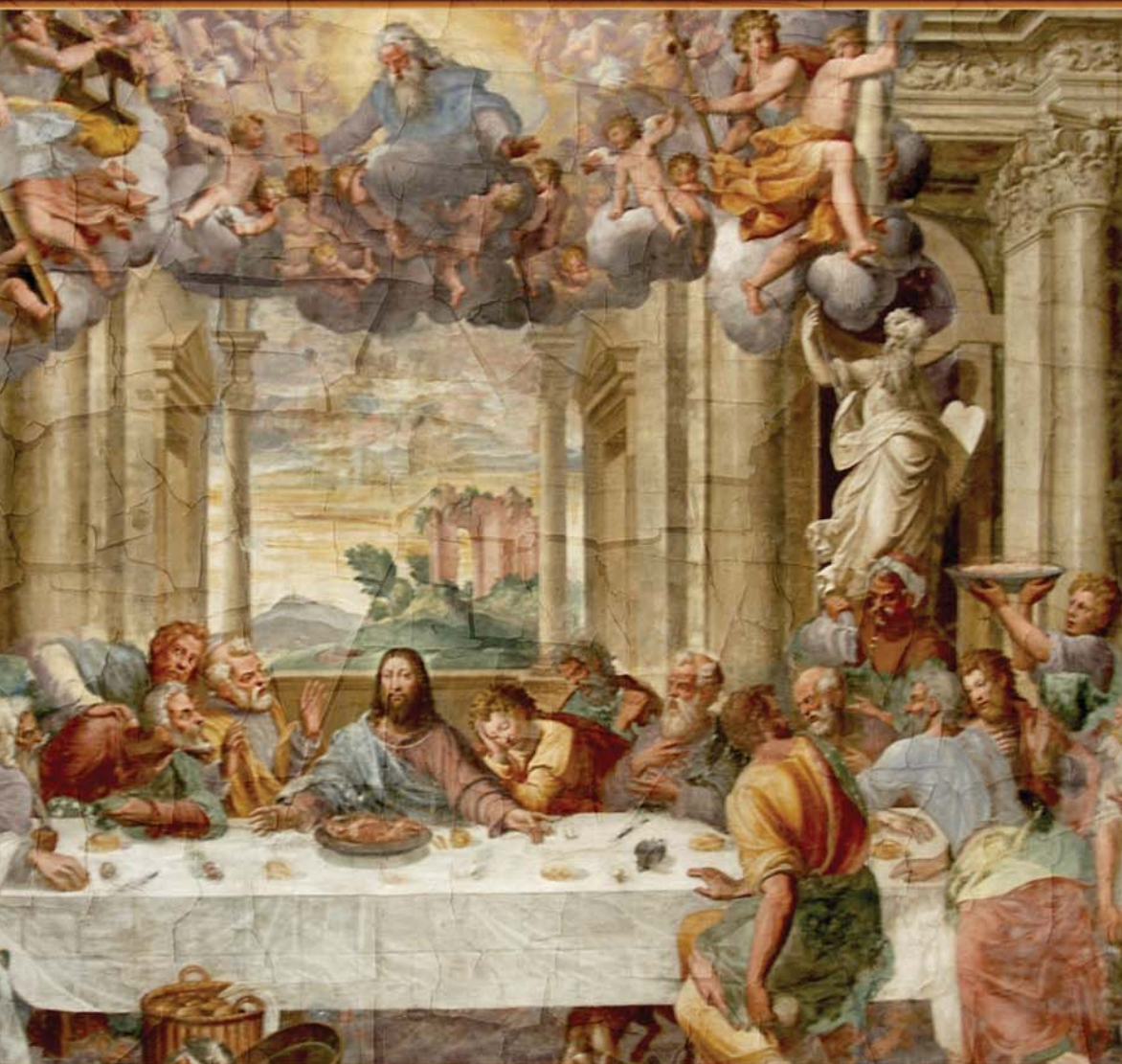


Jesus

THE FINAL JOURNEY



ROBERT E. MACKLIN



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DEDICATION

To LYDIA
...my wife...
my best “sounding board” & my severest critic
with love

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First, the very great assistance provided by my son, Robert, Jr, whose expertise and encouragement helped me overcome my aversion to working with the computer (I'm just this side of a electric typewriter). Through his perseverance, I was able to work with Lily at PublishAmerica.

Ashley for recognizing the value of what I have to say, and Lily for her patience and understanding in working with this first-time author.

Linda Perry for providing me with a much-needed "new" set of eyes and mind, and Millie Wilson, who reminds me daily, through her unselfish actions, of what Jesus meant by love your neighbor .

Connecticut College for the use of just a few of the marvelous woodcuts of Albrecht Durer from their Wetmore Collection.

Front cover artwork: *Last Supper* fresco by Ottavio Semino, Certosa di Pavia, Italy.

And finally, Zaine Ridling with Great Software List for the use of his grand maps. For what's a journey without maps?

INTRODUCTION

Why did I write this book?

I am not a Theologian nor am I learned in the ways of religion and scripture.

Why?

Because I am an actor and a writer who has been greatly blessed to portray the most beloved man of all time, Jesus...Jesus of Nazareth for over twenty years. I have lived the role of Jesus more than three hundred times, while appearing in my one-man play, ROAD TO BETHANY.

During these portrayals I have rubbed elbows with Jesus, worn his clothing and walked in his sandals. At all times before the presentations and during I call upon the Spirit of Jesus Christ to come to me and He has graciously answered my call. There have been times during performances where thoughts emotions and actions have taken place that did not feel as though they were mine.

For example, once, prior to exiting the stage, I felt this electricity surge through me. Not a great electrical shock, a subdued one, nonetheless evident...a tingling sensation. I realized that I was being shown, physically to a small degree, the feeling that Jesus experienced, and how he would notice the draining of “power” in his body when the woman touched his garment (Luke 8:43-46)

...LUKE 8:43-46...And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone, came up behind Him, and touched the fringe of His cloak; and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. And Jesus said, "Who is the one who touched me?" ... "Peter said, "Master, the multitudes are crowding and pressing upon You." But Jesus said, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me."

The play, ROAD TO BETHANY, is rather straightforward in its presentation, with some exceptions. But it is these exceptions that make the play memorable.

The audience meets Jesus outside Jericho on the road to Bethany on his final journey to Jerusalem and subsequent trials. The introduction to the play allows the audience to go back into the past and join a large "unseen" audience, so that everything that takes place occurs at that moment..."real time". The audience experiences the presence of Jesus in characteristic action for over thirty minutes.

In his conversation with both the seen and "unseen" audience the entire life of Jesus is revealed, from birth through the resurrection. That makes the play interesting and enlightening, but the drama comes when he receives revelations of what is to occur in the coming trial. When that happens he goes into a trance-like state and does and says what is revealed to him. He actually ascends the cross in view of the audience.

I wrote this play to bring to the people of today a small idea, dramatically, of what Jesus experienced at his

crucifixion. I believe the live presentation is more intense and personal than one performed on the screen.

It is taking a lot upon myself to say I wrote the play. Let us say, rather, that I was the playwright that compiled the words from scripture. The idea of how to portray the crucifixion was revealed to me.

Without my director there would be no play. It was my good friend and skilled director, D.V. Gokhale (Gokul) who coaxed and bullied a performance from me, that brings to the stage a man who is not Robert Macklin acting as Jesus, but rather a man that could be Jesus. His walk is not mine nor is his manner of speech. His emotions, gestures, his every action do not resemble those of mine.

I also wrote and perform in three other one-man plays on the lives of: Paul, Jacob and Moses...Over 1500 performances to date.

What has all this to do with this book?

While researching, writing and performing I have become immersed in the life of Jesus, especially the latter part of his life. So much so that I started wondering why he did certain things and why he went certain places. I wondered what he was feeling at that time. What his relationship was like with those around him and with the Father, during those intense and horrific times.

In concentrating on that single year...His last, I was able to focus more attentively on the bible verses involved, and in so doing, discovered answers to questions that have plagued me for years. Sometimes it required using other meanings of words, to bring answers to light. At times the answers were always there, I just had to dig harder, and in

so doing, I discovered the key to understanding one of the “codes” of Da Vinci. You won’t find it in the chapter on the Passover Feast (The Last Supper)...read on.

Aside from the many books I read, my research took me to Israel in the summer of 1991, following the first war with Iraq and the United States-led Allied Forces. I went there to experience being on the ground so to speak, to aid me in sense-memory. So that when I refer to certain places in my play, pictures come to mind.

During my stay I spent nine days behind the walled city of old Jerusalem, residing in the Ecce Homo Convent...a hospice for pilgrims. You will read of the Ecce Homo in my story, and find out how it ties in with Jesus’ last days.

A kindly priest took me on a walk of the Stations of the Cross (a walk in old Jerusalem following the route Jesus is presumed to have taken, with “stations” marked indicating what occurred at each one, from his trial to his crucifixion, death, and burial). Currently there are fourteen “stations”, but the numbers and locations have varied throughout the centuries...I wore the sandals that I use in my play, starting on the Via Dolorosa...the Way of Tears. I could say that I walked in his footsteps on that fateful day...Of course the actual physical characteristics have changed, but the topography of the route remains essentially the same.

I climbed the Mount of Olives...It’s not very high, but it’s almost straight up. I climbed it twice; and twice I had to sit down and rest half-way up, but so did this young man with me from Canada. Jesus must have had the legs of a mountain goat to climb that hill so many times during his last days. I visited many places purported to be the sites of great

significance in his final days...Bethany, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Upper Room, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Garden Tomb, the hill of Golgotha, the Kidron Valley, Galilee, Nazareth.

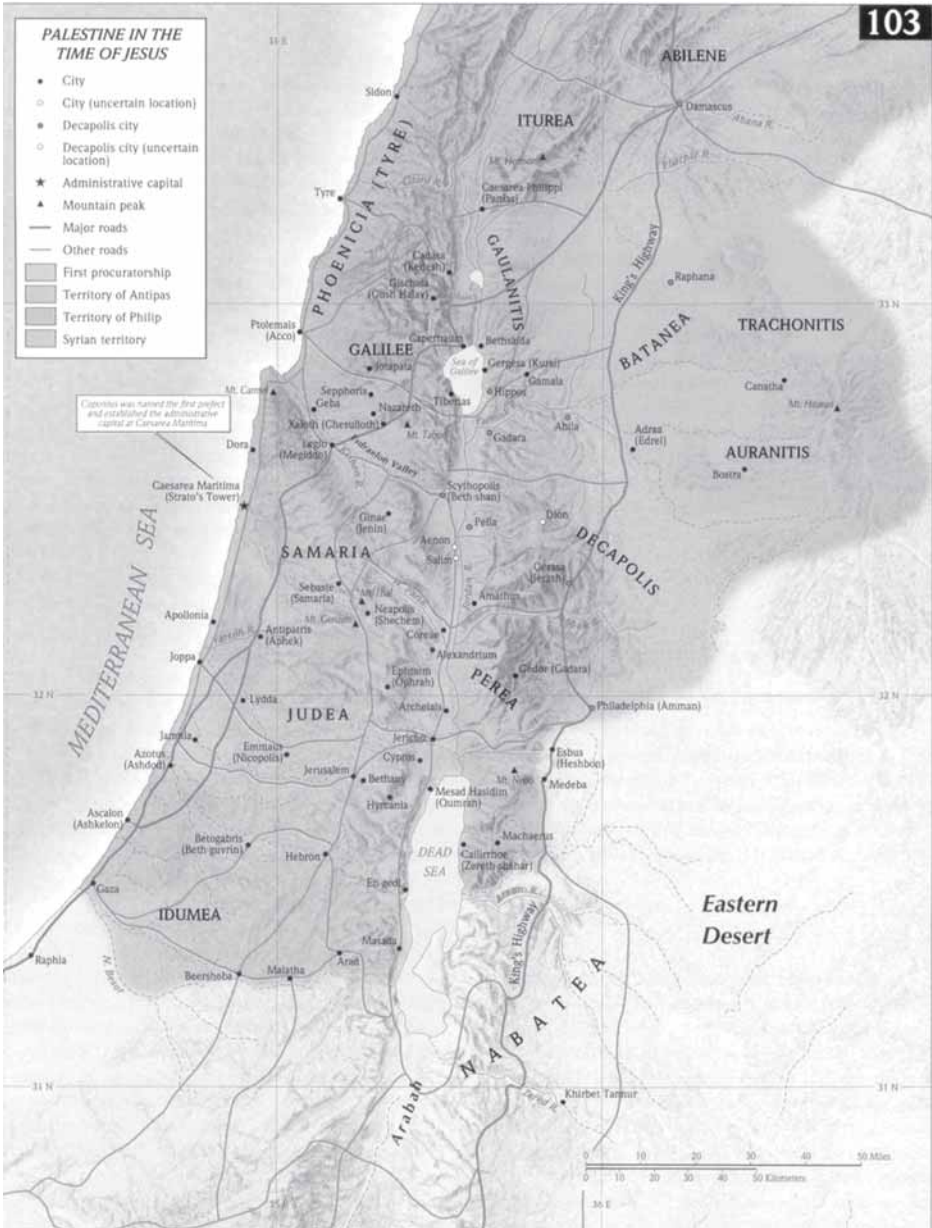
By the Sea of Galilee I ate what is called Saint Peter's fish...delicious. In Tiberias I resided by the Sea. At dawn I watched the sun rise and took a picture of the lake/sea and a lone fishing boat crossing the still waters. Dawn is the best time to see the lake, before the power boats and water skiers pollute the waters.

My efforts to walk around the lake were thwarted by the fences that make the entrance to the sea private. But I did put my feet in the waters of Galilee one night, sitting on a rock watching the waves lap upon the shore, while watching a crowd of noisy teenagers board a cruise ship for their sea-going adventure; and I'll always remember that lone boat sailing in from a night of fishing.

I visited near the springs of Mt. Hermon, which have special significance in my story. I drank from the stream that comes from one of the springs. Should I have my final wish fulfilled, I will spend some months in the area just "being there" near the fount of life, at the Mt. Hermon Springs, communing with nature and the Father.

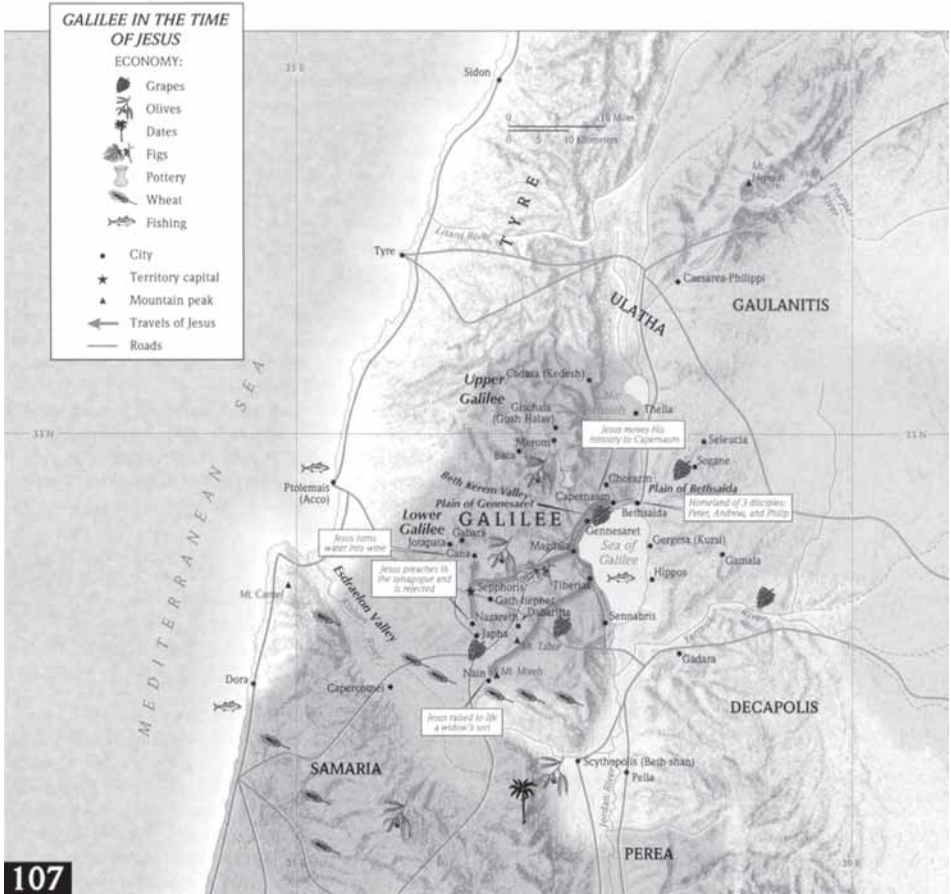
At this writing I still experience great joy in portraying Jesus in my play, just as I derive great satisfaction in writing this book, my personal reflection on His last days on earth, with the hope that it will make Him as real to you as He is to me.

ROBERT MACKLIN
Los Angeles, CA
2005



1) Palestine

JESUS: THE FINAL JOURNEY



2) Galilee

PREFACE

The last days of Jesus hold a fascination, because they include adventures in life, unlike those experienced by any living human being. And, because there are some aspects of his last days that all of us will experience, notably “death” and “resurrection”. For all of us must die, and the Apostle Paul said that all of us will be “raised” (1 Corinthians 15: 13, 14).

...1CORINTHIANS 15:13,14...But if there is no resurrection from the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is vain.

So, this is the story of the last days on earth of the only human who was without sin and who has experienced the resurrection.

He was able to go through life, without committing a sin, because he was filled with the spirit of God. This same fullness of the Spirit of God enabled him to undergo tribulations and experiences that ordinary human beings could not withstand...temptations, expectations and realizations. He was flesh and blood, composed of the same substance as you and I. He felt pain, required sleep, and

sustenance. He knew love, fear, sorrow and joy.

Now, some will say that he was not human, but the son of God, and I do not deny his origin. As the son of God, he emptied himself, became human. He experienced the life of a human being, until his thirties. Then he was crucified, died and rose from the dead.

He was born of woman, and he experienced the growth pangs that all mankind experiences in varying degrees, advancing from birth, through childhood, puberty and adulthood. But, like many of God's creatures, his life was cut short, soon after reaching a mature age.

This is the story of the last days of his life, not just the days of trial, crucifixion, death and resurrection, but of the days leading up to those momentous times, beginning with his final days in Galilee. So my story will begin in Galilee and trace his remaining days from there to Jerusalem, and his death on the Hill of Golgotha, and his resurrection. It is part adventure story and part mystery...call it a "whydunit".

The gospels are replete with what he said and often why, but there is little or no explanation as to why he did what he did or why he went where he did. There is little that tells us the reason for the actions he undertook in the last year of his life. By explaining the events that occurred during this period, it is my hope that this will serve to provide answers to these questions; and will help us in our understanding of the life and death of the greatest man that ever lived.

Each event on his final journey will be summarized, followed by a listing of the gospel chapters and verses related to that event. You may wish to read all the related chapters, but only those chapters and verses necessary to

explain it will be quoted (New American Standard Bible)...where verses are omitted, the symbol “...” will be used. At times, more than one gospel will be included in order to show contrasts or to make a particular point. Lastly, I will expand on it, when necessary, to provide a better understanding of what occurred.

Other biblical verses that have relevance, notably those of Paul but others as well, including verses from the Old Testament, will be added where appropriate.

The English definition of persons and places involved are included, when known, to provide a clearer picture of the event.

Reference to the Bibliography will appear in parenthesis as “B”, followed by the number of the reference work, followed by the page number(s), i.e., (B-9-169).

Jesus (Latin for Greek Iesous, from Hebrew Joshua...Yaweh is salvation) was a human being, that is why the diminutive “h” is used when referring to him in my narrative. He was not called the “Christ” (the Anointed One/Messiah) until after the resurrection. Following the resurrection, the narrative uses the capital “H”, when referring to Him.

It was Paul (small) the Apostle who said that Jesus was born of the flesh and by the power of the resurrection became “Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:1-4).

...ROMANS 1:1-4...Paul, a bond-servant of Christ Jesus called as an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which He promised beforehand through His prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning His Son,

who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh. who was declared with power to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead, according to the Spirit of holies, Jesus Christ our Lord.

While he walked this earth as a man, he was called Jesus, by friend and foe alike. He was known as Jesus the Nazarene, to set him apart from all other Jews who were called Jesus. He was a man alike all other Jews of the period, except filled with the spirit of the Father (the Great Comforter), he was able to perform miracles, and incapable of committing sin (John 3:34).

...JOHN 3:34...For He whom God has chosen speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.

The purpose of this book is for you to accompany Jesus on this his final journey; and to reveal the dynamism of the man, and what I believe to be his state of mind during his last year on earth.

It is my earnest hope that you will enjoy taking this journey with him.

Let us begin

I

5000

After the death of John the Baptist all four of the gospels bring out the story of the gathering and feeding of the "5000" in the "wilderness", near the Sea of Galilee Jesus is with his disciples (the original twelve). This miraculous event occurs near the Feast of the Passover. This is the Passover of the year before the fateful one and the crucifixion of Jesus (Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:34-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-13).

The original disciples are: Simon Peter (a rock), his brother Andrew (many), originally a follower of John the Baptist; Peter's friends and fishing partners, James (Jacob...to guard) and John (Yahweh has been generous), who are the Sons of Zebedee (thunder); Matthew (gift of Yahweh), an ex tax gatherer, publican; Philip (fond of horses) is from the same town as Peter and Andrew; Philip's friend Bartholomew (furrow); Thomas (twin); Judas (Judah, a tribe of Israel), also called Thaddeus (breast); James (Jacob), son of Alphaeus (changing); Simon (tribe of Simeon) the Canaanite (Jew from Galilee) is a zealot (Jewish patriot/terrorist); and Judas Iscariot (town of

Kerioth, in southern Judea) is another zealot. Just common folks, many of whom probably can't read or write, with Matthew the Publican, a notable exception...most make their living on the sea. But God chooses them, not for their intellect, but for their faithfulness.

...JOHN 6:1-13...After these things Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee (or Tiberias). And a great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews was at hand. Jesus therefore lifting up His eyes, and seeing that a great multitude was coming to Him, said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, that these may eat?" And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do. Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, for everyone to receive a little." One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon's brother, said to Him, "There is a lad here, who has five barley loaves and two fish; but what are these for so many people?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. Jesus therefore took the loaves; and having given thanks, He distributed to those who were seated; likewise also of the fish as much as they wanted. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments that nothing may be lost". And so they gathered them up,

and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves, which were left over by those who had eaten.

...LUKE 9:17...And they all ate and were satisfied; and that which was left over to them of the broken pieces was picked up, twelve baskets full.

The fact that so many are fed with so little is miracle enough, but suppose we consider how he is able to bring his message to so many without amplification...another miracle? True, he is gifted with an ability to project his voice, I have no doubt, but how can he be heard by so many? Naturally there would be a cluster of people close to him, but sheer numbers would take most of the thousands some distance away.

It's Spring (remember it's April...Passover time) and I visualize that Jesus stands near the shore, and the hill forms a natural amphitheatre; the multitude surround him and hug the hill above. So his voice carries.

He has been preaching for many hours and now its dusk; and Jesus flashes his sense of humor when he turns to his disciples and asks how they're going to feed these folks, knowing full well the answer and that the Lord will provide.

This miraculous event may have occurred near Bethsaida (place of fishing) in the wilderness, on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galile (circle)...there is no "wilderness" or "mountain" on the western shore. Although there is some degree of confusion about this and the Church of Tabgha (seven springs), commemorating this event, is on a hill on

the western side of the sea. Under the altar there is a mound-like rock, with signs of gouging by Christian souvenir collectors, said to be the rock on which the fish and loaves were apportioned. In front on the floor is a mosaic of two fish, and a basket for the bread.

Mark tells of the disciples getting in the boat and going to Bethsaida, to the east, but ending up in Gennesaret (garden of riches) and that's on the west bank (Mark 6:45, 53).

...MARK 6:45, 53...And immediately He made His disciples get into the boat and go ahead of Him to the other side to Bethsaida, while He Himself was sending the multitude away. And when they had crossed over they came to land at Gennesaret, and moored to the shore.

Now that's confusing! Maybe the storm explained below, causes the boat to change course in mid-sea.

Matthew and John are in agreement, in that the boat sails to the west. Matthew says they "landed in Gennesaret" John says they "sailed to Capernaum (Nahum's town)" (Matthew 14:34, John 6:17).

...MATTHEW 14:34...And when they had crossed over, they came to land at Gennesaret...

...JOHN 6:17...and after getting into a boat, they started to cross the sea to Capernaum...

Luke's narrative omits the boat trip.

(Note: Gennesaret (garden of the prince) must have been the general term used for the western shore of the Sea of Galilee /Lake Gennesaret.)

It is during this sailing across the Sea of Galilee that Jesus joins his followers, walking upon the waters, and he calms the fierce storm that threatens to capsize the boat . It is then that Peter first demonstrates “a lack of faith”when he walks out on the water to join Jesus, but then becomes afraid. Jesus saves him from drowning, saying, “O, you of little fath,why do you doubt?” And again according to Matthew, it is the first time that the disciples acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God (Matthew 14:24-34; Mark 6:47-53; John 6:18-21).

...MATTHEW 14:24-34...But the boat was already many stadia (one stadia is 600 feet) away from land, battered by the waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night (3:00-6:00 AM). He came to them, walking upon the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were frightened, saying, “It is a ghost!” And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid.” And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water.” And He said, “Come!” And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he became afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, “Lord save me!” And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took ahold of him, and said to him, “O, you of little faith, why did you doubt?” And

when they got into the boat, the wind stopped. And those who were in the boat worshipped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!" And when they had crossed over, they came to the land at Gennesaret.

I've admired a painting by a local artist depicting this scene. In the foreground is the boat in the trough of a huge wave, with the disciples clinging to whatever's available to keep from getting thrown into the storm-tossed sea...lightning flashing (the terrible sound of thunder imagined); and in the background Jesus, his face wreathed in serenity, approaching them on splayed-out feet that rest on the water.

Now we should keep in mind that the occupants of this boat are used to being on this sea...many are fishermen. Storms normally present no threat to them, but they are terrified.

The lake/sea that I saw on my visit to Tiberias (good vision...named for Emperor Tiberias) was tranquil, but it has been said that this little inland sea can stir up a tempest at any moment. But, for these experienced boat-people to react the way they do, this has to be the mother of all storms.

Some could fault Peter for his lack of courage. Jesus accuses him of a lack of "faith", but take his place in that battered boat and see how quickly you would jump out into the angry, turbulent sea to WALK on the WATER. He at least made some progress on his walk!

Galilee is a part of the Principate of Herod Antipas. It is here that Jesus is openly opposed by the "law keepers", the Pharisees, and "scribes". They tempt him, demanding signs. Many of the "law keepers" hate Jesus, because he is a threat

to the status quo, and because they believe wrongly, that he is claiming to be God (Matthew 16:1; John 10:33).

...MATTHEW 16:1...And the Pharisees and Saducees came up, and testing Him asked Him to show them signs from heaven.

...JOHN 10:33...The Jews answered Him, “For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.”

For his part, Jesus dislikes the Pharisees (separated ones) and Saducees (followers of High Priest Zadok), considers them evil. He is contemptuous of them, because he knows them to be hypocrites...espousers of the law, but not adherents to the law (Matthew 15: 7,8).

...MATTHEW 15:7, 8... “You (Pharisees and scribes) hypocrites rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far away from me.’”

The “law keepers” are no doubt encouraged to bait Jesus by Herod Antipas and his followers (Herodians), in order to ensnare Jesus; and cause him to commit some blasphemous act. This would give Herod (son of a hero) an excuse to imprison him as he had John the Baptizer, as both Jesus and John were heralding the kingdom of the heaven (Matthew 3:1,2; 4:17).

...MATTHEW 3:1,2; 4:17...Now in those days, John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"..."From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Herod believes, wrongly, that Jesus with his teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God, is preaching sedition. He views the espousal of the kingdom as a threat to his rule. He also believes, rightly, that Jesus' very presence is stirring up unrest, and Herod is a man who dislikes contention and strife.

It is during this period that the Galileans grow dissatisfied with Jesus, and ask him to leave Galilee. Many of his own disciples leave him (none of the original twelve), because they cannot believe what he is teaching. And Jesus becomes discouraged, because the Galileans will not heed his message of the coming kingdom by repenting their ways (Mark 6:2; 5:17; Matthew 11:20-24).

...MARK 6:2-6; 5:17...And when the sabbath had come, He began to teach in the synagogue; and the many listeners were astonished, saying, "Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses, and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they took offense at Him. And Jesus said to them, "A prophet is

not without honor except in his own home town and among his own relatives and in his own household.” And He could do no miracle there except that He had laid hands upon a few sick people and healed them. And He wondered at their unbelief...And they began to entreat Him to depart from that region.

...MATTHEW 11:20-24...Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of the miracles were done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you Chorazin! (a town near the Sea of Galilee) Woe to you Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgement, than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall DESCEND TO HADES; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred to you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgement, than for you.”

Imagine this? Despite the many miracles the people in his home town don't believe him, turn him out...hard to believe. Maybe they are afraid of the danger he represents. Is there any wonder that he becomes discouraged?

Jesus alienates the Pharisees, the scribes, and the Herodians, by his words and actions; and Herod has gone on record as wanting to “see” Jesus, and ultimately intends to

kill him. Herod fears the effect that Jesus' teachings has on the people, and because Herod is involved in an incestuous marriage, he might well fear that Jesus would censure him as John had. Also he wants to curry favor with the "law keepers" by silencing him, as he had John the Baptist (Luke 9:9;13:31; Mark 6:18; Matthew 14:10).

...LUKE 9:9; 13:31...And Herod said, "I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man (Jesus) about whom I hear such things?" And he kept trying to see Him...Just at that time some Pharisees came up, saying to Him (Jesus), "Go away and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You."

...MARK 6:18...For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

...MATTHEW 14:10...And he (Herod) sent and had John beheaded in the prison.

Herod Antipas is ruler of Galilee and Peraea by order of Imperial Rome. Why should he care what the Pharisees and other "law keepers" think of him?

Because he is trying to prove his "Jewishness". He is a Jew by fiat. John Hyrcanus, the Jewish Maccabean king, had conquered Idumea (from land of Edom) and compelled the Idumeans to become Jews, or die (B-15-379). Idumea is the land of Herod ruled by his ancestors. Idumeans were descended from Esau (hairy) the first son of Isaac, brother to Jacob (heel-catcher). Jacob became Israel, father of the

twelve sons (The tribes of Israel), some of whom came to be called “Jews” following their return to Jerusalem, from Persia (Ezra 4:12).

...EZRA 4:12...let it be known to the king, that the Jews who came up from you (Persia) have come to us at Jerusalem; they are rebuilding the rebellious and evil city, and are finishing the walls and repairing the foundations.

(Note:This is the first time the word “Jew” is used in the bible...circa 440 BC.)

And so because of a decree by Imperial Rome, the sons of Israel serve the sons of Esau, even though in God’s blessing of Jacob/Israel through Isaac, it was to be Esau who was to serve Israel. Consequently, the Herodian family is considered by many Jews to be usurpers; and Herod, who seems to suffer from a lack of esteem, seems always to be trying to “prove” himself (Genesis 27:38-40)...

...GENESIS 27:38-40...And Esau said to his father, “Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me, even me also, O my father.” So Esau lifted his voice and wept. Then Isaac his father answered and said to him, “Behold, away from the fertility of the earth shall be your dwelling. And away from the dew of heaven from above. And by your sword you shall live, And your brother you shall serve; But it shall come about when you become restless, that you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

(Note: The Herodian rule may well have been the time spoken of “that you shall break his yoke from your neck.”)

Jesus needs peace and solitude during his final days on earth. He knows that his days are limited. Indeed, he no doubt knows that the Passover of the following year will be his last. He has no wish to contend with Herod and his supporters. He is discouraged by the antipathy of the Galileans, and the loss of faith by some of his disciples.

Again he goes to Bethsaida, and enters the Tetrarchy of Gaulinitis (from Golan?...Golan heights) governed by Herod’s brother, Philip. Apparently Philip does not view Jesus as a threat. Or maybe because there is no love lost between brothers, he may provide a refuge out of spite. He married Herod’s stepdaughter, Salome. Josephus called Philip “just”...So Jesus uses Gaulinitis as a refuge, and Bethsaida is the original home of Peter, Andrew and Philip (John 1:44).

...JOHN 1:44...Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter.

Bethsaida plays an important part in the life of Jesus. Of all the cities in northern Galilee, aside from Capernaum, it is the one most often mentioned in scripture. It is the principal city of Gaulinitis. Philip, the Tetrarch, named the city Bethsaida-Julias for the emperor Tiberius’ mother, Livia-Julia. Bethsaida is a center both for fishing and fish processing.

It has been mentioned that the sons of Zebedee, James and John, are also from Bethsaida. That means that at least five

of the twelve, Peter, Andrew, James, John and the disciple Philip are originally from that city.

There, Jesus takes stock of the time remaining (about a year), and decides that he must do several things to prepare for his death: visit other locations where his followers are to say goodbye and encourage them (he has already made a last visit to the towns around the shores of Galilee, in a “circuit”), prepare his disciples and family for his coming death on the following Passover; and make a physical journey to places that are important to him for symbolic and personal reasons (Mark 6:6).

...MARK 6:6...And He wondered at their unbelief. And He was was going around the villages teaching.

After Bethsaida he journeys to Caesaria Philippi, in Gaulinitis (Mark 8:27).

...MARK 8:27...And Jesus went out, along with His disciples, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, “Who do people say that I am?”

But before the visit to Caesarea Philippi, he travels, with his disciples, to the area of Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15:21; Mark 7:24).

...MATTHEW 15:21...And Jesus went away from there (Galilee) and withdrew into the district of Tyre and Sidon.

II

OUT OF COUNTRY

Jesus' sojourn to Tyre (rock) and Sidon (hunting) is his only recorded journey outside of Roman Palestine. And he makes this journey despite the fact that the message of the kingdom of God was to be given only to Israel, during his lifetime (Matthew 15:24).

...MATTHEW 15:24...But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

If this is the case, then why does he go to Tyre/Sidon?

I believe he goes to visit the village of Zarephath/Sarepta (goldsmith's shop), primarily (not shown on map...located almost midway between Tyre and Sidon). Both gospels say his journey takes him to the "area(s)", and another bible version says "frontiers" of Tyre and Sidon (B-3-107). They do not say he goes "into" either city, although he has to pass through both cities by The Way of the Sea. But I believe that his primary destination is Sarepta.

Why Sarepta?

Because this is the village in which Elijah stayed...one of God's greatest prophets. He stayed in Sarepta (Zarephath) during the famine in Israel, where he healed the son of the widow with whom he stayed (I Kings 17:8-23).

...I KINGS 17:8-23...Then the word of the Lord came to him (Elijah), saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you." So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks; and he called to her and said, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." But she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die." Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first, and bring it out to me, and afterward you make one for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel, "The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth." So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and her household ate for many days. The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the Lord which He

spoke through Elijah. Now it came about after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house became sick; and his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him. So she said to Elijah, "What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance, and to put my son to death!" And he said to her, "Give me your son." Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him upon his bed. And he called to the Lord and said, "O Lord my God, has Thou also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the Lord, and said, "O Lord my God, I pray Thee, let this child's life return to him." And the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived. And Elijah took the child, and brought him down from the upper room into the house and gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son is alive."...

(Note: The comparison between Jesus and his experience with the "bread" and the "fish" with the "5000" and that of Elijah with the "flour" and "oil"...the Lord provides.)

On his journey to Sarepta, Jesus may well have taken an out of the way route that would take him by way of Mt. Carmel (orchard)...the sight of one of Elijah's most meaningful triumphs (I Kings 18:1839).

...I KINGS 18:18-20, 22-24, 26, 29, 36-39...And he (Elijah) said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you (King Ahab) and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed the Baals. Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherath, who eat at Jezebel's table." So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel, and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel...Then Elijah said to the people, "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord, but Baal's prophets are 450 men. Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox, and lay it on the wood, and I will put no fire under it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God." And all the people answered and said, "That's a good idea." ...Then they (Baal's prophets) took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, "Baal answer us." But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made...And it came about when midday was past, that they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention...Then it came about at the time of offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came and said, "O Lord, the God of Abraham,

Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. Answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O Lord, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again.” Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, “The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God.”

That is not to say, however; that Jesus doesn't spread the gospel to the Israelites in and around the cities of Tyre and Sidon, as well. There are many Jews and others from the tribes of Israel in that area.

It is here that Jesus drives out the demons that inhabit the daughter of a Canaanite woman who is Greek. She is called “Syrophenician” by race, to show that she is a gentile and not a Grecian Jew (Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-28).

...MARK 7:24-30...And from there He arose, and went away into the region of Tyre. And when He had entered a house, He wanted no one to know of it; yet He could not escape notice. But after hearing of Him, a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, immediately came and fell at His feet. Now the woman was a Gentile (Taken literally as Greek), of the Syrophenician race (the dictionary defines “Gentile” as other than a “Jew”). And she kept asking Him

to cast the demon out of her daughter. And He was saying to her, "Let the children (Israel) be satisfied first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." But she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, but even dogs under the table feed on the children's crumbs." And He said to her, "Because of this answer go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter." And going back to her home, she found the child lying on the bed, the demon having departed.

Here he displays his compassion and a willingness to detour from a chosen path when mercy calls for it. It is his mission to bring the message of hope to the Israelites, but he responds to her anguish and apparent faith in him.

He departs the area and returns "to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis" (League of ten cities) (Mark 7:31).

...MARK 7:31 ...And again He went out from the region of Tyre, and came through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis.

Now in that short sentence, we have him returning to Palestine by a very unusual route. But no mention is made as to the route taken...only that by coming through Decapolis, he comes from the east. A look at the map shows he could have followed the road east and south from Tyre, or he could've taken the road south and east, originating near the vicinity of Sarepta. Both roads lead to Hazor, and continuing south would lead him to the west side of the Sea

of Galilee. But he goes north “through Sidon” and enters Palestine on the east side of the sea.

Continuing north along The Way of the Sea, he passes through Byblos about 40 miles north of Sidon, from there north east to Qatna, another 70 miles or so, to connect with the road going due south for about 110 miles to Damascus (sack full of blood).

Why Damascus ?

First, because all roads leading to the Holy Land from the east and all roads from the sea, pass through Damascus one of the ten cities of Decapolis (even though it does not fall within the assigned boundaries of Decapolis), because of the mountain barrier east of the sea.

Second, I believe he chooses to go, because it is home to many Jews, and other members of the tribes of Israel. He wants to bring the good news of the coming kingdom of God to them.

While there he may have seen the Road to Damascus that the Apostle Paul, then known as Saul (king of Israel...death/ditch), would take a few years later, where the most significant conversion of mankind occurs (Acts 9:1-30).

...ACTS 9:1,3-8, 17,18...20...Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest...And it came about that as he (Saul/Paul) journeyed, he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him; and he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who art thou, Lord?”

And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise, and enter the city, and it shall be told you what you must do." And the men who travelled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice, but seeing no one. And Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading by the hand, they brought him to Damascus...And Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight, and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he arose and was baptized... And immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying "He is the Son of God."

Why does Jesus choose to return by way of Decapolis?

I'm not sure, but I will attempt to give reasons that may be his.

There are disciples that have been sent into Decapolis and he wants to visit them to give encouragement, and to tell them what is to happen to him. He also may want to gauge the temper of the inhabitants there regarding the treatment of his disciples. He may just want to bring the gospel to the Jews that are there.

In Gerasa (country of the Gerasenes) there are many Jews, and the Gerasenes were followers of John the Baptist. He may well want to make them aware of the latest message. He can pass through Gerasa by taking the King's Highway

south from Damascus. From there he can follow the road south to the Jabbok River (luxuriant river) which Jacob crossed, returning from Haran. Another historic river crossing (Genesis 32:22).

...GENESIS 32:22...Now he (Jacob) arose that same night and took his two wives and his two maids and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok.

He would continue to the west, where he picks up the road paralleling the Jordan River leading north to Pella. Pella is the city to which the followers of Jesus will withdraw for asylum, when the revolt with Rome in 66 A.D. begins (B-15-726). Following His resurrection, Jesus, the Christ, might well have advised them to go there later, as a result of this visit.

Why Pella as a refuge? I don't know, but it is off the "beaten track".

Now, he could take the King's Highway south and then pick up the road southwest through Gamala and then to the Sea of Galilee, but I believe he deliberately detours to visit both Gerasa and Pella for the reasons mentioned, and maybe to see the Jabbok River. But whatever route he takes, eventually it brings him from the east to the "Sea of Galilee, within the region of Decapolis".

For whatever reason, it is plain at this time, he wants to stay away from certain parts of Galilee.

Then we might ask why he doesn't decide to take the more direct route and pass through Gaulinitis, on the way south out of Damascus?

I believe he chooses not to go this way because he plans to visit this area at a later time near the village of Caesarea Philippi mentioned above. He knows his time is limited and he doesn't want to repeat himself.

This circuitous route covers around 300 miles, give or take. They slog over dusty roads and foot paths looking for the next place of rest.

Think of what that trek is like? How exhausting? Where do they eat? I expect kindly villagers feed them when they come to rest at night. But what about when they are in the "wilds"...do they carry food with them, or merely fast between meals? And what of their "call to nature"...slit trenches, and then afterwards cover up. What about water? They can do without food for awhile, but not water. I expect that he has scoped out the route in advance and knows where the wells and springs are.

So after a month or so, he comes to the Sea of Galilee through Decapolis. In the "mountain" he feeds the "4000" (Matthew 15:29-38; Mark 8:1-9).

...MATTHEW 15:29-38...And departing from there (Tyre/Sidon), Jesus went along by the Sea of Galilee, and having gone up into the mountain, He was sitting there. And great multitudes came to Him, bringing with them those who were lame, crippled, blind, dumb, and many others, and they laid them down at His feet, and He healed them, so that the multitude marvelled as they saw the dumb speaking, the crippled restored, and the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel. And Jesus summoned to Himself His

disciples, and said, "I feel compassion for this multitude, because they have remained with Me for three days and have nothing to eat; and I do not wish to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way." And the disciples said to Him, "Where would we get so many loaves in a desert place to satisfy such a great multitude?" And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" And they said, "Seven and a few small fish." And He directed the multitude to sit down on the ground; and he took the seven loaves and the fish; and giving thanks, He broke them and started giving them to the disciples and the disciples, in turn, to the multitudes. And they all ate and were satisfied, and they picked up what was left over of the broken pieces, seven full baskets. And those who ate were four thousand men, besides women and children.

Again he provides a multitude...one thousand less, and then Jesus crosses the sea to the west and lands at Magadan/Dalmanutha (a bucket/branch) in order, I believe, to visit with Mary Magdalene. It is believed by many that the town of Magdala (tower) was located there. Here, as mentioned earlier, he is opposed by the Pharisees and Saducees (Matthew 15:39; Mark 8:10-12).

...MATTHEW 15:39...And dismissing the multitudes, He got into the boat, and came to the region of Magadan.

...MARK 8:10-12...And immediately He entered the boat with His disciples, and came to the district of

Dalmanutha. And the pharisees came out and began to argue with Him, seeking from Him a sign from heaven to test Him. And sighing deeply in His spirit, He said, "Why does this generation seek for a sign? Truly I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."

Again he crosses the sea and ends up in Bethsaida, where he heals a blind man (Mark 8:13, 22-25).

...MARK 8:13, 22-25...And leaving them, He again embarked and went away to the other side...And they came to Bethsaida. And they brought a blind man to Him, and entreated Him to touch him. And taking the blind man by the hand, He brought him out of the village; and after spitting on his eyes, and laying His hands upon him, He asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men, for I am seeing them like trees, walking about." Then again He laid His hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and began to see everything clearly.

Jesus perseveres. If at first you do not succeed, etc. He isn't satisfied with a half-miracle.

From Bethsaida he goes to Caesarea Philippi (Mark 8:27).

...MARK 8:27...And Jesus went out, along with His disciples. to the village of Caesarea Philippi...

III

FINAL JOURNEY BEGINS

Have you ever wondered why he goes to Caesarea Philippi, an area where the god, Pan is worshipped? I have...Why on earth would Jesus use his few remaining days to visit the place of a pagan shrine?

On my trip to Israel, when I visited that region, the answer was revealed to me. Jesus did not go to see anyone...there weren't many followers of his there. He went to visit a location...the same reason he went to Sarepta. He went to the area where he would begin his life's journey...

The Hermon Mountain range looms over the area, once known as Caesarea Philippi (now Baneas). Snow remains on Mt. Hermon (sacred mountain) all year long, and underground springs originate from these mountains. Mt. Hermon was also called Mt. Sion (elevated) and was the northernmost boundary of Israel, granted by Moses. These springs feed the Jordan River...they are its source (Deuteronomy 4:48).

...Deuteronomy 4:48...from Aroer, which is on the edge of the valley of Arnon, even as far as Mt Sion (that is, Hermon).

The Jordan River (the descender...watering place) is the physical symbol of life to those who live in the Holy Land...the physical symbol of life to Jesus. And where possible, I believe he will make his last journey to Jerusalem, in the last year of his life, following the Jordan River down to the Dead Sea (symbolic of death). In this way, symbolically covering his life's span, from birth to death.

The springs of Hermon also represent the spirit of God, from which all life emanates. So in this journey, he is returning to the Father, both physically and spiritually. It is the "beginning" to ready himself for the horrendous ordeal to come, and the "end".

It will probably take the better part of two days to travel to Caesarea Philippi from Bethsaida, a distance of about twenty five miles.

There he tells his disciples of the destiny awaiting him in Jerusalem. He tells them of the suffering that will be inflicted on him by the elders, chief priests and scribes, and of his death, which will be followed by his resurrection (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:21,22).

...MATTHEW 16:21...From that time Jesus Christ (The first time this title is used) began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.

He has gained the enmity of the Pharisees and Herodians, in Galilee. In Jerusalem his fate will be sealed by making enemies of the Saduccees. The Saduccees are the "elders",

the chief priests” and “scribes”. They control the Sanhedrin, the supreme judicial body of the Jews in Jerusalem. They are even more concerned about maintaining the established order than the Pharisees and will violently oppose anyone who might be able to upset it...like Jesus of Nazareth. They came very close to arresting him the previous Passover, in the Temple in Jerusalem (John 7:40-44).

...JOHN 7:40-44...Some of the multitude therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, “This certainly is the Prophet.” Others were saying, “This is the Christ.” Still others were saying, “Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? Has not the scripture said that the Christ comes from the offspring of David, and from the village of Bethlehem, where David was?” So there arose a division in the multitude because of Him. And some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.

Jerusalem is in the Province of Judea, governed by the Roman Prefect, Pontius Pilate. The Saduccees are wealthy and influential men, who can make their influence felt by Pontius Pilate. And they, along with the Pharisees from Jerusalem, have already visited Galilee with the express purpose of finding out more about his “seditious” ways (Mark 7:1-5).

...MARK 7:1-5...And the Pharisees and some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem, and had seen that some of His disciples

were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed. (For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots). And the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?"

Because Jesus will continue to preach of the Kingdom of God and repentance and of baptism as long as he lives, regardless of the feelings of others, he knows they will take drastic measures to stop him. For the Saducees view his teachings as an appeal to the masses to overthrow the existing regime and establish another. Most fail to understand that he is not teaching about the existing physical kingdom, but rather of God's Kingdom that will come. But they believe, emphatically, that he represents a threat to established order.

It is here, near Caesarea Philippi, that Peter recognizes that Jesus is the Christ. It is believed by many, myself included, that even though Peter is a "rock". It will be Jesus, the ROCK, upon which the church will be built. Jesus is no doubt inspired to use this symbolism because of the large out-croppings of rock in the area (Mark 8:29; Matthew 16:18...in keeping with Isaiah 26:4)...

...MARK 8:27-31...And Jesus went out, along with His disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way He questioned His disciples, saying to them, "Who do people say that I am?" And they told Him, saying, "John the Baptist; and others say Elijah; and still others one of the prophets." And He continued by questioning them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "Thou art the Christ." And He warned them to tell no one about Him.

...MATTHEW 16:18-20... "And I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth, shall have been loosed in heaven." Then He warned the disciples that they should not tell anyone that He was the Christ.

...ISAIAH 26:4... "Trust in the Lord forever, For in God the Lord, we have an everlasting rock."

It is also here that Jesus rebukes Peter for another example of a lack of faith. After Jesus tells his disciples of his coming death, Peter says, "...This shall never happen to you." And Jesus replies, "Get thee behind me Satan." (Matthew 16:22,23; Mark 31-33).

...MATTHEW 16:22,23...And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You." But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's."

(NOTE: Paul uses the term "stumbling block" in I Corinthians 1:23 in explaining as to why the "Jews" would not accept Jesus as the Christ.)

...I CORINTHIANS 1:23...but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a "stumbling block", and to Gentiles foolishness.

It is evident that Peter believes that, as Jesus is the Christ...the "Chosen One", God will not permit this to happen, because Peter expects the kingdom to be established imminently, by Jesus. This, despite the fact that Jesus tells them it is not time for the kingdom and that he must suffer, die, and rise first.

But I believe Jesus delivers this "rebuke" with tongue in cheek. He knows that Peter says this out of loyalty, and he just wants to make a point to all assembled.

A waterfall tumbles down off the cliff near Baneas. I can see Jesus under the falls, soaked to the skin, communing with the Father; and again, he and his followers cavorting in the stream, splashing each other playfully, like little kids.

Unfortunately, I was unable to trek through the undergrowth to see the springs themselves, but I did sit

beside one of the streams emanating from them, and drink from it. The water flowed easily over the rocky bottom, clear and cool. I found it very relaxing. I can imagine how much more relaxing and comforting it would be to sit beside the springs that gush forth from the mountainside.

It is beside these springs that Jesus seeks solace with the Father. The bible doesn't mention his time there, but I'm certain he spends many hours alone with the Father, reaffirming his faith in his destiny. It is here that he is probably reminded by the Father that his life will not end with death, for he will be resurrected and have everlasting life, just like the springs of Hermon. We read the 23d Psalm and get a better understanding of his feelings at the springs.

...PSALMS 23:1-3... "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures: He leads me beside the quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake..."

It is here that he begins his final journey...his journey of "life".

IV

TRANSFIGURATION

I believe the Transfiguration takes place not long after his visit to the springs. The dictionary defines “transfigure” as “change in appearance.”

Matthew and Mark describe the change that takes place in Jesus as “...His face shined as the sun”...“clothes began shining, exceedingly, brilliantly, white as snow”...“as no launderer on earth could whiten them...” Luke says “...the appearance of His face became different...”

Moses and Elijah are transfigured, as well, because they were dead and appear to be alive. But their appearance is not described...only that they appear “in glory” (maybe wraith-like, as well). Afterwards, Jesus, Moses and Elijah are enshrouded in a cloud, from which the voice of God emanates, saying that Jesus is His Son...the Messiah and that they should listen to Him (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-9; Luke 9:28-36).

...MATTHEW 17:1-9...And six days later Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And

He was transfigured before them; and His face shown like the sun, and His garments became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, I will make three tabernacles here, one for You and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice, out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; hear Him!" And when the disciples heard this they fell on their faces and were much afraid. And Jesus came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, and do not be afraid." And lifting up their eyes, they saw that no one, except Jesus Himself alone. And as they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus commanded them, saying, "Tell the vision to no one, until the son of Man is risen from the dead."

...MARK 9:2-9...And six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. And He was transfigured before them; and His garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them. And Elijah appeared to them along with Moses; and they were conversing with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles, one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to answer; for

they became terrified. Then a cloud formed, overshadowing them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is My beloved Son, listen to Him." And all at once they looked around and saw no one with them anymore, except Jesus, only. And as they were coming down from the mountain, He gave them orders not to relate to anyone what they had seen, until the Son of Man should rise from the dead."

...LUKE 9:28-36...And some eight days after these sayings, it came about that He took along Peter and John and James, and went up to the mountain to pray. And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him. And it came about, as they were parting from Him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles; one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah" —not realizing what he was saying. And while he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My Son, My Chosen One (Messiah), listen to Him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was

found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

What a dramatic scene. Peter, together with John and James, downstage center, Jesus, Moses and Elijah upstage resplendent in glory; and God directing from above!

There have been several theories posited as to where the Transfiguration occurred. Some believe it was on the lower mountain of nearby Mt Hermonit, others Mt. Tabor...Some feel it was Mt. Carmel, as one of the persons transfigured was Elijah, the sight of one of Elijah's greatest triumphs, as God's prophet mentioned previously. Others say it was Mt. Hermon.

I believe the Transfiguration took place on Mt. Tabor (small drum). This mountain sits in the Valley of Jezreel (God sows) and is over 1800 feet high, with steep sides. Although that is not as high as the other mountains, when it ascends straight up from the valley floor it appears very high indeed. Both Mark and Matthew refer to it as a "high" mountain. My main reason for believing it is this mountain is because it is near the road that Jesus would take to Jerusalem (more about this later). The other mountains would've been out of the way.

Moses (son...draw from...God is Jehova) is chosen, I believe, because he is considered the greatest prophet, and also because he was never able to enter the Promised Land. This enables him, at long last, to step onto the hallowed soil. Also, many (myself included) consider Moses to be the "Jesus" of the Old Testament. Moses was the bearer of the Old Covenant (Ten Commandments)...worship by law; and

Jesus is the bearer of the New Covenant...worship by Faith (Numbers 20:12).

...NUMBERS 20:12...But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not believed Me, to treat Me holy in the sight of the sons of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land (the Promised Land...Palestine) which I have given them."

I believe Elijah (God is Jehova) is there, because he is the prophet chosen to proclaim the coming Messiah, Jesus. And John the Baptist is said, by Jesus, to be the Elijah of that day (Matthew 17:10; 11:13,14).

...MATTHEW 17:10...And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"

...MATTHEW 11:13,14...Jesus continues "For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. And if you care to accept it, he (John) is Elijah, who was to come."

So, God enables this beloved prophet to witness the fulfillment of the prophecy...the arrival of the Messiah.

To show the esteem God had given these two prophets, they were the only ones known, of all those in His service, whose place of burial was deliberately made secret. Moses was personally laid to rest, by God, in an unknown location near Mt. Nebo, and Elijah was taken up into the heavens by

God and transported somewhere to his final resting place (Deuteronomy 34:6; 2 Kings 2:11).

...DEUTERONOMY 34:6...And He (Jehovah) buried him (Moses) in the valley, in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor (near Mt. Nebo, in what is now Jordan); but no man knows his burial place to this day.

...II KINGS 2:11...Then it came about as they (Elijah and his protege Elisha) were going along and talking, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven.

Now this does not mean that Elijah was carried up to heaven, bodily, where he resides to this day. For no one, except Jesus, is alive who once lived and died. No, it was God's way of once again insuring that no one knows the burial place of one very special to Him and His people.

An aside...As to why Jehova would insure that their places of burial would be unknown I wouldn't know for sure. Who knows the mysterious ways of Jehovah? But I will hazard a guess that it was because He didn't want humans to worship at their graves. If this seems farfetched, look at the way Christians of today worship at sights believed to be connected with Jesus. Or for that matter, look at the shrine erected to Elvis Presley and how the "faithful" flock to that shrine in Memphis. People are prone to look for "idols" to worship.

In the First Century AD, there were six Holy Days

celebrated by the Jews. They were:

- 1) Passover...14th day of the 1st month (our calendar, April)
- 2 Weeks/Firstfruits...50 days after Passover (May/June)
- 3) Trumpet&Atonement...1st and 10th day of 7th month (October)
- 4) Tabernacles...15th day of 7th month
- 5) Purim...14 and 15th day of 12th month (March)
- 6) Dedication...25th day of 9th month (December)

Observant Jews were expected to celebrate three Feast-Holy Days...Passover, Firstfruits, and Tabernacles at the Temple in Jerusalem. Naturally, nothing would keep Jesus from participating.

Jesus is going to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. As evidenced by what Peter says regarding the setting up of tabernacles, the Transfiguration may well have occurred at this time. The Feast of Tabernacles celebrates the ingathering of the harvest, and is also called the “Feast of Ingathering”. It is celebrated in “booths” for a seven day period, at the close of the agricultural season. It is a celebration of the coming into the Promised Land (Leviticus 23:34).

*...LEVITICUS 23:34...(Jehovah speaks to Moses)
“Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, “On the fifteenth of the seventh month is the Feast of the Booths for seven days unto the Lord.”*

John says that the “Feast of Tabernacles was at hand” (John 7:2,10) .

...JOHN 7:2,10...Now the feast of the Jews, the Feast of the Tabernacles, was at hand...But when His brothers had gone up to the feast, then He Himself also went up, not publicly, but as it were, in secret.

Or it could have occurred at the Day of Atonement. This would also be appropriate, because it is a holy day that honors the expiation of the sins for the Jews, and the death of Jesus will be the expiation of the sins for all mankind (Leviticus 16:34).

...LEVITICUS 16:34...“And this shall be an everlasting statute for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins...”

Or it could have occurred ten days earlier at Trumpets.

I’m always interested in answers to the six questions...WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY, HOW

The location for the Transfiguration is based on my best estimate. So for me, that is the WHERE of this event. The accounts above give us the WHO, and the WHAT. The WHEN could be near the Feast of Tabernacles, or he could have wanted to get there earlier to celebrate the Holy Days of Trumpet and Atonement. We look to Luke to understand the WHY of the Transfiguration. The HOW we’ll leave to God.

It is fairly well concealed, but Luke says that Moses and Elijah are speaking of Jesus’ “departure”...that is an innocuous term for “death”. Another term used is “exodus”

which is defined as “going out”...”decease” (B-3-97). So, they are not talking about any physical journey that he is going to make after his trip to Jerusalem, but rather what he will experience after dying. This gives “ingathering” a whole new meaning. This may be the Father’s way of explaining the process of death to His Son. These prophets are no doubt the most revered by His Son, and they are able to explain what he will experience in death’s journey. But they have no way of preparing him for the agonies he will endure before death.

It seems strange to me that the gospel of John, attributed to the only author present at this event, was the only one who does not mention the Transfiguration. And in each story all three disciples, John, James, and Peter witness the event.

Mark, credited by many with writing the first gospel, was the cousin and disciple of Barnabas. Barnabas was an early disciple of the “twelve”, and Mark could have heard the story from him, or Mark might have heard it, first-hand from Peter, in Antioch. Both Mark and Luke were disciples of Paul for a time, so Luke could have heard of the account from Mark.

The gospels of Matthew and Luke were said to have been inspired by that of Mark.

Even though the gospels may not actually have been written by these four disciples, the written accounts would have been based on their oral or written traditions. Four different view points: Matthew - from the aspect of the King; Mark - the Servant of Man; Luke - the Man; and John - the Son of God.

Some claim that the details of the Transfiguration, i.e., the

appearance of the Prophets, the physical change in Jesus, the voice of God, etc., are embellishments after the fact, on the original accounts of Luke. They think what might have happened is that, while praying, Jesus' face undergoes a change because he experiences an epiphany or a revelation, which is reflected in his countenance (B-13-18). Nobody knows for sure, but whatever occurred is significant enough to be chronicled by three of the gospels, and to make a profound impact on Peter.

But, if the account was originally that of Luke's, how does that track with Mark's gospel being first and an inspiration for Luke? Another unanswerable question.

(Note: In my play, ROAD TO BETHANY, I use the "idea" of the Transfiguration to make the crucifixion of Jesus more compelling, keeping it in the "present". By this I mean I use the dramatic device of the "trance", and in that state ascend the "cross" to capture the passion of the crucifixion.)

V

TRAVELS & MIRACLES

I believe John's gospel was written last. Having access to the other writings/traditions, he decides what events he will include that the other accounts don't cover. The Transfiguration and other events near Caesarea Philippi have been covered and so they are omitted by him. He chooses instead to concentrate more on the events in and around Jerusalem, prior to the fateful visit at the final Passover.

So John's account, after the feeding of the "5000", veers off in a separate direction. I think his account is also used to give the reader a better understanding of the chronology of the events in the life of Jesus...He is constantly making reference to the holy days.

In the account of the feeding of the "5000", he makes us aware that Passover "was at hand". Then he says that Jesus attends the Feast of the Tabernacles in Jerusalem, some six months later.

John tells of Jesus' stay in Jerusalem through the Feast of Dedication, teaching in the Temple area; of the attempt to arrest him; and his escape. (John 10:22-39).

...JOHN 10:2225, 3033, 39...At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father's name, these bear witness of Me" ... "I and the Father are one." The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, "I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning me?" The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God" ...Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him; and He eluded their grasp.

(Note: The Feast of Dedication celebrates the rededication of the Temple during the Maccabean era.)

So Jesus remains in Jerusalem and vicinity for about two months, teaching, and avoiding capture. After which time, he escapes to the site where John baptized him, Bethabara (house of the ford...The exact location of the site is much disputed), on the east side of the Jordan river in Peraea (land beyond) . There he returns to his "spiritual" rebirth (baptism). He is beyond the immediate threat of those in Jerusalem, but now he is back under the jurisdiction of King Herod of Antipas, his old foe (John 10:40).

...JOHN 10:40...And He went away again beyond the Jordan to the place where John was first baptizing; and He was staying there (Bethabara).

John's account resumes with the raising of Lazarus at Bethany, near Jerusalem. He makes reference, again, to a holy day when he says "...the Passover of the Jews was at hand" ...the final Passover. Some four months remain from the time that he arrives in Bethabara and the time of his raising of Lazarus, near the Passover (John 11:55).

...JOHN 11:55...Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover, to purify themselves.

Due to the proximity of Judea and the fact that he is in Peraea, he will not remain in Bethabara for long. He returns north, first to Gaulinitis and then, later, to Galilee.

In order to understand what Jesus does, between the Feast of the Passover (feeding the "5000") and the Feast of Tabernacles (attended in Jerusalem), a period of some six months; and what he does during the four months between his arrival at Bethabara (shortly after Dedication), and his arrival at Bethany (six days before Passover...his last), it is necessary to return to the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Reading the gospels is almost like reading the stories of two different men. The specifics of the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke may vary, but the accounts themselves remain essentially the same...synoptic, with

Matthew and Mark being the most closely related. Whereas John seems to be marching to the beat of a different drummer, most of the time.

But at certain times, considered critical to John as “time markers”, his account coincides with the others, i.e., at or near the Feast of the Passover for the feeding of the “5000”; and a year later, for the entrance into Jerusalem, when the Feast of the Passover is again at hand.

Between these two events, one year, Jesus: makes a circuit through Galilee; visits Tyre/Sidon (Sarepta); travels through Decapolis, via Damascus; visits Caesarea Philippi/Mt. Hermon; spends two months in Jerusalem; performs countless miracles; teaches the Kingdom of God throughout the Holy Land and beyond; and the Transfiguration takes place.

After the Transfiguration, the “synoptic” gospels relate the story of the healing of the boy afflicted by demons and the need for faith and fasting to perform such miracles. They tell of his being in Galilee and his talk of the coming trials in Jerusalem (Matthew 17:14-23; Mark 9:14-31; Luke 9:37-44).

...MARK 9:14,17-20,25-29,31 ...And when they (Jesus, Peter, James and John) came back to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them, and some scribes arguing with them...And one of the crowd answered Him, “Teacher, I brought You my son, possessed with a spirit which makes him mute; and whenever it seizes him, it dashes him to the ground and he foams at the mouth, and grinds his teeth, and stiffens out (symptoms

of epilepsy). And I told Your disciples to cast it out and they could not do it.” And He answered them and said, “O unbelieving generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him to Me!”...And when Jesus saw that a crowd was rapidly gathering, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and do not enter him again.” And after crying out and throwing himself into terrible convulsions, it came out; and the boy became so much like a corpse that most of them said, “He is dead! “But Jesus took him by the hand and raised him; and he got up. And when He had come into the house, His disciples began questioning Him privately, “Why is it that we could not cast it out?” And He said to them, “This kind can not come out by anything but prayer”...For He was teaching His disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man is to be delivered up into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise again three days later.”

Now, whether this event occurs before he goes to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (six months) or following his return from Bethabara (four months), it cannot be determined. They do not appear to be as concerned about when events take place, as much as they are about recording what takes place.

Matthew, Mark and Luke pick up the story of his journey to Jerusalem from Galilee (during the final four months). Luke speaks of his impending crucifixion, and of going by

way of Samaria and not being welcomed in one village, and of sending seventy new followers ahead of him. Matthew and Mark tell of his leaving Galilee and crossing into Judea on the eastern side of the Jordan River...omitting any mention of Samaria. They both say that Jesus crosses the Jordan River, but remains in Judea (Luke 9:51-53; 10:1; Matthew 19:1,2; Mark 10:1).

...LUKE 9:51-53; 10:1...And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face for Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem...Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.

...MARK 10:1...And rising up, He went from there (Galilee) to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; and crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them.

(Note: Maps show the Jordan River as the border between Judea and Peraea. But I believe the river is included as part of Judea. A river is never divided in half and the Romans who govern Judea, aware of the tactical value of the river,

would want to control the major portion of that important body of water on both sides of the river.)

While in Galilee during his final visit, I believe Jesus intentionally steers clear of the Sea of Galilee and its vicinity (bypassing Tiberias, Herod's capital), staying in the hills in the western region, avoiding confrontation. The western sector of Galilee has rolling hills and any off-road movement would not be difficult.

It is very probable that he visits his family in Nazareth, at this time. Perhaps he prepares them for what is to come in Jerusalem. And then again, he may want to save them the agony of thinking about the future and just suggest that they all go together to attend the Passover in Jerusalem. But family members, along with Mary Magdalene, another Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, may well have accompanied him on his final journey to Jerusalem. In any event, the gospels assure us that they are present at the crucifixion and later.

(Note: No mention of his father, so it is probable that he is dead.)

I visited Nazareth, while in Galilee. It's a small, bustling town with what appeared to be a good mix of Arabs and Jews, with its huge Church of the Annunciation, purportedly where the Virgin Mary received her Ghostly visit. I was looking for the "cliff" where the citizens of Nazareth were going to throw Jesus off, the recounting of which I include in my play. I selected the high ground overlooking the town as the place (Luke 4: 29,30).

...LUKE 4: 29, 30...and they rose up and cast Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him off the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.

From Nazareth, Jesus proceeds southwest on the Roman road out of Galilee, following the road to Samaria by way of Meggido (crowded). From there, he proceeds southeast along the Esdraelon Valley (Plain of Esdras) road, picking up the road heading due south into Samaria (watchtower). He leaves Samaria, because the people are not hospitable to him (Luke 9:52,53).

...LUKE 9:52,53...And He sent messengers on ahead of Him. And they entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem.

(Note: The Samaritans are not hospitable because “He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem”, which means that he is going to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple of Herod; and is, therefore, their enemy in faith, because they worship at their holy mountain, Mt. Gerizim (hachets).

This isn’t the only reason that he leaves. I believe he enters Samaria, not with the intent of passing through the province all the way to Jerusalem, but rather to avoid the Province of Decapolis, before returning to the Jordan River...and his river of “life”.

I believe that Jesus avoids the road leading to Decapolis because the cities along the main route, like Scythopolis and Salim, would be garrisoned with Roman troops.

In Galilee and Samaria he performs miracles and preaches of the Kingdom of God in the villages and the cities (Luke 13:22).

...LUKE 13:22...And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.

(Note: Luke is more interested in relating Jesus' teachings and parables at this time, than in covering his travels.)

After passing through part of Samaria, following the road south and east through Sebaste, I believe he veers north to take the road following the Wadi Farah to the Jordan River. There, according to the gospels, he crosses the river and continues on his "journey of life", following the river south.

Now why he crosses the river, instead of following the road on the western bank headed south, I can only suppose that he does this because he wants to avoid a main route used by countless pilgrims headed south to worship at the Temple for the Passover in Jerusalem. He also wants to avoid running into Roman soldiers or Jewish guards that might take him into custody and escort him to Jerusalem, or prevent his continuing on. The word might have gone out to look for him. I believe at this time, because of how he has "ruffled the feathers" of the leaders of the Jews...Herod, the Pharisees, and the Saducees, that he is essentially a "wanted man".

It is necessary that he be in Jerusalem for the Passover to fulfill his promise to God, so he has to avoid drawing attention to himself in the meantime. As an individual he could remain incognito, and join the thousands streaming south, for his appearance is like any other. But he has a “mob” of people with him that keep increasing at every stop, and every miracle he makes, and it’s certain that he never stops preaching of the coming Kingdom at every opportunity.

There is no Roman road to follow, on the eastern bank, but there is a local road (probably nothing more than a foot path). This “road” is called Way of the Plain (B-12-10). I suspect, where there is no road, that the terrain along the river would not present too many obstacles to movement, in any event.

No mention is made of it, but I believe he continues his journey to the river’s end...the Dead Sea - “Death” and, thus, completes his “journey of life”. While there, he may well have visited the occupants of Qmram in the Wilderness of Judea, near the Dead Sea.

I went to the Dead Sea early one morning on my visit to Israel. The mist clung to the water. There was no living thing other than me. I skipped a rock across its surface, and then went to see the ruins of Qmram.

Although there appear to be many differences in Jesus’ teachings and theirs, they do agree on the fact that the “law keepers” do not represent true believers. There are also similarities in beliefs, most notably the idea of sharing communally, and of the forswearing of riches (Matthew 19:21-23).

...MATTHEW 19:21, 23...Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come follow Me" ...And Jesus said to His disciples, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

He travels to Jericho, still in the Province of Judea, and the stepping-off place for Bethany and Jerusalem. In Jericho, according to the three gospels, he lodges with a tax collector and heals the blind (Matthew has him healing two, and Mark and Luke, one) (Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43; 19:1-10).

...MATTHEW 20:29,30,32-34...And as they were going out from Jericho, a great multitude followed Him. And behold two blind men sitting by the side of the road, hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out, saying "Lord, have mercy upon us Son of David!"...And Jesus stopped and called them and said, "What do you wish me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Lord, we want our eyes to be opened." And moved with compassion, Jesus touched their eyes; and immediately they received their sight, and followed Him.

...MARK 10:46,47, 51, 52...And they came to Jericho. And as He was going out from Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the road. And when he heard that it was Jesus the

Nazarene, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" ...And answering him, Jesus said, "What do you want Me to do for you? And the blind man said to Him, "Rabboni (A term of great reverence... "my master"), I want to regain my sight!" And Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and began following Him on the road.

...LUKE 18:35,38, 4143; 19:1,2,57...And it came about as He was approaching Jericho (both Matthew and Mark have him leaving Jericho), a certain blind man was sitting by the road begging...And he called out, saying, "Jesus, Son of David (all gospels agreed on this title), have mercy on me!" ... "What do you want Me to do for you? (Jesus replied) And he said, "Lord I want to receive my sight!" And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God...And He entered and was passing through Jericho. And behold, there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; and he was a chief tax collector, and he was rich...And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, hurry and come down (from the tree), for today I must stay at your house." And he hurried down and received Him gladly. And when they (the townspeople) saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to be a guest of a man who is a sinner."

This is not the first time he is accused of “hobnobbing” with “sinners”. Very early in his ministry, he accepted the invitation of another tax collector in Galilee...Matthew (Matthew 9:9-11).

...MATTHEW 9:9-11...And as Jesus passed on from there (his home in Capernaum), He saw a man, called Matthew, sitting in the tax office; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he rose and followed Him. And it happened that as He was reclining at table in the house, behold many tax-gatherers and sinners came and joined Jesus and His disciples at the table. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, “Why does your Teacher eat with tax-gatherers and sinners?”

So Jesus is not above shocking the hypocritical “law keepers”. I suspect that he even takes joy in their reaction to his associating with “sinners”, and we must remember two things, he has not come to save the “righteous”...and God chooses those of whom you would least expect (Matthew 9:13; 1Corinthians 1:27).

...MATTHEW 9:13...But go and learn what this means, “I desire compassion and not sacrifice, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners”.

...1 CORINTHIANS 1:27)...but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of this world to shame the things that are strong.

But, then again, Paul says that “all have sinned”. So there’s hope for us all (Romans 3:23).

...ROMANS 3:23...for all have sinned and all have fallen short of the glory of God.

It is outside Jericho (place of fragrance) that my play, ROAD TO BETHANY, takes place, on what I imagine to be the road to Bethany. On my visit to Jericho, I selected the place to use in my mind’s eye as I perform. The wilderness and the mountains in the distance, with the The Last Temptation Monestary, barely visible, clinging to its side. Nearby, there are trees with bright red flowers, the same as those here in California. It’s the last place with lush vegetation, before the wilderness. Across from this dusty road stands the Last Temptation Restaurant (I’m not making this up), with its familiar red and white Coca Cola signs...the last chance for refreshment before hitting the wilderness. This is the same “wilderneess” in which the devil tempted Jesus, following his baptism (Matthew 3: 16;4:1).

...MATTHEW 3:16, 4:1...And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water” ...”; Then Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.

VI

BETHANY

All four gospels intersect in the vicinity of Bethany (house of the poor) (Matthew 21:1, 2; Mark 11:1,2; Luke 19:29,30; John 11:1).

...JOHN 11:1...Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

In Bethany, Jesus raises Lazarus from death. He arrives there four days after Lazarus is buried (two days from the time that he is informed that Lazarus is dead). He waits the extra days to ensure that there is no question Lazarus is dead and gone, before returning him to life. Martha (mistress) professes her belief that Jesus is the Son of god and her sister, Mary (Miriam...beloved), chides Jesus for not coming earlier (John 11:3-44).

...JOHN 11:3,4,6,11,14-17,27,32-35,38,39,41-44...The sisters therefore sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he (Lazarus) whom You love is sick." But when Jesus heard it, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but

for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it” ...When therefore He heard that he was sick, He stayed then two days longer in the place where He was (Jericho) ...This He said, and after that He said to them (disciples), “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awaken him out of sleep” ...Then Jesus therefore said to them, “Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.” Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus (twin), said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.” So when Jesus came, He found that he (Lazarus) had already been in the tomb four days...She (Martha) said to Him, “Yes, Lord; I have believed that You are the Christ, the Son of God, even He who comes into the world” ...Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him and fell at His feet, saying to Him, “Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.” When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her, also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit, and was troubled (He realized that His delaying, though necessary, had caused great pain to His friends), and said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to Him, “Lord, come and see.” Jesus wept...Jesus therefore again being deeply moved within, came to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, “Remove the stone.” Martha, the sister of the deceased, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there will be a stench; for He has been dead four

days”...And so they removed the stone. And Jesus raised His eyes and said, “Father, I thank Thee that Thou hearest Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always; but because of the people standing around, I said it, that they may believe that Thou didst send Me.” (I believe, by the tone of this verse, that Jesus was out of hearing from the people, or that He was speaking softly to the Father, when He said this). And when He had said these things, He cried out in a loud voice (so the people could hear Him...more show), “Lazarus, come forth.” And he who had died came forth (out of the cave), bound hand and foot with wrappings; and his face was wrapped around with a cloth, Jesus said to them, “Unbind him and let him go.”

(Note: Mary sounds like a “nagging wife” when she rebukes him. That does not mean to imply that Jesus is married to Mary or anyone for that matter; but, according to the custom of the times, it would be an anomaly for a Rabbi (teacher), which Jesus is, not to be married by the time he’s thirty. For that matter, the average Jew is expected to be married by that age. We know that Peter is married).

Picture this, Lazarus with cloth wrappings at his side, dragging in the dirt, emerges from a hole in the side of a hill, arms outstretched, shaking his head, trying to make sense of what is happening, even who he is. Imagine the effect on the onlookers, gazing with a mixture of fascination and dread. He was dead and now he lives! And the orchestrator of this scene stands aside, observing, content that his friend is alive. Add to this the stench that accompanies Lazarus, he has been decomposing for four days.

Jesus is intent on forcing the “law keepers” to take action. This miracle of making “life” from “death” is the final indignity to the Pharisees and Saducees, and serves as the death warrant for Jesus (John 11:46-53).

...JOHN 11:46-53...But some of them (people who saw Jesus raise Lazarus from the dead) went away to the Pharisees, and told them of the things which Jesus had done. Therefore the chief priests and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, “What are we doing? For this man is performing many signs. If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” But a certain one of them, Caiphias, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.” Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation. And not for the nation only, but that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (members of the lost tribes of Israel).” So from that day on they planned together to kill Him.

Jesus has performed countless miracles during his ministry, in keeping with the commission he received, as prophesied in Isaiah and quoted in Luke. This annoyed the “law keepers”. It made him a dangerous nuisance, but his

giving life to the dead makes him a definite threat to their well-being. His ability to raise the dead unquestionably underscores his special relationship with God (Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 4:18,19).

...LUKE 4:18,19...The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."

Put yourself in the place of the Jews responsible to maintain law and order for the Roman authorities and, at the same time, trying to keep their position of leadership. You are fearful of Jesus and his effects on the common man. There have been a number of men professing to be the Messiah. They proved to be delusional; but this man performs countless miracles and his teaching is subversive. There are rumors of his coming to Jerusalem, of his healing a cripple boy in one town and a woman, possessed, in another. He is coming, leaving a trail of miracles in his wake, and accompanied by a great crowd of supporters, which increases with each stop, each miracle. You have to prevent his coming and stirring up the people that are assembling for Passover. But, despite your efforts he keeps coming. There was the blind man receiving sight in nearby Jericho. He is coming. And now he's raised a man, named Lazarus, from the dead! And this happened in Bethany, right next door. He's here!

The “law keepers” believe that, if the masses find out that he has raised someone from the dead, they will clamor to follow Jesus. They may rise up in revolt, force the Romans to assert their power, take away the authority of the “law keepers”, and enslave the nation. The die is cast. Now all that is needed is a plot of how they can dispose of him quickly, before THE miracle becomes known to all.

They have another reason for haste...The Feast of the Passover is approaching and they won't allow anything to interfere with the feast. They are intent on killing him, and he is intent on sacrificing himself...They are on a collision course.

But in order to prevent himself from being taken, prematurely, he and his disciples go into hiding in a little village, about ten miles north of Jerusalem, called Ephraim (son of Joseph...for God has made him fruitful in the land of his affliction). They remain there until six days before the Passover Feast, when they again return to Bethany (John 11: 54,55;12:1).

...JOHN 11:54,55;12:1...Jesus therefore no longer continued to walk publicly among the Jews, but went away from there to the country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim; and there He stayed with the disciples. Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and many went up to Jerusalem out of the country before the Passover to purify themselves...Jesus, therefore, six days before the Passover, came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead.

Bethany is located on the reverse slope of a hill, near the Mount of Olives, almost due east of Jerusalem, a little less than two miles from the Temple Mount. There is a sign there indicating the location where Lazarus was raised.

There is a paved road now, that winds steeply down the side of the Mount of Olives, passing a garden location, chosen as the Garden of Gethsemane. The road then crosses north of the Kidron Valley and then winds its way from the east through the Lion's Gate/St. Stephen's Gate (this gate did not exist at the time of Jesus)...It is believed that during his time, entry from the Mount of Olives was made from the south, by way of the Fountain Gate, into the Temple area.

Lion's Gate is the one I used to get to the Ecce Homo Convent, when entering through the wall from the east.

In Bethany, Jesus stays with his good friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus (who must be in a state of recuperation/resuscitation...his name is not mentioned). It is in their home, at the evening of the sixth day before Passover, that Mary anoints Jesus' feet. Judas reprimands her for "wasting" valuable ointments, and Jesus tells him to "let her alone", and that it may be used for his burial (John 12:3-8).

...JOHN 12:3-5,7,8...Mary therefore took a pound of very costly, genuine spikenard (a fragrant plant that grows in the Himalyan mountains) (B-12-903), and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. But Judas Iscariot, one of the disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii, and given

to the poor people?"...Jesus therefore said, "Let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of my burial. For the poor you always have with you; but you do not always have Me."

(Note: This is probably Mary's way of showing her gratitude to Jesus, not only for being the Lord, but for raising her brother from death. Judas' concern for the value of the ointment may reflect his concern as the treasurerer of the group, which many believe he is.)

It is at this time also, that the Hellenist Greeks come to see Jesus. They are Jews who have come to worship at the Feast of the Passover (John 12:20-22).

...JOHN 12:20-22...Now there were certain Greeks among those who were going up to worship at the feast: these therefore came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and began to ask him, saying, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip came and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip came and they told Jesus.

Before we examine the "days" up to the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, keep in mind that the Jewish day begins with sunset and ends at sunset, the following day. So the following morning (still the sixth day), Jesus and his followers proceed to Jerusalem by way of the Mount of Olives. Jesus sends two of his disciples ahead to the village of Bethpage (house of unripe figs), located less than a mile east and north of Bethany, to get a donkey's colt for him. The colt is obtained, and Jesus rides the upon it into Jerusalem,

so as to fulfill the prophecy of Zekariah. (Matthew 21:1-7; Mark 11:1-7; Luke 19:29-35; John 12:14,15; Zekariah 9:9).

(Note: Matthew tells of a donkey and its foal and the others refer only to a single “colt”.)

...MATTHEW 21:1-7...And when they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethpage, to the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them, and bring them to Me. And if any one says something to you, you shall say, “The Lord has need of them, and immediately he will send them.” Now this took place that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying “Say to the daughter of Zion, behold your king is coming to you, gentle and mounted upon a donkey, even upon a colt, the foal of the beast of burden.” And the disciples went and did just as Jesus had directed them, and brought the donkey and colt, and laid on them their garments, on which He sat.

...LUKE 19:32, 35...And those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them...And they brought it to Jesus, and they threw their garments on the colt, and put Jesus on it.

...JOHN 12:14...And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it...

...ZEKARIAH 9:9...Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you...Humble and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

(Note: This is interesting, because it would appear, according to Luke, that the disciples pick Jesus up and “put” him on the colt...probably so that the garments will not move as Jesus sits upon it, side-saddle. And again, it seems strange that Jesus rides on the colt, not the donkey? It would seem that a “colt”, “foal”, “young donkey” would be too small to carry a man, but Jesus would not do anything to harm an animal. This is done, once again, to fulfill a prophecy. Maybe it’s because his triumphant entry calls for him to ride upon a donkey that’s never been ridden? Unless he’s a lot smaller than imagined, Jesus is sitting on the small donkey, with legs upraised so that his feet won’t touch the ground...an amusing picture, Does the foal’s mare accompany her offspring on this famous journey?)

Many people gather to watch him pass as he descends the Mount of Olives, most of whom pay homage to him as a king. They spread their coats in his path...some wave palm branches. Many shout his praises, and cry out Hosanna’s (“Save Now!”). As mentioned previously, Jesus probably enters Jerusalem by way of the Fountain Gate, which led him through the City of David to the southern wall of the Temple (Matthew 21:8-11; Mark 11:8-10; Luke 19:36-38; John 12:12,13)...

...MARK 11:8-10...And many spread their garments in the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields. And those who went before, and those who followed after, were crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord; Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father, David; Hosannah in the highest!"

Currently, only the west wall of Herod's temple remains...the so-called "wailing wall", at which I witnessed the separation of sexes praying and leaving notes. The women were emitting a keening sound...a continuous high shrill in praise of some event.

It would appear that "most" of the multitude that cry out as Jesus approaches, are his followers ("disciples"), as mentioned by Luke, or, according to John, by those who witnessed the raising of Lazarus . John further clarifies that it is "palm" branches that are being spread out on the road...and thus "Palm" Sunday (Luke 19:37, John 12:12-18).

...LUKE 19:37...And as He was now approaching, near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to praise...

...JOHN 12:12, 13,17,18...On the next day the great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took the branches of the Palm trees and went out to greet Him, and began to cry out, "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the

name of the Lord, even the King of Israel” ...And so the multitude that were with Him when He pulled Lazarus out of the tomb, and raised him from the dead, were bearing Him witness. For this cause also the multitude went and met Him, because they heard that He had performed this sign.

So Jesus enters Jerusalem on the morning of the sixth day before Passover...What occurs during those remaining six days? Basically, they are spent with Jesus teaching in the Temple by day and returning to Bethany/Mount of Olives to spend the night. The following provides greater detail of what occurs during those days.

VII

SIX DAYS

Sixth day...After his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (foundation of God...Salem, peace), he visits the Temple, looks around, and returns to Bethany before sunset that day. He is getting the lay of the land, so to speak. Many of the crowd continue to lavish praise on him. This is also the time that he weeps for Jerusalem, realizing that it will be destroyed and beseiged by its enemies. He spends the night in Bethany (Mark 11:11; Luke 19:41-44).

...MARK 11:11...And He entered Jerusalem and came into the temple; and after looking around, He departed for Bethany with the twelve, since it was already late.

...LUKE 19:41-44...And when He approached, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, "If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes. For the days shall come when your enemies will throw up a bank before you, and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and will level you to the ground and your

children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

(Note: This well describes the way in which the Romans invested and destroyed the Temple and Jerusalem in 70 AD.)

Fifth day...He returns in the morning to the Temple in Jerusalem. On the way there he curses the fig tree for not bearing fruit to ease his hunger (Matthew 21:18, 19; Mark 11:12-14).

...MATTHEW 21:18,19...Now in the morning, when He returned from the city, He became hungry. And seeing a lone fig tree by the road, He came to it, and found nothing on it except leaves only; And He said to it, “No longer shall there ever be any fruit from you.” And at once the fig tree withered.

...MARK 11:12-14...And on the next day, when they had departed from Bethany, He became hungry. And seeing in a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it; He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He answered and said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening.

(Note: Mark tells us that the fig tree “withered” later, below. And he says they are going to Jerusalem, whereas

Matthew says they are leaving Jerusalem, and that the tree withered “at once”.)

This seems on the surface to be completely out of character for Jesus, but who knows the ways of God and His Son. He would naturally know it isn't the season for fig trees to bear fruit. Maybe he just wants to demonstrate, once again, the awesome power of God. He brought man to life and now he brings death to nature's handiwork.

After entering the Temple courtyard, Jesus drives out the money changers"...accusing them of being "robbers" and "thieves" (Matthew 21:12,13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45,46).

...MARK 11:15-17...And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began casting out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations.' But you are making it a robber's den."

It's interesting to read how graphically Matthew and Mark describe the actions taken by Jesus...you can see the "tables" of the "moneychangers" and the "seats" of the "dove sellers" being overturned. Another interesting point that Mark makes is where Jesus says the temple should be for "all nations", and yet the temple is excluded to all those who are not Jews.

Now, it is necessary for “money changers” to be in the Temple area, so that those without livestock and doves to sacrifice at the Temple can purchase them. These creatures will then be sacrificed at the altar by the priests, in the name of the person who provides the sacrifice, to atone for the misdeeds of that person. The person requesting the sacrifice cannot perform the sacrifice, himself, because the altar is in the Priest’s Court, which is off-limits to the common man. He has to be content to observe the procedure from the Court of the Israelites. The women are even less fortunate because they are not permitted to even enter the Court of the Israelites (B-17-134-136).

Apparently the “money changers” are “gouging” the people and Jesus takes exception to this practice, calling them “thieves” and “robbers”. Some paintings of this event show a vengeful Jesus cracking a whip over the miscreants, but I think all he needed to do was show his wrath and raise his voice, I doubt it was necessary to strike anyone. Maybe he grabbed a few of them by the shoulder and “escorted” them out of the courtyard...

I share with others the belief that Jesus takes this symbolic action to show that the old system of sacrificing creatures to appease God for the misdeeds of His chosen people is no longer to be practiced. This custom, introduced by Moses, is no longer acceptable to God (B-14-37). After Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross there will never be any need for further sacrifices.

I take this one step further. Jesus uses this method to show that, as sacrifices were no longer required, there will no longer be the need for priests, or any mediator, between the

people and their God. And in Mark, Jesus presages the mission of Paul by saying “all the nations” should be able to pray to the Father. Paul was the apostle to the “nations/gentiles” (Ephesians 3:8).

...EPHESIANS 3:8...To me (Paul), the very least of the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

Those in positions of power, through the old system of sacrifice and mediation, know what Jesus means when he drives out the “money changers”. They know that he is directly challenging the old system...their right of power, and that he has to be silenced.

The scribes and Chief Priests want to kill Jesus for the actions that he takes with the “money changers” and for the doctrines he is teaching, but they are afraid that the crowds will interfere and prevent them from seizing Jesus. He leaves Jerusalem and returns to Bethany, where he spends the night. And so ends the fifth day (Matthew 21:46; Mark 11:18)...

...MATTHEW 21:46...And when they sought to seize Him, they became afraid of the multitudes, because they held Him to be a prophet.

...MARK 11:18...And the chief priests and the scribes heard this, and began seeking how to destroy Him; because they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching.

Fourth day...In the morning, on Jesus' return to Jerusalem, they discover that the fig tree has dried up. Jesus reminds his disciples of what faith in God can do (Mark 11:20-23).

...MARK 11:20-23...And as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. And being reminded, Peter said to Him, "Rabbi, the tree that You cursed has withered ." And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes in what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him."

Jesus is confronted by the chief priests and scribes, in the Temple. He responds to their challenges and answers them with parables, in such a way as to silence his accusers. This brings about greater enmity on their part. The multitude look upon Jesus as a prophet. The priests and scribes plot against him (Matthew 21:23-46; Mark 11:27-30,33; 12:1-12; Luke 20:1-19).

...MARK 11:27-30 33; 12:1-12...And they came again to Jerusalem. And as He was walking into the temple, the chief priests, and scribes, and elders came to Him, and began saying to Him, "By what authority are You doing these things, or who gave You the authority to do these things?" And Jesus said to them, "I will ask you one question, and you answer Me, and then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Was the

baptism of John from heaven or from men? Answer Me”...And answering Jesus, they said, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things”...And He began to speak to them in parables; “A man planted a vineyard, and put a wall around it, and dug a vat under the wine press, and built a tower, and rented it out to vine-growers and went on a journey. And at the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, in order to receive some of the produce of the vineyard from the vine-growers. And they took him, and beat him, and sent him away empty handed. And again he sent another slave, and they wounded him in the head, and treated him shamefully. And he sent another, and that one they killed; and so with many others, beating some, and killing others. He had one more to send, a beloved son; he sent him last of all to them, saying, ‘they will respect my son’. But those vine-growers said to one another, ‘this is the heir; come let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours!’ And they took him, and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the vine-growers, and will give the vineyards to others. Have you not even read the scripture (Psalm 118:22,23): ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone; this came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes’?” And they were seeking to seize Him; and yet they feared the multitude; for they understood that He had spoken the parable against them. And so they left Him, and went away.

The Pharisees and Herodians then attempt to entrap him, and Jesus outwits them, just as he has the priests and scribes (Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26).

...MATTHEW 22:15-22...Then the Pharisees went and counseled together how they might trap Him in what He said. And they sent their disciples to Him, along with the Herodians, saying, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God, in truth, and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any. Tell us therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to give a poll tax to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their malice, and said, "Why are you testing Me, you hypocrites? Show me a coin used for the poll tax." And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's"

The Saducees next question him at length, on the resurrection (they do not believe in the resurrection of the dead). Jesus answers them convincingly, and silences them (Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40).

...LUKE 20:27-40...Now there came to Him some of the Saducees (who say that there is no resurrection), and they questioned Him, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote us that 'if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he is childless, his brother should take the wife and

raise up offspring to his brother'. Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died childless; and the second and the third took her; and in the same way the seven also died, leaving no children. Finally the woman died also. In the resurrection therefore, which one's wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage, but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; for neither can they die anymore, for they are like angels, and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the "burning bush", where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Now He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for all live to Him." And some of the scribes answered and said, "Teacher, You have spoken well." For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

The scribes and lawyers challenge Jesus regarding the commandments, and he answers the challenge (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34).

...MATTHEW 22:34-40...But when the Pharisees had heard that He had put the Saducees to silence, they gathered themselves together. And one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" And He

said to them, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and foremost commandment. And a second is like unto it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”

Jesus uses this opportunity to tell how the Old Covenant and its Law...the law of Moses (the Ten Commandments) has been replaced by the New Covenant and Love and Faith. He is telling them that the first five commandments reflect the love of God: 1) Have no other God before Me; 2) Make no idols; 3) Do not take My name in vain; 4) Observe the Sabbath; 5) Honor your father and mother. While the last five reflect the love of your “neighbor”: 6) Shall not commit murder; 7) Shall not commit adultery; 8) Shall not steal; 9) Shall not bear false witness; 10) Shall not covet anything belonging to your neighbor.

Apparently the “law keepers” are greatly afraid of Jesus’ teachings and his effect on the people, because they challenge him again and again on this day, but are unable to trap him. Jesus, in turn, accuses the “law keepers” of hypocrisy and he cautions the people not to follow their ways (Matthew 23:1-3).

...MATTHEW 23:1-3...Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and His disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the seat of Moses; therefore all they tell you to, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things, and do not do them.”

Jesus refers to a psalm of David to disprove the claim of the “law keepers” that the Christ is the son of David. He warns the people to be wary of the “law keepers”, telling them that they make a “big show” of living by the letter of the law, but never follow the law in their hearts (Mark 12-35-40; Luke 20:41-47).

...MARK 12:35-40...And Jesus answering began to say, as He taught in the temple, “How is it that the scribes say that the Christ is the son of David? David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘The LORD said to my Lord, sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies beneath Thy feet’ (Psalm 110:1). David himself calls Him “Lord”; and so in what sense is He His son?” And the great crowd enjoyed listening to Him. And in His teaching He was saying; “Beware of the scribes who like to walk around in long robes, and like respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues, and places of honor at banquets. They are the ones who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers; these will receive greater condemnation.”

Which son? They no doubt mean Solomon, who is the best-remembered son of David, King of Judah and Israel. But when you examine what is said, it becomes evident that here, and in other examples, there is, apparently, a belief in Reincarnation, Jesus acknowledges the generosity of the old woman...the fact that she contributes more to the Temple, proportionately, than the others (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4).

...LUKE 21:1-4...And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw a certain poor widow putting in two small copper coins. And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put more in than all of them; for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on."

He ends by openly accusing the "law keepers" of doing vicious acts against humanity, and of the fate awaiting them, because of their acts (Matthew 23:13-39).

...MATTHEW 23:13-16,23-25,27-29,33,36-39... "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do allow those who are entering to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated'..." Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law; justice and mercy and faithfulness; but those are things you should have done without neglecting the others.

You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence” ...
”Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are the whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men’s bones and uncleanness. Even so you too appear outwardly righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness” ... ”You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?” ... ”Truly I say to you, all these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers a chick under her wings, and you were unwilling. Behold, your house is being left to you desolate! For I say to you, from now on you shall not see Me until you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

(Note: In the Apostle Paul’s confrontation with the Sanhedrin in the temple, he refers to the chief priest as a “whitewashed wall” ... reminiscent of what Jesus says about “whitewashed tombs” (Acts 23:1-3).)

...ACTS 23:1-3...And when Paul, looking at the Council, said, “Brethren I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience up to this day.” And the high priest, Ananias commanded those standing

beside him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! And do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law, order me to be struck?"

(Note: Again refer to Acts and we read of the martyrdom of Stephen, the first prophet of the New Covenant...who was stoned to death, as prophesied by Jesus above, "and stones those who are sent to her" (Acts 7:58-60).)

...ACTS 7:58-60...And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul (later St Paul). And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep.

Even though Jesus performs signs and miracles, the people still do not believe that he is the Messiah (John 12:37).

...JOHN 12:37...But though He had performed so many miracles before them, yet they were not believing in Him.

On his way out of the Temple area he tells everyone of how the temple would be destroyed (Matthew 24:1,2; Mark 13:1,2; Luke 21:5,6).

...MARK 13:1,2...And as He was going out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, "Teacher, behold what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left upon another which will not be torn down."

Then he leaves Jerusalem and takes refuge on the Mount of Olive. He spends the night with his disciples talking about the signs to look for at the "end of the age", and how the Kingdom of Heaven will come to earth (Matthew 24:3-31; Mark:13:3-37; Luke 21:7-36).

...MATTHEW 24:3-7,9,14,15,20-24,29-31...And as He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered and said to them, "See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and will mislead many. And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of war; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes"... "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name"... "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the

nations, and then the end shall come. Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF THE DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand) "... " But pray your flight may not be in the winter or on a Sabbath; for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short. Then if any one says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ', or 'There He is', do not believe him. For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect" ... "But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the POWERS OF THE HEAVENS WILL BE SHAKEN, and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. And He will send forth His angels WITH A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER HIS ELECT FROM THE FOUR WINDS, FROM ONE END OF THE SKY TO THE OTHER."

And he gives his disciples a number of parables explaining the necessity of being prepared for the kingdom

of heaven and the arrival of the Christ, and he tells of how the faithful will be rewarded (Mark 13:34-37;Matthew 25:1-46).

...MARK 13:34-37... "It is like a man, away on a journey, who upon leaving his house and putting his slaves in charge, assigning to each one his task, also commanded the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether in the evening, at midnight, at cockcrow, or in the morning—lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you, I say to all, 'Be on the alert!'

...MATTHEW 25:34-40... "Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you, who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me' ... "And the king will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me'."

He, literally, hides himself from others after dark, so that he can instruct his disciples in greater detail, undisturbed; and so as to be out of sight of the “law keepers”, during the hours when there is the most danger of being captured. The

fourth day ends on the Mount of Olives. This is the procedure that he follows for the next two days...Teach in the Temple during daylight hours and return after sunset to the Mount of Olives to give detailed teachings to his disciples. This leads to the second day before the Passover (Matthew 26:1,2; Mark 14:1; Luke 22:1).

...MATTHEW 26:1,2...And it came about that when Jesus had finished all these words, He said to His disciples, "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion."

It is at this time that the chief priests and scribes, including the high priest Caiphas, plot in earnest, to arrest Jesus. But they want to avoid doing so, during the Festival, to prevent the people from rioting (Matthew 26:3-5; Mark 14:1,2; Luke 22:2).

...MATTHEW 26:3-5...Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiphas; and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill Him. But they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people."

In Bethany, at the home of Simon the Leper, a woman anoints him with precious ointments. A number of his disciples complain of the waste. Jesus reprimands them, reminding them that her beautiful "work" would go toward

his burial; and her act will be known throughout the world (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9).

...MARK 14:3-9...And while He was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, and reclining at table, there came a woman with an alabaster vial of costly perfume of pure nard (abbreviated form of spikenard...mentioned earlier); and she broke the vial and poured it over His head. But some (Matthew says they were disciples) were indignantly remarking to one another, "For what purpose has this perfume been wasted? For this perfume might have been sold for three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her. But Jesus said, "Let her alone, why do you bother her? She has done a good deed to Me. For the poor you always have with you, and whenever you wish, you can do them good; but you do not always have Me. She has done what she could; she has anointed My body beforehand for the burial. And truly I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, that also which this woman has done shall be spoken of in memory of her."

(Note: Jesus takes this opportunity to chide them about how they can care for the poor, anytime they want to...just make the effort.)

It is at this time that Judas Iscariot becomes directly involved in the plot to seize Jesus...to betray him (Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10,11; Luke 22:3-6).

...MARK 14:10,11...And Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went off to the chief priests, in order to betray Him to them. And they were glad when they heard this, and promised to give him money. And he began seeking out a time that he could betray Him at an opportune time.

In Matthew 26:15, it says “...And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver.”

Judas Iscariot was so called to distinguish him from all the other Judas’ in the land. Judas Iscariot signified that his family was originally from Kerioth, a town located in the southern part of Judea.

Many reasons have been given for Judas’ betrayal. Some say that he was just naturally evil and never loyal to Jesus. Luke relates that he is possessed by Satan. John says the devil put it in his heart to betray Jesus (Luke 22:3; John 13:2).

...LUKE 22:3...And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

...JOHN 13:2...And during supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him.”

Judas Iscariot was a zealot...a Jewish patriot/terrorist. There are those who think he has become disillusioned with Jesus, like many of the people, because he would not lead the uprising against Rome, and wants to repay him for being

disillusioned. Some believe he feels betrayed, because Jesus wants to do away with the old ways. Others say he betrays Jesus, because he wants to force Jesus' hand. He wants to make Him declare Himself king, taking action in the meantime to save Himself; then establish his kingdom, and destroy the Romans.

I favor the last reason. But no matter why, he is God's instrument used to bring about the death of His son. Jesus knows that Judas Iscariot will betray him (John 13:21-26).

...JOHN 13:21, 24-26...When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray me" ...Simon Peter therefore gestured to him (John), and said, speaking to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." He, leaning back thus on Jesus' breast, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus therefore answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

The first day of the Week of the Passover is the day of unleavened bread, the Feast of the Passover. Three of the gospels describe the preparations that day. The Feast is to be held in the evening of the following day, in the "upper room" (Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13).

...MATTHEW 26:17-19...Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus,

saying, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, “The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.” And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

ILLUSTRATIONS:
Albrecht Durer



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Small Passion -- CHRIST'S ENTRY into JERUSALEM

1) Christ's Entry into Jerusalem



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Small Passion -- CHRIST DRIVING the MONEY CHANGERS from the TEMPLE

2) Christ Driving the Money Changers from the Temple



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Large Passion -- CRUCIFIXION

3) Crucifixion



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Large Passion -- LAMENTATION

4) Lamentation



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Large Passion -- RESURRECTION

5) Resurrection

VIII

PASSOVER FEAST

All four gospels come together, again, for the Feast of the Passover and that evening is covered in detail...this is also the first sabbath day of the festival. There is a foreboding of what's to come. The washing of feet is symbolic of how the master should treat those subordinate to him, and how his disciples should treat each other (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:14-38; John 13).

...JOHN 13:1,3-9,12,14,16,17...Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end...Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God, rose from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towell, girded Himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. And so He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him,

“What I do you do not realize now; but you shall understand hereafter.” Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part of Me.” Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head “...And so when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?” ...”If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” ...”Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master; neither is the one who was sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed, if you do them.”

Again brash Peter speaks without thinking. Jesus is his Master and it’s not proper that he should allow him to “debase” himself, but look how quickly he recovers and volunteers to a full body-wash. Another example of Peter’s slavish acceptance, but misunderstanding, of what his role is in relation to Jesus.

All four gospels bring out the fact that Jesus informs his disciples that someone will betray him. John tells of Judas’ departure to fulfill his role in the divine plan (Matthew 26: 21-25; Luke 22: 21-23; John 13: 18-32; Psalm 41: 1).

...JOHN 13: 18-32...”I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, ‘HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.’ From now on

I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. Truly, truly I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent me.” When Jesus said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, “Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me.” The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. There was reclining on Jesus’ breast one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore gestured to him, and said to him, “Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.” He leaning back thus on Jesus’ breast, said to Him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus therefore answered, “That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.” So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him, Jesus therefore said to him, “What you do, do quickly”. Now no one of those reclining at table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we need of for the feast”; or else that he should give something to the poor. And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately into the night. When therefore he had gone out, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of God glorified, and God is glorified in Him; if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately.”

...PSALM 41:9...Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.

(Note: It's almost like Jesus...the Protagonist is staging this event, wherein Judas...the Antagonist becomes the villain, and the supporting players...the twelve disciples are witness to his "treachery." A nice piece of "business" with the morsel of bread. Is this staged so that those present will bear witness that it satisfies the prophecy?

And when he says, "Now is the Son of God glorified etc.," he means that the "wheels" have been set in motion towards his ultimate sacrifice.

In Da Vinci's painting, they are seated at the table, whereas the bible states that, in the custom of the day, they are "reclining at table"...artistic license. Some say that Judas is on the right of Jesus...black hair, blue robe. I don't believe it, because the morsel of bread is on Jesus' left. I believe Judas sits on his immediate left and is looking down at the bread.)

In subsequent verses the symbolic importance of the "bread" and "wine" is related. It is felt by many that these become symbols of the "new" covenant...the "body" and "blood" of Jesus, who would soon be sacrificed for the sins of all mankind, taking the place of the lamb that is the usual Passover sacrifice (Matthew 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20).

...LUKE 22:17-20...And having taken a cup, when He had given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it

among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And having taken some bread, when He had given thanks, He broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” And in the same way He took the cup, after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant of My blood.”

The new covenant sacrifice is a radical departure from the old covenant, when creatures were sacrificed, because only the flesh was offered. The blood was drained before the sacrifice and poured on to the ground, thus passing into Hades...the unknown. (Deuteronomy 12:16 “...Only you shall not eat the blood; you are to pour it out on the ground like water”). This was done because the blood is the “soul” which belongs to God.

When he drinks and offers the wine/blood Jesus is saying that the blood is now to be a part of the sacrifice. His soul is to be within us.

I also believe that, as with many things he did, the wine and bread were symbols. When he refers to the wine and the bread, he is proposing as a toast that the wine and bread should be thought of as something similar to his blood and flesh. He did not intend that his proposal be accepted as the actual partaking of his blood and flesh. I believe, further, that he intends these symbols to be used as remembrances of his sacrifice. And following his crucifixion, when sacrifices would be required by law, this would be the way that they should be observed...rather than sacrificing animals.

This new covenant represents one more threat to the established hierarchy.

That night during the meal, several of the disciples contend with one another about who would be the “greatest” among them. Jesus reminds them that the “greatest” will be the ones who serve, and he tells them of their future as judges of the twelve tribes...in the Kingdom of Heaven (Luke 22:24-30).

...LUKE 22:24-30...And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors’. But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. And you are those who have stood by me in my trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom, and you will sit on the thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel...”

Jesus tells them that they will be the ones to bring the news of the coming kingdom after he has gone, and be scattered throughout the world. And that this time they are to carry swords. They sing hymns and then depart, once again, for the Mount of Olives (Matthew 26: 30; Mark 14:26; Luke 22:35-39).

...LUKE 22:35-37...And He said to them, “When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack for anything, did you?” And they said, “No, nothing.” And He said to them, “But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one. For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘And He was classed among criminals; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.’”

...MATTHEW 26:30...And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

John goes into greater detail about the role Jesus would play and that of the disciples. He reminds them that he is “the way”, and they are to follow, and that they will be able to do anything in his name. He says that after he is gone, the Great Comforter, the Helper (God’s spirit) will abide in them (John 14).

John 14:1,2,5,6,8,10,13,16,18,26,30...”Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I am going to prepare a place for you”...Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; how do we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me”...Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us”... “Do you not believe that I am

in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father will be glorified in the Son” ... “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him, because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you” ... But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” ... “I will not speak much more with you, for the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.”

When Jesus says that the Helper, the Spirit of Truth abides with them, he is referring to himself. Jesus is filled with the “Spirit”. It is necessary for him to leave, so that the Helper will be free to distribute itself throughout the disciples. Because the Holy Spirit works through him, he will return to them in that guise and not “leave them orphans.”

He tells them that he is the “vine”, the Father is the “vinedresser”, and they are his “fruit”. They are no longer

“slaves”, but “friends”, because everything has been made known to them. What they do, they do for his sake, and the world will hate them for it. He again reminds them that he will send the Helper to assist them (John 15).

...JOHN 15: 1,5,8,15,18, 23-27... “I am the true vine and the Father is the vinedresser” ... “I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing” ... “By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples” ... “No longer do I call you slaves; for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you” ... “If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you” ... “He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause’. When the Helper comes whom I will send to you through the Father, that is the spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you will bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning.”

He reminds them that he is going soon and that they will stay behind and carry on his work, and the “Helper” will

guide them. They will be outcasts, and eventually killed by those who think they are doing God's work. The disciples are confused about what he means by "going", but then he makes it plain to them that he is to die and then live in glory (John 16).

...JOHN 16:2,5,13,17,19,28-30,33... "They will make you outcasts from the synagogue; but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God" ... "But now I am going to Him who sent me; and none of you asks Me, "Where are You going" ... "But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" ...Some of His disciples therefore said to one another, "What is this thing He is telling us, 'A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'Because I go to the Father'?" ...Jesus knew what they wished to question Him, and He said to them, "Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, 'A little while, and you will not behold Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me'?" ... "I came forth from the Father, and have come into the world; I am leaving the world again, and going to the Father." His disciples said, "Lo, now You are speaking plainly, and are not using a figure of speech. Now we know that You know all things, and have no need for anyone to question You; by this we believe that You came from God" ... "These

things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”

In this chapter, Jesus makes it clear that the Spirit of Truth...the “Holy Ghost” speaks the words that are given Him from God, the Father. The Spirit of Truth is the voice of God...that speaks through your conscience.

His prayer to the Father is one beseeching Him to look after his disciples, after he is gone; and to glorify him (Jesus) together with himself (God) (John 17).

...JOHN 17:1,2,9-11,14,15,20-22,25,26... “These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said, “Father, the hour has come; glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee, even as Thou gavest Him authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life” ...”I ask on their behalf, I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine; and all things that are Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I have been glorified in them. And I am no more in the world; and yet they themselves are in the world, and I come to Thee, Holy Father, keep them in Thy name, the name which Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, even as We are” ... “I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one” ... “I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for

those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me. And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given to them; that they may be one, just as We are one” ... “O righteous Father, although the world has not known Thee; and these have known that Thou didst send Me; and I have made Thy name known to them, and will make it known; that the love wherewith thou didst love Me may be in them, and I in them.”

He tells the disciples that they will “fall away from him”; and despite protestations to the contrary, Jesus prophesies that Peter will deny him three times, before the dawn (cock’s crow). All gospels are in agreement that Peter will deny him (Matthew 26:31-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-34; John 13:36-38).

...MARK 14:27,29-31...And Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away, because it is written, ‘I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered’...But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away, yet I will not.” And Jesus said to Him, “Truly I say to you, that you yourself this very night, before a cock crows twice, shall three times deny me.” But Peter kept saying insistently, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” And they were all saying the same thing, too.

(Note: The Church of St. Peter In Gallicantu (cock crow) on Mt. Zion (citadel) in Jerusalem is purportedly built on the spot where Peter denied Jesus. In the morning you can hear the resident roosters crow to greet the dawn.)

They come to the garden of Gethsemane (oil press) that night, while it is still early in the third day of the Passover (Matthew 26:36; Mark 14:32; John 18:1).

...MATTHEW 26:36...Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

The garden is somewhere on the forward slope of the Mount of Olives. By its name, it is evidently a garden that contains olive trees and a press for olive oil. In all probability it is the refuge that Jesus uses on the Mount of Olives, beginning on the fourth night before the Passover week. It is the location that Judas would expect to find Jesus, when he brings the priests to take him prisoner (Luke 22:39; John 18:2).

...LUKE 22:39,40...And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him.

...JOHN 18:2...Now Judas also, who was betraying Him, knew the place; for Jesus had often met there with His disciples.

The site chosen for Gethsemane's location today, is a well-tended garden, just to the east of the bridge that crosses the Kidron ravine. It is well down the slope of the mount, in an angle made by the road and the rock path going up the hill. John mentions the "Kidron" (John 18:1).

...JOHN 18:1...When Jesus had spoken these words, He went forth with His disciples over the ravine of the Kidron, where there was a garden, into which He entered, and His disciples.

In the garden Jesus prays that, if it is the Father's will, the "cup" be taken away from him...that he not be crucified. He is praying for the strength to undergo what is to come. In Luke we read of his praying so intently that he sweats blood. An angel comforts him. This is evidently early in the morning of the second day of Passover, because, even though he asks his disciples to stay awake, he has to awaken them twice...Matthew says three times (Matthew 26:39-46; Mark 14:35-42; Luke 22:41-46).

...MATTHEW 26:39,40,42-45...And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, "So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour?"...He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Thy will be done." And He came back

and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. Then He came to the disciples, and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners...”

...LUKE 22:43,44...Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

Jesus knows that it is God’s intention and desire that he be sacrificed for the good of mankind. Yet, he displays his “humanness” in beseeching God to save him from such a horrendous undertaking. Human indeed.

I make a conscious effort to emphasize his “humanness” in my play. I will give you one example, which many have said is the most poignant moment in the play. The crucifixion scene has yet to be played, and emphasis has been made on the fact that my play captures the passion of the crucifixion...it is the highlight of the play. Visualize this...I make what I call a “fake exit” to enhance the suspense, then turn to the audience, sensing what they are thinking and say,

“You are troubled at my going, knowing my journey will end in Jerusalem...Please do not be, it was foreordained...it is not my will, but the will of He who sent me. If it were left

to me—(I scan the audience seeking a woman with child, then deliver direct to her) You must know what this life means to me...How special to hold the child...smell the flowers...climb the hills...be with those you love. Is it any less precious to me? (Sit) but, it is time for the Passover lamb to be sacrificed...Salvation comes when my blood—(Now I assume a trance-like state, rising and sitting on the back of the chair, and “ascend the cross”).

Judas, together with priests, scribes, elders, slaves, and guards, comes into the garden. Jesus is seized. The disciples prepare to fight for him. Peter cuts off the ear of a slave named Malchus (counselor), and Jesus heals him. He stops them from defending him. He questions the use of force to take him prisoner...but then says it must be done, again so as to fulfill the prophecies (Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-49; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:3-12).

...MARK 14:43-49...And immediately while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, came up, accompanied by a multitude with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now he who was betraying Him had given them a signal, saying, “Whomever I shall kiss, He is the one; seize Him, and lead Him away under guard.” And after coming, he immediately went up to Him, saying, “Rabbi!” and kissed Him. And they laid hands on Him, and seized Him. But a certain one of those who stood by (John says Peter) drew his sword and struck the slave (Malchus) of the high priest, cutting off his ear (Luke says “He (Jesus) touched his ear and healed him”).

And Jesus answered said to them, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me, as though I was a robber? Every day I was with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me; but this has happened that the scriptures might be fulfilled.”

In this episode, I find great fascination in two ways.

It is obvious by the fact that Judas kissed Jesus, in order to identify him, that Jesus appears no different than any of his disciples. In no way would his outward appearance betray him!

We think of the disciples as mild-mannered men. We forget that they are men used to living out of doors, facing the elements, guarding against predators, animal and human. They are armed with swords, which some of them know how to use. They are prepared to defend their master. Indeed, Peter attacks one of them. As an ex-military man I derive satisfaction in this knowledge. Of course Peter’s aim is not very good, or else the man moved at the last moment.

One of the scriptures referred to above (Isaiah 53:7).

...ISAIAH 53:7...He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth.

IX

INTERROGATIONS

His disciples run away as prophesied in Isaiah (salvation of Jehova). John says that Jesus is escorted to Anas/Ananias (yah has been gracious), father-in-law of Caiphas (depression) the current high priest. Matthew, Mark, and Luke say that he is brought to the high priest (Isaiah 53:6; Matthew 26:56,57; Mark 14:50-53; Luke 22:54; John 18:12,13).

...ISAIAH...53: 6...All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned his own way...

...JOHN18:12,13...So the Roman cohort and the commander, and the officer of the Jews, arrested Jesus and bound Him, and led Him to Annas first; for he was father-in-law of Caiphas, who was high priest that year.

I choose John's account. Not only because he was there, but because it makes sense that, in deference to his father-in-law, Caiphas would let him interrogate Jesus first.

He is questioned by Anas. Jesus is struck the first time for his insolence, and then sent to Caiphas (John 18:19,24).

...JOHN 18:19,21-24...The high priest therefore questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching... "Why do you question Me? Question those who have heard what I have spoke to them; behold, these know what I said." And when He had said this, one of the officers standing by gave Jesus a blow, saying, "Is that the way You answer the high priest?" Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken wrongly, bear witness of the wrong; but if rightly, why do you strike Me?" Annas therefore sent him bound to Caiphas the high priest.

A word about the priests of the temple. Their duties are to minister the sanctuary, by conducting the ceremonies and the sacrifices. During the time of Jesus, the "chief priests" are the present "high" priest (leader over all priests and their activities), former "high" priests, and male members of the families of "high" priests. The ruler of Judea selects the high priests. Caiphas was selected by Pontius Pilate's predecessor, Valerius Gratus (B-15-134). Peter denies Jesus three times. Luke says Jesus sees Peter, just after the first cock-crow. John says that another disciple, probably John but not stated, accompanies Peter. At any rate, whoever the disciple is, he is known by the high priest, because he is allowed into the court of the high priest, where the interrogation takes place (Matthew 26:58,69-75;Mark 14:54,66-72;Luke 22:54-62;John 18:15-17,25-27).

...MARK...14:54,66-72....And Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest;

and he was sitting with the officers and warming himself by the fire...And as Peter was in the courtyard, one of the servant-girls of the high priest came, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked at him, and said, "You, too, were with Jesus the Nazarene." But he denied it, saying, "I neither know nor understand what you are talking about." And he went out onto the porch. And the maid saw him, and began to say once more to the bystanders, "This is one of them!" But again he was denying it. And after a little while the bystanders were again saying to Peter, "Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean too." But he began to curse and swear, "I do not know this fellow you are talking about!" And immediately a cock crowed a second time. And Peter remembered how Jesus had made the remark to him, 'Before a cock crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And he began to weep.

I can't help but feel that what Peter does is all too human. In order to realize why he did what he did, you have to put yourself in his sandals. He is surrounded by officers and the air is charged with excitement. A "dangerous criminal" has been captured. They are looking for blood and would no doubt seize anyone connected with this "criminal". Besides, it takes the grace of God to face danger, heroically; and Jesus told Peter that he would deny him...Peter has no choice but do do so.

I think that it's interesting too, that Peter resorts to curses and swearing in order to disassociate himself from Jesus. As a fisherman, he probably has occasion to swear and curse on

a recurring basis, dealing with the sea and the elements. He probably is capable of “swearing like a sailor”.

There is another thing to consider. True, Peter denies Jesus, but at least he follows him. The others, with the exception of one unnamed disciple (John?), run away.

Apparently there is something about “Galileans” that make them different from others, because the bystanders recognize Peter as a Galilean. Maybe it is the way they dress, or their manner...Matthew says it is the way they talk (Matthew 26:73).

...MATTHEW 26:73...And a little later the bystander came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are one of them; for the way you talk gives you away.”

It is the evening of the third day of Passover week.

The chief priests and elders, including members of the Sanhedrin, overseen by Caiphas, interrogate Jesus in Caiphas’ home. They attempt to get Jesus to say something that will condemn him...false witnesses testify. He is beaten (Matthew 26:59-62; Mark 14:55-59; Luke 22:63).

...MARK 14:55,56...Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain testimony against Jesus to put Him to death; and they were finding none. For many were giving false testimony against Him, and yet their testimony was not consistent.

...LUKE 22:63...And the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him, and beating Him.

Jesus remains silent until he is asked if he is the Christ, the son of God. When he answers in the affirmative, Caiphas tears his garments and accuses him of blasphemy. All condemn Jesus to death. They mock him, and beat him again, with their fists and rods (Matthew 26:63-68; Mark 14:61-65).

...MARK 14:61-65...But He kept silent, and made no answer. Again the high priest was questioning him, and saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" And Jesus said, "I am; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." And tearing the clothes, the high priest said, "What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?" And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. And some began to spit at Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, with their fists, and to say to Him, "Prophecy!" And the officers received Him with slaps in the face.

The interrogation at the house of Caiphas, before the "law keepers", lasts throughout the hours of darkness. At dawn of the second day, they decide to send Jesus to Pontious Pilate (marine armed with a javelin) .

But first they take Jesus to the Sanhedrin (to the meeting place where they assemble), where they seek to confirm Jesus' blasphemy before all of its members. Again he is challenged to confirm whether he is the Son of God, and he answers the challenge (Matthew 27:1; Mark 15:1; Luke 22:66-71).

...LUKE 22:66-68,70,71...And when it was day, the Council of the Elders of the people (Sanhedrin) assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chambers, saying, "If You are the Christ, tell us." But he said to them, "If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask a question, you will not answer"..." And they all said, "Are You the Son of God, then?" And He said to them, "Yes, I am." And they said, "What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.

It is generally believed that the Sanhedrin meets in council to try people in the court of the Temple, itself. Where is not known, but it would not be in the sanctuary. It is not conducted out of doors, so that the trial can be controlled without outside interference. It is probably conducted in one of the Temple's inner rooms..."council chambers".

Josephus refers to council meetings held outside the Temple area, between the west wall of the Temple mount and the inner wall of Jerusalem (B-11-552). But at that time the Pharisees had wrested control from the Saducees and may not have allowed secular meetings within the confines of the Temple building itself.

They take him from the Sanhedrin to the Praetorium, which is used as the hall of judgement by Pilate. The "law keepers" do not enter the Praetorium, because they will be defiled if they do (Matthew 27:1,2; Mark 15:1; Luke 23:1; John 18:28).

...John 18:28...They led Jesus therefore from Caiphass into the Praetorium; and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.

We read of Judas' reaction to having betrayed Jesus. He throws away the thirty pieces of silver and hangs himself on a tree. The priests purchase "potter's field" with the "thirty pieces of silver". It is also emphasized that this occurs so "that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled" (Matthew 27:3-10).

...MATTHEW 27:3-7, 9, 10...Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He was condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers"... "Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled, saying, 'AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SENT BY THE SONS OF ISRAEL; AND THEY GAVE

THEM FOR THE POTTER'S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME".

(Note: Matthew may have quoted what Jeremiah may have “spoken”, but it’s not in the Book of Jeremiah currently in the Bible. The only mention of “shekels” in Jeremiah is found in Jeremiah 32:9...and has nothing to do with this” I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver”. The closest “quote” related to this (Zechariah 11:12,13.)

...ZECHARIAH 11:12,13...And I said to them, “If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not never mind!” So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, “Throw to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.” So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

The reason for Judas becoming remorseful puzzles me. He has to know that Jesus will be condemned, and that the chief priests and elders will do anything to ensure this. If, on the other hand, Judas’ reason for betrayal is to force Jesus’ hand, and declare himself king; then his reason for remorse is clear. There’s another possibility, as well, that Jesus and Judas are in cahoots. They plan together how Jesus can be captured. He could easily turn himself in, but then that wouldn’t “fulfill the prophecies”(there it is again). Another interpretation of Judas’ role in this, found in Mark 14:44 (B-3-130), is that Judas “had given him up”. Now, that’s far different than “betraying him”. But in “giving him up”, in

the original plan, maybe Jesus didn't reveal everything. Or maybe Judas knows what's to come, but kills himself anyway, because of the unyielding remorse over the part he is forced to play.

According to Matthew 26:24, mentioned earlier during the "last supper", he said "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" which could have foretold the reason for taking his life.

In any event, we know that he didn't do it for the money.

I can "see" Judas taking the 30 pieces of silver and flinging it into the Temple sanctuary, scattering the coins all over in a fit of remorse and rage. There are some who believe that the tree on which Judas hangs himself is in "potter's field". I include myself in this group.

All four gospels are reconciled once again, when Jesus is questioned by Pilate. When Pilate asks why the priests don't judge him themselves, they say they are unable to "put him to death". Pilate questions him about being King of the Jews and Jesus tells him that he is. Pilate seems uncertain about Jesus' guilt and even comes to admire him. The "law keepers" keep pressing him to do "something" about Jesus. (Matthew 27:11-14; Mark 15:2-5; Luke 23:2-5; John 18:29-38).

...LUKE 23:2-5...And they began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, and king" and Pilate asked Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" and He answered him and said, "It is as you say." And Pilate

said to the chief priest and the multitudes, "I find no guilt in this man." But they kept on insisting, "he stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee, even as far as this place."

We see that the "law keepers" are not above lying in order to accomplish their purpose, when they state that Jesus is forbidding the people to pay taxes to Caesar. He said that taxes should be paid. (Matthew 22:19-21).

...MATTHEW 22:19-21... "Show Me the coin used for the poll tax." And they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose likeness and inscription is this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." Then He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; And to God the things that are God's."

Luke tells us that Pilate sends Jesus to Herod to be disposed of when he hears that Jesus is from Galilee. Herod is in Jerusalem for the feast and Jesus comes under his jurisdiction. Herod is pleased that Pilate thinks of him and he is also pleased to be able to question Jesus, at long last. He questions him for some length, but despite questioning and abuses by his accusers, Jesus chooses to remain silent. He is mocked and ridiculed and a royal robe (purple) is placed over him...evidently intended to mock his claim as "king". Jesus is returned to Pilate for disposition. The other gospels omit any reference to this interrogation by Herod (Luke 23:6-11).

...LUKE 23:6-11...But when Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean. And when he learned that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him. And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing. And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently. And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate."

(Note: Herod's reason for wanting to see Jesus appears to be that he expects Jesus to put on a show for him, "perform signs". Jesus has too much class to provide a "pup and pony" show for the king.)

After this, Pilate and Herod, who were once enemies, become friends. This, no doubt, is because they show deference to one another as leaders (Luke 23:12).

...LUKE 23:12...Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another after that day; for before they had been at enmity with each other.

Herod's palace is just inside the western wall in the upper city. The location of the houses of Anas and Caiphas are not known, but they are probably close to the palace.

The location of where Pilate conducts his questioning is one much debated, but the gospels tell us that the questioning took place in the Praetorium (palace of the Praetor...chief civil magistrate of Roman colony). The problem lies in locating the Praetorium.

Some say it is located in the general vicinity of Herod's palace in the upper city, perhaps in the Caesarium...the building set aside by Herod for royal visitors. Keep in mind that Herod's palace is not occupied by him much of the year. His home is in Tiberias, and the palace in Jerusalem is used by him for special state visits to Jerusalem, and annual feasts.

Many favor the Antonia Fortress located north of and abutting the temple mount. Indeed, some of the remains of the foundation of the old Antonia Fortress are to be found in the Ecce Homo Convent on the Via Dolorosa.

During my stay at the Ecce Homo, I was awakened every morning at 4:00 A.M., on the dot, by the call to the faithful, blasting forth from the loudspeakers in the Mosque of Omar (Dome of the Rock), which now occupies the old temple mount. It was here that I met Denny McLouglin, an old soul from the northernmost part of County Donegal, in the Irish Republic; and Father Murphy, the kindly priest who took me with him on his annual walk of the Stations of the Cross

The Ecce Homo Convent is considered to be one of the Stations of the Cross of today, specifically the Lithostrostos (Greek)...Gabbatha (Aramaic)...a slab-stoned, hard-rock floor in the nether regions of the convent, on which it is believed that Jesus was sentenced by Pilate. I visited this place, near an old abandoned pool and saw what appears to

be games carved in the stone, but whether they occurred back then or later is not known. It had a forbidding feel to it.

So the interrogations take pace in four locations, beginning on the third day of Passover week...the house of Caiphas, the Sanhedrin, the Praetorium, and Herod's palace. Oh, we musn't forget the brief interrogation at the home of Anas, as well...perhaps five locations in all. The distance between locations doesn't really matter in determining total time spent in interrogation. After all the furthest distance from wall to wall is about 1600 meters. But there are hills to negotiate and winding roads.

We are not told how long it takes for interrogating. We know only that interrogations begin on the third day of Passover week in the evening, at the house of Anas, and continue during the morning hours of the same day at Caiphas' house. Luke says that Herod questions him at "some length". Considering that five separate interrogations may have been conducted, it is probable that they are well into the fourth day of Passover Week, when Jesus is questioned the second time by Pilate. Or it might have been the fifth day...and he is sentenced on the sixth day.

X

SENTENCE

At the second interrogation by Pilate, he continues in his belief that Jesus is innocent of any crime, and says that is how Herod feels as well. He finishes by saying he'll punish him and release him (Luke 23:13-16).

...LUKE 23:13-16...And Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers of the people, and said to them, "You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges that you make against Him. No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him. I will therefore punish Him and release Him."

Pilate reminds the crowd of the custom of releasing a prisoner at the time of the Passover. His wife tries to influence him not to harm "that righteous man", because of her dream. Three of the gospels (Matthew, Mark, and John) agree that the crowd of Jews want Barabbas (son of the

master), a criminal, to be released from prison, not Jesus. The people, stirred up by the priests and elders, call for the release of Barabbas, and the crucifixion of Jesus, despite Pilate's continued assertion that Jesus has done nothing to warrant death. Luke reports that he tells the crowd three times that he has "found in Him no guilt demanding death" (Matthew 27:15-23; Mark 15:6-14; Luke 23:18-23; John 18:39,40).

...MATTHEW 27:15,17,19-23...Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the multitude any one prisoner whom they wanted...When therefore they were gathered together, Pilate asked them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas or Jesus who is called Christ?"...And while he was sitting on the judgement seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the multitude to ask for Barabbas, and to put Jesus to death. But the governor answered and said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas". Pilate said to them, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let Him be crucified!"

Luke assures us that Pilate is hoping that the crowd will want to release Jesus and free him of the obligation of condemning a man he considers to be innocent. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that Pilate suspects that the priests

and elders are jealous of Jesus and that is why they want him put to death (Luke 23:20; Matthew 27:18, Mark 15:10) .

...LUKE 23:20...And Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again...

...MARK 15:10...For he (Pilate) was aware that the chief priests had delivered Him up because of envy...

Pilate proclaims himself innocent of Jesus' blood by the physical act of "washing his hands", and the people say his blood will be "on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:24,25).

...MATTHEW 27:24,25...And when Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the multitude, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." And all the people answered and said, "His blood be on us and on our children!"

Barabbas is set free. Jesus is stripped, scourged, beaten, reviled; and according to three of the gospels, it is then he is clothed in a purple robe and crowned with a thorn-wreath (Matthew 27:27-30; Mark 15:16-19; John 19:1-5).

(Note: Later, when Jesus cries out to God, he says, "Abba", so this "criminal", Bar-abbas, may not be what we consider a man who commits a crime, but rather he might be

a Zealot...a leader who has committed crimes against Rome, but a favorite of the people.)

...MATTHEW 27:27-30...Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort (a company consisting of 300-600 men) around him. And they stripped Him, and put a scarlet robe on Him. And after weaving a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they kneeled down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head.

(Note: There is some confusion between stories, in that earlier in Luke 23:11, he says Jesus receives the royal robe while being interrogated by Herod.)

The robe is removed after the acts of beating and mocking cease and replaced by Jesus' own clothes (Matthew 27:31; Mark 15:20).

...MARK 15:20...And after they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, and put His garments on Him...

John relates the activities in greater detail...more as a witness, starting with the "punishing" (scourging) of Jesus.

Apparently the interrogation takes place within the Praetorium, away from the view of the crowd, and then the actual sentencing is made outside on the street in front of the

crowd. It is there on the pavement, in front of the Praetorium (the Lithostrostos?) that Jesus is sentenced to be crucified.

John allows us to visualize specific activities that take place. The mock “crowning” of Jesus...The physical movement of Pilate. The account is essentially the same as the others, as far as the give and take with the crowd, and Pilate’s confusion. But, as will be covered later, it gives us a better understanding of what causes his confusion, the reaction to Jesus’ reply, and the goading of the Jews. And it is John who tells us that Pilate makes much of Jesus being the “King of the Jews”. It is here that he tells the Jews, “Behold the Man” (Ecce Homo). He uses another “time marker”, when he says “it was the day of preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour”, when he presents their king (John 19:1-15).

...JOHN 19:1-6...Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged Him. And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and arrayed Him in a purple robe; and they began to come up to Him, and say, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and to give Him blows in the face. And Pilate came out again, and said to them, “Behold I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.” Jesus therefore came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, “Behold the Man!” When therefore the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.”

The Jews continue to bait Pilate. They refer to the fact that Jesus claims to be the Son of God, which causes Pilate to be fearful. He goes back inside and questions Jesus further. When Jesus tells Pilate that he would have no authority over him, if it weren't received from God, Pilate again makes an effort to release him. His efforts to release Jesus are pitiful, almost as though he, the leader of the people, is pleading with them to accept his judgement. The "law keepers" try another ploy by reminding Pilate that if he releases a man who claims to be "king", he would not please Caesar...a veiled threat that this knowledge will be forwarded to Rome. It is then Pilate brings Jesus outside and presents their king to the Jews, and asks if their king should be crucified. They call for his crucifixion and claim only Caesar as their king (John 7-15).

...JOHN 19:7-15...The Jews answered him, "We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God." When Pilate therefore heard this statement, he was the more afraid; and he entered into the Praetorium again, and said to Jesus, "Where are You from?" But Jesus gave no answer. Pilate therefore said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You know that I have authority to release You?, and I have authority to crucify You?" Jesus answered, "You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given from above; for this reason he who delivered Me up to you has the greater sin." As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out, saying, "If you release this

Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be king opposes Caesar.” When Pilate therefore heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgement seat at a place called the pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha (Aramaic)...(Greek Lithostroton). Now it was the day of the preparation of the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your king!” They therefore cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your king?” The chief priests answered him, “We have no king but Caesar.”

(Note: It would appear by Pilate’s reaction to Jesus’ response about Pilate’s “authority” that he senses that Jesus is something besides just a “good man”, an “innocent”. It seems as though he fears the personal consequences of condemning Jesus.)

The moment is at hand...the moment of decision, and Pilate decides to acquiesce to the crowd’s demands and crucify Jesus (Matthew 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:24; John 19:16).

...JOHN 19:16...And so he then delivered Him up to be crucified.

Why? Why does this man of authority with the power of Rome at his beck and call, knuckle under to this unruly crowd? Why, despite his own feelings and the warnings of his wife, does he crucify an innocent man and release a known criminal? The reasons are complex and in no way

exonerate Pilate for his actions, but may tend to explain why he makes this terrible, world-shattering decision.

It is easy to say that Pilate is a weak, vacillating man, which he is, but it goes further. He is also fearful that the tense situation that exists in Judea will be made worse if he frees Jesus. He would gain the enmity of the “law keepers” who so successfully influence the common man. He may not like, nor understand the fact, that religious men have such control over the people, but he is practical enough to accept the fact that they do. And he will not deliberately court their enmity. He is afraid, as well, that Caesar (Claudius) might consider this an affront to his person if he releases a man who claims to be king.

The Zealots never stop stirring up the people to rise up and throw off the yoke of Rome. Matthew says in the above paragraph “that a riot was starting”, and Pilate would want to defuse the cause of that near riot. And if he doesn’t, this may be the spark that the Zealots will use to start a revolution.

Another reason could be that he believes the priests do indeed represent the will of the people. So, Pilate acquiesces to their outspoken demands.

Finally, and most importantly, it is because God wills it. Regardless of how Pilate might want to defend his convictions, he is not able to so. Jesus makes us aware of this when he reminds Pilate that he would have no authority over him, if it had not been given “from above”. So God is the ultimate authority, and it is His decision that His Son is to be crucified. God wills that Pilate makes this fateful decision. He is an “instrument” of God’s design, just as Judas Iscariot is.

This is done, in a manner similar to the way Pharaoh was used as an “instrument” to allow Israel’s exodus from Egypt.

Moses had originally asked Pharaoh for permission for the entire tribe of Israel to go into the wilderness, to the holy mountain, to just worship for three days and nights. Despite repeated entreaties, Pharaoh said “no”. But before he said “no”, each time he appeared ready to agree to Moses’ condition; but then the Lord “hardened Pharaoh’s heart” (Exodus 10:27).

...EXODUS 10:27...But the Lord hardened Pharaoh’s heart and would not let them go.

So God brought the final, ultimate tragedy to Egypt, with the death of their first-born children and then Pharaoh ordered Israel to leave. And Moses seized this opportunity to leave forever (Exodus 12:31).

...EXODUS 12:31...Then he (Pharaoh) called for Moses and Aaron at night and said, “Rise up, get out from among my people, both you and the sons of Israel...”

Now, Pilate may have “washed his hands” of Jesus’ crucifixion, but history does not let him off that easily. He stands accused by mankind of being the murderer of Jesus. The Jews in the crowd may have accepted the responsibility, but they are not so stigmatized. Even though the Jews are willing to accept responsibility for his crucifixion, nevertheless, they do not have the authority and, therefore,

are not responsible. Even though the Jews are not responsible for his death, they are, according to Jesus, responsible for the “greater sin” of delivering him up for judgement.

And even though the crowd says that Jesus’ blood will be on their children, according to Matthew, God does not punish the “sons” for the “fathers”, that is to say, the Jews of subsequent generations should not be held accountable for the actions of their ancestors. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the slaughter of many thousands, including the “children”, by the Romans subsequently, was; however, no doubt due to the fact that the Jews surrendered their king to be killed.

Again, John uses a “time marker” to let us know when Jesus is sentenced, when he says, “...And it was in the preparation of the Passover and about the sixth hour...”

What does he mean by the sixth hour?

It is the sixth hour of the day, about noon...the day before the Festival Sabbath. The Jewish morning begins at 6:00AM.

During the Passover week there are always at least two sabbaths. The first day of the week is celebrated as a sabbath, and so is the last day. Many times there are three sabbaths, during the Passover week...the first and last days, and any regular sabbath (Friday, sunset to Saturday, sunset) that might fall within the seven day period.

The Jews insisted that the execution of any of its citizens be completed prior to the Sabbath. According to custom and law, twenty four hours are required between the handling of a corpse for burial and the entering of the sanctuary. And as some of its citizens must accomplish burial rights for their

people, there had to be sufficient time to accomplish this task and still attend the sabbath service.

But which sabbath is approaching?

The first has already come and gone, with the eating of the Passover lamb in the upper room. The one for which they are preparing could be the final sabbath or the regular sabbath in between.

If the approaching sabbath is the regular one, then the resurrection of the Christ will occur at some day during the week. Most Christians hold with His resurrection occurring on the Sabbath, in keeping with the spiritual significance of the resurrection. The interpretation of the Sabbath, in this instance being Sunday...or it could have taken place on the Jewish Sabbath, as well.

In order for this to occur, the approaching sabbath will have to be the Festival Sabbath...the last day of the Passover week, with the regular sabbath occurring two days later. This also allows for the time (six days) spent interrogating.

After sentencing by Pilate, Jesus is imprisoned over night, in preparation for the crucifixion the next day. We can only wonder if they continue to persecute him during that period or if he is left alone to commune with the Father, in his agony. There is no record of what occurs during this period.

Before beginning the tortuous walk to and climb up the hill called Golgotha/Calvary (skull...Hebrew/Greek) for the crucifixion, let us examine in detail, the physical punishment inflicted on this Man of Innocence, during the five interrogations.

He has been beaten numerous times, with fists and clubs,

causing bruises, abrasions and great bodily pain, along with the flow of blood from wounds. It is said he was beaten with rods. This may well mean that he is beaten, in accordance with Jewish tradition...the customary “Forty blows, minus one”. Bruised, bloodied and battered, he is in great physical pain. And he is a man who possesses physical strength, as he is a carpenter by trade, accustomed to using his hands, and use to living out of doors. He is filled with great emotional torment, as well. Finally, at the conclusion of Pilate’s interrogation, we read that Jesus is “scourged”...in keeping with the prophecy of Isaiah 53:5 (again “the prophecy”).

...ISAIAH 3:5... ”But he was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.”

The act of scourging so weakens the body that life itself starts to drain away. The claim is that it may have been done with merciful intent, so as to quicken death by crucifixion. But I don’t see much mercy involved in whipping with a lash, designed to tear through the flesh, bringing excruciating pain, exposing the bone and marrow, draining the blood...sapping the very soul of the body. On second thought, when one reads of the agonies inflicted by crucifixion, it may well have been an act of “mercy”.

Filled with the Spirit of God, as he is, he might well call on the Spirit...the Great Comforter/Healer, to provide solace, heal his injuries but he cannot do this and accomplish the task assigned by the Father. Despite the pain and

suffering, there is no mention of his crying out, in acknowledgment of the pain, as was prophesied (Isaiah 53:7).

...ISAIAH 53:7...”He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth.”

The four gospels coincide, once again, with the walk to the hill of Golgotha for the crucifixion. The three synoptic gospels include the recruiting of Simon, the Cyrenean, to carry the “cross” of Jesus; whereas John states that Jesus carries the “cross” all the way to Golgotha. Luke amplifies the “walk”. He relates of how Jesus tells the women not to weep for him, but rather to weep for themselves and their children, intimating the calamitous times to come. He describes the crowd that follows Jesus. (Matthew 27:31-33; Mark 15:20-22; Luke 23:26-31; John 19:17,18).

...MATTHEW 27:31-33...And after they had mocked Him, they took His robe off and put His garments on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him. And as they were coming out, they found a certain Cyrenean named Simon; this man they pressed into service to bear the cross. And when they had come to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull...

Regarding the “cross” that is carried, our understanding of it is colored by the depictions of him dragging a large wooden vertical piece of wood with crossbar attached. I

believe the “cross” referred to is a single piece of wood that is used as the cross bar, that is attached to a tree or a stake permanently imbedded in the hill of Golgotha. As many crucifixions that are administered by the Romans, it is more probable that the instruments of torture would remain in place. This cross bar is heavy, sturdily constructed, so as to bear the weight of its victim, a monstrously cumbersome load to drag up to the hill of Golgotha, especially for a man so weakened by torture.

XI

CRUCIFIXION

CRUCIFIXION! What an ominous word. Never in the history of mankind, in all its infamy, has a means of death so despicable, so torturous, been devised, except maybe by the British “Drawing and quartering”. Many credit the Romans with developing this means of death, but they are not the originators. History credits the Persians with this “honor” (B-17-256). The Romans may have perfected its use, made it more diabolical, and employed it more often than any others; but I believe the act of crucifixion...affixing a body to a “tree” is as old as “nails”, themselves, or rope, for that matter. Oftentimes, crucifixion was accomplished by tying the victim to the “tree”. The Apostle Paul tells us in Galatians that hanging from a tree is a curse from time immemorial when he says, “it is written ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs from a tree’”...(Galatians 3:13).

...GALATIANS 3:13...Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs from a tree...’

In Deuteronomy 21:23, it says "...for he who is hanged is accursed of God."

...DEUTERONOMY 21:23... "his corpse shall not hang all night on the tree, but you shall surely bury him on the same day (for he who is hanged is accursed of God), so that you do not defile your land which the Lord your God gives you as an inheritance."

Why shameful, cursed?

Maybe the act, alone, is indicative of shame, for those who are crucified suffer contempt from the public...They are criminals. Jesus is, after all, crucified with two criminals (Matthew 27:38; Mark 15:27; Luke 23:32).

...MARK 15:27...And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on the right and one on the left.

Or, maybe it goes further.

The crucifixion depicted by artists, shows us a Jesus, with a cloth modestly covering his nakedness. But I believe those who are crucified are made to hang, unclothed...exposing themselves, naked, shamed before the world.

It is the custom of orthodox Jews to keep themselves modestly covered at all times. Members of the same sex, while bathing, take pains to conceal their nakedness. Public nakedness is the height of "shame". Moses is admonished by Jehovah, in building the altar, not to use steps, so that "...your nakedness may not be exposed on it." The need for modesty is decreed by God, Himself. So, I believe that the

crucified victim is “cursed” by the very fact that he is exposed in his nakedness (Exodus 20:26).

...EXODUS 20:26... 'And you shall not go up by steps to My altar, that your nakedness may not be exposed on it.'

Jesus, with no reason for shame, is shamed by the act itself, as he hangs naked upon the cross. But we are assured that “...Jesus despising the shame endured” (Hebrews 12:2).

...HEBREWS 12:2...fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Jews seeking signs, according to Paul, could therefore never accept a crucified Jesus as the Messiah “...Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block...” It is beyond the average Jew’s capability to accept that the Messiah...the enlightened One...the Savior of the World would allow Himself to be so shamefully treated. Paul explains how it could be so, by reminding us that “...God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.” And why? “So that no man could boast before God.” (1 Corinthians 1:22-29).

...1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-24,27-29...“For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but

we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God...but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things that are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.”

Let us examine the crucifixion itself. How is the crucifixion administered?

The physical act of crucifixion takes many forms. Some are strapped to the cross bar, others nailed to it. Some are crucified upside down...tradition holds that Peter was crucified in this manner, because he deemed himself unworthy to be crucified upright, as his Lord was. Tradition also says that Andrew was crucified on an “X” shaped cross...thus the Cross of St Andrew. Different trappings/coverings are sometimes added to the victim, such as animal skins, and then carnivorous animals are set loose on them. Others are covered with flammables and set afire (Nero was credited with doing this to the Christians). Sometimes a wooden rest is provided on which the victim can sit, or on which the feet can rest, which prolongs the agony and dying. At other times a blade, like a sword, is secured to a stake below the victim; so that when the victim collapses, he is impaled on the sword. There are countless variations, each more diabolical than the other.

Despite the variations used, the ultimate purpose of crucifixion is to cause its victim excruciating pain and death...Death comes from respiratory failure. The muscles become fatigued, due to extreme stress placed on them, in holding up the hanging body. It becomes progressively more difficult to exhale...carbon dioxide builds up and the victim dies from slow suffocation. Sometimes the legs are broken below the knees; and because he is unable to force himself upright, he suffocates more quickly. This is considered a merciful act.

History reveals that the normal method of crucifixion by Romans included the nailing of the arms at wrists and the legs at the ankles. I imagine that this is the way in which Jesus of Nazareth is crucified.

What about the actual crucifixion of Jesus...what happens?

The gospels state only that "He was crucified". The writers spare us the details of the crucifixion itself. They tell of the guards "casting lots" for his clothes. Jesus is offered a sedative to drink (Matthew says "vinegar" and "gall", and Mark, "wine" and "myrrh") which they say he refuses. But John says he "received the sour wine". Pilate has "King of the Jews" written on the board above his head, despite objections by the chief priests. John says "...it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek". The people and soldiers mock and jeer him. And Jesus is crucified with criminals...Mark tells us that he is crucified at the "third hour" (Matthew 27:33-38; Mark 15:23-28; Luke 23:33-38; John 19:19-24, 30).

...MARK 15:23-28...And they tried to give Him wine mixed with myrrh; but He did not take it. And they crucified Him, and divided up His garments amongst themselves, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take. And it was the third hour when they crucified Him. And the inscription of the charge against Him read, "THE KING OF THE JEWS?" And they crucified two robbers with Him, one on the right and one on the left. (Footnote states that verse 28 was added: And the scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was reckoned with transgressors').

The scripture referred to is from Isaiah "And (He) was numbered with the transgressors." David says, "They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots" (Isaiah 53:12; Psalm 22:18).

...ISAIAH 53:12...Because He poured out Himself to death and was numbered with the transgressor...

...PSALM 22:18...They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots.

I wondered for sometime why anyone would want his "garments", which would be bloody and covered with other bodily excretions. But then, I read somewhere that his robe-like undergarment was white and seamless and so, despite the condition of the robe, it is considered valuable, and that is why the soldiers cast lots for it. And, again, a thought, maybe Pilate put the "royal"/purple robe back on him to

remind the people further that he is a king, and that would have value.

It is the third hour after dawn...9:00 AM, the day before the final Passover Sabbath.

Apparently Pilate wants to make sure that all of Mankind knows who the man is that is being crucified, because he insists on having the sign “King of the Jews” spelled out in the principal languages of the day...the charge for which he is being crucified, affixed to the cross, despite vehement objections by the “law keepers”...risking their displeasure. I think that he sincerely believes that Jesus is their king. I believe further, that this is his way to attempt to atone for his role in the judgement of Jesus...a physical act of “washing his hands”. It is his way of saying that this man, their king, has been condemned by them, not him. And maybe because he believes that the crucifixion of Jesus is a terrible injustice against the man and, quite possibly against a deity.

Examining this further, it appears that Jesus has the right to be called king, based on his heritage. His lineage can be traced back to King David. It could well be that he is the only one with this pedigree, and a right to the crown (Matthew 1:6-16).

...MATTHEW 1:6-16...and to Jesse was born David the king. And to David was born Solomon by her who had been the wife of Uriah; and to Solomon was born Rehoboam; and to Rehoboam, Abijah; and to Abijah, Asa; and to Asa was born Jeosophat; and Jeosophat, Joram; and to Joram, Uzziah; and to Uzziah was born Jotham; and Jotham, Ahaz; and to Ahaz, Hezekiah;

and to Hezekiah was born Manasseh; and to Manasseh, Amon; and to Amon, Josiah; and to Josiah were born Jeconiah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon, to Jeconiah was born Shealtiel; and to Shealtiel, Zerubbabel; and to Zerubbabel was born Abiud; and to Abiud, Eliakim; and to Eliakim, Azor; and to Azor was born Zadok; and to Zadoc, Achim; and to Achim, Eliud; and to Eliud was born Eleazar; and to Eleazar, Matthan; and to Matthan, Jacob; and to Jacob was born Joseph, husband of Mary, by whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

The sedative (“vinegar”, “gall”, “wine”, or “myrrh”) offered him is intended to dull his senses, somewhat, from the pain. As mentioned, we read that there’s a difference of opinion as to whether he accepts or refuses the sedative. Maybe, according to John, the “sour wine”, contained in a sponge, is applied to his mouth, despite his refusal. He refuses to take it for the same reason he refuses to call on the Great Comforter to assuage his pain. Because the Father expects him to experience all of the pain and suffering meted out. “...And the good pleasure of the Lord will prosper in His hand, as a result of the anguish in His soul”...(Isaiah 53:10, 11).

...ISAIAH 53:10, 11...But the Lord was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the

Lord will prosper in His hand, as a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.

Since no details are provided of the actual crucifixion, itself...let us ascend the cross with Jesus of Nazareth. I mentioned previously that my play captures the passion of the crucifixion; and by acting out the agony of the experience for even a little over a minute I try to make the audience aware of His suffering...make them uncomfortable, distressed, if just for that moment in time.

On reaching the hill of Golgotha, Jesus is stripped of his garments, and forcibly placed on the ground...probably knocked down by one of the guards. We must always keep in mind that the guards are on exhibition, as well as the victims. Large crowds attend crucifixions. It is a very real form of entertainment for the masses, similar to the hangings in the "old west" in America, the guillotine in France, the beheadings in England, the flaming pyres of the Inquisition, and so on. So the guards are performing before the public, and they would not want to be viewed as less than zealous in the performance of their duties.

Jesus lies naked on the ground, physically exhausted. The blood from his wounds mingles with the dirt and the sweat. The blood on his face, caused by the wounds from the thorned wreath, is probably dried, giving a scarred appearance to his visage. His arms are spread out and nailed at the wrists. A large nail is used to secure each wrist to the wooden beam. The wrists may have been nailed into the

wood one at a time, or both at once. The guards know where to penetrate the wrist, so as not to sever a major artery, which would be disastrous, because he would bleed out and spoil the crucifixion. Think of how this would disappoint the crowd. A mallet is used to drive the long nail into the flesh and bone. Care is taken so that only the flesh and tendons are ripped asunder, along with minor capillaries, which will add very little to the flow of blood already oozing from his body. The nail pierces the median nerve, causing extreme pain with each blow of the mallet head.

After Jesus is nailed to the cross beam, several soldiers raise the beam and set it on the vertical stake/pole, which makes a T-shaped cross. Or maybe there is a slot, for the beam to be inserted, a little ways down from the top of the stake, making a more traditional “cross”. During the raising of the beam, other soldiers support the lower part of his body, so as not to put undue stress on the arms too soon. Nevertheless, as the beam is raised, Jesus feels the strain and pull on his arms and shoulders from the movement of the beam, alone. After the cross beam is secured to the vertical stake, his legs are nailed to it, either on a wooden rest, or into the stake itself. The nail is probably driven through both feet at once, around the middle of the foot...or maybe more than one nail is used to secure each foot. Now, secured to the cross, he literally hangs with his shoulders and arms bearing the weight of his lacerated body.

There are a number of Jews who watch with satisfaction as Jesus hangs there...priests, scribes, and others who feel threatened by his presence, and “hangers on” who appreciate a good “show”. They mock and taunt Jesus. They

shout insults at him, encouraging him, sarcastically, to “save himself”. One of the criminals, who is crucified beside him, mocks him. The other criminal recognizes him as the Messiah and asks Jesus to intercede in his behalf. Jesus assures him that he would be with him “in Paradise” (Matthew 27:39-44; Mark 15:29-32; Luke 23:35-43)

...LUKE 23:35-37,39,40,42,43...And the people stood by looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.” And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming up to him, offering Him sour wine, and saying, “If You are the king of the Jews, save Yourself!” ...”And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!” But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?” ...”And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today, you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

John is more concerned with making us aware of those who are there, who revere and love Jesus...his mother, Mary, her sister, and the other two Marys...Magdalene and the wife of Clopas (some say Alphaeus), the husband of Jesus’ mother’s sister...his uncle. And John tells of how Jesus assigns the “disciple He loved” (considered to be John, himself) with the duty of caring for Jesus’ mother, and

of her assuming the role of mother to the disciple (John 19:25-27).

...JOHN 19:25-27...Therefore the soldiers did these things. But there was standing by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

Here we see Jesus, the loving son, whose concern for his mother surpasses that of his own suffering. In his time of great trial and agony, his thoughts are of his mother's well-being.

A thought of Mary the mother, at this time.

The agony she endures can be understood, but what of the questions that must confront her in her time of trial? Questions like: Who is this man, who causes so much strife? What power does her son have that the most powerful men in her tribe want him dead? He is only a carpenter, a teacher with a meager following, who threatens no one with bodily harm. And unlike the Zealots, he has no interest in overthrowing the Roman intruder. Why must he die? What terrible crimes has he committed to be crucified?

Surely Jesus must have told her beforehand what was to occur...maybe during the stay at Bethany. And it is remarkable that she would wonder at this, if we are to

believe as most do, that, as a virgin, she was impregnated by the Spirit of God (Luke 1:35).

...LUKE 1:35...And the angel (Gabriel) answered and said to her (Mary), “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.”

If so, then how could she fail to realize that he would be something special? That he must do the business of the Father? And yet, years earlier when Jesus was twelve, she accused him of treating his family rudely, when he wandered off and went to the Temple to be with the teachers. The family couldn't find him for three days, after the Passover Festival. And she didn't understand when he told them he “had to be in His father's house”,(Luke 2:42-50).

...LUKE 2:42,43,46,48-50...And when He became twelve, they went up there (Jerusalem) according to the custom of the Feast; and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. And His parents were unaware of it...And it came about that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them, and asking questions...And when they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.” And He said to them, “Why is it that you were

looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?" And they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.

Let us return to the cross and examine the torment of Jesus.

First, the physical. The shoulders start to cramp, from trying to hold himself up on the bar. The nerve damage to the wrists causes shooting pains, which are aggravated by the strain on his wrists. In severe distress his breath comes in gasps, as the carbon dioxide becomes increasingly difficult to expel. Voracious insects start to bore their way into the many wounds and welts on his body, causing extreme discomfort and pain. Birds of prey circle overhead, above the victims. Maybe some of the birds become bold enough to attack the face of Jesus, ripping off an ear or his nose. It's doubtful however, that the Father would permit disfigurement of His beloved Son by His creatures, but it has happened many times to those crucified, before and after him.

Jesus finds it increasingly difficult to force his body upright. The arms, that started out nearly horizontal, become V-shaped, as the weight of his body forces the arms to sag and give way. They start to rotate out of the shoulder sockets. The more his body sags, the greater the restriction on his breathing...the more severe the pain. Eventually, he finds it impossible to hold his head upright, and it, too, sags upon the chest. He is suffocating...he is near death.

Next, the emotional suffering.

We know that Jesus is made to bear the sins of the world.

We read that “He was crushed for our iniquities;...” Only with “His blood” would mankind be forgiven, nay pardoned, nay again...”justified” (acquitted) for its manifold sins and wickedness (Isaiah 53:5; Romans 5:8,9).

...ISAIAH 53:5...But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening of our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed.

...ROMANS 5:8,9...But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

All the wicked acts of which he is innocent, through the grace of God and His Spirit, Jesus is made to experience in his mind. He is made to feel the shame and embarrassment of an adulterer. He is overcome by the great despair and sorrow that accompanies the taking of a life. The guilt of lasciviousness and wickedness is his. And greed and lust remain in his thoughts, while swimming in a sea of pain. In his weakened condition, during the three hours that he hangs on the cross, his mind remains open to every calumny and act of degradation. He sees himself, in his mind's eye, doing these despicable acts. He is ashamed of his nakedness.

Jesus is made to feel, not only the gross emotions that accompany the commitment of nefarious acts, but as though he has, indeed, committed these acts. And worse, that this

type of action, on his part, is endemic in him. He, quite literally, bears the evil of man, while hanging on the cross. Naked to the world, bearing the sins of mankind for three excruciating, mind-crazed hours.

At the ninth hour, Jesus cries out, in Aramaic, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI”. This is interpreted as being, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Some of the Jews think that Jesus is crying out for Elijah, and make fun of him (Matthew 27:46, 47, 49; Mark 15:34,35).

...MATTHEW 27:46,47,49...And at about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?” And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, “This man is calling for Elijah”...”But the rest of them said, “Let us see whether Elijah will come and save Him.”

He expires on the ninth hour...3:00 PM

An aside. There are various times that Aramaic words are used by Jesus. I think that this is done to show that, even though Jesus usually speaks the language of that day, Greek and Hebrew, from time to time he speaks in his vernacular tongue...Aramaic. Maybe he uses Aramaic at times of extreme stress when it just spills out, involuntarily, as above...or maybe, purposefully, at times, in a familiar sense, as expressions of endearment.

Aramaic was a North Semitic language...originating in Mesopotamia. Syria was called Aram by the Greeks. Thus,

Aramaic meant the language of Syria. Aramaic was the language adopted by the Jews of the Diaspora, starting with exile in Persia. Several of the books of the old testament were written in Aramaic. Aramaic was the vernacular tongue of those Jews living in the northern part of Palestine, including Galilee. A form of Aramaic is called Syriac, today. Syriac has a distinctive rhythm and intonation to it that renders it unique in its sound. Earlier, I alluded to the fact that the way Peter talked may have stamped him as a Galilean...Aramaic vocal rhythm?

While performing as Jesus in my play, I attempt to speak in a rhythmic manner and place emphasis on syllables, within words, that simulate what I believe to be the Syriac sound. Definitely not the manner in which I normally speak.

What happens that causes Jesus to cry out to God about forsaking him?

I believe that the Father has been in view throughout the entire period of the trials and tribulations of His Son. He does not provide him any solace from the Great Comforter. He provides no balm for his pain and suffering. He is just there...providing comfort by His visible presence. But, just before Jesus expires, He turns away. He, quite literally, leaves Jesus alone to die. It is probable that the Father does this because He is overcome by emotion, and can not bear to watch, and then again He expects His Son to face death alone.

Back to the cross, where fatigue and pain overwhelms Jesus. As he is about to succumb, he says he is thirsty, and they offer him vinegar to drink. John says that after taking the vinegar, Jesus says, "It is finished." Earlier, he

committed his spirit to the Father. A soldier thrusts his spear into Jesus' side, and blood and water issue forth. Jesus expires...The gospels are joined at his death (Matthew 27:48,50; Mark 15:36,37; Luke 23:46; John 19:28-34).

...JOHN 19:28-30,33,34...After this, Jesus knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine (vinegar) was standing there; so they put a sponge full of sour wine upon a branch of hyssop, and brought it to His mouth. When Jesus therefore received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" and He bowed His Head, and gave up the spirit...but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs; but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water.

(Note: He says he is "thirsty", probably hoping to drink water, but they give him the "sponge full of sour wine" instead.)

When he says "It is finished", he means that he has done all that is expected of him, and that the prophecies have been fulfilled. It is expected that he would suffer greatly, and die, which he does, along with great torment, ridicule, and shame.

In addition to the writings of the prophets, primarily those of Isaiah, some of which were quoted, heretofore; there is also the song of David (beloved). This song prophecies the trials and tribulations of Jesus, along with the cries of

anguish of David himself, starting with the first verse, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” (Psalm 22: 1, 7,8,16-18).

...PSALM 22:1,7,8,16-18...”My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?...All who see me sneer at me; they separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying “Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him; let Him rescue him, because He delights in him”...For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones, they look, they stare at me; they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.”

XII

WHY?

God is not idle, during the period of His Son's crucifixion, as we read in the accounts of the Gospels.

His thoughts inspire the soldier to drive the spear into Jesus' tortured body, to preclude his legs being broken. He causes darkness to cover the land for three hours. His tears may have blotted out the sun. His cries of anguish may have caused the earth to shake, the rocks to crack; and open up the tombs for the dead to walk the earth. These same cries of grief may have torn the veil of the Temple in two. His Son cries out before dying. How much greater would the Father's cries be! (Matthew 27:45,50-53; Mark 15:33,38; Luke 23:44,45).

...MATTHEW 27:45,51-53...Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon the land until the ninth hour...And behold, the veil in the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the earth shook; and the rocks were split, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the city and appeared to many.

How the Father must have suffered! He suffers because His Son, Jesus, is tormented and persecuted, and murdered, in such a diabolical way. And He suffers because He is responsible. It is He who arranges for the emotional and physical torment that is inflicted on Jesus. It is the Father who has His Son killed in such an agonizing manner.

Why? Why does He sacrifice His only begotten Son? John tells us why (John 3:16).

...JOHN 3:16... "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

That is the reason He sacrifices Jesus...for us - all mankind, who ever lived and have yet to live, so we would have eternal life! He does it out of His love for us!

Israel and the Jews were taught by Jehovah to set aside a special day in which their sins could be washed away. On that day, the Day of Atonement, an unblemished goat was sacrificed to wash away the sins of Israel for one year. And this ceremony would be repeated every year, to rid the people of their sins for a year's duration. But then, when the people died, they did so with no hope of return to earth...no hope of resurrection (Leviticus 16:5-34).

...LEVITICUS 16:5,9,15,21,22,29,30... "And he shall take from the congregation of the sons of Israel two male goats for a sin offering and one ram for a burnt offering...Then Aaron shall offer the goat on which the lot of the Lord fell, and make it a sin offering" ... "Then

he shall slaughter the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood inside the veil, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, and sprinkle it on the mercy seat (seat for Jehovah) and in front of the mercy seat...Then Aaron shall lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the sons of Israel, and all their transgressions in regard to all their sins; and he shall lay them on the head of the goat and send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who stands in readiness. And the goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to a solitary land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness...And this shall be a permanent statute for you; in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall humble your souls, and not do any work, whether the native, or the alien who sojourns among you; for it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you; you shall be clean from all your sins before the Lord.”

I believe that God intended to sacrifice Isaac (God laughs) for the sins of mankind, thousands of years earlier. Afterwards, He intended to resurrect him, and thus guarantee eternal life for the rest of the world's people. This is conjecture on my part. It may be that He only intended to test Abraham's faith as most believe.

God directed Abraham (father is high) to take his son, Isaac, to a mountain in the land of Moriah (thought to be the mount in Jerusalem, on which the Temple was erected years later...and on which the Dome of the Rock stands today).

There he was to sacrifice Isaac, his heir, as an offering to God. Abraham did not shrink in his duty. He and his son went to the mountain as directed. As he was about to cut Isaac's throat, the angel of the Lord stopped him and a ram was sacrificed in Isaac's place (Genesis 22:1-13).

...GENESIS 22:2,4,6,10-13...And He (God) said, "Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah; and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you" ...On the third day Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance...And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and took in his hand the fire and the knife. So the two of them walked together...And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. But the angel of the LORD called him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me." Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up as a burnt offering in place of his son.

I believe God, the Father, changed His mind because of the suffering He saw in Abraham...God's, avowed friend. I believe that, even though Isaac would've been resurrected,

God knew that Abraham, His great and loyal friend, would've been devastated by the fact that he had killed his own son.

So God had a change of heart and realized, at that time, that only He could bear the sorrow of killing a son worthy of sacrifice, as Isaac was thought to be. Isaac was considered to be nearly perfect...as perfect as a human being could be. Interestingly, Isaac is referred to as Abraham's "only son", even though Abraham had another son, called Ishmael (God hears). Ishmael was born of Abraham's concubine, Hagar (emigrate). I expect that God did not acknowledge Ishmael as his son, as he was not given the Promise, and Ishmael's birth was not sanctified, as Isaac's was.

Fathers have killed their sons throughout history because they represented a threat, but not to benefit mankind. The only one that would benefit was the father. Herod the Great, King of Judea, before the start of the Common Era, had three of his sons executed, Antipater, Alexander, and Aristobulus (B-11-355, 366). And Herod was not unique in this practice. Rulers have killed sons time and time again.

So God, in His inestimable wisdom, decides that no one, born of man, can be the sacrificial lamb. There is no one righteous enough to be the sacrifice for all of the iniquities of mankind, and whose death would guarantee eternal life. Only the son of God...the creation of God, the Father, who would be without sin...incapable of committing sin, would be able to fill that role. It is then that He plans the sacrifice, long before His Son is conceived. And His son is to become flesh, dwell "among us". Then, empty himself, suffer and die for everyone (John 1:1-,14; Philipians 2:6-8; Hebrews 2:9,10).

...JOHN 1:1,14...In the beginning was the Word (the Logos), and the word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh (Jesus of Nazareth), and dwelt among us. We beheld His glory, glory as the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

...PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8...Who (Jesus Christ) although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

...HEBREWS 2:9,10...But we do see Him who having been made a little lower than the angels, namely Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for every one. For it was fitting for Him (The Word), for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their (humankind) salvation through sufferings (as Jesus).

And Paul tells us that “...having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Romans 5:9).

...ROMANS 5:9...Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

But, on the Day of Atonement, the sacrificial goat's throat was cut...a merciful death. Abraham was going to slay Isaac in the same way, quickly, mercifully. Many religions, through the ages, that believed in sacrificing humans to their gods, were comparatively merciful, quick...virgins were cast into volcanoes...victims were cast down from great heights and smashed to the ground, or beaten to death with clubs, staked out on altars and decapitated, or their hearts were cut out...all in the name of religion, done quickly. None of these sacrifices entailed the sufferings experienced by Jesus on the cross.

Why does God permit His Son and our Lord, when he is human, to suffer so on the cross? Why doesn't He just have an assassin slip up behind him, while he is asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane, and slit his throat?

Because, as we read in Hebrews above, His sufferings are necessary to justify all of the sins of mankind, and to give us eternal life. The sufferings have to be extreme enough, shameful enough. His death has to be violent enough to compensate for, and thus justify, all of the evils of mankind throughout history. He is made "to be sin on our behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

...2 CORINTHIANS 5:21 ...He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

And, Paul says that with His crucifixion, the whole world is crucified (Galatians 6:14).

...GALATIANS 6:14...But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

We don't know how the Father could plan for His Son to be treated so cruelly...we wouldn't do this, but we are humans. In order to understand the Father's reason, we must think as God. This is beyond our capability, at present. And even if it were within our capability to do so, we could not reproach the Father for what He did with His Son. Because He did this out of love "...The Father so loved the world..." Everything that God, the Father, does or causes to be done is motivated by love...His love for His creation—man.

Let us return to Jesus on the cross.

As he expires, his face, though frozen in pain, bears a look of compassion. Sad and forlorn, his eyes transmit the great love he holds for all. For he not only forgives his murderers...he loves them. Could you imagine anything more difficult than loving someone who is killing you? He said, "...love your enemies..." (Matthew 5: 44; Luke 6:35).

He asks this of his people and he would do no less, himself.

...MATTHEW 5:44..."But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you..."

Upon his death, he cries out with a loud voice and mysterious things, mentioned above, start to occur.

The veil, spoken of, is the cloth that separates the Holy of Holies from the rest of the Tabernacle in Herod's Temple. Remember, it is the Holy of Holies in which the priests, alone, are permitted entrance, before the altar of God. This veil that keeps the altar from being viewed by the commoners has been ripped open. Now there is nothing obscuring the view of the Holy of Holies from anyone. This is the physical act of showing that, with the death of His son, there is never to be an obstruction between God and man... no longer need there be an intercessor between us and God.

(Note: Even though the graves are opened at His death, the dead do not rise and walk until Jesus is resurrected.)

The aura of Jesus, and the unusual events surrounding his death, cause the Roman centurion to acknowledge Jesus as the "Son of God"...an innocent man (Matthew 27:54; Mark 15:39; Luke 23:47).

...MARK 15:39...And when the centurion, who was standing right in front of Him, saw the way He breathed His last, he said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!"

...LUKE 23:47...Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, "Certainly this man was innocent."

XIII

RESURRECTION

The incredible journey begins...Jesus is at rest. The great teacher, healer, emancipator, lover of all mankind, the Sinless One...the Son of God, is dead.

Jesus has undergone the “second baptism”, spoken of in Luke. The baptism of death. Only death’s baptism could “wash away” the horrendous sins and crimes that he was forced to bear...our crimes (Luke 12:50).

...LUKE 12:50... “But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!”

The Jews are in a hurry to have Jesus and the others taken down from the crosses before the Holy Day begins, so as not to desecrate the celebration. That day is to begin about three hours from the time of the death of Jesus. The soldiers, realizing that Jesus is dead, do not break his legs. This fulfills the requirement that no bones of the sacrificial lamb be broken, in accordance with the prophecy...another prophecy (John 19:31:37; Numbers 9:12).

...JOHN 19:31-33,36... “The Jews therefore, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high “day”), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. The soldiers therefore came, and broke the legs of the first man, and of the other man who was crucified with Him; but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs;” ...For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.”

...NUMBERS 9:12... “They shall leave none of it (sacrificial lamb) until morning, nor break a bone of it; according to all the statute of the Passover they shall observe it.”

Recall how I said earlier that John oftentimes uses “time markers” to keep abreast of when certain significant events take place? He does it here, again. I mentioned before that the Sabbath that “was approaching” is the Sabbath of the Passover week (the last day of Passover). Here, John confirms this when he says in the first paragraph above “for that Sabbath was a high “day”“. The reason “day” is in italics is to make us aware that it does not indicate a time of day, but rather is an expression used to denote a special day of celebration. It is sometimes expressed as a “high holy day”. It denotes the special Sabbaths of the feast...in this case the last Sabbath of the Passover week.

The other gospels concern themselves with the women

who are there. The ones mentioned by name are: Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and Salome. And there are others, both men and women, who are followers of Jesus. They stand off at a distance, observing. The great remorse they experience is emphasized (Matthew 27:55, 56; Mark 15:40,41; Luke 23:48,49).

...MARK 15:40,41...And there were also some women looking from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the mother of James and Joses, and Salome. And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister Him; and there were many other women who had come with Him to Jerusalem.

...LUKE 23:48,49...And all the multitudes who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts. And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee, were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

We learn several things from these verses.

First, that the women are considered as afterthoughts...“also some women”. But certain of these are considered significant enough to name. Whereas Jesus’ male followers remain nameless,. Except for John, we do not know which of his disciples, if any, are present. We are told that the women had “come with Him to Jerusalem.

Second, it is interesting to note that those who have assembled there for the “spectacle” are filled with

misgiving, thus the “beating of the breasts”, attendant with remorse. This is probably because of the unaccustomed terrors that accompanied the crucifixion and death of Jesus. It makes them painfully aware that they have witnessed, and perhaps contributed, to the death of a man with a special connection with the Almighty. If not His Son and the Messiah, who then?

Third, who is Salome (perfect)? Could she be the Salome who danced for Herod and caused the decapitation of John the Baptist mentioned in Mark 6:22-28?

...MARK 6:22, 24, 25, 27, 28...and when the daughter of Herodias herself (Salome) came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests; and the king said to the girl, “Ask for whatever you want and I will give it to you” ...And she went out and asked her mother, “What shall I ask for?” And she (Herodias) said, “The head of John the Baptist”. And immediately she (Salome) came in haste before the king and asked, saying, “I want you to give me the head of John the Baptist on a platter” ...And immediately the king sent an executioner and commanded him to bring back his head. And he went and beheaded him in the prison, and he brought his head on a platter and gave it to the girl; and the girl gave it to her mother.

It hardly seems possible that this could be the same Salome. But she was after all a “girl, when she “danced”. When she matured, she may have realized the enormity of the crime she committed, “saw the light”, so to speak,

repented, and was converted. It is not impossible, others have done so. Saul of Tarsus, by his own admission a foremost persecutor of the followers of Jesus mentioned earlier, (Acts 9: 3-8), was converted by the blinding “light” that was Jesus (1 Timothy 1: 13).

...1 TIMOTHY 1:13...even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor. And yet I was shown mercy, because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.

Now, if Saul could be converted, why not Salome? Taking this one step further, maybe this is a reason why Jesus spent so much time in Gaulinitis, where Salome reigned with Philip. It hardly seems plausible that Jesus would associate with the person responsible for the death of John the Baptist, if she were not converted.

Some suggest, because the mother of James and John are present, that Salome is the mother (B-15-819), but the name of the mother is not given. And, then again, maybe Salome is a common name. So who this Salome is remains a mystery. I opt for the “dancer”.

Jesus’ body begins to decay. With death his heart stops, life-giving oxygen is cut off, the blood ceases to flow. His body starts to decompose, even as it hangs on the cross. The color of his skin becomes greyish, and the body is becoming rigid. His spirit has already returned to the Father, as it is with all spirits at death. Jesus had commended his spirit to the Father earlier. The Father will keep his spirit until it is time to return it...as He does with all spirits of those who die (Luke 23:46; Ecclesiasties 12:7) .

...LUKE 23:46...And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." And having said this, He breathed His last.

...ECCLESIASTIES 12:7...then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.

The soul has gone to sheol/hades...the unseen. And with it the consciousness of Jesus of Nazareth has vanished into the unknown, until it is time to rejoin the spirit and the corporeal body.

The four gospels come together, again, when Joseph of Arimathea obtains permission from Pilate to bury Jesus. This man, a secret follower of Jesus, is wealthy and courageous.

The synoptic gospels say that Joseph of Arimathea takes Jesus down from the cross. Before this, his body hangs there, prey to scavengers and voracious insects, for many minutes after his death. They go into detail about how the body is prepared for burial, and laid in the tomb in the garden selected By Joseph of Arimathea...his own tomb. Matthew and Mark tell of the huge stone used to cover the entrance; and of the women, two of the Marys and Mary Magdalene, who sit and watch the entombment. The Sabbath is about to begin (Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:43-47; Luke 23:50-55).

...MATTHEW 27: 57-61...And when it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph,

who himself had become a disciple of Jesus. This man came to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out of rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

Arimathea is the Greek word for Ramah...maybe this is the town located northeast of Jerusalem called Ramallah today.

This use of the burial place of Joseph of Aramithea fulfills still another prophecy (Isaiah 53: 9).

...ISAIAH 53:9...His grave was assigned to be with wicked men, Yet with a rich man in His death;

Jesus' body is removed from the cross in preparation for his entombment.

First, the nails are forced out of the holes in the feet to free him from the vertical stake. After his body is free of the vertical, the cross beam is removed. He is carried, together with the beam, to the ground, where the nails in his wrists are removed...He doesn't feel anything. He is beyond pain. His friends work quickly to remove the nails, avoiding, where possible, further damage to his wounded body...it is not long before sunset of the Sabbath.

Next, his body is carried by several stalwart friends to the tomb. In the tomb, his corpse is laid upon the cold stone

niche carved into the side of the hill...his “final” resting place. The blood, dirt, and sweat is sponged off the wounded corpse.

John gives emphasis to the contribution of Nicodemus. Nicodemus is a member of the Sanhedrin with whom Jesus explained certain things, years earlier, among which was how one becomes “born again”. He is also the one who defended Jesus before the Council (John 3:1-8; 7:50-52).

...John 3:1-8...Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God as a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from or where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

...JOHN 7:50-52...Nicodemus said to them (chief priests and Pharisees) (he who came to Him before

being one of them), “Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?” They answered and said to him, “You are not also from Galilee are you? Search and see that no prophet comes out of Galilee.”

Nicodemus comes to Jesus to query him at “night”, because it wouldn’t do for a man in his position to be known as someone who looks up to Jesus. I’m not sure what is meant by “leader of the Jews”, but it probably means that he was the head of the Pharisees. The parenthetical expressions above allude to the earlier meeting with Jesus, which must have made an impression on John, and that Nicodemus was a member of the Council...the Sanhedrin. Now read it again, and something else is revealed by “before being one of them”, this means that Nicodemus becomes a another secret follower of Jesus, subsequently. Curious how the group responds by challenging whether or not Nicodemus is from Galilee, as though implying only those from Galilee could be concerned about Jesus...maybe in league with him. John gives emphasis to the contribution of Nicodemus...the one hundred pounds of myrrh and aloe. Aloe and myrrh are the “spices” used to prepare the body for burial according to custom (John 19:39,40).

...JOHN 19:39,40...And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.

The preparation for burial continues, they lovingly anoint his body, slathering it with the aromatics. Coins are placed over the eyes. A white linen cloth is used to wrap his sorrowful countenance. The body is then wrapped in clean costly linen in the manner of that day...vertically. His friends, tear-stained, say a prayer over the body and then hurry home to prepare for the Sabbath.

Aromatics/spices are applied to the body..."the burial custom" to mask the odor of death. It is used to provide a degree of preservation also, so that the corpse may be viewed later. There is not enough time, before the Sabbath, for loved ones to properly mourn. And the viewing of the body has to take place in the daylight, after the Sabbath.

Myrrh is one of the gifts brought by the Maji to the infant Jesus (Matthew 2:11) "...and opening their treasure they presented Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh." It is formed from the bark of a tree that grows in Arabia. Aloes are not found in the aloe vera plant with which we are familiar, but rather it is a perfume from the resin of a tree that grows in India.

Throughout this activity, the mother of Jesus and the other women and followers look on from a distance and weep, tear their clothes, and pour ashes and dust on themselves. The sound they make is a keening sound that penetrates the senses. They stand apart from the tomb and watch as Jesus is laid to rest. They are numb with grief and overcome by passion.

The "law keepers" go to Pilate and ask that guards be assigned to the tomb of Jesus for at least three days because Jesus said that he would arise after three days. Pilate tells

them to provide their own guards. The guards are placed in position to guard the tomb. The stone is placed in front of the opening and sealed (Matthew 27:62-66).

...MATTHEW 27:62-66...Now on the next day, which is the one after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, and said, "Sir, we remember when He was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I am to rise again'. Therefore, give orders for the grave to be secured until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead', and the last deception will be worse than the first." Pilate said to them, "You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how." And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

This is done on the same day that Jesus is entombed. The guards are Gentiles assigned by Pilate to the priests, so that they may continue in their guard duty through the Sabbath.

I visited both places claiming to be the tomb in which Jesus was buried; the centuries old Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Garden Tomb discovered in the late 19th Century. Which has provenance, I have no idea, but the last four "stations of the cross" are found today in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

I will digress. The events surrounding the trial, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus are sometimes very confusing. Some commentaries indicate that all these events took place in one day...the day before the Sabbath.

As you have read, I can't believe this theory. From time to time we are given hints by the gospel writers as to when these various events take place. I interpret them as occurring over six days. Jesus is seized after the first sabbath of the feast (the day after the "last supper"), followed by the interrogations and trial. The crucifixion and burial is completed by the afternoon of the day before the final feast sabbath.

*TIME-LINE:

WED/THUR...FIRST SABBATH OF THE FEAST
(“LAST SUPPER”)

THUR/FRI...CAPTURED/IMPRISONED

FRI/SAT...WEEKLY SABBATH

SAT/SUN...INTERROGATIONS

SUN/MON...INTERROGATIONS/TRIAL

MON/TUE...TRIAL/SENTENCE

TUE/WED...CRUCIFIXION/BURIAL

WED/THURS...FINAL FEAST SABBATH

* Days are recorded from sunset to sunset.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, mother of James, and others, buy or prepare aromatics and spices on the day after the Feast Sabbath to be used to anoint Jesus. The next day they rest, “according to the commandment” (Luke 23:56, MARK 16:1).

...LUKE...23:56...And they (the women) returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

...MARK 16:1...And when the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices that they might come and anoint Him.

Apparently, they didn't communicate any better back then than we do today, because the women must not have been aware that aromatics have already been applied in copious amounts, at his burial. Or maybe they intend to unwrap Jesus and anoint him, again...which doesn't make much sense. And which James is this the mother of? James is one of the brothers of Jesus. Could this be someone's way of letting us know that James was her son or is this James one of the sons of Zebedee?

But that James is always referred to by one of the sons of the father. Another interesting question without an answer.

The corpse of Jesus lies in repose, in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb, for three days and three nights.

How do we know the time of repose was three days and nights?

Because Jesus said it would be so. He said he would rest "in the heart of the earth" for "three days and nights", just as Jonah spent "...three days and nights in the belly of the sea monster", when he is asked for a sign by the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 12:40).

...MATTHEW 12:40..."for just as JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

How is this accomplished?

We know that he spends the first day, the day before the Feast Sabbath in the tomb. He spends the first night on the Feast Sabbath, and the second day, that same day. I will stop proceeding in sequential order and skip to the next known.

We know that Mary Magdalene and the “other Mary” go to the tomb and find it empty on the first day of the week (Sunday) (Matthew 28:1,6; Mark 16:1,6; Luke 24:1,6).

...MATTHEW 28:1,6...Now late on the Sabbath, as it began to dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave...”He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.”

(Note: The tomb has to be within easy walking distance for them, in order for them to walk “late on the Sabbath”. For any work or exertion is forbidden to the Jew on the Sabbath.)

Where it says “it began to dawn on the first day of the week” can be confusing, because the first day of the week begins at sunset not sunrise, and it is “late on the Sabbath”. “Dawn” used here means “lighting up”(B-3-86). So they arrive at the tomb just before sunset on Saturday when it is still light.

They come to anoint Jesus, according to Mark, who says the Sabbath is over. Luke concurs that they go to the tomb to anoint him, and that it occurs on the first day of the week (Sunday).

We know, then, that by Sunday the tomb is empty. So he is not in the tomb that day...the day after the Sabbath... We

still have one day and one night to account for.

How could this be?

I don't presume that I can solve a mystery that is almost two thousand years old, but I will give the only answer that I can think of. There was a day between the Feast Sabbath and the regular weekly sabbath; so that day was Thursday and the Feast Sabbath was Wednesday.

He was buried the DAY before the Feast Sabbath (Wednesday) began; lay in repose during the Feast Sabbath, NIGHT and DAY; Thursday NIGHT and DAY; and the NIGHT of the weekly Sabbath (Friday). In this manner I account for the three days and three nights that he rested in "the heart of the earth". Keeping in mind that the "days" would not have to be 12 hours in length.

Proceeding with this theory then, Jesus' perishable, decaying, and odiferous body is transformed into an imperishable body—miraculously, sometime before sunrise on Saturday. Then, His body is resurrected. His spirit is returned. His body is vivified by the Spirit of the Father. By today's calendar maybe we should be celebrating Easter Saturday?

Paul describes this transformation that the body undergoes as a "mystery". He says, "Behold, I will tell you a mystery...we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed..." Isaiah said, "He will swallow up death for all time..." (1 Corinthians 15:51-55; Isaiah 25:8)

...1 CORINTHINANS 15:51-55...Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the

last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall all be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?'

...ISAIAH 25:8...He will swallow up death for all time, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all the faces...

Paul explains the resurrection of the dead by saying, “It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body...It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” And he reminds us that “...flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God...” (1 Corinthians 15:42,44, 50).

...1 CORINTHIANS 15:42,44,50...So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body...Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Now as to how the actual resurrection takes place...raising a spiritual body, God alone knows.

Paul says, further, that the resurrection of the Christ is the basis of our faith...that we, too, will be resurrected. And he reminds us that if Jesus was not resurrected, then our faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-17,22).

...1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-14,17,22...Now if Christ preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection from the dead? But if there is no resurrection from the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is in vain...and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins...For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

Jesus is “born again” with this transformation. This is what he told Nicodemus must happen (John 3:3), “...unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” In that “twinkling of an eye”, he changed from Jesus of Nazareth to the Christ Jesus, or Jesus Christ.

XIV

INCREDIBLE JOURNEY OF JESUS CHRIST

The incredible journey of Jesus Christ begins.

Jesus the Christ awakens on the slab, unwraps the cloth around his body and head, removes the coins from his eyes, and rises from the stone slab. He then wraps himself in the linen cloth for modesty's sake, moves the rock aside, and exits into the dawn.

(Note: It is probable that the two angels are provided by the Father to assist their Lord in these activities(John 20:12, below).

The gospels coincide, once again, when the tomb is visited...Each of the writers agrees that the body of Jesus is not in the sepulchre/tomb.

The synoptic gospels say that the stone has been rolled away from the entrance. Matthew explains this by the "earthquake". Mark says that the women are confused as to how the stone was moved. The women are told that Jesus has been resurrected. Matthew and Luke mention Mary Magdalene and the "other Mary". Luke includes Joanna, and the "other women", as well. Matthew refers to the

individual, who delivers the message, as an “angel”. Mark says he is a “young man...in white”. Luke says that there are two men in “dazzling apparel”. Both Matthew and Mark state that it began to dawn”...”the sun had risen”. After seeing the empty tomb, the women rush to tell the disciples. Mark says that they are told to tell Peter. (Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:2-10; Luke 24:1-10).

...LUKE 24:1-7,9,10, JOHN 20:12...But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they (the women) came to the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened that while they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling apparel; and as the women were terrified and bowed their heads to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the Living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee?, saying the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day arise again”...and (they) returned from the tomb and reported these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

(Note: Here we go again...confusion caused by translation. The women didn't come to the tomb at “early

dawn”, Sunday. They arrive just before sunset before the Sabbath ends. Another translation describes the time as “early depths of one of the sabbaths” (B-3-215)...which means just before sunset, Saturday. As overcome by grief as the women are, they would not let the night, Saturday night, go by without visiting their loved one, and taking advantage of what little light is still available to apply the aromatics.)

This is another way in which God uses the weak to confound the strong, by selecting women to spread the word. Women are considered the “weaker” sex. In many ways, they are almost non-persons during this era. And yet, they are chosen to be the messengers, bearers of tidings of the most significant happening in all history. Women are the first evangelists...bringers of the good tidings of the redemption of the world through the risen Jesus Christ.

Also it appears that Jesus told his followers, including the women, of what was to occur to him, on his last trip through Galilee. Evidence of this is reflected in what the two men say, above, when they speak of what Jesus told them”...while still in Galilee.”

Luke reports that after the disciples are told of what happened, they are not believed. Peter goes to the tomb and discovers it is empty, and wonders what happened (Luke 24:11,12).

...LUKE 24:11,12...And these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home marveling at what had happened.

(Note: Paragraph 12 is omitted in some of the older manuscripts.)

John relates the story differently. He says that it is Mary Magdalene, alone, who discovers that the stone has been taken away. She tells Simon Peter that someone has taken the Lord out of the tomb. Peter and the “other disciple” (probably John) run to the tomb and see the linen clothes lying there. The “other disciple” enters the tomb after Peter does, and he “saw and believed”. Then it says that they did not understand...”that He must rise again from the dead.” Mary, left alone, sees two angels in the tomb and Jesus appears and talks to her. He says, “Stop clinging to Me...”, because He has not yet ascended to the Father. He tells her to tell the disciples that He ascends to the Father. She goes to the disciples and tells them “I have seen the Lord.”(John 20:1-18).

...JOHN 20:1-3,6,8-12,14,16-18...Now on the first day of the week (sunday) Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken from the tomb. And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him”. Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were going to the tomb...Simon Peter therefore also came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he beheld the linen wrappings lying there,...Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, who had first come to the tomb, and he saw, and

he believed. For as yet they did not understand scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. So the disciples went away again to their homes. But Mary was standing outside the tomb weeping; and so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beheld two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been lying...When she said this, she turned around, and beheld Jesus standing there, and did not know it was Jesus...Jesus said to her, "Mary!" She turned to Him and said to Him in Hebrew, "Rabboni!" (which means teacher). Jesus said to her, "Stop clinging to Me; for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God'." Mary Magdalene came, announcing to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord," and that He had said these things to her.

(Note: What is meant by rising "again" from the dead I don't know).

But again, another translation reads, "...He must rise from "among" the dead"(B-3-278), which makes more sense, It is interesting that Jesus tells her not to cling to Him, because He hasn't "ascended to the Father". One can only imagine why this would be. Maybe because human flesh defiles the "incorruptible" body?

That same day, on the road to Emmaus (hot springs), Jesus encounters two disciples, one of which is the Greek, Cleophas. When Jesus asks them why they are "depressed", they respond sarcastically, asking Him how He could have

been in Jerusalem and not know what happened. Jesus, still unrecognized, reminds them of what the prophets said must happen for Jesus to gain “glory”. When they arrive at Emmaus, He joins them. After blessing and giving them bread, He disappears. It is then that they realize that He is the risen Lord and they return to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples what happened. (Luke 24:13-35).

...LUKE 24:13,14-20,22-26,28-31,33-35...And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were conversing with each other about all these things which had taken place. And it came about that while they were conversing and discussing, Jesus Himself approached, and began travelling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad. And one of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?” And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and rulers delivered Him up to the sentence of death and crucified Him...But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came,

saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said He was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see. And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" ...And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He would go farther. And they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." And He went in to stay with them. And it came about that when He had reclined at table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight" ... "And they arose that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered there the eleven and those that were with them, and saying, "The Lord has really risen, and has appeared to Simon." And they began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

I imagine that these disciples are going to Emmaus, because they are concerned for their safety in Jerusalem, or maybe they are going to "take the baths". It becomes more important to them to forego the baths, or concern for their safety, to tell the others about the risen Christ. The man "Cleopas", also written "Cleophas" was probably the Greek who visited Jesus in Bethany.

Who says that Jesus does not have a sense of humor? He knows very well what is upsetting them, but He plays the “fool” in order to get their reaction. I imagine that He does this in the way of a jibe, as well.

Luke provides a “time marker” when he says, “...it is getting toward evening...” So this event occurs just before sunset on the first day of the week (Sunday).

(Note: On the face of things, it appears as though there is a contradiction here, when the two told Jesus, “...Him they did not see.” (Referring to the disciples who saw only the empty tomb, and did not see the Christ). And then turn around and tell the disciples that the Lord “appeared to Simon”. Are they referring to someone other than Simon Peter...perhaps the man with Cleophas? Or did the Lord appear to Simon Peter later (not written of); or did he tell them that he had also seen Jesus, after they arrived in Jerusalem? I don’t know which answer is correct.)

Mark relates a similar instant, without elaboration, and states that the disciples do not believe them (Mark 16:12,13).

...MARK 16:12,13...And after that He appeared in a different form to two of them, while they were walking along on their way to the country. And they went away and reported it to the others, but they did not believe them either.

Mark provides us with the reason why they don’t recognize Him, when he says, “...He appeared in a different form...a disguise?”

Matthew says that the elders bribe the guards to tell

everyone that the disciples have stolen Jesus out of the tomb. The guards do as instructed, and the report spreads abroad, throughout the Jews. In an aside, he states that this report persists to this day (Matthew 28:11-15).

...MATTHEW 28:11-13,15...Now while they (refers to disciples from previous paragraph) were on their way, behold some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priest what had happened. And when they (guards) had assembled with the elders and counseled them together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, and said, "You are to say, 'His disciples came by night and stole Him away while we were asleep.'" ...And they took the money and did as they had been instructed; and this story was widely spread among the Jews, and is to this day.

All four gospels come together again, in Christ's meeting with His disciples in Jerusalem. But each writer has a different spin on the meeting. Matthew says that they meet Him on the return from the tomb, and that they worship Him and He reassures them. (Matthew 28:9,10.)

...MATTHEW 28:9,10...And behold, Jesus met them (Peter and the other disciple) and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshipped Him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and take word to my brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they shall see Me."

There is no specific location for this meeting... somewhere around Jerusalem. This may have been when Simon Peter saw Jesus, before the two disciples, mentioned above (Luke 24:34), arrived. In the other gospels, the meeting takes place in Jerusalem where the disciples are eating the evening meal.

Luke and John say He reassures them that He is Jesus by showing the holes in the body. John says it is the “hands” and “side”; Luke says it is the “feet” and “hands”. Christ reminds them that they are being sent to others, just as the Father sent Him. And even though many still don’t believe, they are overcome by joy. Mark says that Jesus rebukes them for their disbelief. He eats fish and honeycomb. He instructs them, again, regarding His suffering and resurrection. And He tells them to be witnesses of these things, and to carry the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins throughout the “nations”. Thomas arrives. True to his “doubting” nature, he does not believe what they tell him. He says that he will only believe when he puts his “finger into the place of the nails” (Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-25; Mark 16:14).

...LUKE 24:36,38,39,41-44...And while they (Cleophas and the other disciple) were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst...And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” And while they still could not believe it for joy were they marveling, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” And

they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it in their sight. Now He said to them, "These are My words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things that are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" ... "and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power on high."

...JOHN 20:25...The other disciples were saying to him (Thomas), "We have seen the Lord!" But he said to them, "Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my fingers into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Again Jesus reveals His humorous nature when He asks if there is anything to eat. It's as though an old friend you haven't seen for a long time that you supposed was dead, drops in on you unexpectedly, and asks, "What's for dinner?" Perhaps the meeting takes place in the "upper room", where they enjoyed the "last supper".

I believe that Jesus eats fish so that all can understand that resurrected beings are capable of eating and enjoying food. I believe further, that food is not necessary for sustenance, however, because resurrected beings do not have blood.

He reassures them that he is flesh and bone, not spirit, so that they will realize He is not an apparition...an image of their imagination. But now He allows himself to be touched. One can only surmise as to why now and not before, because He has not yet ascended to the Father. Maybe there's a difference between touching and "clinging" by Mary Magdalene? Another thing that's cause for wonder is that He told her to tell the disciples that He has to ascend to the Father. Maybe he decided to see them for Himself, before making the trip?

He takes this time, again, to bring the message, and to remind them that it is up to them to tell the "world" about the promise of the resurrection. He knows that only, if believers realize that they will be resurrected, then will they truly believe in Him; and then they will have the same faith in Him that He has in the Father.

It is hard to believe that some that are present still don't believe that it is He, but such is the nature of humankind. Sometimes, even seeing is not believing.

When he speaks of them remaining in Jerusalem, until they are "clothed with power on high", He is speaking of receiving the Holy Spirit/the Helper/The Great Comforter from the Father. The Helper will be available to them, after He has joined the Father. When He was instructing them earlier, He mentioned that He had to leave in order for the Helper/Spirit of truth to come to them (John 14:16,17). The Holy Spirit/Helper arrives in a spectacular way, dramatically portrayed, when it descends like tongues of fire that rests on the disciples (Acts 2:1-4).

...ACTS 2:1-4...And when the day of Pentecost had come (fifty days after Passover), they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent, rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them tongues of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each of them. And they were filled with the Holy spirit and began to speak with tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

Jesus Christ's incredible journey continues with His ascension and visit with the Father.

It is not known how he travels into the heavens to be with the Father, but I believe He moves/translates at the "speed of thought". In the heavens, He is received with great joy and celebration by the celestial, spiritual beings. I imagine that the reunion with the Father is a highly emotional one, with the Father asking the Son to forgive Him for the pain and suffering He was forced to endure alone. The Christ is reconciled with the Father and together they plan His return to earth.

How long He remains with the Father is not known...I like to think that it is for three days and nights.

It could have been longer, but not longer than eight days.

The incredible journey continues when the Christ Jesus returns to earth, eight days later, where John picks up the story when Christ makes an appearance before the disciples. Thomas becomes a believer, after touching the scars of Jesus. Jesus uses this opportunity to remind us that those who believe, who have not seen, are blessed. (John 20:26-29).

...JOHN 20:26-29...And after eight days His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst, and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into my side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see Me, and yet believed."

John tells us that Jesus performs many miracles, from that day on, which are not included in his writings. He says the ones that are included in his writings are there so that we will believe that Jesus is the Son of God. And (if all the miracles were included) "...the world itself would not be able to contain the books which were written" (John 20:30,31;21:25).

...JOHN 20:30,31;21:25...Many other signs Jesus also performed in front of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name...And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books which were written.

Remember, I said earlier, that John was writing his gospel from the viewpoint that Jesus was the Son of God.

Paul gives us a better understanding of the numbers of people that saw Jesus Christ, following His resurrection. He says that over five hundred people saw Him, in addition to the disciples and James, and Paul himself (on the road to Damascus) (1 Corinthians 15:5-8).

...1 CORINTHIANS 15:5-8...and that He appeared to Cephas (Simon Peter), then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

What did Paul mean when he says "...then to the twelve", after he already mentions Peter? I suppose he means that Peter was the first of the original disciples to see Him. Then he saw Him again, when he was with the other disciples at dinner. The James that Paul refers to is the brother of Jesus, the first leader of the early church in Jerusalem (I can imagine how emotional that reunion was). He was not, however, one of Jesus' twelve disciples. When Paul says, "all the apostles", I believe he refers to the many followers of Jesus, when He was teaching on earth.

Stephen saw Jesus in a manner similar to the way Paul did on the road to Damascus. He saw Him looking down from the heavens as he was dying, following his stoning in Jerusalem (Acts 7:55).

...ACTS 7:55...But being full of the Holy Spirit, he (Stephen) gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

Jesus travels to Galilee, where He meets the disciples. Matthew says that there are still some who “doubted”, which seems hard for me to believe (Matthew 28:16,17).

...MATTHEW 28:16,17...But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some were doubtful.

At this time no one has been selected to replace Judas, who was one of the original “twelve”. It’s interesting to muse over which “mountain” has been “designated”...I like to think it is Mt. Tabor, the sight of the Transfiguration. Funny how people can worship, and still have doubt. But that is the way of some to this day.

John tells us that Jesus Christ “manifests” and “reveals” Himself to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias/Galilee, while fishing. After they fail to catch any fish, He causes the nets to be filled. They have breakfast. He says that this is the third time that Jesus is manifested to His disciples, after the resurrection. After dinner, Jesus asks Peter three times if he loves Him. And after answering vehemently in the affirmative, Jesus says “...shepherd My sheep”. Christ Jesus also says that Peter will die in a way that will glorify God. Jesus finishes by saying that John, the writer of the gospel, will be alive when the Christ returns. The disciples,

confused, believe that Jesus means that John would not die. John clarifies this by saying that it means only that he would “remain” until Jesus comes. This concludes the writings of John (John 21;1-24).

...JOHN 21:1-7,10,12,14,15,17-24...After these things Jesus manifested Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias; and He manifested Himself in this way. There were together Simon Peter and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael (God has given) of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples. Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will also come with you.” They went out, and got into the boat; and that night they caught nothing. But when the day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know it was Jesus. Jesus therefore said to them, “Children, you do not have any fish, do you?” They answered Him, “No.” And He said to them, “Cast the net on the right hand side of the boat, and you will find a catch.” They cast therefore, and then they were not able to haul it in because of the great number of fish. That disciple therefore whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord.” And so when Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put his outer garment on (for he was stripped for the work), and threw himself into the sea...Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish which you have now caught”...Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples ventured to question Him, ‘Who are You?’ knowing that it was the

*Lord...This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after He was raised from the dead. So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Tend My lambs" ...He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved because he said to Him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, "Lord You know all things; You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Tend My sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go". Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!" Peter turning around, saw **the disciple whom Jesus loved following them, the one who also has leaned back on His breast at the supper.** Peter therefore seeing him said to Jesus, "Lord, and what about this man?" Jesus said to him, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that of you? You follow me!" This saying therefore went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?" This is the disciple who bears witness to these things; and we know that his witness is true."*

(Note: The key to understanding the so-called “code” of Da Vinci, present in his painting, “Last Supper”, can be found in the bible itself and in the man who painted it. The words of John above, “the disciple whom Jesus loved the one who also leaned back on His (Jesus’) breast at the supper”, appears to be the scene on which Da Vinci based this famed painting. Only he chose to have “the disciple whom Jesus loved”(the one to the right of Jesus) lean the other way, not on Jesus’ breast, so as to keep the central figure, Jesus “clean” and unobscured. Da Vinci was purportedly a homosexual, and because of this I believe that he chose to portray this “disciple whom Jesus loved” as an alluring presence (some think almost girl-like), but the disciple portrayed in the painting is not a girl..it is not Mary Magdalene. How do we know this? There are twelve disciples accounted for in the painting. In Mark 14: 17, regarding the Passover Feast, he says “And when it was evening He came with the twelve.”If it were Mary Magdalene then there would be thirteen figures portrayed with Jesus. And in John’s gospel, he always refers to Mary Magdalene by name. On the other hand, John refers to himself in his gospel, in the third person, as “the disciple whom Jesus loved”. How he came to this conclusion is not known, but it probably means that, of all the disciples, he was the closest to Jesus (thus his seat of honor on Jesus’ immediate right). The disciple portrayed in the painting is the Disciple John as imagined by Da Vinci.)

“Manifest” means to “show plainly”. In reading the accounts of how He appears before the disciples, it leads me to believe that Jesus’ appearance would be sudden...from

out of nowhere. They would be unaware of His presence, and suddenly there He was, in their midst, or standing idly by observing. He was, after all, an immortal being. As such, He would be able to appear and disappear...materialize and dematerialize at will, passing through walls, if necessary.

There are seven disciples present...Peter, Thomas, Nathanael (Bartholomew), James and John (sons of Zebedee), and two others. One is probably Peter's brother, Andrew, and perhaps the other is Philip, a friend of Bartholomew, or His brother James. At this time I'm certain that friends and kin would draw near for comfort. It's interesting to note that Peter fishes in the nude. This is probably because he doesn't want to soil his clothing with the fish. Maybe his work involves direct contact with the smelly fish, so he divests himself of his garments. More proof of the fact that Jesus' appearance does not distinguish himself from other Jews, in that they do not recognize him at first. He appears as a bystander, with no physical attributes that cause him to stand out, idly watching the activity. Only when He speaks does He betray who He is.

It is significant that Jesus Christ singles Peter out for special attention. He is the first of His disciples, and the one most ready to proclaim allegiance. Could it be because Peter was unable to follow him, after Jesus was seized in the Garden of Gethsemane? Is the Lord testing him, to insure his willingness to follow Him to the death?

When He tells Peter that after he becomes old, he will go where he does not wish to go, He is referring to the fact that Peter would be crucified because of his beliefs.

When the Christ says that John will “remain” until He comes, this is a reference to his appearing before John at the Revelation of John (Revelation 1:1-17).

...REVELATION 1:1,13,17...The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to his bond-servant John...and in the middle of the lampstands one like the Son of Man, clothed in a robe reaching to the feet, and girded across His breast with a golden girdle...And when I saw him, I fell at His feet as a dead man, and He laid His right hand on me, saying, “Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.”

This fishing incident is reminiscent of the way Jesus first met Simon Peter, at Capernaum (Luke 5:4-6).

...LUKE 5:4-6...And when He (Jesus) had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.” And Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but at Your bidding I will let down the nets.” And when they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish; and their nets began to break;

(Note: It should be mentioned that today, as in the past, fish are usually caught on the Sea of Galilee/Tiberias after

dark. And the predominant fish caught is called Peter's fish...it is flat and broad in appearance and delicious.)

The synoptic gospels get together for His ascension into heaven. Jesus the Christ commands His disciples to spread the gospel to all "creation", and reminds them that they will be able to perform miracles in His name. Matthew says He sends them to "make disciples of all the nations". Luke says that He leads them to Bethany and then "parted from them". He ends by saying that they return to Jerusalem with "great joy", and that they are continually "praising God in the temple." Mark reminds us that that the disciples "went out and preached everywhere", performing miracles, and the Lord Jesus is received in heaven...and "SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD" (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20; Luke 24:50-53).

...MARK 16:15,17-20...And He said to them, go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation...And these signs will accompany those who have believed; in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover." So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed.

It's interesting that the Christ does not limit their preaching to humans. Maybe that is why St. Francis of Assisi concerned himself with the other creatures of this world. Next time you are alone with your pet tell it about Jesus.

The incredible journey of the Christ continues.

He ascends into the heavens, where He remains at the right hand of the Father, doing His bidding, preparing for His return to earth, when He will establish the Kingdom of God. He will reign for the millenium, after destroying His enemies...the last being death, and then “delivers the kingdom to God...”(Hebrews 10:12,13; 1 Corinthians 15:24,25,26).

...HEBREWS 10:12,13...but, He having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET.

...1 CORINTHIANS 15:24-26...then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.

EPILOGUE

During Jesus' last year, he accomplished much, travelling to those places significant to him, visiting his disciples, encouraging them, spreading the gospel, making a symbolic journey, following the Jordan River from the Springs of Mt. Hermon to the Dead Sea, while performing countless miracles.

He kept his appointment with destiny, obeying the will of the Father.

He was afflicted, physically and emotionally, "crucified" on the "cross of shame", bearing our sins, where he suffered and died.

He was buried, resurrected and vivified; and then appeared to His followers, assuring them of His resurrection. He returned to the Father for a brief stay, afterwhich He came back to earth, visiting His disciples and others, exhorting them to spread the gospel, including the resurrection, to all the creatures of the world.

He ascended into the heavens, taking His place at the right hand of the Father, where He remains today, awaiting His return to establish the Kingdom of God, here on earth.

And when will that be? "...of that day and hour no one knows" (Mark 13:32).

...MARK 13:32... "But what of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone."

The God-inspired teachings of Jesus in the writings of the New Testament bring us the good news of the coming kingdom, and of the resurrection from the dead. His suffering and death justifies all the sins of mankind. According to Paul we are justified through the faith of Jesus Christ. His being raised from death assures us of our resurrection, as well (Romans 3:24-26; 1 Corinthians 15:12-14).

...ROMANS 3:24-26...being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was the way to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

...1 CORINTHIANS 15:12-14...Now if the Christ is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection from the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if the Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain, your faith also is vain.

There are many who refuse to believe that Jesus Christ is Lord. But the day will come when everyone will believe and “...every knee should bow...” (Philippians 2:10,11).

...PHILIPPIANS 2:10,11...that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

AMEN

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