. They cried for joy and even though the hour was late, decided immediately to share their good news with Jesus' followers.

The Emmaus dinner group quickly returned to Jerusalem and met with the disciples and others assembled at the large upper room.

Ever since Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples have been hiding behind locked doors for fear of the Jews, inside sources say.

And for some unknown reason one disciple (Thomas called Didymus) was absent, *The Testament Spectator* learned.

Unable to wait for Thomas' possible but doubtful arrival, Cleopas, his traveling companion and the other Emmaus dinner guests, couldn't contain themselves.

"It is true! It is true! It is true," they insisted about Jesus' resurrection "The Lord is risen indeed and has also appeared to Simon Peter."

The Emmaus dinner group, surprised that those who were closest to Jesus lacked faith and stubbornly refused to believe them, thought the disciples would be more receptive and less skeptical about the wonderful news.

In an attempt to convince Jesus' disciples that they had not just seen a vision, Cleopas and his Emmaus road traveling companion recalled in detail what happened.

The two men explained how Jesus initially appeared to them shortly after they left Jerusalem's city limits.

For a short distance the unidentified Man, completely robed except His face, walked behind Cleopas and his companion. The three headed toward Emmaus, a small village located southwest of Jerusalem.

Cleopas and his companion were talking about everything that happened the past few days when the robed Man, sensing their sorrow as they were en route, asked what the two were discussing.

"I inquired whether the Man was a visitor to Jerusalem and if He knew what happened there the past three days," said Cleopas, responding to them.

"What things," the Traveler asked them.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they said. "He was a Prophet — powerful in word and deed before God and all the people."

The pair explained to the robed Traveler about the Chief Priests and rulers remanding Jesus to the Romans, who in turn crucified Him.

"But we had hoped that He was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place," they said to the Traveler, referring to Jesus' foretold resurrection, a prophecy which they seemed to doubt would actually come to pass.

A little bit self-conscious of their unbelief, Cleopas and his companion admitted to the robed Traveler that some of their women amazed them this morning when they didn't find Jesus' Body at the tomb.

The two told Him that the women testified at seeing a vision of Angels after returning from Jesus' gravesite.

"Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women said," the two said, relating to the Traveler what Peter and another disciple discovered.

"But Him [Jesus] they did not see," the two men quickly added.

Cleopas said the robed Man told them they were foolish and slow of heart to believe all the Prophets have spoken.

"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things then enter His glory," He asked them.

"Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He [Jesus] recounted to us what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself," the two men related.

When the three finally arrived on the outskirts of Emmaus, the Man acted as if He were going farther.

"But we strongly encouraged Him to stay with us because it was nearly

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Vanishing...

(Continued from Page 43, Column 4)

evening and the day was almost over," they said.

The Robed traveling Man accepted their invitation for food and lodging, so the three proceeded to the Emmaus home.

Guests were already waiting for them and when they gathered to eat in the dining room, everyone noticed that the unidentified Traveler exuded such radiance, majesty, serenity, power and peace.

However no one ever thought He was the risen Jesus Christ of Nazareth — that is until after He performed this newly-adopted ritual, practiced for the first time just four nights before when Jesus distributed bread the same way to disciples during their last Passover supper together.

While Cleopas and his companion were sharing this story in Jerusalem, they became even more frustrated that those of Jesus' inner circle didn't believe them.

But the frustration of the two men would dissipate, because the risen Jesus Christ of Nazareth would soon appear to them yet a second time that evening, as many would see.

Thomas doubts resurrection

Disciple won't believe unless he sees Jesus' nail marks and wounded side

One of the 11 surviving disciples, who was not present when the resurrected Jesus first appeared to His followers, did not believe that the Christ was alive.

"We have seen the Lord," they told Thomas after seeing the alive Jesus supernaturally appear before them in Jerusalem on the evening of that first day of the week.

But Thomas, who is also called Didymus, didn't believe their report — not the women who met the resurrected Lord at the empty cave nor the Emmaus dinner guests who saw Jesus vanish in thin air.

"Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe it," said Thomas emphatically, doubting their story.

Thomas would get his wish. A week later he was with the disciples in a house behind closed doors.

All of a sudden without warning, Jesus came through the locked doors. His resurrected Body moved through the door as if the solid matter was porous or the partition wasn't even there at all.

"Peace be with you," He said, standing among them.

Already aware of what Thomas said, Jesus asked the disciple to put his hands in His wounds.

"Put your finger here; see My hands; Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told Him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus Christ reappears to disciples behind locked doors; Eats broiled fish

Rebukes them for lack of faith

Hours after Jesus Christ disappeared in front of those gathered for dinner at an Emmaus home, He reappeared again to disciples locked behind closed doors seven miles away in Jerusalem.

This all happened on the evening of that first day of the week when Jesus' beleaguered followers, hiding underground for fear of the Jews, were listening to others share their experiences about seeing the risen Lord.

So many people were crammed in the large upper room, not everyone was able to comfortably recline at the U-shaped, almost floor-level dining table. Consequently, most stood against the wall to listen, yet no one seemed to mind the inconvenience.

While Cleopas, his traveling companion and the other Emmaus dinner guests, told them about being with and talking to the risen Lord earlier that evening, something inexplicable happened, those who witnessed this phenomena so attested.

All of a sudden in the only empty area of the room, the space rippled. Right toward the center of the U-shaped table, a bright light formed, enlarged and quickly illuminated the entire room.

Instantly, the silhouette of a Being materialized into the perfect embodiment of a Man who resembled Jesus — albeit more radiant than His earthly form.

Those at the table jumped up and scrambled back against the wall — pushing one another in the process and brushing against those who were already standing there.

Some scampered out the door in fear while other's almost fell over.

Those who remained in the room were mesmerized, fixated on what they initially thought was but some sort of a vision that resembled Jesus, who in turn was looking right back at them.

"Peace be with you," Jesus said warmly, exuding majesty and splendor befitting the Son of God.

Initially startled and frightened, the group in the room now thought they had seen more than a vision. They said Jesus was a ghost.

In an attempt to allay their fear, He asked them to come closer.

Jesus sensed their confusion and unbelief. He lowered His arms and feet, showing the wounds where just over three days before, three seven-inch-long

Those whose fear was allayed just a little, moved closer and saw that Jesus was indeed real, not the imaginary vision or the feared ghost.

Even after a closer examination of His wounds and gentle rebuke, some still did not believe He was alive. Others became overjoyed and expressed amazement.

"Do you have anything here to eat," Jesus asked unexpectedly, moving toward the table elegantly and relaxing on the cushion.

Someone gave Jesus a piece of broiled fish, which He took and ate in their presence.

Some sat reverently around Jesus and others cautiously positioned themselves around the table, watching His every

'Look at My hands and My feet. It is I Myself! Touch Me and see. A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have' — Jesus Christ

crucifixion spikes punctured His once fragile yet now resurrected flesh.

One-by-one-by-one, they all slowly moved from cowering against the wall back toward the table, which was the only barrier between them and Jesus.

There Jesus stood in the center of the room — waiting for them patiently.

"It is I Myself! Touch Me and see," He said. Jesus urged them to lower their guard, move just a little closer so they could get a better look. "A ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

Inquiring why they were still troubled and feared His resurrection, Jesus rebuked them for their lack of faith and stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

"Why do doubts rise in your minds," Jesus asked.

move.

Why Jesus wanted to eat now is a mystery. Some speculate He was just hungry and others opine He was scientifically proving to them that He wasn't a vision or ghost.

No one knows for sure. Jesus ate heartily that evening, those who were in attendance say.

After Jesus finished eating, He shared Scripture with them.

The Lord insisted that they preach to all nations, sharing His repentance and forgiveness of sins doctrine.

"As the Father has sent Me, I am now sending you," Jesus said, breathing on and imparting a blessing upon the gathering.

"Receive the Holy Spirit. But stay in Jerusalem until you have been clothed with power from High."

Graverobber's stealing Jesus' Body theory undergoes intense scrutiny

Mary's resurrection story more credible to accept

Many of Jesus' followers, still mourning His crucifixion and death, found Mary Magdalene's resurrection story more credible to believe than the guards' allegation that someone stole the Nazarene's Body while they slept.

Hopeful at hearing more about this phenomenal resurrection news, these followers recalled the Nazarene foretelling that He would arise three days after His crucifixion.

Perhaps Jesus' prophecy became true after all, they speculated optimistically.

Besides, how could a collection of scared fishermen and motley crew of middle-class men, untrained and inexperienced in military covert incursion, secretly enter a secure area undetected, those outside Jesus' inner circle theorize.

Even if they were trained and experienced, how could they still be able to quietly roll the big stone from the sepulchre, go in the cave and then neatly drag a dead body without even ruffling the many yards of clean burial linen cloth?

Furthermore, how could they transport Jesus' Body away without

being seen by irate Roman warriors and not leave a trace that they had been there, these diehard followers hypothesize.

To believe the Roman soldiers' tale of Jesus' missing body would cause anyone to disregard logic.

Why should anyone believe their story? These very same Roman soldiers probably participated in Jesus' arrest, torture, suffering and death, reminded the Nazarene's faithful, still hiding

Although the Jews were still befuddled at explaining the inexplicable, they were all too aware that Jesus commanded the dead Lazarus of Bethany to life about six weeks ago and was also responsible for two previous resurrections. But somehow the same unbelievable thing must have happened to Jesus.

For it seemed that when Jesus was resurrected by the power of the Holy Spirit, He arose through the many yards

'How could a collection of scared fisherman secretly enter a secure area undetected, quietly roll the big stone from the sepulchre, then neatly drag a dead body without ruffling the many yards of clean burial linen cloth'

underground and fearful of revealing their identity.

But a breathing, walking, talking and thinking resurrected dead man is even more unbelievable, retort many Jews who believe the guards' story.

Adding more skepticism to the Roman guards' story is an unconfirmed report that the Chief Priests and Elders actually paid these soldiers a large sum of money to incriminate the disciples, according to sources familiar with what was discussed during this hastily-convened closed-door meeting.

of burial covers which Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of Jerusalem so reverently and meticulously wrapped around Him.

"If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble," an unidentified Jewish religious official was overheard to have assured the soldiers they would defend them to Pontius Pilate should he find out and believe that Jesus resurrected.

So the soldiers took their money, did as they were instructed and blamed the disciples for stealing Jesus' Body.

Letters To The Editor

Editor's note: In the first and third letter of this fictitious Letters To The Editor page, anonymous disciples or followers of Jesus Christ claim that He resurrected. Attempting to discredit this story are the Chief Priests and Pharisees, who in the second letter accuse the disciples of stealing Jesus' Body while the soldiers slept.

Jesus' resurrection is true, say those who saw His many miracles

Dear Editor:

This widely circulated story, propagated by some Roman guards accusing us for stealing the Lord Jesus' Body during the night while they slept, is false.

Yes, at first we did not believe the women who, after returning from the burial cave that glorious morning, insisted that Jesus lives! But after seeing, talking to and, yes, even eating broiled fish with our Lord Jesus, we are undoubtedly convinced that He is alive!

Despite evidence to the contrary, some of the Jews, willing to chew, swallow, digest then regurgitate this Jesus-Body-stealing tale on others, still

do not believe that He is resurrected.

But just as the Lord Jesus rebuked us for our stubborn refusal to believe in His resurrection and hardness of heart, we ask you: Is a Jesus Christ resurrection beyond His capabilities?

Did you not witness Jesus perform many miracles during the last three years? On many occasions, we saw Jesus cast out demons and heal many people from their ailments, sicknesses and diseases.

So scared of a Sea of Galilee storm which came out of nowhere, we were the ones who, after awaking Jesus from deep sleep in the stern of the boat that evening, witnessed Him quell the sea.

We were there on the Bethsaida mountainside. From just five small barley loaves and two tiny fish, we saw Jesus materialize enough portions to feed 5,000 men plus an incalculable number of women and children. We organized the hungry people in groups of hundreds then fifties and fed them what our Lord just created. But we still hardened our hearts — even after seeing the leftovers.

Hours later on the Sea of Galilee boat, we were the ones who saw Jesus speedwalking toward us, witnessed our brother Peter walk on water and experienced being instantly transported on our boat from the middle of the sea

to the Gennesaret shore, which was approximately four miles away!

And then from seven loaves and a few fish, we His disciples parcelled a full meal to 4,000 others — again, not including the women and children — congregated on a mountainous hill near the Sea of Galilee. Just as before, we saw the leftovers.

Three times we saw Jesus command life to return in the bodies of a teenage girl, a Nain young man and then most dramatically, Lazarus of Bethany.

Jesus' miracle-working exploits speak for themselves. He needs no defense. Yet we felt compelled to respond to the Roman guards' accusations in this letter.

This resurrection is a hoax, it would be foolish to believe otherwise

Dear Editor:

Adhering to the Sanhedrin-adopted policy that it would be expedient for us that one man die for the people than the whole Jewish nation perish, we the Chief Priests and Pharisees, reluctantly sanctioned Jesus of Nazareth's arrest, arraignment, conviction and crucifixion several days ago.

But unfortunately for the Jews, our Roman fathers and, yes, even our Gentile brethren, Jesus' followers just will not allow Him to rest in peace. What we have feared and sought to prevent has indeed happened.

Unbelievable as it might sound, we must announce that a group of religious fanatics and political agitators audaciously stole Jesus' Body from the tomb and now sensationally claim that He rose from the dead.

We are undoubtedly convinced that Jesus' disciples are responsible for this horrendous, tasteless and macabre act, intended to foment insurrection and raise your false hopes that He will establish a Jewish Kingdom.

We were grieved to learn about this

unfortunate Body-stealing-incident from our trusted Roman guards, members of Jerusalem's Regional Army Detachment.

Fatigued from being on a heightened state of alert three days following the Nazarene's death, these Roman soldiers forthrightly came to us and with honest-driven motives, disclosed to us during a closed-door executive session that Jesus' disciples flawlessly yet luckily stole His Body during the night while they slept.

Quite naturally we will keep their identity secret to protect them from Jesus' extremists who, in an attempt to corroborate this untrue and fictional resurrection story, might try to bribe, harm or perhaps even kill them.

At our bidding, these Roman soldiers bravely volunteered to help us keep the peace by guarding Jesus' tomb.

Yes, we paid these brave warriors a large sum of money, not to bribe them as it has been alleged by seditious intent on discrediting us, but to compensate them as a token of our appreciation.

We remember all too well that while this Deceiver was alive, Jesus

convincingly assured us all that after death, He would arise on the third day.

We reminded Judean Governor Pontius Pilate just three days before the Body-missing incident that such a deception will be worse than the first. That's why we recommended that he order a Roman guard be posted at Jesus' tomb.

Why are many of you so willing to believe that Jesus must be this "Christ," "Messiah" and "Son of God," capable of supernaturally, dramatically, and miraculously arising from the dead and establishing some sort of Kingdom here on earth?

Perhaps Jesus the Deceiver devised, conspired and then carried out this resurrection hoax with His disciples just last week!

Haven't you considered that the reason the burial cave is empty is because a small determined band of zealots plotted, planned and then pirated Jesus' Remains away? Couldn't these rogue disciples be assisted by the very same women who claim they saw, felt and talked with Jesus?

Who knows what strong potion these women could have carried with them when they transported spices to complete anointing Jesus' Corpse that early morning? Could they not have easily and discreetly slipped a drug in the guards' canteens?

It would be unwise for anyone to believe in this resurrection tale, propagated by a bunch of hysterical women and stubborn disciples unwilling to allow Jesus of Nazareth's death to close this chapter once and for all.

We, the Chief Priests and Pharisees who are guardians of Mosaic Law, must inform your readers that anyone who believes Jesus arose from the dead is at minimum in danger of facing legal consequences which could lead to probable religious excommunication. And at maximum, they could face Jesus' fate. We are reluctant to ostracize or crucify anybody, but we will if we have to do so.

Jewish and Gentile brothers and sisters, let's put this Jesus matter behind us. Jesus is dead. It would be foolish for anyone to believe otherwise.

The Romans killed Jesus — but whose report will you believe?

Dear Editor:

Jesus Christ is not dead, but alive! How can anyone believe the Chief Priests and Pharisees who claim it would be foolish for you to believe otherwise?

And why should anyone believe the Romans who said we stole our Lord's Body when it was they who participated in Jesus' arrest, torture, suffering and death?

As members of Jerusalem's Roman Regional Army Detachment, it was probably they who were part of the 600-man posse, dispatched to arrest Jesus at the Garden of Gethsemane.

These very same soldiers could have been members of the squad which transported Jesus from Annas' house to Caiaphas' palace.

They could have been the ones who shuttled Jesus to Judean Governor Pontius Pilate's "Stone Pavement," then taken Him back to King Herod, only to have Him returned to Pilate again to face judgment.

After Jesus was brutally flogged at the Common Hall, it was probably they who spat on Him, slapped Him in the face. They probably mocked him "King of the Jews," hitting Him repeatedly atop of His head with a makeshift reed scepter.

It was probably they and their comrades, standing at parade-rest in full battle gear, who watched our Lord Jesus drag His cross-beam through Jerusalem's dusty streets.

Perhaps the very same Roman guards who are blaming us for stealing Jesus' Body were assigned to the Centurion's crucifixion detail on Golgotha Hill that dark afternoon.

Maybe one of them was the one who, when piercing Jesus in the side with his spear to confirm that He had truly died, saw a mixture of blood and water spew forth from His Body.

How can anybody, who knows a Roman soldier sells his sword to the highest bidder, trust their word — particularly when it's obvious that they had a strong motivation to lie?

These guards, posted at our Lord Jesus' tomb by Governor Pilate's precept at the behest of the Chief Priest and the Pharisees, were duty-bound to fulfill their mission.

For three days and two nights they did. Divided into four-member squads, the Roman soldiers dutifully guarded Jesus' tomb on a rotational basis.

Their imposing presence dissuaded "religious fanatics" and "political

agitators," inflammatory rhetoric which Jewish religious leaders called us on this very same Letters To The Editor page, from even thinking about entering in the cordoned-off gravesite and stealing our Lord's Body.

On the third day — which would have been the last day of their mission — something miraculous, inexplicable and supernatural occurred, several women at the burial site so insisted and we now believe.

While the women went on their way to tell us this good news, some of the guards reportedly went to the city and told the Chief Priests everything that happened.

Perhaps others went AWOL, fearing execution for dereliction of duty. Who knows, but they, the Roman soldiers, had to offer some rational, perhaps reasonable even slightly believable explanation — and blame someone else for the disappearance of Jesus' Body.

After the Chief Priests had met with the Mosaic Law Elders they devised a plan, we learned from inside sources.

They told them to say that one of us came during the night and stole Jesus' Body away while they were asleep. Their story is preposterous!

In exchange for perpetuating this lie, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money.

They then assured them that if this report gets to the Governor, they will satisfy him and keep them out of trouble.

So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed.

Must we remind you that these same religious men had already established the precedent of paying one of us 30 pieces of silver to assist them arresting Jesus in the first place?

There can only be one explanation how Jesus' dead Body, anointed with spices by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of Jerusalem then wrapped in yards and yards and yards of linen cloth three days before, vanished after entombment.

We insist without any hesitation or equivocation that the miraculous resurrection of God's only begotten Son Jesus Christ was conceived and supernaturally-wrought by the Lord Almighty through the power of the Holy Spirit!

Undoubtedly, some Jews and Gentiles will believe the Roman report. You must make up your mind: Whose report will you believe?

Jesus Christ's resurrection similar to mountain transfiguration incident

Deceased Moses, revived Elijah appear with incarnate Nazarene

Jesus Christ's resurrected appearance resembled the radiance He exuded during an incident which occurred on a deserted mountain some time ago, Peter, James and John now reveal.

Approximately a week after Jesus first predicted that He would be tortured, killed and resurrected, the Nazarene took the trio with Him to a high mountain for private prayer, James and John recollect.

The three of them had been alone with the Nazarene before. Jesus asked them to accompany Him when He revived Jairus' dead daughter.

They were also at the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus was arrested, the apostles reminded *The Testament Spectator*.

To place the event in some historical perspective, the transfiguration incident occurred a few days after Jesus turned His back from Peter, looked at the other apostles and commanded Satan to "get behind Me."

This rebuff was a response to Peter rebuking the Nazarene for predicting His demise, a prophecy which the fisherman and the others didn't understand at the time.

Peter felt pretty bad after that. He didn't sense any malevolent force behind him, but apparently Jesus did. He thought he had fallen out of grace with the Nazarene.

That's why the fisherman was surprised when Jesus still invited him, along with the two others, to the mountain that evening.

The dark night and mountain's

elevation made conditions quite chilly, the disciples recall.

The trio cut, collected, arranged some wood then ignited it to keep themselves warm.

But the fire, barely generating enough heat for one much less the three of them, eventually burned itself out.

While the orange and red embers flickered and glowed in the darkness, Jesus could still be heard praying earnestly in the background.

Rather than pray, the trio tried to huddle close to the warm coals to get some shut-eye, albeit it wasn't the sound, restful sleep they'd might have desired.

'Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead'
— Jesus Christ of Nazareth about a year ago

While they slept, the cool air suddenly became quite warm around them. Initially, Peter said he thought it was a pleasant dream. Then he surmised that either Jesus reignited the fire, or His miracle-working ways were at work again.

Perhaps Jesus had commanded the air around them to heat up, a feat not too impossible because it was this same Man who quelled the Sea of Galilee, Peter reflected what he was thinking then.

But that wasn't the case after all. Something more supernatural occurred that evening, Peter said, an account corroborated by James and John.

The warmth which ushered their uneasy sleep — and eventually caused them to suddenly awake — was not a reignited campfire or a Jesus-induced miracle; it was the radiant, outward change in the face, appearance and, yes,

even the total embodiment of Jesus, they described to *The Testament Spectator*.

While Jesus prayed, the Nazarene's face shone as bright as the sun. His radiant countenance was like the purest, most intense light. His clothes became dazzling white — whiter than they could be bleached and as bright as a flash of lightning.

Words could not adequately or totally explain and describe the transfigured appearance, look and countenance of Jesus, the three insisted.

Appearing before them were two men — in intense, white, glorious splendor.

Based upon the oral history of the

"If you wish, let us," Peter said, looking at James and John, who laid prostrated on the cold, damp ground.

Quickly changing his suggestion to just include him, Peter stammered with trepidation and said: "Uh — I will put up three shelters — one for you, one for Moses and, and, and, uh, one for Elijah."

Peter confessed that he did not know what to say, because he, along with the other two apostles cowering and shivering on the ground with him, were so very frightened. But while the fisherman talked nervously, they said nothing.

While Peter was stammering — ever so fearful and nervous of the two holy, resurrected men talking to Jesus — a bright cloud enveloped them. They became afraid as Jesus, Moses and Elijah were surrounded by the cloud.

"This is my Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased. Listen to Him," a voice from the cloud suddenly said.

Upon hearing this, the disciples trembled with fear and were more terrified. They would have remained indefinitely with their faces pressed to the ground if Jesus didn't touch them.

"Get up. Don't be afraid," He said to them reassuringly, allaying their fear.

When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus.

As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

The trio kept quiet and the incident remained a secret — that is until Peter alludes to the event in his "...Did Not See The Lord At The Tomb" narrative, which begins on page 42-43 in this edition.

Disciples net miraculous catch of fish

All night fishing expedition yields nothing, but Jesus helps them at dawn

Jesus Christ spawned a school of fish into the nets of seven disciples, who had been fishing all night in an anchored boat about 100 yards from the Sea of Galilee shore.

This fish manifestation miracle was probably intended to yet again demonstrate to these disciples — as He had shown to them, the remaining four, and countless others in seven previous post-resurrection appearances — that He was indeed the risen Messiah, theorize Jesus' ardent believers.

Still focusing on their Lord's death rather than rejoicing in His resurrection, these seven men felt guilt and shame about abandoning and denying Him, surmised those who suspected their state of mind.

They must have sought solace from their despair, confusion and discouragement by going fishing.

However, this welcomed preoccupation could have been even more frustrating for the seven men — particularly since they didn't catch anything.

But in the early morning hour, a Jesus-induced fish-materializing miracle and

hastily-prepared breakfast would cure their spiritual, emotional and psychological malaise.

According to the testimony of Peter, James and John, precisely 153 large fish supernaturally appeared and became entwined in their fishing net.

Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, and two other men verified this exact fish count.

The seven-man fishing crew were amazed that even after ensnaring such a big catch, their nets still didn't rip.

It was an unidentified Man — later revealed to be Jesus Christ the Lord — who not only engineered this miracle at dawn for these seven disciples, but also prepared and served them breakfast.

While ministering in Capernaum about two years before, Jesus performed an identical fish catching miracle — just

prior to recruiting Andrew, Peter, James and John to follow Him, many of the Nazarene's followers recall.

But a lot has happened since then, a reason why the seven fishermen first closed themselves in an undisclosed location before deciding to follow Peter fishing.

No one knows what the men were thinking, talking or planning behind closed doors. Perhaps they were just reflecting on the past, their present, and what they'd do in the future.

They all had seen their Lord Jesus at least once since His resurrection, but probably weren't sure if, how, or where they would go from here.

Should they continue with Jesus' work as He instructed? Should they go back to their families, homes and businesses? Should they resume living

a normal life? These were but some of the questions which came to their minds.

Then the man, who tried to protect Jesus by slicing off a servant's ear in the Garden of Gethsemane and still felt guilty for denying Him thrice at High Priest Caiaphas' courtyard campfire, made a practical suggestion.

"I'm going out to fish," Peter told them.

The other six disciples wondered if Peter, tired of sitting around and wanting to clear his head, was actually considering returning to his old vocation rather than carrying on with Jesus' life work.

"We'll go with you," they all responded to the son of Jonas.

Departing the house just after sunset, they launched their boat in a harbored inlet and anchored the craft not too far from off shore.

Seven silhouetted figures superimposed on the dark horizon were seen fishing aboard their boat throughout the night, other fishermen and passersby recall.

Illuminated by the moonlit sky, a lantern attached to the bow and lamp fastened astern, the seven took turns casting their fishing net off the starboard side of the boat, then over the port side.

Jesus Christ's Post-Resurrection, Pre-Ascension Appearances

- To Mary Magdalene
- To Women at the Tomb
- To Emmaus Road Travelers
- To Emmaus Dinner Guests
- To Simon Peter, Son of Jonas
- To 10 Disciples

- To Thomas, Plus 10 Disciples
- To 7 Disciples On Sea of Galilee
- To 11 Disciples On Mountain
- To 11 Disciples, Plus Matthias
- To 500 Believers
- To Jesus' Brother, James

(Continued on Page 47, Column 1)

Netting miraculous catch of fish...

(Continued from Page 46, Column 4)

To the right and then to the left. Right, left, right, left — over, and over and over again.

They rotated the net counterclockwise several times high overhead, cast it through the air in the water, waited for it to subside beneath the surface and pulled the net toward the boat.

Each time they cast the net into the water, the fishermen anticipated catching one fish — just any kind of fish.

Despite the many counter-clockwise-rotating, net-tossing, water-subsidizing, pulling the net toward their boat fishing attempts, an inexplicable thing happened.

No one understood why, but they didn't catch any fish.

Peter and his six-man fishing crew knew they had been fishing in a location where plentiful fish were known to bite, but no fish — not a single one — nibbled or became ensnared in their sea-saturated nets that night.

So from sunset until the wee hours of the next morning, the seven men fished and fished and continued to fish, yet they still caught nothing.

Finally at dawn, a Man sighted on the shore would make their overnight fishing

efforts finally pay off!

"Hello My friends, have you caught any fish," the Man called out to them warmly.

"No," they all answered, not knowing His identity or how long He had been standing there watching them fish.

"Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some," He

There were so many fish concentrated in such a small area they churned the water into white foam.

Buoyed at hearing and seeing such a large school of fish, the men grabbed the end of the net floating on the surface.

As some of the seven disciples on the starboard side leaned over and pulled the net toward their boat, the other's stayed

recognized the profile of his risen Lord.

Peter immediately wrapped his outer garment around him — for he had disrobed himself — and jumped into the water.

The other disciples followed him in the boat, towing the fish-laden net since they weren't too far from shore. Peter, a strong swimmer, got there just a head of the other six.

Upon arriving on land, the seven men saw a fire of burning coals with fish already cooking over the flame. Fresh bread lay nearby.

"Bring some of the fish you have just caught," Jesus said.

Peter climbed aboard the boat and dragged the net ashore. Even though they counted 153 large fish, the net still didn't tear.

"Come and have breakfast," Jesus said.

None of the disciples dared ask Him who He was, because they knew He was their Lord.

Jesus gave the seven men bread and fish with such serene and servile majesty, the seven disciples recalled.

They ate heartily that morning and enjoyed being in Jesus Christ's presence on this, His eighth post-resurrection appearance.

'Throw your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some' — the risen Jesus Christ

toled them.

The fishermen immediately complied, without questioning whether they would catch any fish this time.

One of the seven men positioned the fishing net in his hands as he had done countless times before throughout the night.

Despite being sore and tired, he raised the net, rotated it counterclockwise several times high overhead, and cast it through the air in the water.

For a moment, the net floated and then sank — right beneath the surface.

Suddenly, the waters splashed. The seven disciples heard the forgotten, welcome sound of fishes flapping their fins.

on port side — counterbalancing any uneven weight displacement.

So even in their glee and excitement, the men still exercised safety, careful not to capsize the boat.

Because of the great number of large fish, the seven disciples were prevented from lifting the net inside the boat.

John, one of the disciples whom Jesus loved, looked up from struggling with the fish-filled-net. He put his right hand on his head, squinted his eyes and focused at the shore to see who caused this miracle.

"It is the Lord," John exclaimed with excitement.

As soon as Peter heard John identify Jesus, he looked toward the shore and

Simon Peter ordained to preach the Gospel; Becomes leader of Jesus Christ's disciples

Former Sea of Galilee fisherman reinstated to lead 'Christian Movement'

The disciple who disowned Jesus Christ on the eve of His crucifixion, was forgiven, ordained and has become leader of the "Christians," inside sources reveal.

Simon Peter, son of Jonas, was the Sea of Galilee fisherman recruited as Jesus' disciple more than two years before.

Andrew, James plus John, Peter's business partners back then, also left their families, vocations and responsibilities and followed Jesus that day.

Even though Peter became one of Jesus' closest aides — involved with His many high-profile, most spectacular miracles — he still denied the Nazarene and swore he never even knew Him.

Near the flickering glow of High Priest Caiaphas' courtyard campfire that evening, two women and a relative of the man whose ear Peter sliced off at Jesus' Garden of Gethsemane arrest, asked the son of Jonas whether he was the Nazarene's disciple.

Afraid of being exposed and arrested, Peter told the two servant girls they didn't know what they were talking about.

Not believing the fisherman's denial and attempting to link him with Jesus, Malchus' relative remarked that the son of Jonas has to be part of the Nazarene's crew, because his Galilean accent "gave him away."

But still Peter, emphatically denying any personal knowledge of or association with Jesus, called "down curses on himself."

Hours later, Jesus was crucified, buried and three days after that,

miraculously resurrected from death.

Since then Jesus appeared to many. Peter was the fourth to see Him on the day the Christ came back to life. But the normally talkative Peter has been silent about his encounter with Jesus.

As if to reenact those three denial incidents nearly 40 days before, Jesus asked Peter a single question three times.

"Simon son of Jonas, do you truly love me more than these," He asked after they ate a fish and bread breakfast.

"Yes, Lord," Peter responded. "You

know that I love you."

Jesus said Peter was to "feed my sheep."

A little later Jesus asked the son of Jonas the same question.

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you," Peter answered unequivocally.

"Take care of my sheep," Jesus instructed.

The third time Jesus asked Peter the same question. "Simon, son of Jonas, do you love me," He said.

Peter was hurt by now, because Jesus

asked him the same question three times. It was almost as if Jesus didn't believe him.

"Lord, You know all things. You know that I love you," Peter said.

"Feed my sheep," Jesus said to Peter. Jesus seemed to be satisfied now.

Based on this dialogue, it not only appears Jesus forgave Peter, reinstated the fisherman, and ordained him to further preach the Gospel; but he was also anointed leader of the new "Christian Movement."

Jesus Christ the Lord rises into Heaven

Disciples commissioned before Mount of Olives ascension

Forty days after Jesus Christ arose from the grave, His followers saw Him arise from the Mount of Olives into Heaven.

While Jerusalem inhabitants and people throughout the region debated whether Jesus was indeed alive, the Christ seemed oblivious to the dispute. Jesus appeared to many, His family, disciples, friends and countless followers say.

Just like the time during Jesus' three-year ministry, His 40-day post-grave existence included teachings, healings and miracles.

On a pristine and radiant spring day — when many expected to see of and hear more from the resurrected Christ — something unexpected occurred, those who were fortunate to witness the supernatural spectacle affirm.

It was the fortieth day following His resurrection. Jesus led those who were with Him to the vicinity of Bethany, a

city on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives which is about two miles from Jerusalem.

As people worshipped Jesus, He lifted up His hands and imparted a final blessing on them. Jesus said all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him. He stated that anyone who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but those who refuse to believe will be damned.

"And these signs shall follow them who believe," Jesus said. "In My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."

Jesus instructed that they disciple all nations, preach the gospel to everyone, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," He said. "Surely I am with you always, to the very end," Jesus said.

Right after the Lord Jesus blessed them, some inexplicable force caused

Him to levitate. Rising toward the sky, Jesus ascended higher and higher.

Like an ocean gently undulating, the droves of people arose from kneeling on the ground to get a better view of the ascending Jesus.

Though a cloud finally hid Him from their sight, everyone still stared toward the Heavens — expecting something else to happen.

Even after Jesus finally positioned Himself at the right hand of the Lord God Almighty, they continued to look skyward.

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand here continually looking at the sky," asked two Angels, suddenly appearing before them in white.

"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into Heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into Heaven," they said.

They returned praising God with great joy to Jerusalem Temple, which was a Sabbath day's walk from the city.

Jesus' disciples went out and preached everywhere. The Lord worked with and through them — confirming His word by many signs and miracles.

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