

FRIENDS OF THE NAZARENE©

An on-line Biblical Studies Magazine

“They Follow the Lamb No Matter Where He Goes”

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: Nazarene Saints Publishing© is a Bible research group for a better Scriptural understanding. We are dedicated to the preservation and publishing of Christian writings which aid *Friends of the Nazarene*© to "follow the Lamb no matter where he goes." (John 15:14; 3 John 14; Revelation 14:4) The *Friends of the Nazarene*© are a spiritual community of Messianic Christians. We are apologists dedicated to the defense of the truth that "God is One" and not three. The Bible is our creed. We view this "God-breathed" Book as inspired alone, while the thoughts of men about it are not. We wish to show respect for our multitude of Christian brethren. (1 Peter 3:15)

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ?? ***Nazarene Commentary 2000*©:** With the completion of the Gospel of Luke this month the complete commentary on all the books of the Christian Bible is now available as a single download from the Friends of the Nazarene web site. This work is largely a new rendering of the New Testament called the *Nazarene Saints Rendering*. It includes many features with references on every phrase and comparisons against numerous translations. The whole

work of 2,000 pages, 12,000 footnotes, and 1.8 million words is the product of 50 years of Biblical reading and research. For details on *Nazarene Commentary 2000*© see the related article in this issue.

- ?? **BIBLE CORRESPONDANCE COURSE:** The *Friends of the Nazarene* are offer an e-mail course of Bible study for those interested in following a program using *Nazarene Commentary 2000*©. Each e-mail lesson will include one chapter of the Bible each week, beginning with Matthew chapter 1. [Those interested in an accelerated program at their own pace may do so.] After reading the material for the week, there are review questions on each chapter. These may be answered and a qualified teacher with many years of experience will assist the Bible student where needed. Questions may be asked on each chapter and material will be provided where the answer may be found in *Nazarene Commentary 2000*©. If you are interested in this program please email Mark Miller [nazsaints@koan.com] for an appointment and schedule with an experienced teacher who will provide personal attention on a one-on-one basis. When the complete New Testament [or, Christian Bible] has been completed a certificate will be mailed to the Bible student indicating the completion of such a course. There is no cost or obligation.
- ?? **WEEKLY BIBLE READING:** The *Friends of the Nazarene* follow a weekly schedule of Bible reading. Each Friday a chapter of the Bible with footnotes from *Nazarene Commentary 2000*© will be attached to an announcement. Those interested in expressing their thoughts and opinions on that particular chapter may do so on the *Nazarene-Friends* eGroup list. You need not agree with everyone else. Question will also be considered in the spirit of Christ-like love and material posted on where answers may be found in *Nazarene Commentary 2000*©.
- ?? ***Nazarene Commentary 2000*© CD:** We are just beginning to burn the CD with Matthew to Revelation [and, Daniel].

==== END ====

FAITH PERSPECTIVES

[An Open Forum for Thoughts and Encouragement]

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT

thanks a lot! – JH, England

>>>>>

Thanks to God and to you for providing a place like this to talk about the truth from the Bible. -- RM

>>>>>

Good to see that you are still very hard at work helping out those of us who are not as fortunate to be able to do what you do. – GK, New York

>>>>>

Praise Jehovah for this!
I appreciate all that you do! – AW, Chicago

>>>>>

May God bless you for all the hard work! The effort in this monumental work was nothing short of miraculous! I'm overjoyed!...thank you...thank you.... – LP, Los Angeles

>>>>>

Greetings in the name of our Lord,
Thank you for making the fruit of your theological labors available to us. – RW

>>>>>

==== END ====

TWO KINDS OF FOUNDATIONS

The Greatest Test of the Christian Church

The Golden Rule is one of the most repeated religious teachings in the history of humanity: *“As you would have others do to you, you also do to them.”* [Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31] However, even most Christians could not tell you the context of the Golden Rule in the Gospel of Luke. The answer has a strong bearing on one of the greatest tests ever put before the Christian Church.

Jesus concluded his *Mountain Teachings*, as well as what is called his *Plain Teachings*, with a parable of a home builder. One “dug down deep” to lay a solid rock foundation, while the other merely built the house on dirt. When a great

flood came the latter was destroyed in a enormous collapse, and the former built on a solid foundation endured the cataclysm. Jesus used this analogy to compare two types of listeners in the audience of his disciples [or, modern readers]. The first was the disciple who heard the teachings of Jesus and did them. The latter was the one who claimed to be a disciple, heard what Jesus taught, but did not follow through with action. [Compare Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 6:46-49]

How does the Golden Rule determine what type of house Christians are building? The answer will come as a shock to most Christians. The answer will condemn the world-wide Christian Church as having built their house on sand.

PLAIN TEACHINGS ON THE GOLDEN RULE

Most Bible readers are familiar with the most famous sermon ever given – the Sermon on the Mount. It is found in Matthew 5-7. However, fewer are familiar with what is called the *Plain Teachings* in Luke chapter 6. These teachings were delivered by the Nazarene on another occasion and to an audience of his disciples. Read those words in their context containing the Golden Rule:

LK6:27 *“Now I tell all of you listening to me –continue to show loving concern for your enemies. Continue to do good to those who keep hating you. **LK6:28** Continue to bless those who keep cursing you. Continue to pray for those who keep insulting you. **LK6:29** Offer your other cheek to the one slapping you on the cheek. When someone takes your outer garment do not hold back even an under garment. **LK6:30** Continue to give to everyone who keeps asking you, and do not ask the person who takes your possessions to return them. **LK6:31** Now just as you want people to do to you, you continue to do the same. **LK6:32** And if you only continue to love those who love you -- what charity is there to that? **LK6:33** And if you only continue to do good to those who keep doing good to you – what kind of charity is that? Even sinners do the very same thing! **LK6:34** And if you ever lend [money] hoping to receive it back – what kind of charity is that? Even sinners keep lending [money] expecting an equal amount in return! **LK6:35** Instead, all of you continue to show loving concern for your enemies. And continue doing good – continue lending [money] without expecting anything to be paid back. If you do your reward will be considerable, for you will become the Most High’s offspring, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. **LK6:36** Continue to be charitable just as your Father is charitable. [NSR]*

By reading the context of Jesus’ sermon above it becomes clear what this Golden Rule involves – the love of your enemies! The Nazarene gives clear examples of what he means and how this love is to be demonstrated. Let us consider the different parts to our Lord’s teachings in these verses. Let us do this with the concluding parable of two different house-builders.

“ENEMIES” DEFINED

LUKE 6:27 *“Now I tell all of you listening to me – continue to show loving concern for your enemies. Continue to do good to those who keep hating you.”* [Nazarene Commentary 2000©]

Who are your “enemies”? Jesus parallels these with those “who keep hating you.” So your enemies are those who either hate you outright, or love you less than others. An “enemy” may be one who is just indifferent to you. That is, you are not their favorite person and these may be exposed as those who gossip and slander you, or completely ignore your needs. Jesus says to “continue to show loving concern” for them. The Greek construct here is of an action that continues. Luke puts the Greek AGAPATE in the Nazarene’s mouth. [For details on AGAPE see notes in Nazarene Commentary 2000 on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.]

To these hateful “enemies” Jesus says to “continue to do good” to them.” The word love in the Bible has been defined as “seeking the highest good of another.” [William Barclay] It is not hard to know what is “good” when we think of how we would like to be treated. What would we consider something “good” done to us?

An example is demonstrated by Jesus in his parable of the “good” Samaritan. Samaritans were essentially enemies of the Jews and generally hated one another. If we experienced a robbing and mugging and were left half-dead in the gutter, would we not appreciate it if a stranger and supposed enemy came to our aid? [Luke 10:29-37] Given that, then is it not clear how we might be “good” to someone who thought us an enemy?

In this matter Jesus also includes how a “genuine disciple” responds to insults or verbal abuse. “Continue to bless,” says Jesus. He means to speak kindly and positively about the very person who has spitefully attacked you. Paul echoes the Nazarene when he counsels: *“Bless persecutors. Continue blessing others and not cursing others.”* [Romans 12:14 NSR] Those who use freeways or highways may think of this when experiencing “road rage.” Peter points to our Lord as an example of not returning reviling for reviling. [1 Peter 2:23]

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THIS “LOVE”?

Luke 6:28 *“Continue to bless those who keep cursing you. Continue to pray for those who keep insulting you. Luke 6:29 Offer your other cheek to the one slapping you on the cheek. When someone takes your outer garment do not hold back even an under garment.”* [Nazarene Commentary 2000©]

Rather than return cursing for cursing, Jesus teaches “continue to bless those who keep cursing you.” Indeed, the real disciple will pray for those who are insulting. Paul writes in the same vein: *“Do not repay harm with harm. Think good in advance regarding all persons.”* [Romans 12:17 NSR] Even if slapped in the

face Jesus says to “turn the other cheek.” Reading the related phrases, the disciple of the Nazarene is never to react out of revenge, or getting even. The disciple of Jesus is not to resist authority, or to seek redress for theft or extortion.

GIVING AND THE GOLDEN RULE

Luke 6:30 *“Continue to give to everyone who keeps asking you, and do not ask the person who takes your possessions to return them. Luke 6:31 Now just as you want people to do to you, you continue to do the same.”*

[Nazarene Commentary 2000©]

Jesus never qualifies these statements. It is true some will take advantage of the Christian because of this, but such will answer to the Judge. The whole spirit of the Lord’s teachings is one free of greed and revenge. One version renders this: *“Demand no restitution.”*[RIE] Another says: *“Whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.”*[NAS] It is interesting that it is right here in this immediate context Jesus mentions the Golden Rule again. Can there be any question that such a rule has to do with enemies? Could our Lord make it any clearer? This matter of doing unto others as we wished to be treated has to do with kindness to enemies, and particularly in the area of financial help.

Not only has the Christian Church failed in this matter of loving their enemies throughout almost two thousand years, they have often slaughtered them by the millions. How the Church has failed and the vast majority of its membership has proved to be those who built their houses on sand! How our Lord must be offended with so many Christians killing Christians, Christians torturing Christians, and Christians murdering innocent babies and children! But, some Christian will say: “I have not killed anyone and I love friends and family.” Is this real charity?

IS LOVING FRIENDS REAL CHARITY?

Luke 6:32 *“And if you only continue to love those who love you -- what charity is there to that? Luke 6:33 And if you only continue to do good to those who keep doing good to you – what kind of charity is that? Even sinners do the very same thing! Luke 6:34 And if you ever lend [money] hoping to receive it back – what kind of charity is that? Even sinners keep lending [money] expecting an equal amount in return!”*

[Nazarene Commentary 2000©]

Such love is required by just human decency and good manners. Compare Paul’s opinion of those who do not: *“But if any one -- especially household members -- does not provide for their own relatives, such a person has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”* [1 Timothy 5:8 NSR] A person’s

manners and charity cannot be determined by conduct among friends. For Jesus follows up, “if you only continue to love those who love you,” with “what kind of charity is that”? The Greek word here is CHARIS which is also rendered thanks, credit, grace, merit. CHARIS is the word from which the English “charity” is drawn. Charity is an undeserved favor or kindness. Friends and family automatically deserve such favor or charity.

Jesus teaches that his disciples should not only give, but also not expect any repayment. So that a Christian never loans money – he or she gives it as a gift without strings. After love of enemies this is the most bone-jarring command Jesus makes. Few Christians have ever been able to obey it and as a whole the Church has failed. During the so-called Dark Ages the Church put the burden of usury on the Jews who then became the most important bankers in Europe. The Law of Moses forbid loans with interest to fellow Israelites, but permitted usury in dealings with non-Jews. [Exodus 22:25; Leviticus 25:36, 37; Deuteronomy 23:19, 20; Psalm 15:5; Nehemiah 5:10, 11] Jesus prohibits it completely.

HOW IS MONEY INVOLVED IN BECOMING GOD’S CHILDREN?

Luke 6:35 *“Instead, all of you continue to show loving concern for your enemies. And continue doing good – continue lending [money] without expecting anything to be paid back. If you do your reward will be considerable, for you will become the Most High’s offspring, because He is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Luke 6:36* *Continue to be charitable just as your Father is charitable.* [Nazarene Commentary 2000©]

Jesus characterizes this love for enemies by three things: prayer, doing good, and financial gifts. If this is how enemies are to be treated what does the Master expect of treatment to fellow disciples. [Compare Galatians 6:10] Those who claim to be children of God must be characterized as those who continue to pray for their enemies, continue to do good to their enemies, and willingly give material gifts to their enemies without any agenda. Based on what has been said before, only those who would listen and obey Jesus’ teachings on these matters could ever be considered God’ children.

God is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. He is not like some Christians who refuse to give to those who do not meet their standards for charity. The genuine disciple of Christ, in order to imitate God, cannot make judgments of people regarding whether charity will be shown or not. God is truly charitable. That is, merciful, compassionate, full of pity, empathetic. The English word “mercy” is drawn from the idea of giving or charity. The idea is to have mercy [compassion, empathy] for anyone in need no matter who they are, or even how they might use such kindness.

DO YOU SAY 'LORD, LORD' AND NOT PERFORM?

It is an awesome, even frightening thought, that just because a Christian believes Christ is Lord is not enough to gain his favor. The world is filled with millions of Lord-Lord-disciples who not only do not do what Jesus commands, but have never even really studied the Nazarene's teachings. The image of a great river breaking its banks, collapsing a house, and washing it down river, comes to mind. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord concluded with these words:

Not everyone saying to me, "Lord, Lord!" will enter the Heavenly Realm but the one doing the will of my heavenly Father. Many will say to me in The Day: "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And, in your name cast out demons? And, in your name did many dynamic works?" And then I shall confess to them: "I never knew you! Get away from me, those working unlawfully! So, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them, will be like a smart person who built a house upon a solid Rock. And the rain came down and the rivers flood and the winds blew and it did not fall. For it was founded on that solid Rock. And, everyone hearing these words of mine and not doing them will be like a stupid person who built a house on sand. And the rain came down and the rivers flood and the winds blew and struck that house! And it fell! And the fall was great! [Matthew 7:21-27 NSR]

The God of our Lord Jesus bless how we build! Are we not glad we continue to build on the solid foundation of obedience to the Nazarene's teachings?

==== END ====

FRUITAGE THAT PREVENTS REMOVAL

The Nazarene taught in a parable of the Vine truths known by many Christians. These are found in John 15:1-10. The main thrust includes several factors:

- ?? To remain in the Vine a disciple must bear fruitage.
- ?? A disciple is "pruned" by the Word.
- ?? A disciple may only remain in God's love by continued obedience.

Read John 15:1-10 from the Nazarene Saints Rendering –

JN15:1 "I am the True Vine, and my Father is the farmer. JN15:2 Every branch in me not bearing fruit He removes, and everyone bearing fruit He prunes so that it may bear more fruit. JN15:3 You are pruned ones by means of the Word that I have spoken to you. JN15:4 You remain in me and I in you. Just as the branch cannot continue to bear fruit if it does not remain in the Vine, neither will you if you do not remain in me. JN15:5 I am the Vine and you are the branches. The one remaining in me, and I in him, this person continues to bear much fruit. Because apart from me you are unable to accomplish anything. JN15:6 If ever anyone does not remain in me, he is to be thrown outside and then burned up. JN15:7 As long as you [apostles] remain in me and in my Sayings, whatever you shall ask for it will come

to be. JN15:8 In this my Father is glorified, that you may continue to bear much fruit and [show] you are [truly] my disciples. JN15:9 Just as my Father loved me, I also loved you. Now you remain in my love. JN15:10 You remain in my love If you continue to observe my commandments, even as I have observed my Father's commandments and continue to remain in Him." [NSR]

THOSE WHO BEAR FRUITAGE REMAIN IN THE VINE

What did Jesus include or associate with this need to produce fruitage? What is included in such fruitage? A brief review of some of our Lord's words in John 15:1-10 help us appreciate our need to be fruitful.

Jesus said: ***"Every branch in me not bearing fruit He removes, and everyone bearing fruit He prunes so that it may bear more fruit."*** [John 15:2] That is, any Christian branch belonging to Christ cannot be an "unfruitful branch" otherwise God takes it away, prunes it away, or cuts it away from the Vine itself. It is God who removes any unfruitful branches, and this for a failure to produce. [Matthew 15:13; Hebrews 6:8] Those who do bear fruitage God "prunes" – or, purges, cleanses, trims clean.

Jesus explains that the branch bearing fruit is further "pruned" in order for it to bear more fruitage. Our Lord said: ***"You are pruned ones by means of the Word that I have spoken to you. You remain in me and I in you. Just as the branch cannot continue to bear fruit if it does not remain in the Vine, neither will you if you do not remain in me."*** [John 15:3, 4] It is the teachings of Jesus that "prunes" or "cleans." Without a familiarity with these teachings there can be no pruning or cleaning. [John 17:17] The branch must continue, abide, or dwell in Jesus and this involves continuing in his teachings. Christ will then continue his close relationship with the disciple.

The disciple must remain in an intimate relationship with Christ just as a branch does with the Vine. The branch cannot exist without the Vine. Jesus said: ***"The one remaining in me, and I in him, this person continues to bear much fruit. Because apart from me you are unable to accomplish anything. If ever anyone does not remain in me, he is to be thrown outside and then burned up. As long as you remain in me and in my Sayings, whatever you shall ask for it will come to be."*** [John 15:5-7] Bearing fruit is what characterizes those who continue in Jesus' teachings and maintain a close relationship with him. Those who do not "accomplish anything" by bearing fruitage have parted from Christ. That is God Himself as the farmer or vine-dresser will, as some versions word it-- cast forth, throw away, trim off, cast aside -- resulting that the branch withers or dries up.

There is no absolute guarantee that a branch may automatically remain in the Vine. If such 'branches' do not remain in the teachings of the Nazarene, and thus maintain a good relationship with him, they will be cast off and destroyed.

[Compare notes on Hebrews 6:4-8.] Those who maintain their relationship in Christ must also “remain ... in my Sayings.” That is, as another version puts it: *“Remain in union with me and my words remain in you.”* [WMS] One cannot separate the Nazarene’s teachings from the Nazarene himself. Any disciple who refuses to remain in Jesus’ teachings, no longer remains in a relationship with him.

Jesus taught that it was the disciple’s fruitage that glorified his Father. He said: ***“In this my Father is glorified, that you may continue to bear much fruit and [show] you are [truly] my disciples. Just as my Father loved me, I also loved you. Now you [apostles] remain in my love. You remain in my love if you continue to observe my commandments, even as I have observed my Father’s commandments and continue to remain in Him.”*** [John 15:8-10 NSR] It is this fruitage that “proves” [RSV] one is a “genuine disciple.” [Matthew 5:16; John 13:35; 2 Corinthians 13:5] It is not enough to claim to be a disciple of Christ. There must be fruitage in proof of such a claim.

Only in this way may a disciple “remain in Christ’s love.” This love is not automatic, but conditional based on: a] continuing in the Lord’s teachings; b] maintaining a relationship with him; c] producing fruitage; and, d] obeying his commandments. Note the following phrase when the Nazarene says: *“... IF you continue to observe my commandments.”* This love is conditioned on obedience to the Nazarene commandments. [See the work *Nazarene Commandments* and the 60 commands of Jesus Christ. Compare John 15:14.]

In this matter Jesus himself set the example of obedient fruitage. He himself had to remain in God’s love by obedience. The Son’s own relationship with his Father was condition on his own observance of His commandments. [Compare notes on John 8:29.] Paul echoes the same when he writes in Hebrews 5:8, 9: *“With strong outcries and tears borne toward [God] he was favorably heard, and as a Son, he learned obedience from those things he suffered. And having become perfected he became to all those obeying him the one responsible for causing ageless salvation.”* [NSR]

How can such fruitage be identified? What does the Bible teach on the kind of fruitage a Nazarene disciple must continue to produce? Consider some of the following.

REPENTANCE AND FRUITAGE ARE RELATED

There can be no true spiritual fruitage without repentance. John the Baptist taught this: *“Therefore, produce fruitage worthy of repentance. Do not be presumptuous. ... Every tree not producing good fruit will be cut down and thrown into a fire.”* [Matthew 3:8-10 NSR] Before embarking on a course of discipleship each person must first feel a genuine regret for past attitudes, inclinations, and life-style. True repentance is evidenced by recognizable

fruitage.

For example Paul wrote about such repentance and how it was characterized at 2 Corinthians 7:10, 11: *“For sadness in a godly way leads to repentance unto salvation – and that is not to be regretted. But now worldly sadness produces death. For, consider! -- this very matter of being saddened in a godly way, how much earnestness it produced! How much sudden indignation! Let alone, defense! Let alone, displeasure! Let alone, fear! Let alone, longing! Let alone, zeal!”*[NSR]

FRUITAGE INVOLVES THE MOUTH AND JUDGMENT

Good fruitage is characterized by good speech. Good speech, that is what is favorable about others, comes from a good heart. What is unfavorable about others comes from a wicked heart. Jesus taught: ***“You either make the tree good and its fruitage good, or you make the tree rotten and the fruitage rotten. For a tree is known by its fruitage. Generation of vipers, how can you speak good when you are wicked? For out of the heart’s bounty the mouth speaks. Out of the good person’s heart comes a treasure of goodness; and expelled out of the wicked person’s wicked treasure comes wickedness. But I tell you that every fruitless word humans speak will be held to account on Judgment Day. For by your words you will be declared ‘Not Guilty,’ and by your words you will be accursed.”*** [Matthew 12:33-37 NSR]

It is clear from our Lord’s teachings that “every fruitless word human’s speak” will come back to haunt both Jew and Christian on the Day of Judgment. No one can claim to be a genuine worshipper of God and yet slander fellow worshippers. James echoes his Lord when he writes: *“If anyone considers themselves to be a formal worshipper and does not bridle his tongue -- but continues deceiving his own heart -- this person’s worship is worthless.”*[James 1:26 NSR] In a life-time a Christian produces a record of either good speech or harmful speech. If good speech is viewed as godly fruitage, then the “genuine disciple” will be characterized by such.

FRUITAGE MAY VARY BUT SHOULD INCREASE THROUGHOUT LIFE

Jesus taught that not all produce the same amount of fruitage. What is important to the Nazarene is that fruitage is increased in some measure. This ever-bearing fruitage is the result of listening to his teachings with an obedient heart. Consider Christ’s explanation of his parable: *“Now, the seed in the good soil, these are those who have heard with a good and honest heart, and having retained the Word they bear fruit with endurance.”* [Luke 8:15 NSR] First the individual hears of Christ’s teachings with “a good and honest heart.” Then after “retaining the Word” fruitage is produced throughout the disciple’s life.

FRUITAGE INCLUDES MAKING DISCIPLES OF OTHERS

Paul writes about fruitage as that of making disciples, or new followers of Christ: *“However, brothers, I do not want you to be unaware that often I made plans to travel to you -- though I was hindered until now -- so that I might have some fruitage among you also as in all the other non-Jewish peoples.”* [Romans 1:13-16 NSR] Paul uses the word “fruitage” several times in the context of finding and making new disciples of Christ. [Philippians 1:22; 4:17; Colossians 1:6] He writes at Hebrews 13:15: *“By means of [Christ] let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to the God – that is, the fruit of lips confessing his name.”* [NSR]

It is automatic that from true faith comes “speech” about Jesus Christ and his Kingdom. At 2 Corinthians 4:12 Paul writes about what moved him: *“Now, possessed of the same believing attitude – just as it has been written: ‘I believed, and because of this, I spoke’ [Psalm 116:10] – we also continue to believe, ‘and because of this,’ we continue to speak.”* [NSR]

In the course of a life time the genuine disciple will produce fruitage because of talking to others about the Gospel. This may include family, relatives, friends, school-mates, work-mates, or perfect strangers. Our Lord set the perfect role model in such disciple-making, and his first disciples demonstrated how this could be done. If one has been a Christian for many decades and looks back over a life without having produced any fruitage at all in the realm of disciple-making, then it is important to accept that “pruning” from the Word. This failure to be productive in a fruitage similar to our Lord’s may be corrected by asking those who are successful how they managed such fruitage. [Compare Matthew 28:19.]

FRUITAGE INCLUDES CHARITY

True Christian fruitage can never be separated from charity. Paul associates such charity with fruitage. He writes: *“For [the saints of] Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make some contribution to those poor saints in Jerusalem. For, also, the non-Jews were pleased to become indebted spiritually and so they ought to share in common their material things as part of their public ministry. Therefore, having completed and sealed to them this fruitage, I will travel through you [in Rome] on to Spain.”* [Romans 15:26-28 NSR] He also compares such fruitage to a spiritual sacrifice: *“Also, do not forget doing good and sharing [with others], for with such sacrifices the God is favorably pleased.”* [Hebrews 13:16 NSR]

FRUITAGE INCLUDES PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS

The mental, emotional and personality traits of an individual should also give evidence of growing fruitage. After a few years of “following the Lamb no matter where he goes” will give evidence of some of the following characteristics. *“The Spirit, on the other hand, brings a harvest of love, joy, peace; patience towards*

others, kindness, benevolence; good faith, meekness, self-restraint. Against such things as these there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their lower nature with its passions and appetites.” [Galatians 5:22-24 Weymouth Translation]

This fruitage is compared to the purest light: *“Continue conducting yourselves as Children of the Light because the Light’s fruitage is every type of moral virtue, ethical uprightness, and integrity.”* [Ephesians 5:8, 9 NSR Paraphrase]

True it takes hard work to improve the character, and sometimes it requires self-discipline as well as godly discipline. *“Of course, at the moment any discipline is not joyful but causes grief. However, afterward [discipline] produces peace to those who have been trained by it with a righteous reward.”* [Hebrews 12:11 NSR]

FRUITAGE INVOLVES EVER-INCREASING KNOWLEDGE

After accepting Christ in the heart the genuine disciple will grow through his/her life in a knowledge and understanding of God’s Word. Paul describe it this way: *“For this reason we also, from the day we first received these tidings, have never ceased to pray for you and to entreat that you may be filled with a clear knowledge of His will accompanied by thorough wisdom and discernment in spiritual things; so that your lives may be worthy of the Lord and perfectly pleasing to Him, while you exhibit the results of right action of every sort and grow into a fuller knowledge of God.”* [Colossians 1:9, 10 Weymouth Translation]

FRUITAGE PRODUCES PEACE

Any observer can always tell when this Christ-like fruitage is growing and producing because it always produces peace. James wrote: *“In contrast, the wisdom from above is first, pure, then, peace-loving, considerate, yielding, full of mercy and good fruitage, impartial, unhyprocritical, and righteous fruitage planted peacefully by those who are peace-makers.”* [James 3:17, 18 NSR]

Conclusion –

It is clear from the teachings of our Lord that a disciple must produce fruitage if he/she is to remain connected to the Vine; and, that such fruitage identifies the tree.

“By their fruitage you will know them! No one ever gathers grapes from thorns or figs from thistles! Thus, every good tree bears good fruitage, but rotten trees, wicked fruitage. No good tree bears wicked fruitage, nor a rotten tree good fruitage. Every tree not bearing good fruitage is cut down and thrown into the Fire. And, so, from their fruitage you will know them.” [Matthew 7:16-20 NSR]

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“FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK”

In Luke chapter 12 Jesus gave a sermon to a crowd so big they were “stepping on one another.” [Luke 12:1] Yet most of the public talk was directed to his personal disciples, his apostles – his “friends” – whom he called his “little flock.” [Luke 12:32] The sermon is almost completely unknown to vast majority of the two billion “Christians” on earth today at the beginning of the 3rd Millennium. This is a great tragedy for the Christian Church with its 10,000 sects and denominations. For perhaps no other chapter of the New Testament could so uniquely and singly lay out in broad strokes the basis for judging every person who claims to believe in Jesus Christ.

Unlike his most famous sermon called by many the *Sermon on the Mount* – or even another similar sermon called the *Sermon on the Plain* – this message deals with personal instructions to only his close followers. Thus, every Christian ought to make a study of this address the subject of an intense and thorough study. The following article is an outline of just some of the material in the wondrous sermon where our Lord Jesus encourages his disciples: “*Do not be afraid, little flock.*” [Luke 12:32]

- ?? **THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY [LUKE 12:1-7]**
- ?? **THE NEED TO CONFESS CHRIST [LUKE 12:8-12]**
- ?? **GUARD AGAINST GREED [LUKE 12:13-21]**
- ?? **FEAR NOT, LITTLE FLOCK [LUKE 12:22-34]**
- ?? **WAITING FOR THE LORD’S RETURN [LUKE 12:35-44]**
- ?? **I CAME TO CAUSE DIVISION [LUKE 12:49-53]**
- ?? **LEARN TO INTERPRET THE SEASON [LUKE 12:54-59]**

THE DANGER OF HYPOCRISY

Luke chapter 12 is unique in that the account reveals exactly who Jesus was speaking to. For example, at the very beginning of the sermon Luke states that Jesus speaks to his disciples about hypocrisy. Consider the opening words to this important message from the Nazarene.

LK12:1 At about this same time crowds in the thousands gathered so that they were stepping on one another. Jesus began to speak to his disciples first: “*All of you pay close attention so that you are on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees -- which is hypocritical.* **LK12:2** *There is nothing that is covered up that will not become known, for what is secret will become known.* **LK12:3** *So then, whatever you [disciples] say in darkness, it will be heard in the light; and whatever you whispered in secrecy will be*

announced from the rooftops. **LK12:4** Now I tell you [disciples], my friends, do not become frightened of those who kill the body but can do nothing more. **LK12:5** Rather, I will indicate to you [disciples] the One to fear – you [disciples] fear the One who after killing the body has authority to hurl into Gehenna. Yes, I tell you [disciples], fear this One! **LK12:6** Are not five sparrows sold for two assarion? And yet not one of them is overlooked in the sight of the God. **LK12:7** But even the hairs of your head have all been counted. Do not be frightened. You [disciples] are worth more than many sparrows. [Nazarene Saint Rendering]

Jesus told his disciples to be on guard against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees when he said: **“All of you pay close attention so that you are on guard against the leaven of the Pharisees -- which is hypocritical.”** [Luke 12:1 NSR] **Guard against the leaven of the Pharisees:** This is a courageous statement given the Pharisees are likely still present, and that Jesus has just pronounced woes against them in the previous chapter. [Compare Matthew 16:6 and Mark 8:15.] This warning about hypocrisy must be kept in the context of the words that follow directed to the disciples.

With hypocrisy in mind Jesus cautions his disciples: **“There is nothing that is covered up that will not become known, for what is secret will become known. So then, whatever you [disciples] say in darkness, it will be heard in the light; and whatever you whispered in secrecy will be announced from the rooftops.”** [Luke 12:2, 3 NSR] Another version renders this first phrase: **“There is nothing covered up which is not going to be exposed.”** [PME] Though this may include the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, it is also possible Jesus is aware of private talk among his own apostles. Surely later one in particular is to be exposed – Judas. No disciple of the Nazarene can remain under the delusion that negative things can be spoken of others in secret and not exposed in the end. At the latest during the parousia-judgment. Things spoken in secret, particularly criticisms of others, have ways of back-firing. [Ecclesiastes 10:20] To Jesus hypocrisy here is speaking something negative and hurtful in private and the in behaving in a friendly way to the object of the secret talk.

In the Gospel of *Matthew* the Nazarene uttered the fear-inspiring words: **“Out of the good person’s heart comes a treasure of goodness; and expelled out of the wicked person’s wicked treasure comes wickedness. But I tell you that every fruitless word humans speak will be held to account on Judgment Day. For by your words you will be declared ‘Not Guilty,’ and by your words you will be accursed.”** [Matthew 12:35-37 NSR] So with these words in mind, the opening words of Jesus in Luke 12 caution his disciples against loose talk in private.

Often a hypocritical slanderer would never speak in public, or even in the presence of the one being criticized. They would be too afraid to do that! But, Jesus makes it clear, such secret and hurtful speech is heard by Another – a Heavenly One. It is the God of Jesus Christ who ought to be feared. Jesus tells his disciples: **“Now I tell you [disciples], my friends, do not become frightened of those who kill the body but can do nothing more. Rather, I will**

indicate to you [disciples] the One to fear – you [disciples] fear the One who after killing the body has authority to hurl into Gehenna. Yes, I tell you [disciples], fear this One! [Luke 12:4, 5 NSR] The Nazarene clearly taught the fear of God, as did his inspired disciples. [Compare Romans 3:18; 2 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:1; Colossians 3:22; 1 Peter 2:17; Revelation 14:7]

There is another form of speech, a godly one, the Nazarene now addresses to his disciples.

THE NEED TO CONFESS CHRIST

While there are some secret things that should never be discussed, there are other things that should be spoken publicly. Jesus told his disciples: ***“I tell all of you [disciples], anyone whoever confesses me before people, the Son of Humankind will also confess the same in the presence of God’s angels. LK12:9 However, the person who denies me in the sight of people will be denied in the sight of God’s angels.”*** [Luke 12:8, 9 NSR] Another version puts it: *“... who publicly acknowledges me.”* [PME] The disciples must speak about his Master in public. [Compare Romans 10:9-11; Hebrews 13:15.] Genuine faith will always move a disciple to speak to others. [2 Corinthians 4:13]

Avoiding evil, hypocritical speech, as well as publicly confessing Christ is a wonderful start. However, the Nazarene continues to give a most serious warning about greed.

GUARD AGAINST GREED

LUKE 12:13-21

LK12:13 Now someone in the crowd called out: “Teacher, tell my brother to share the inheritance with me!” **LK12:14** But Jesus told him: *“Man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?”* **LK12:15** Then Jesus said to the crowd: *“Look out and be on guard against all kinds of greed, because even if someone is wealthy life does not result from one’s possessions.”* **LK12:16** So Jesus told them all a parable: *“A certain rich person’s farm produced a good crop. LK12:17 So he began to say to himself: ‘What should I do, because I have no place to gather in all my produce?’ LK12:18 So the farmer said, ‘This is what I will do. I will tear down my barns and I will build larger ones. Then I will gather into them all the grain and my goods things. LK12:19 Then I will tell my soul, ‘Soul, you have many good things stored up for many years. Rest now, eat, drink and be merry!’ LK12:20 But then the God said to him: ‘Fool, during this very night they will demand your soul from you. Now to whom will all you prepared belong?’ LK12:21 So it happens to the person who saves for self but is not rich with regard to God.”* [NSR]

At this point in Jesus’ sermon someone in the great crowd calls out and asks the Nazarene to settle a dispute over inheritance. We do not know the real circumstances. It may well be this person had a legal right to his inheritance

which his brother has extorted. The main problem was that the man had gathered to a crowd listening to a spiritual teacher and he raises a family and financial problem. He betrays his greed and materialism in such an environment. [Compare Proverbs 20:21.]

Though Jesus could have easily acted as judge regarding this Jews problem, he is no so audacious to act a part he has not been appointed to. But he does give a stern warning to all: *“Look out and be on guard against all kinds of greed.”* What does Jesus mean by greed or covetousness? Greed is defined as a desire for more. In Latin the word is **CUPIDATIS**. The Greek is PLEONEXIAS [Strong's Exhaustive Concordance # 4124, desiring more]. There are many forms and degrees of greed from mild gambling to deceitful extortion. The greedy Christian is to be shunned. [1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 6:9, 10] Greed or covetousness runs in bad company. [Mark 7:22; Romans 1:29; James 4:2]

Jesus states a simple principle about life in general: *“One’s life does not result from one’s possessions.”* Jesus then continues with a parable about a rich farmer who had a particularly good crop, a wind-fall as it were. Now there is nothing wrong with this in itself. But Jesus strikes at humanity’s greed and desire for more security. Note that in the parable the rich farmer uses the personal pronoun [I, me] a dozen times indicating his ego-centric obsession with self. He does exactly what James 4:13-15 cautions against – planning for the future without thinking about God and neighbor.

The rich farmer is thinking years ahead and in all of his self-talk he never mentions God, nor does he utter one word about charity to the poor. Rather, he plans to really enjoy himself – *“eat, drink, and be merry.”* There is nothing wrong with this in itself. [Ecclesiastes 2:24; 11:9] But it can become only self-focusing. [James 5:5] And suddenly the One he is ignoring comes on the scene in the parable.

God addresses him as a fool, that is someone unreasonable from the bigger perspective – really, a simpleton, or stupid, no matter how shrewd his business dealings. God asks an important question: who inherit all these possessions. The phrase is a strong echo of Ecclesiastes 2:18, 19 which describes the vanity of working only for material things, and in the end leaving it all to a fool who will squander the inheritance.

The rich farmer has really been *“the person who saves for self.”* Rich is defined as one with a surplus. Wealthy is a person with a surplus who is propertied. Both of these terms are relative to the cultures in which they live. To the billionaire the million is a pauper. To the millionaire the person with an income of \$50,000 is rat broke. Saving merely for himself – without any thought for others – was what leads to this farmer’s condemnation. A person will be judged on how they use their riches or wealth. There are warnings in Proverbs that sound like the Nazarene. Proverbs 23:4, *“Do not labor for riches.”* Proverbs 28:20, *“The man*

who wants to get rich quick will quickly fail.” Proverbs 30:8, “Give me neither poverty nor riches, grant me only my share of bread to eat.”

These words must have caused the Nazarene’s disciple some misgivings about their own concerns of the future. That is anxiety about basic needs in life.

ANXIETY AND THE KINGDOM

LK12:22 Now Jesus turned to his disciples and said: “*And so I tell you [disciples], do not be anxious regarding your souls as to what you will eat, nor regarding your body as to what you will wear. LK12:23 For the soul is more than food and the body more than clothing. LK12:24 You [disciples], consider the ravens how they do not sow or reap. They have neither barn or storehouse, and yet the God feeds them. How much more valuable are you than these birds? LK12:25 But which one of you [disciples] is able to add but a cubit to his life-span by anxiety? LK12:26 If you cannot do such a small thing, then why are you anxious about the rest? LK12:27 You [disciples], consider how the lilies grow. It does not labor or spin. But I tell you that Solomon in all his glory was not clothed as one of these. LK12:28 So if these are in the field of a meadow today and tomorrow thrown into an oven, how much more the God clothes you of little faith. LK12:29 So, all of you [disciples] do not keep seeking what you will eat or what you will drink, and do not continue to be anxious. LK12:30 For these things the non-Jews of the world of humanity continue to strive after, because your Father is aware you need these things. LK12:31 Instead, all of you [disciples] continue to seek His Kingdom and everything else will be provided to you. LK12:32 Do not be afraid, little flock, your Father was well pleased to give to you [disciples] the Kingdom. LK12:33 Sell your possessions and give to charity. Make for yourselves purses that never wear out – an inexhaustible celestial treasure – where a thief can never get close and moths never consume. LK12:34 For where your treasures are there also will be your hearts.* [NSR]

Jesus now addresses this matter of anxiety over life needs and insecurities. His words are similar to those he had spoke some years before in the Sermon on the Mount. [Matthew 6:25-34] Here Jesus repeats them because they can never be heard enough.

Jesus tells his disciples, “*Do not be anxious.*” This anxiety involves three things: food, drink, and clothing. These are the most primary needs for human existence. Jesus does not have in mind anxieties over luxuries. Modern western societies with all their riches and wealth are still plagued by anxiety and worry, not over food, drink and clothing, but because of their luxuries. In this regard millions of Christians have self-inflicted wounds that destroy faith and end up causing a person to blame God for their problem. [1 Timothy 6:5-10]

The counsel of the Nazarene stands in contrast to the modern “prosperity preachers” who twist scores of Bible verses to convince Christians they deserve to be rich and will become so if they donate “love gifts” to them. Such “lovers of money” [Luke 16:14] will not find God very “friendly” when they stand before Him in the judgment. [Luke 16:9]

The Nazarene gives one of his 60 commandments, *“Do not keep seeking what you will eat and what you will drink.”* Jesus has in mind life’s aims or goals. Jesus considers only the most basics of life – food, drink, and clothing. And even these are not to remain a focus of anxiety. We can imagine how our Lord would feel about those whose daily concerns involve western society’s luxuries. If we listed these they would fill the entire page. It is a sad fact that if all those who claim to be Christians were judged on Luke chapter 12, virtually all of Christendom will hang its head when before the judgment seat of Christ. [2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 John 2:28]

It is natural to be worried or have anxiety from time to time. However, Jesus teaches, *“Do not continue to be anxious.”* There are probably no great daily concerns that eat away at the fiber of individuals than their constant concerns about the necessities of life. The modern problem is that hundreds of items have been added to the Nazarene’s meager list of food, drink, and clothing. So while the Christian world publishes hundreds of books on how to lose weight, the third world is starving, or at least living at the same standards they did two thousand years ago.

The world in general makes material things their constant concern and “continue to strive after” more and more. One way to observe this are the subjects people talk about. Rather Jesus tells his disciples to *“continue to seek His Kingdom.”* That is, strive to find, make it your chief care, set your heart on, eager to have. It is a continual process for the Nazarene disciple. [Compare Romans 8:5-8 and Colossians 3:1, 2.] In the end Life will be billions of years long, and this brief heartbeat of time in the present life is not worth pursuing a life-style that either ignores God, or places Him in a very little corner.

Jesus promises that God will care for his worshippers. That is the bare necessities of life – food, drink, and clothing. Despite this promise, it does not mean there will be times when some Christians being persecuted may go without. [Compare 1 Corinthians 4:11 and 2 Corinthians 11:27.] Jesus says not to be afraid. Jesus anticipates a normal reaction to what he has just told them.

The Nazarene tells this “little flock” not to fear. Who is this “little flock”? There are several views on the identity of this “little flock.” Some maintain it is the whole Church and that this is limited in number. Reading the context of chapter twelve it is clear to others that the “little flock” is limited to Jesus’ apostles. Return to Luke 12:22 and the beginning of the context. This does not mean that the counsel of our Lord cannot be extended to other disciples in principle. However, those who claim to make up the “little flock” would be under charge by their Lord to do what verse 33 directs.

What a surprise for this little flock which include a tax-collector and working fishermen. Jesus tells the “little flock”, *“Sell your possessions and give to charity.”* The Greek is literally “sell your belongings and give gifts of mercy.” Jesus gives

these instructions directly to his “little flock” – that is, his apostles. They did exactly as he told them. [Compare Luke 18:28.] After the ascension of Christ the early Church followed the example of the apostles. [Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32-37] This was something voluntary and no one was forced to sell their property. [Acts 5:1-6] No where in all of Paul’s writings does he instruct the churches to follow this example. He does encourage sharing and suggests an economic equalization was the better way. [Romans 12:13; 2 Corinthians 8:14, 15] He instructs Timothy to give orders to the rich. [1Timothy 6:17-19]

Clearly, it is the heart that is involved in greed and anxiety. It is indeed from the heart that one’s real treasure is manifest. Ask: what is it I really treasure in life? What do I think about the most? What do I talk about most often? What do I read about most often? If those who know me best were asked what my central focus was what would be there answer? Only each individual can answer: what do I think about the most?

Seeking first the Kingdom would involve another attitude about the future – the Return of Christ.

WAITING FOR THE LORD’S RETURN

LK12:35 “Strengthen your thighs with your lamps lit. **LK12:36** You [disciples] should be like men waiting for their Lord, so that when he returns from the marriage banquet and arrives knocking they may open the door at once. **LK12:37** When the Lord arrives blessed are those slaves he discovers have kept watching. I tell you [disciples] this truth: he will put on his apron and have them recline at table while he comes close to serve them. **LK12:38** Even if he arrives in the second or third watch [of the night] and he finds [them ready] – those are blessed. **LK12:39** But all of you understand this: if the master of the house was aware in what hour the thief would arrive, he would not have allowed him to break in. **LK12:40** All of you be prepared because in an hour you do not think it to be the Son of Humankind will return.” [NSR]

Moving from anxiety and fear regarding material needs and future security, Jesus moves to the right spiritual attitude for every disciple of the Nazarene: a constant spirit of expectation in the Return of the Master. Jesus is to repeat some of this later during the last week of his life. [Matthew 24:43, 44; Mark 13:35] The Nazarene directs his disciples “to be ready for action, with belts fastened.” [NEB] They were to be “like men waiting for their Lord” to Return. Here he alludes to what he will later call the Parousia. He does not tell his apostles he will return in their life time. He tells them no matter when he returns to be prepared. That means to “keep watching.” This state of alert may be characterized by faithful obedience, continued charity, constantly growing spiritual enlightenment, and an expectant heart yearned for Christ’s return.

“Be prepared,” Jesus says. Each day the disciple of the Nazarene must be a genuine Christian, evidenced in deep faith, charitable love, care for others in the Church, introducing others to Christ, and self-sacrificing endurance. No matter

when Christ returns it will be a moment not expected by his disciples. [For details see notes in Nazarene Commentary 2000 on Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32.] Anyone who tells you differently should never be followed. [Luke 21:8]

As this point in the Nazarene's sermon, Peter asks a question.

WHO IS THE FAITHFUL STEWARD?

LK12:41 Now Peter asked: "Lord, do you speak this parable to just us or also to everyone else?" **LK12:42** And the Lord said: "*Who is the faithful and wise steward? The one the Lord will appoint over his body of attendants to continue to provide allotments of wheat at the proper season?* **LK12:43** *Blessed is that slave whom the returning Lord finds doing the same.* **LK12:44** *Truly I tell you [disciples], he will appoint him over all of his possessions!* **LK12:45** *However, if that slave ever says in his heart, 'My Master delays his return' -- and begins to beat male and female servants and to eat and drink and get drunk --* **LK12:46** *the Lord of that slave will return on a day that he did not expect and in an hour that he did not know. And he will cut him in two and will put him with the unfaithful.* **LK12:47** *Now that slave who knew his Lord's will but did not prepare and do according to it will be beaten with many strokes.* **LK12:48** *But the one who was not aware but did things worthy of a beating will be beaten with only a few. Now to everyone to whom much was given, much will be required from him; and the one who was entrusted with a lot, they will ask even more from him.* [NSR]

Jesus is also to mention his answer against at Matthew 24:45-51. There is a huge crowd and Peter wants to know if this parable of the ready servants applies directly to the apostles only or to others. Jesus asks a rhetorical question which the following analogy is to answer.

The parable is of a house servant who is appointed over the household slaves. The phrase "body of attendants" is from the Greek THERAPEIAS [therapists; curing staff]. The 1st Century Jewish philosopher actually reports that a commune of Christians in Egypt called their members by this Greek word. It is possible the immediate question of Peter, as well as the identity of the "little flock" mentioned above, indicates the "faithful steward" is the body of the apostles. At the same time the principle could be applied to any Christian who is in fact faithful and wise and who feeds other community members.

The faithful steward would first have to have access to such food. It is interesting that if the parable were viewed literally, we do find the apostles later actually in charge of the literal feeding of the early Church members. [Compare Acts 6:1-7.] That body of elders throughout the Gospel Age who have busied themselves as slaves to the whole household could be described as such a "faithful steward." [Compare notes on 1 Corinthians 12:27, 28 and Ephesians 4:11-16.] The happy "faithful steward" will be that one as part of "we the living" of 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17. Whenever the Lord returns there will be either individuals or bodies of people who will fit the Lord's parable.

It is unfortunate that large numbers of members of the Church, as well as many so-called scholars, have written of the “delayed parousia.” An entire theology has been structured on the idea that Christ and his apostles expected the parousia in their life-time, making all of them great disappointments. It is very serious state of mind to begin to think the Lord is not coming. [Compare Habakkuk 2:4-6.]

Jesus also states there is an “evil slave.” This slave loses faith in Parousia and “begins to beat” fellow slaves. Also the evil slave starts to become concerned with eating and drinking and indeed becomes a habitual drunk. The unfaithful steward becomes focused on the very things Jesus mentions above. They seek those things the Nazarene warned about. When the Master returns he threatens to cut such a slave in two.

In this parable other than the faithful slave, Jesus lists three other types of Household slaves – all members of the Christian Church – and the various punishments they will receive: a) the unfaithful steward who harmed his fellows; b) the slave who but did not perform; and, c) the slave who did not know what to do. The evil slave will share the fate of the unfaithful, that is “the traitor’s lot.” Unlike the faithful Christian who remained busy in the care of their fellows and was appointed over the Lord’s possessions, this Christian slave is thrown in with the infidels.

The next Christian is familiar with the Lord’s teachings. However, this disciple “does not get ready or act.” [GDS] Or, “made no attempt to carry them out.” [NEB] Many Christians belong to this group of slaves: they do not harm others, but neither do they respond positively or energetically. When the Lord returns they will be severely beaten with the figurative 40 strokes. How this will take place is not described. It surely will include deep embarrassment when in the presence of the Lord. [Daniel 12:2; 1 John 2:28]

The final slave was in the Household but ignorant of the Master’s will. Millions in modern Christendom fit this category of those unknowing slaves. They are still members of the Christian Church but either due to their leadership or their own failure to learn the Master’s will it is not clear to them what is required. These will still be beaten but with few strokes. The whole parable tells us several things: a) it tells us something about our Lord, that he is not just a passive, all forgiving Savior; and, b) though the Lord metes out severe punishment to those who deserve it, he is also very merciful to the last two slaves, who are not assigned with the infidels. These later slaves are not described as beating their fellows or getting drunk.

One of the points of Jesus’ illustration is that not all Christians are equal in gifts of responsibility. These gifts vary. [Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10, 11] Christian men who are elders will be held accountable for what they do or do not do. [Titus 2:1, 2] Mature Christian women will be held responsible for what they teach younger women. [Titus 2:3, 4]

Christian parents will be held responsible for what they teach their children. [Ephesians 6:1-4] Degrees of responsibility within the Church varies according to gifts and blessings. To be given an assignment and fail to carry it out is a most serious matter.

Some have been misguided into thinking that Christ is all peace and love and virtually lacks any other attributes. What was one reason Jesus Christ even came in the first place? Concluding his sermon, the Nazarene makes surprise statement.

I CAME TO CAUSE DIVISION

LK12:49 *"I came to hurl fire upon the earth – and how I wish it was already ignited!*
LK12:50 *And I have a baptism to be baptized with – and how I am distressed until it is finished!* **LK12:51** *Do you [disciples] think that I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you! Rather, division!* **LK12:52** *For from now on in one house five will be divided against three, and three against two, and two against three.* **LK12:53** *A father will be divided against a son, and a son against a father, a mother against the daughter, and a daughter against the mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law."* [NSR]

Jesus had already said something similar a bit earlier. So this was not the first time his disciples heard some of these things. [Matthew 10:34-36] Now Christ tells his disciples one of the reasons he came to the earth: *"I came to hur fire upon the earth."* Or as other versions render this: to build a fire, set the world on fire. Any retrospective of history can see how this lone carpenter from Nazareth did indeed set a fire on earth. The Jews held that when Messiah came universal peace would begin. However, Jesus teaches just the opposite. The fire will not start until after his execution and the spread of his Church throughout the Roman world.

The Nazarene says he did not come to "bring peace on earth." One of the reasons modern rabbis do not think Jesus was the Messiah is because of their view that when Christ comes peace will come to earth. Since this has not happened, they reason Jesus could not have been Messiah. However, Jesus taught exactly the opposite. If he did not come to bring peace, what was it the Messiah expected to do?

Instead he says he came to "cause division." That is, discord or dissension. Not only would there be divisions between individuals and families, the Church itself would be fractured, resulting in the 10,000 schisms today. Paul also writes of the need for this division within the Church: *"The Christ is divided. ... It is actually not for the better, but for the worse, that you meet together. For first of all when you assemble for meeting I hear that schisms exist in your midst. In part I believe this. Now there is a necessity that opinionated heresies exist in your midst that*

those approved may also become manifest among you.” [1 Corinthians 1:10;11:17-19 NSR] If he said that nearly two thousand years ago imagine what his assessment would be today.

Jesus borrows from Micah 7:2 in describing the divisions Christianity would bring in households. Such divisions continue to this day. Jesus did not promise one Church with perfect unity. Such unity was for but a moment when the Church reached maturity by the end of the 1st Century. [Ephesians 4:12-16] Since, as Paul predicted in 1 Corinthians 11:17-19 and elsewhere, the Church has remained divided into 10,000 schisms of sects, organizations, and denominations. This has also divided families. This division will continue until Christ comes with his angels to separate the wheat [or, sheep] from the weeds [or, goats] within his own Church.

In part this is all due to the great apostasy foretold by Jesus and his inspired disciples. [Matthew 13:25, 39; 2 Thessalonians 2:2, 3] But divisions become about for other reasons – some of them honestly. They are brought about due to a Christ-conscience – when a sensitive and devoted disciple realizes that leadership in his church or organization has abandoned the plain truths of the Nazarene and his inspired disciples. Such a conscience cannot abide living under the brutal control of a religious hierarchy who had hidden agendas and self-centered motives. Such a fire with its divisions will continue right up to the Return of Christ as wheat and weeds grow together in the same periods of time.

But, how does Jesus bring his marvelous sermon to a conclusion? How does he wrap up what he has said before? Note that he ends with two analogies of what his “genuine disciples” should do.

LEARN TO INTERPRET THE SEASONS

LK12:54 Then Jesus also spoke to the crowds: *“When you see the clouds building in the west, right away you say a rain storm is coming and so it happens. **LK12:55** Also, when a south wind begins to blow, you say it will be hot and it happens. **LK12:56** Hypocrites, you can interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How come you are not aware how to interpret this present season? **LK12:57** Also, why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? **LK12:58** For as you are on your way to a ruler with your adversary before the law, on the way work out your dispute with him and get rid of the problem. Otherwise, he will drag you before the judge, and the judge will hand you over to the court officer, and he will put you in prison. **LK12:59** I tell you, you will be no means ever get out until you have paid back the last lepton.”* [NSR]

No speaker whose sole purpose is to create peace and harmony addresses his audience as “hypocrites.” But this is exactly what Jesus does. The language of Jesus to the crowd at large is harsh for he knows the vast majority have not come to learn but to see signs. These same people will later scream for his execution. The Nazarene has condemned his generation and this will be fulfilled

in the year 70 AD with the destruction of Jerusalem and the death of one million Jews.

He concludes with two analogies: a] the need to be alert to current trends and the prophetic horizon; and, b] the need to make peace with God before the judgment.

First, he condemns these hypocrites who claimed Yehowah as their God because they fail to interpret or discern “this present season.” He uses the analogy of predicting the weather. These people could look at the sky and tell what the weather was going to do, but prophetic events escaped their notice. They were completely oblivious to their momentous period in history.

Likewise today, millions of Christians – like the Jews of the 1st Century – have failed to read their Bibles and come to an understanding of the prophetic horizon. Like the nations they make the pursuit of material things their primary interest in life. As a result, should the Master return in our own life-time, these will find themselves unprepared.

Christ’s second analogy is a lesson in making peace with God before the Day of Judgment arrives. Jesus analogy is likely to mean the righteous Jew should not set his relationship with the Judge and make for peace before the coming cataclysm. One million Jews failed to do this and perished in the siege of 70 AD. On the other hand thousands of Christians saw the fulfillment of Christ’s prophecies about Jerusalem, and so escaped into the mountains.

Judgment is a major theme of the Nazarene. Indeed, while he only uses the word “salvation” twice, he uses the word group judge and judgment about 60 times. [For details see notes in Nazarene Commentary 2000 on *God and Judgment in Biblical Articles*.] In this analogy Jesus stresses the point in his conclusion to do what is necessary to come to peaceful relations with God. One way to learn what is required is by reading this marvelous sermon of our Lord several times. Then after comprehending what the Nazarene taught, make every effort to live by his teachings.

In review, what are some questions we could ponder on this Christine sermon in Luke chapter 13?

- ?? What hypocrisy does Jesus tell his disciples to look out for?
- ?? What does Jesus teach about confession and forgiveness?
- ?? What is the blasphemy of the holy spirit?
- ?? What does Jesus teach about greed?
- ?? What does Jesus teach about anxiety?
- ?? What should come first in a disciple’s life?
- ?? Who is the “little flock”?
- ?? What are they told to do?
- ?? Jesus compares his disciples to what kind of men?

- ?? Who is the faithful steward?
- ?? Did Jesus come to bring peace and unity?
- ?? How does Jesus illustrate the need for a righteous examination?

==== END ====

Nazarene Commentary 2000©

By Mark Heber Miller

26 July 2000

INTRODUCTION TO *Nazarene Commentary 2000©*

Nazarene Commentary 2000© is a complete reference to the 29 books of the Christian Bible. Most of these books have been presented in a new version called the *Nazarene Saints Rendering*. This special study of the New Testament includes over 2 million words, 12,000 footnotes, and 3,000 pages. This entire work was completed Wednesday 26 July 2000. It is the intellectual property of Mark Heber Miller and may not be reproduced without written permission except in reasonable portions as free gifts to friends and relatives for the purpose of increasing Biblical knowledge. All this material may be downloaded from the *Friends of the Nazarene* web site – www.nazarene-friends.org/

It is hoped that this spiritual aid will be a blessing to present and future Saints and that in time it will also be hard published so that those who do not have access to computers and the Internet may also benefit.

CONTENTS [Copy and Paste to go to subject]

- ?? HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE
- ?? WHERE DO I START?
- ?? MEMORIZING IMPORTANT BIBLE SUBJECTS
- ?? DEVOTIONAL BIBLE STUDY GROUPS
- ?? OTHER PUBLICATIONS FOR BIBLICAL STUDY
- ?? HOW TO FIND OR RESEARCH
- ?? BIBLE TRANSLATION ABBREVIATIONS
- ?? THE AUTHOR AND EDITOR

How to Understand the Bible

Nazarene Commentary 2000© s designed to help you understand Biblical Truth by doing your own research into the meaning of the Scriptures. I have tried to

avoid being dogmatic, or insisting on only one view. I will be the first to admit that there are some Biblical subjects -- despite 2,000 years of research -- on which not everyone agrees. This does not mean the *Friends of the Nazarene* do not have their own firm views on most matters.

Nazarene Commentary 2000© is designed to provide you with as much information as is reasonably possible so you can arrive at your own conclusions. I have endeavored to supply a deep and broad coverage of the major phrases and key words dealt with here in this Bible study aid. However, I encourage any comparison with other lexicons, dictionaries, encyclopedias and commentaries. There is a wealth of knowledge cultivated by the Church of Christ throughout the Gospel Age. Though I do not agree with every Biblical "scholar" during the history of the Church, I respect their godly labors. Each disciple of the Nazarene is responsible before God to first understand the EPIGNOSIS [heightened knowledge] of the eternal purpose of God. [Ephesians 3:9-11] Secondly, each individual Christian bears their own responsibility of coming to a mature comprehension of the will of God, to "the end of fully pleasing Him." [Colossians 1:9, 10]

Interest in the Bible

Despite its age of over four thousand years -- and despite the attempts over this same period to destroy the "People of the Book" [Koran] and their Scriptures -- more sincere people are interested in the Bible as we enter the 3rd Millennium CE than any other time in human history. More copies of the Bible are distributed in thousands of languages and tongues in every corner of the world. Millions of Bibles in a variety of translations continue to be distributed internationally.

Where Do I Start?

Where one starts in their use of *Nazarene Commentary 2000*© depends on their level of Christian maturity. I encourage any person new to Nazarene discipleship to begin first in harmony with Hebrews 1:1, 2: "On many occasions, and in a variety of ways in ancient times, The God spoke to our [Hebrew] forefathers by means of the Prophets. In these last days He spoke to us by means of a Son whom He appointed heir of the Universe." [Nazarene Saints Rendering (NSR)] In other words, begin a study of the Bible with what Jesus Christ the Nazarene taught.

For brevity that would include the Sermon on the Mount [Matthew 5-7], the parables of Jesus [Matthew 13], and the Nazarene's prophecy about his promised Return. [Matthew 24, 25] In this regard one may find it beneficial to use the *Nazarene Commentary 2000*© on the *Gospel of Matthew*. This is a completely new rendering of the Greek of Matthew's Gospel with 1,500 footnotes. Beginning with the Sermon on the Mount one first learns what Jesus

actually taught in his most famous public discourse. The publication *Nazarene Principles* is a basic primer on the fundamental teachings of Jesus.

If you want to learn about the early Church and how it was arranged, you may wish to begin with the *Nazarene Commentary 2000©* on *First Timothy* and *Titus*. There you will learn how Christians ought to conduct themselves in God's House. Also helpful here is the work *Nazarene Community*. This work is a consideration of how early Christian meetings were conducted, how elders and deacons were chosen, and how Christians can maintain a degree of unity and harmony despite different backgrounds.

Many have attempted to read the Bible but the majority stop after a few months. Only a small portion complete the entire Bible. Fewer still understand what they have read. Hundreds of thousands want to know how to understand the Bible and then remember what they have learned. The *Friends of the Nazarene* are devoted to helping any honest person by publishing many publications on the World Wide Web. That is the purpose of *Nazarene Commentary 2000©*. Under the title *How to Read the Bible* below there are some helpful suggestions. There are hints to help anyone to remember key words that will aid memorizing important truths and principles.

All books of the Christian Bible available in *Nazarene Commentary 2000©* contain review questions on every paragraph and/or chapter. Most of these Bible books contain two or more other versions for comparisons, as well as individual words compared against two dozen translations.

After Matthew I recommend beginning with Paul's epistle to the Philippians which is both simple and encouraging. Each major thought or subject is presented in a paragraph. This paragraph has been assigned a topical heading in just a few words. You may wish to create your own brief statement on each chapter and paragraph.

Read the chapter heading before beginning. Note the key word and plan to look for these and related synonyms. You may wish to read the "Theme Verse" first to give you an over all view of the subject. Read each paragraph slowly and carefully. Compare the Bible versions provided to aid in a wider understanding. Noting the footnotes will also expand horizons of understanding.

You will note a couple things in your reading of the footnoted literal version: 1) Where Paul quotes or alludes to the Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures these are noted; and, 2) Greek words of interest are usually printed in CAPS and often followed by the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* of the Bible and its numerical codes. [#1334] By using this concordance, or another lexicon keyed to the Strong's numbers, more can be learned about the meaning.

Memorizing Important Bible Subjects

Some people, like Presidents Lincoln and Roosevelt, have memorized the entire Bible. Though this is commendable, few have accomplished this feat. Your purpose here ought to be to learn and remember key words and subjects in certain Bible books.

Take one book of the Bible at a time beginning with Philippians as an example of the process. Each paragraph grouping or chapters contains "Review Questions." Review these and try to find the answers as you proceed. Usually there are cross-referencing texts that will provide more information on that subject and question. [There is a section called *Key Words of the Bible* in the Nazarene Commentary 2000© which gives a key word for each chapter of the Bible.]

After reading a paragraph, review these verses and associate what you have read with the subject theme provided for that material. Do this with each paragraph, one after another. Then at the end of each chapter ask yourself these summary questions without looking at the chapter reading. Write these down. If you need to look over certain portions again, do so. "Repetition is the mother of retention."

Proceed through the four chapters in Philippians at your own pace. Take your time and meditate on what you are learning. [Psalm 1:1, 2] Do not worry if you do not grasp everything on the first reading. Few subjects worth learning are clearly understood upon a first reading. It usually takes several readings to begin to grasp the overall purpose and the details.

Devotional Bible Study Groups

Many prefer to be involved with a local Devotional Bible Study Group. [This is usually held on a mid-week evening.] You may be able to invite friends, family, or neighbors to share in such a Bible reading and discussion. If there is a qualified teacher present, or if the group wishes someone to take the lead, most will feel the discussion ought to be opened with prayer. [For details see *Nazarene Community*.]

The leader of the group may wish to review what was read and discussed the previous week. This can be done by going over some of the questions and summaries emphasizing key words for memory purposes. It is always beneficial to pay close attention to certain principles that will enhance a Christian's life.

Before reading a paragraph ask the preliminary Lesson Questions so all in the group can be looking for the main points. Different members of the group can take turns in reading the paragraph in a single version which all can follow. After the reading the Lesson or Review Questions can be asked one at a time and the answers discussed. As needed the Cross Reference verses can be examined to gain more detail. Some may wish to examine a special Greek word, or make a comment on a footnote. Those who prepare in advance will find they get more out of the discussion.

No doubt some in the group will have questions. These may be discussed in brief and further direction given on how to learn more about that subject. It is only natural that some will have one view while others have another. Each view should be respected and individuals can make up their own minds as they study further. It is hoped that a humble and loving Christian group can come to "one mind" on most matters. [Philippians 2:1-3] The important thing is to grow as a Christian in knowledge, faith, and love. [Ephesians 4:12-16]

Following a reasonable length of time -- most feel about an hour is beneficial -- the leader of the devotional study group can review some points with the purpose of remembering the information and applying key principles in one's life.

Persons new to Bible reading and study do well to begin with the letter to the Philippians.. The Bible books in *Nazarene Commentary 2000*© include review questions on each paragraph or at the end of chapters. Most will want to pass on to other Bible books. It is believed by most Christians that a study of the teachings of Jesus Christ the Nazarene should be a life-long project. Though questions are not provided with these, a format similar to the one described above can be created locally. We suggest the following books of the Bible in this order: Matthew, Acts, First Timothy, Ephesians, First John. Though many are interested in Revelation, I recommend reading Daniel first, and then do not draw any conclusions until both are read several times.

These follow a similar format as those epistles mentioned above. They are all new versions with a fresh literal rendering from the Greek language. Some contain two versions: a literal and a paraphrased. Two [Romans and Jude] also contain interlinear versions. Most key words and phrases are footnoted and all critical Greek words are studied.

With few exceptions the *Nazarene Commentary 2000*© of the *Nazarene Saints Rendering* [NSR] generally contains the following:

- ?? **A new rendering of the Greek language**
- ?? **In some cases there are two versions: literal and paraphrase**
- ?? **A footnote commentary on major words and phrases**
- ?? **A topical outline with headings on key subjects**
- ?? **Studies on key Greek (or, Hebrew) words with Strong's numbers**
- ?? **Most phrases are compared to the *King James* as well as other versions**
- ?? **Key cross references have been compared, studied and listed**
- ?? **Brief summaries or questions of each paragraph or chapters**
- ?? **Review questions for personal or group discussions**

If the above project is regularly practiced most will find they have developed a deeper and broader understanding of the Bible. They will also note that they are

growing in Christian character, as a New Person in Christ. Others will recognize the change in their lifestyle and Christian growth. Some who began as first-time readers of the Bible may discover a true love of teaching the Scriptures to others.

Other Publications for Biblical Study

In addition to the above there are numerous magazines, booklets, and books on a variety of subjects in *Nazarene Commentary 2000*©. These include:

?? **Biblical Articles** containing over 128 articles on specific subjects in a wide range of interest.

1. DO NOT JOIN THEM! [LUKE 21:8]
2. DOES JOHN 14:19 PROVE THE RETURN OF CHRIST WILL BE INVISIBLE?
3. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF DANIEL 8:14?
4. HOW IS 1 THESSALONIANS 4:17 TO BE UNDERSTOOD?
5. WHAT IS "SPIRITUALITY"? [1 CORINTHIANS 2]
6. WHAT IS THE FIRST MENTION OF THE "RESURRECTION" IN THE BIBLE?
7. THE ONLY TRUE RELIGION---DOES THE BIBLE TEACH IT?
8. WHY WE CANNOT PREACH THESE ARE "THE LAST DAYS"?
9. HOW JESUS DIED ON BOTH A TREE AND A STAKE?
10. IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED? [2 TIMOTHY 3:16]
11. WHAT IS "THIS GENERATION"? [MATTHEW 24:34]
12. CELEBRATING THE "MEMORIAL" OF CHRIST'S DEATH [1 COR 11:26]
13. THE "LITTLE FLOCK" AND "THE FAITHFUL STEWARD" [LUKE 12:32]
14. WHO ARE THE ONES THAT BELONG TO THE FATHER?
15. NAZARENE LOVE [1 CORINTHIANS 13]
16. THE TENT OF YAHWEH [PSALM 15]
17. THE PAROUSIA FOLLOWS THE GREAT TRIBULATION! [MATTHEW 24:29]
18. THE PAROUSIA -JUDGMENT [2 CORINTHIANS 5:10]
19. THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON
20. WHAT ARE "THE TIMES OF THE GENTILES"? [LUKE 21:24]
21. DO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCES POINT TO A CREATOR? [ROMANS 1:20]
22. WHAT IS THE "HOLY SPIRIT"?
23. WAS THE FLOOD LOCAL OR GLOBAL? [GENESIS 6-9]
24. WAS JESUS RAISED IN A FLESHLY HUMAN BODY? [1 PETER 3:18]
25. DOES GOD EXIST? [PSALM 14:1]
26. DOGMATISM VERSUS CONVICTION
27. HOW TO CONDUCT A BIBLE DISCUSSION
28. "THINK JUST AS CHRIST THOUGHT!" [1 CORINTHIANS 2:16]
29. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 1, 2, 13]
30. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 13:11-20]
31. DO THE NAZARENE SAINTS "WORSHIP" TWO GODS? [JOHN 1:18]
32. MAY PRAYERS BE DIRECTED TO JESUS RATHER THAN HIS FATHER?
33. ARE THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT STILL AVAILABLE TODAY? [1 COR 12, 13]
34. THE HOLY SPIRIT AS "HELPER" [JOHN 14-16]
35. ARE THERE TWO CHOICES OR OPTIONS FOR CHRISTIANS: HEAVEN OR EARTH?

36. WHO ARE THE "SHEEP" AND "GOATS"? [MATTHEW 25:31-46]
37. THE HOPE OF THE PATRIARCHS [HEBREWS 11]
38. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 13:21-24]
39. A LOVING DISCIPLE OF THE NAZARENE [1 CORINTHIANS 13]
40. "TABERNACLE SHADOWS"
41. CHRISTIAN GIVING -- THE WAY TO SPIRITUAL PERFECTION
42. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 14:1-5]
43. WHEN IS SATAN CAST OUT OF HEAVEN? [REVELATION 12:10-12]
44. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 14:6-14]
45. THE FUNDAMENTALS
46. THE DIVINE NAME AND YOUR FAVORITE TRANSLATION
47. THE PROPHETIC HORIZON: HOW WE CAN KNOW THE FUTURE?
48. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 14:15-20]
49. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 14:21-34]
50. REGARDING HEBREWS 7:1-3
51. ARE THE "TWO PROPHETS" AMONG US? [REVELATION 11]
52. WITH WHOM IS THE "NEW COVENANT" MADE? [JEREMIAH 31:31-35]
53. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 23:1-11]
54. "FOLLOW THE LAMB" [REVELATION 14:4, 5]
55. WHAT IS WRONG WITH CHRISTIANS TODAY?
56. THOUGHTS ON THE PROVERBS [PROVERBS 23:12-19]
57. WHO HAS "THE TRUTH"?
58. PAY ATTENTION TO THE WORD OF PROPHECY [2 PETER 1]
59. WHAT IS "THE LOVE"? [1 CORINTHIANS 13]
60. WHO IS THE "ONLY POTENTATE"? [1 TIMOTHY 6:15]
61. GUARD AGAINST EVERY KIND OF GREED! [LUKE 12:15]
62. WHAT IS THE "BODY" AND WHO ARE THE "EAGLES"? [MT 24:28; LK 17:37]
63. WHERE TO FIND "INSPIRED INTERPRETATIONS"
64. GOD AND JUDGMENT
65. A WARNING TO THE JUDGMENTAL! [MATTHEW 7:1, 2]
66. THE MEANING OF ROMANS CHAPTER 11
67. "YOU ARE NOT PART OF THE WORLD" [JOHN 15:19]
68. WHAT ARE "TEACHINGS OF DEMONS"? [1 TIMOTHY 4:1]
69. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CHRISTIAN ELDERS [1 TIMOTHY 3:1; TITUS 1:5]
70. WHAT MAKES WORSHIP "WORTHLESS"? [MATTHEW 15:9; JAMES 1:26, 27]
71. THE FIFTEEN STEPS TO HEAVENLY GLORY
72. ARE THE "LAST DAYS" 2,000 YEARS LONG?
73. "COMMAND OTHERS NOT TO TEACH DIFFERENT DOCTRINE!"
74. WORTHLESS RELIGION AND DEAD FAITH
75. WALKING IN CHRIST'S DOCTRINE [2 JOHN]
76. IMITATE GOOD AND NOT BAD [3 JOHN]
77. "SEAL NOT THIS BOOK!" [REVELATION 22:10]
78. HOW TO KNOW ONE IS BORN OF GOD [1 JOHN]
79. WHERE WILL CHRISTIAN'S SPEND ETERNITY? [2 CORINTHIANS 5:1]
80. DID CHRIST HAVE A PRE-EXISTENCE? [JOHN 17:5]
81. EVERY CHRISTIAN AN EVANGELIST!
82. WHAT IS "ARMAGEDDON"? [REVELATION 16:14, 16]
83. SHOULD "HEBREWS" CONTAIN THE TETRAGRAM?
84. "IS CHRIST DIVIDED?" [1 CORINTHIANS 1:10]
85. PRIESTS IN THE "MORE PERFECT TENT" [HEBREWS 9, 10]
86. "BEHOLD, A WHITE HORSE!" [Revelation 6:1, 2]
87. AN ALLUSION TO CHRIST'S PRE-EXISTENCE IN THE SYNOPTICS
88. EIGHT THINGS TO MAKE YOUR CALLING SURE [2 Peter chapter 1]
89. OUR LORD TAUGHT THE RAPTURE! [1 Thessalonians 4:15]
90. NAZARENE PRINCIPLES [TRACT]
91. SEAL NOT THE BOOK! [TRACT]

92. THE PROPHETIC HORIZON [TRACT]
93. FOLLOW THE LAMB [TRACT]
94. KEEP MY SABBATHS AND STAND IN AWE!
95. SIN OFFERING
96. THE BIBLICAL WOMAN
97. WHAT IS THE "GOSPEL"?
98. AGREE TO DISAGREE?
99. A DIFFERENT JESUS
100. BEHOLD, A RED HORSE
101. WHAT IS THE "REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST"?
102. FIRSTBORN MEANS "FIRST-CREATED"
103. KEY WORDS OF THE BIBLE
104. AFFIRMATION OF CONVICTIONS
105. OBSERVING THE LORD'S SUPPER IN A WORTHY MANNER
106. DEATH OF MESSIAH FORETOLD
107. CHRIST – THE DAY OF DEATH BETTER THAN THE DAY OF BIRTH
108. DO BUSINESS UNTIL I RETURN
109. BIBLE THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
110. NAZARENE PRINCIPLES – BIBLE STUDY BOOKLET
111. BEHOLD, A RED HORSE
112. WHAT IS THE "REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST"?
113. FIRSTBORN MEANS "FIRST-CREATED"
114. KEY WORDS OF THE BIBLE
115. AFFIRMATION OF CONVICTIONS
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117. MESSIAH'S SUFFERING AND DEATH FORETOLD
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119. DO BUSINESS UNTIL I RETURN
120. BIBLE THOUGHT FOR THE DAY
121. NAZARENE PRINCIPLES – BIBLE STUDY BOOKLET
122. THE "LOVE BOMB"
123. JEHOVAH IS OUR LAWGIVER
124. FOR FREEDOM CHRIST HAS SET US FREE
125. MESSIAH'S PRE-EXISTENCE IN THE HEBREW BIBLE
126. WHAT WE LEARN FROM YOUR LETTERS
127. WHAT KIND OF CONGREGATION WILL YOU BE?
128. BIBLE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

?? **The Error of the Trinity** [*De Trinitatis Erroribus*] is a thorough study of the subject of the Trinity including historical and philosophical sources. It also has a commentary on virtually every Bible verses used in defense of the Trinity.

?? **Where Are the Dead?** is a study of "death" from Genesis throughout the Bible. It covers such topics as hell, Hades, Sheol, soul, spirit, Gehenna, immortality, resurrection, rapture, and other related subjects.

?? **Nazarene Community**© is a study of the early church order and arrangement.

?? **Nazarene Commandments**© is a study of the 60 commandments given by the Lord Jesus.

?? **Nazarene Principles**© is a Bible study primer on the basic doctrines of Jesus Christ and his inspired disciples. It is useful for Church meetings and personal studies with new disciples of the Nazarene.

How to Find or Research

You may find any key word or subject by entering such in the “Find” [Ctrl + F] window. Bible verses may be located by entering the individual book code [mt = Matthew] and the chapter-verse code -- 1:1 etc. The following are the codes for each Bible book in *Nazarene Commentary 2000*©.

Matthew -- MT [NSR in a literal version]
Mark – MK [NSR in a paraphrased version]
Luke – LK [NSR in a paraphrased version]
John – JN [NSR in a literal version]
Acts – AC [NSR in a paraphrased version]
Romans – Ro [NSR in an interlinear and literal version]
1 Corinthians – 1Co [NSR in a literal version and *Weymouth Translation*]
2 Corinthians – 2Co [NSR in a literal version and *Weymouth Translation*]
Galatians – GA [*Revised Standard Version* and *Weymouth Translation*]
Ephesians – EP [NSR in both literal and paraphrased versions]
Philippians – PH [NSR literal version and *Revised Standard Version* and *Weymouth Translation*]
Colossians – Co [*Revised Standard Version* and *Weymouth Translation*]
1 Thessalonians -- 1TH [*Revised Standard Version*, *Weymouth Translation*, and *Young’s Literal Translation*]
2 Thessalonians -- 2TH [*Revised Standard Version* and *Weymouth Translation*]
1 Timothy -- 1TM [NSR literal version and *Young’s, Darby*]
2 Timothy -- 2TM [*Revised Standard Version*]
Titus – Ti [NSR literal version and *Weymouth Translation*]
Philemon – PHM [NSR literal version]
Hebrews – HE [NSR literal version]
James – JA [NSR literal version and *Weymouth Translation*, *Young’s*]
1 Peter -- 1PE [*Revised Standard Version* and *Weymouth Translation*]
2 Peter -- 2PE [NSR literal and paraphrased versions]
1 John -- 1JN [NSR literal and paraphrase versions]
2 John -- 2JN [NSR literal version with *Contemporary English Version*]
3 John -- 3JN [NSR literal version with *Contemporary English Version*]
Jude – JU [NSR interlinear and literal versions]
Revelation – RV [NSR literal version]
Daniel – DN [NSR literal version (this work is included with Revelation)]

These will lead you quickly to the Bible books. For any Bible verse just enter, for example JN3:16 in the Find window This will take you to all places that verse

occurs. In researching where a verse is referenced enter, for example, Daniel 7:13. In some cases that will be considerable.

Key words and subjects may also be located by entering the word in the Find window. Some words in the footnotes are underlined indicating this subject is covered elsewhere. You may find many subjects of interest in this manner.

Bible Translation Abbreviations:

Many Bible versions were used in the preparation of *Nazarene Commentary2000*© and these are indicated by a three-letter code.

ASV – American Standard Version
DOU – Douay [1582]
WEB – Websters [1833]
LEE – Isaac Leeser Jewish Scriptures [1853]
FEN – F Fenton Complete Bible in Modern English [1882]
EXP – Expository's Bible [1895]
TCN – 20th Century New Testament [1898]
WEY – F R Weymouth New Testament in Modern Speech [1902]
ROB – James A Robertson New Testament Modern Speech [1943]
PEO – B Johnson People's New Testament
MOF – James Moffatt A New Translation [1913]
LAM – G M Lamsa New Testament According to Aramaic [1933]
JPS – Jewish Publication Society [1955]
GDS – An American Translation Smith and Goodspeed [1925]
WMS – C B Williams A Translation in the Language of the People [1937]
KNX – New Testament a New Translation R A Knox [1943] Catholic
SOC – Soncino Bible [1947] Jewish
BER – Berkeley Version in Modern English [1945]
CON – Confraternity Catholic [1952]
CNC – Concordant [1958]
NOR – Norlie's Simplified New Testament [1951]
NAS – New American Standard [1960]
NWT – New World Translation
WUE – K Wuest An Expanded Translation [1956]
PME – Phillips Modern English [1963]
AMP – Amplified Bible [1958]
NEB – New English Bible [1961]
BEC – W F Beck American Translation [1963]
TEV – Today's English Version [1966]
TAY – Living Bible by K N Taylor [1962]
BAR – W Barclay [1968]
NRS – New Revised Standard Version
NSR – Nazarene Saints Rendering [1998] by Friends of the Nazarene

NKJ – New King James Version T Nelson [1979]
TAN – Tanakh by Jew Publication Society [1985]
REB – Revised English Bible [1989]
ABU – New Testament of our Lord and Savior John A Broadus
ALF – Henry Alford New Testament
BAS – New Testament in Basic English
MON – The Centenary Translation Helen Barrett Montgomery
RHM – J B Rotherham the Emphasized Bible
DIA – Diaglott Benjamin Wilson
KIT – Kingdom Interlinear
INB – Interlinear Bible Jay Green
UBS – United Bible Society Interlinear
LXX – Jewish Greek Septuagint Bagster
NJB – New Jerusalem Bible
NIV – New International Version
YNG – Young Literal Version

Just some notes –

Ultra-literal version – KIT
Literal – RHM, YNG, UBS, INB
Mildly paraphrased but accurate – NJB, NWT, GDS, RSV
Paraphrased but generally accurate – PME, WEY, MOF

The choice of a personal Bible is just that “personal.” Many use the current versions produced with a profit in mind: NRS, NIV, TEV, NKJ, NAS.

An excellent Bible is the NJB which has a pleasant read, is mildly paraphrased, and contains superb cross-references and footnotes. It also uses the Divine Name YAHWEH.

Some would consider the most accurate literal versions to be RHM, GDS, RSV — in that order.

Someone said: “All translations of the Bible are paraphrased versions.” There is no Bible without its individual bias.

One way to determine overall accuracy is to use the RSV and compare it against a couple of interlinears remembering ALL TRANSLATIONS HAVE THEIR BIAS.

Our genuine prayer is that the Nazarene Commentary 2000© Bible study aid will be a blessing to your continued growth as a disciple of the Nazarene.

THE AUTHOR AND EDITOR

The work contained in the *Nazarene Commentary 2000*© is the result of the efforts of one Christian man devoted to Jesus Christ the Nazarene, Mark Heber Miller. This work may be viewed as nothing more than one Christian's notes on the Bible. The 2.5 million words here were composed during the years 1996 to 2000, though the preparation and research actually involved a period of 50 years. The author was christened a Lutheran [1938], baptized as a Baptist [1949] and completed his first reading of the *King James Version* when he was 12 years old. He was re-baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses [1956], and for doctrinal reasons parted company with "the Society" in 1996. In the 50 years following his first complete reading of the Bible his life has been dedicated to a love of God's Word the Bible. The last two years have absorbed his determination to create a new rendering of most of the New Testament Christian Bible called the *Nazarene Saints Rendering*.

Mark turned down college scholarships in English, creative writing and swimming to enter self-supporting missionary work in three countries over a 40-year period, 20 years in the full-time ministry. He has been the Presiding Minister of ten congregations in several states. Mark is well-known for his ongoing self-education. He has read the Bible completely scores of times, and the New Testament innumerable times. Mark has read the entire Bible in numerous translations, including: King James Version [6 times], Revised Standard Version [3 times], American Standard Version [2 times], James Moffatt [1 time], Smith and Goodspeed [2 times], New World Translation [10 times], Benjamin Wilson [2 times], New International Version 1 time], Today English Version [1 time], New Jerusalem Bible [3 times], Isaac Leeser [1 time], Green's Interlinear Bible [1 time], K Wuest [3 times], William Barclay [1 time], Catholic Douay [2 times], F R Weymouth [1 time], G M Lamsa [1 time], Confraternity [1 time], Phillips Modern English [3 times], Amplified, New English Version [1 time], Living Bible [2 times], New Revised Standard Version [1 time], J B Rotherham [2 times], Bagster's Septuagint [3 times]. In addition he has read and studied portions of another 80 versions.

He is a student of every Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek and Latin words of the Bible, having compared word for word Greek texts in half a dozen interlinear versions with over three dozen translations. He has studied virtually every cross-reference in several Bibles, including computer searches. He has read all the classic, secular and religious literature published in English, both the ancient Greek classics, history, philosophy, and the complete volumes of Will Durant's *Story of Civilization*, Gibbon's *Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Josephus. [*Wars of the Jews*], and most of the Church fathers during the first four centuries. He has read all the most well-known religious books of Christian and non-Christian sources. There is probably no important work in literature and religion that he has not read or studied.

In addition he has lectured and taught at a variety of learning centers on the American authors Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, and William Faulkner. He has appeared on television in discussions of Shakespeare. His Bible discussions and lectures have been given in several churches, including Mormon, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist. He has discussed the Bible personally with such as the president of the American Bible Society, a Secretary of State, rabbis, and hundreds of clergymen and scholars. Other the years he has had Bible discussions with scores of clergymen and university scholars, including a Noble Prize winner.

As an internationally known photographer Mark has traveled widely, including China, Canada, Mexico and most of Europe. He has lived for more than a year in Italy, England, The Bahamas, Canada, and Spain. His most recognizable photo is the inspirational "*Footprints in the Sand*." He has had many one-man art shows, won numerous awards for magazine photography, and spoken before numerous college groups interested in magazine and corporate photography. His photography may be viewed on the world wide web address:

www.markmillerphoto.com. Mark was one of the first photographers selected by Canon to produce a "signature" CD of his photography and this may be seen at *Photo Essentials* -- <http://www.photoessentials.com/d/pe118.html> . He was senior editor of the very first laser disk of photography.

There are few men living today who have studied the Bible so intently for over 50 years -- from the age of 12 to 62 -- and at the same time have brought so many disciples one-on-one to Christ. He has been published in 80 languages in over 200 countries and it is safe to say that a vast portion of the globe has seen or read his work in one form or another. He was educated in private schools in the United States, Italy, Spain, The Bahamas, and England. He has been an instructor in public speaking and Christian apologetics. His speaking engagements and lectures have included audiences upwards of 50,000 persons in four countries. He has spoken before hundreds of churches in America in the states of New York, Pennsylvania, California, Texas, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Nevada and Colorado.

In 1995 Mark "walked away" from Jehovah's Witnesses for doctrinal reasons. He devoted the next 5 years to full-time study of the Bible without the influence and bias of any sectarian perspective. During this period he began to prepare *Nazarene Commentary 2000*. Much of it has been published on the World Wide Web. Thousands of people in over 30 countries have down-loaded this material. His own life story is told in the autobiography *Messianic Confessions* which has been read by over 7,000 persons in scores of countries.

Mark makes no claim of inspiration or special revelation from God. He states that it is his belief that each individual Christian will stand before the judgment throne of Christ [2 Corinthians 5:10], and therefore is responsible for their own choices

in matters of doctrine and Christian worship. He believes that no church, sect, or religious organization has an exclusive on Biblical truth. He has never told a person to leave or join any particular group. He believes there have been “wheat” Christians [or, sheep] scattered all around the world throughout the Gospel Age. Not all Christian teachers have agreed during the past 2,000 years, nor does perfect harmony obtain now at the beginning of the 3rd Millennium. Despite this, Mark believes major Bible truths are self-evident in the Scriptures and that any honest person who reads the Bible without bias, or some sectarian filter, will come to understand those truths taught by Jesus Christ the Nazarene and his inspired disciples.

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