

Through the Bible

MATTHEW-II

Zac Poonen

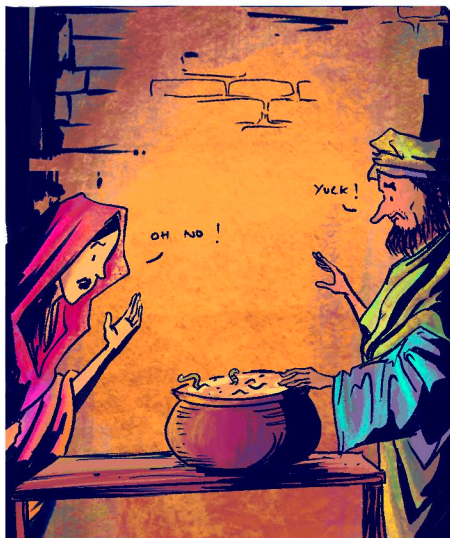


Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

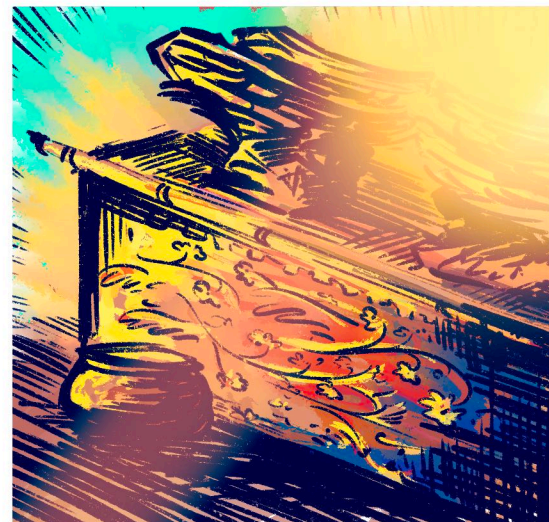
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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

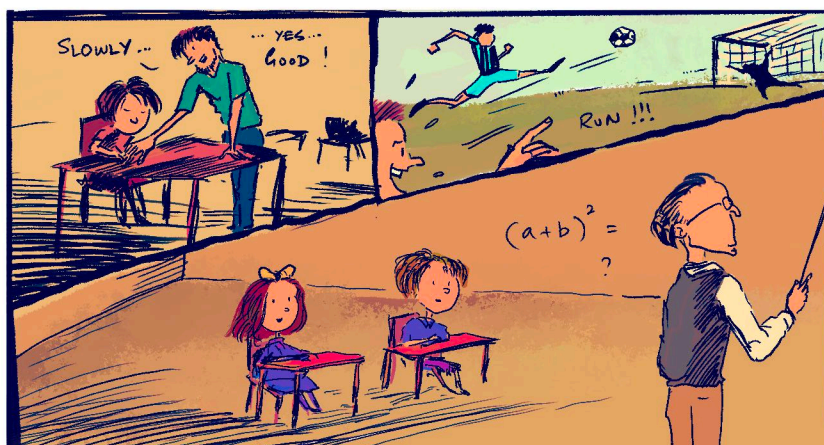
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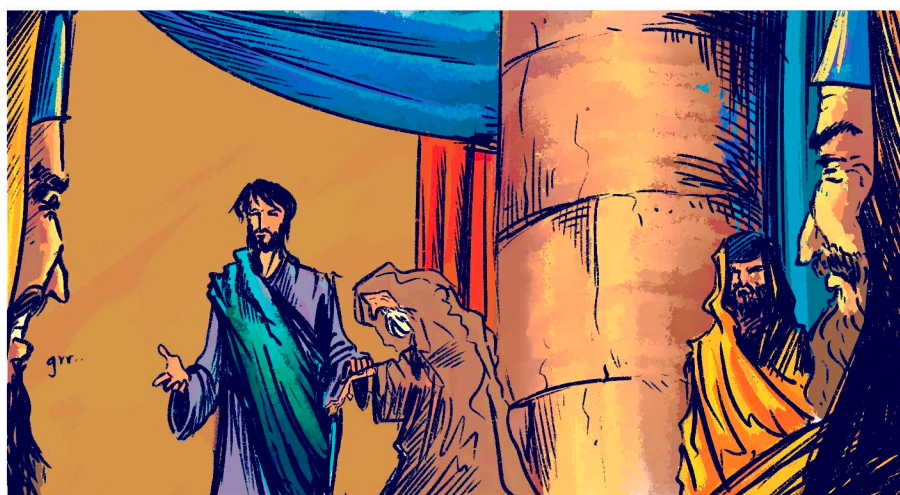
CHRIST HAS APPOINTED **TEACHERS** IN THE CHURCH. BUT WE HAVE TO TAKE THAT **SECOND-HAND** TEACHING BEFORE THE LORD AND SAY, "LORD, MAKE THIS **FIRST-HAND** KNOWLEDGE FOR ME. MAKE IT MY **OWN** EXPERIENCE." THEN THOSE TRUTHS WILL BE **YOURS** FOREVER. IF YOU DON'T DO THAT, THEN EVEN THE TRUTHS YOU RECEIVE FROM HEAVEN WILL BECOME **STALE** -- LIKE THE **MANNA** SENT FROM HEAVEN BEGAN TO **BREED WORMS** WITHIN 24 HOURS. BUT THE **MANNA** THAT WAS KEPT IN **GOD'S PRESENCE** IN THE **MOST HOLY PLACE** REMAINED **FRESH** AT ALL TIMES.



IN 11:28, **JESUS** SAID, "COME TO ME, ALL YOU WHO **LABOUR** AND ARE **HEAVY LADEN** AND I WILL GIVE YOU **REST**." THIS IS THE FULFILMENT OF THE OLD-TESTAMENT **SABBATH**. THE NEW-COVENANT **SABBATH** IS **NOT** A DAY OF PHYSICAL REST, BUT AN **INNER REST** THAT **JESUS** GIVES US. HE GIVES IT FIRST OF ALL, TO THOSE WHO **COME TO HIM ACKNOWLEDGING** THAT THEY ARE WEARY AND HEAVY LADEN.



IN 11:29, **JESUS** SAID, "TAKE MY **YOKE** UPON YOU AND LEARN FROM ME -- FOR I AM **GENTLE** AND **HUMBLE** IN HEART". A DISCIPLE IS A **LEARNER** AND HE COMES TO **JESUS** TO LEARN FROM HIM, LIKE A **TEACHABLE** CHILD. WHAT DOES THE LORD WANT US TO LEARN FROM HIM FIRST OF ALL? MANY WANT TO LEARN HOW TO **PREACH**, HOW TO HEAL THE SICK, AND HOW TO PROPHECY, ETC. BUT THE LORD WANTS US TO LEARN **GENTLENESS** AND **HUMILITY** FROM HIM **FIRST** OF ALL.



SIGNIFICANTLY, IMMEDIATELY AFTER **JESUS** SPOKE ABOUT THIS REST, HE WENT ON TO **DEMOLISH** THE **FALSE JEWISH** UNDERSTANDING OF THE **SABBATH** (12:1--13). FIRST, WHEN HIS **DISCIPLES** WERE **PICKING** SOME **GRAIN** ON THE **SABBATH** DAY AND THE **PHARISEES** QUESTIONED IT, **JESUS** IMMEDIATELY DEFENDED HIS **DISCIPLES** QUOTING THE EXAMPLE OF **DAVID** AND THE **LEVITICAL PRIESTS** (12:1--8). THEN HE **HEALED** A MAN IN THE **SYNAGOGUE** ON THE **SABBATH** DAY AND STOPPED THE CRITICISM OF THE **PHARISEES** BY SAYING, "IF A SHEEP OF **YOURS** FALLS INTO A PIT ON A **SABBATH** DAY, WON'T YOU PULL IT OUT IMMEDIATELY? ISN'T A MAN MORE IMPORTANT THAN A SHEEP?" (12:9--13). **LEGALISTIC** PEOPLE ARE VERY **NARROW-MINDED** AND **SELFISH**. THEY TAKE GOOD **CARE** OF **THEMSELVES**, BUT ARE VERY **UNCARING** ABOUT THE NEEDS AND SUFFERINGS OF **OTHERS**.



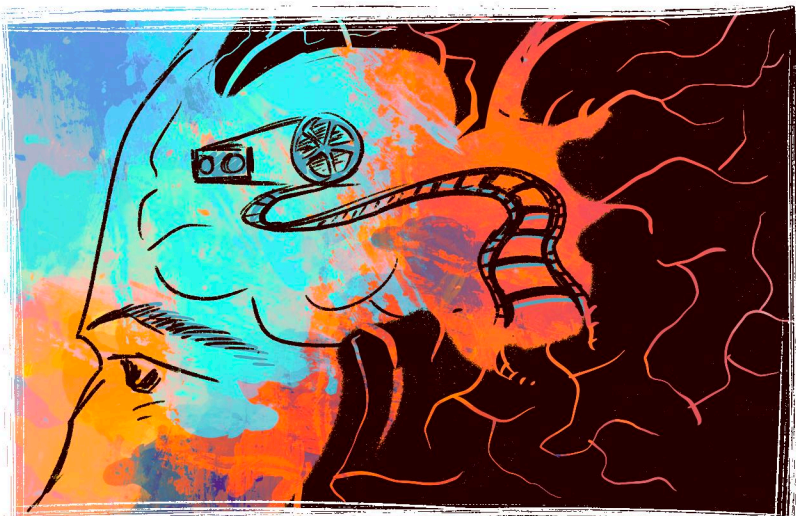
IN 12:24, 31, 32, WE READ THAT THE PHARISEES SAID THAT JESUS WAS CASTING OUT DEMONS BY BEELZEBUL THE PRINCE OF DEMONS. JESUS REPLIED, "HAVE YOU SPOKEN AGAINST ME? IT'S **FORGIVEN**." WHEN MIRIAM CRITICISED MOSES SAYING, "WHY DID YOU MARRY THAT WOMAN?", SHE GOT **LEPROSY** (AS A JUDGEMENT FROM GOD). BUT WHEN THE PHARISEES CRITICISED JESUS SAYING HE WAS IN LEAGUE WITH **SATAN**, THEY GOT **FORGIVENESS!!** THAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE **OLD COVENANT** AND THE **NEW COVENANT**.



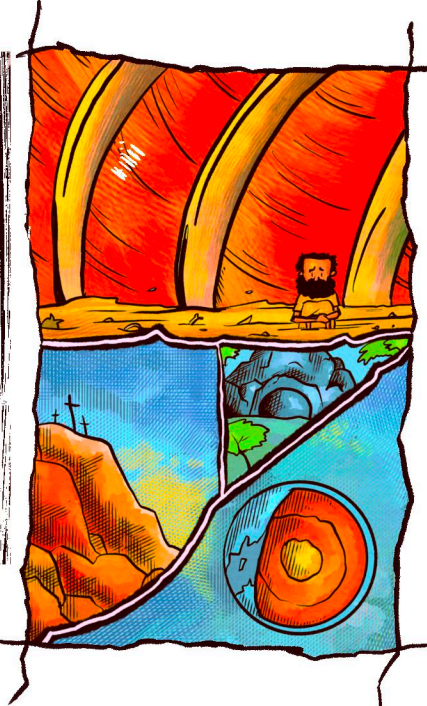
THE BLOOD OF ABEL CRIED OUT FOR **JUDGEMENT**. THE BLOOD OF JESUS CRIES OUT FOR **MERCY** (HEBREWS 12:24). IF YOU WANT **GOD** TO **JUDGE** THOSE WHO **HURT** YOU, THEN YOU ARE STILL UNDER THE **OLD COVENANT**. BUT IF YOU WANT GOD TO **FORGIVE** THEM, THEN YOU ARE A **DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST**.



IN 12:36, 37, JESUS TAUGHT ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR **SPEECH**: "EVERY **CARELESS** WORD THAT MEN SHALL SPEAK, THEY SHALL GIVE AN **ACCOUNT** IN THE DAY OF **JUDGEMENT**." I AM CONVINCED THAT **95%** OF BELIEVERS DO **NOT** BELIEVE THIS. THAT IS WHY THEY CONTINUE TO SPEAK **EVIL** OF **OTHERS**, **GOSSIP**, **BACKBITE**, CRACK **FILTHY** JOKES, ETC. THEY **HURT** OTHERS WITH THEIR **JOKES** TOO. **HUMOUR** IS A **GOOD** THING. BUT HUMOUR THAT **HURTS** OTHERS IS **NOT** GODLY.



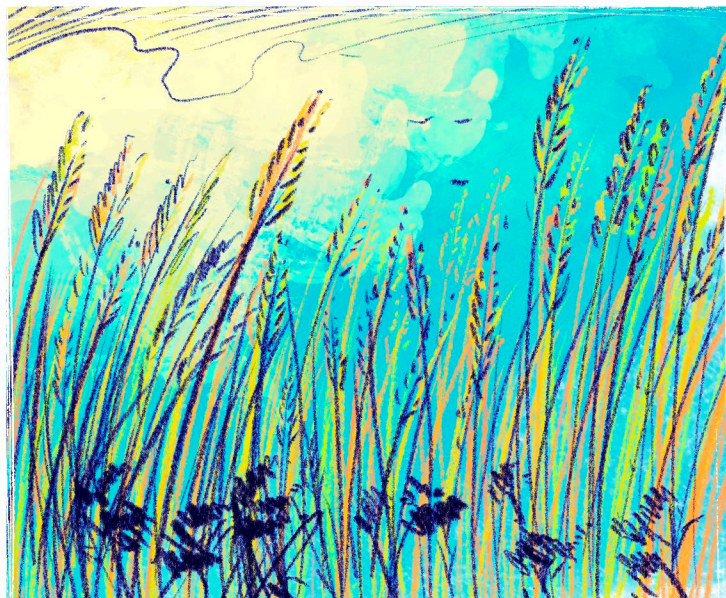
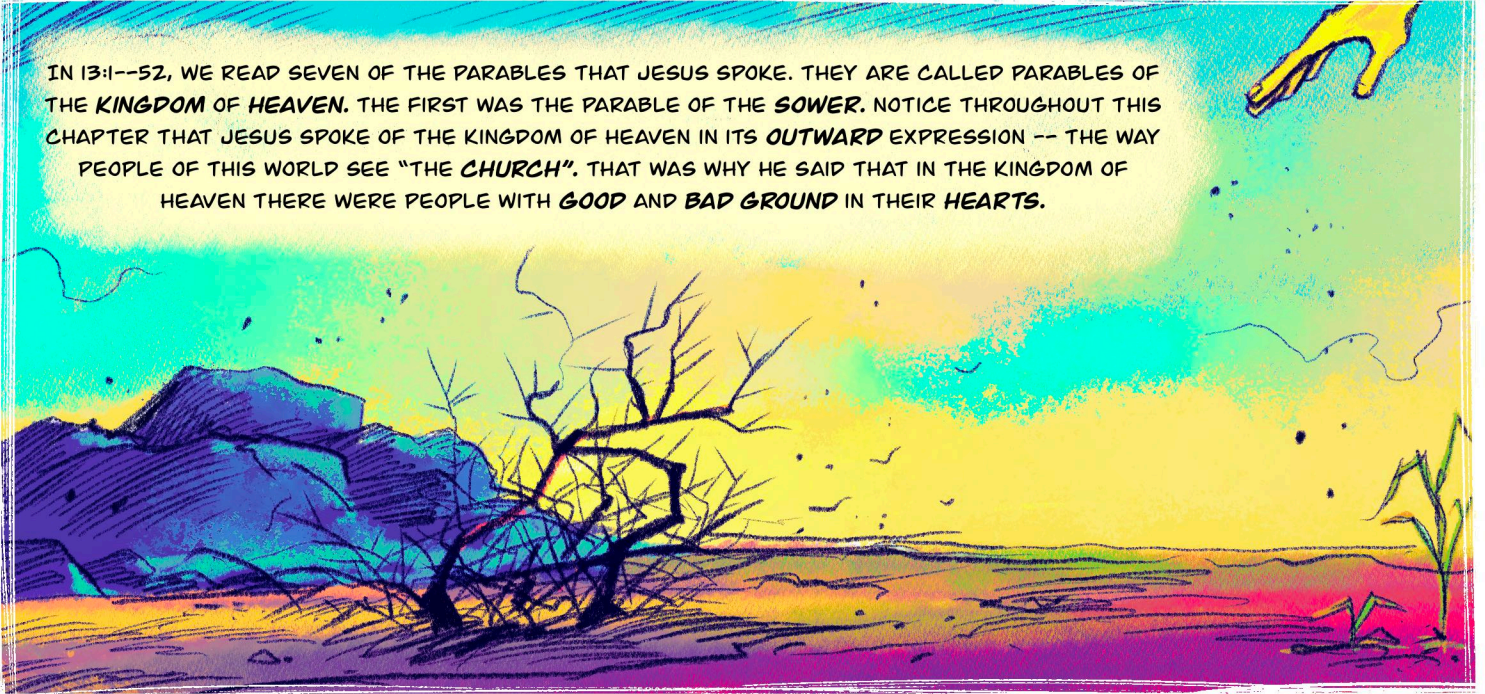
THERE IS A **VIDEO TAPE** THAT HAS BEEN RUNNING IN OUR **MEMORY** EVER SINCE WE WERE **BORN**. LIKE A **COMPUTER'S** MEMORY, GOD HAS **RECORDED** EVERY **THOUGHT**, **WORD** AND **DEED** OF OURS.



IN 12:40, JESUS REFERS TO JONAH STAYING IN THE BELLY OF A LARGE FISH. THEN HE SAID, "SO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE IN THE **HEART** OF THE EARTH." JESUS WAS **ALIVE** FOR **THREE** DAYS AND **NIGHTS** EXACTLY LIKE JONAH. THEN HE CAME BACK INTO HIS **BODY** AND "**AROSE** FROM THE **DEAD**".

Parables of Jesus

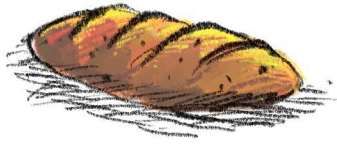
IN 13:1--52, WE READ SEVEN OF THE PARABLES THAT JESUS SPOKE. THEY ARE CALLED PARABLES OF THE **KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**. THE FIRST WAS THE PARABLE OF THE **SOWER**. NOTICE THROUGHOUT THIS CHAPTER THAT JESUS SPOKE OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN ITS **OUTWARD** EXPRESSION -- THE WAY PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD SEE "THE **CHURCH**". THAT WAS WHY HE SAID THAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN THERE WERE PEOPLE WITH **GOOD** AND **BAD GROUND** IN THEIR **HEARTS**.



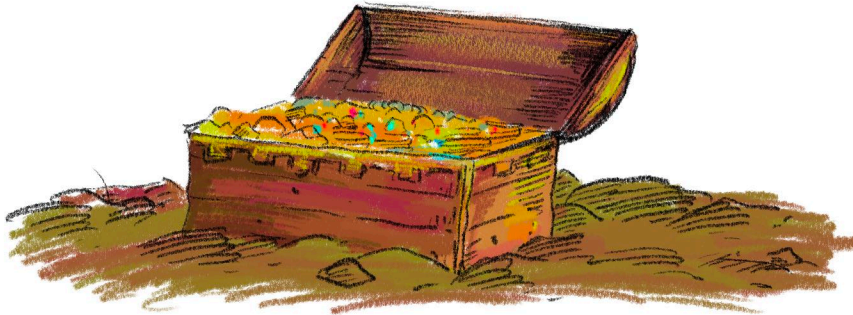
HE ALSO SAID THAT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WAS LIKE A FIELD IN WHICH **WHEAT** AND **TARES** WERE BOTH FOUND. HE EXPLAINED LATER THAT THE FIELD WAS THE **WORLD, NOT THE CHURCH** (13:38). IN THE LOCAL CHURCH, WE MUST ENSURE THAT (AS FAR AS IS HUMANLY DISCERNIBLE) ONLY THOSE WHO HAVE **REPENTED** OF THEIR SINS AND HAVE BEEN **BORN AGAIN** THROUGH **FAITH IN CHRIST**, ARE ALLOWED TO BE **MEMBERS**.



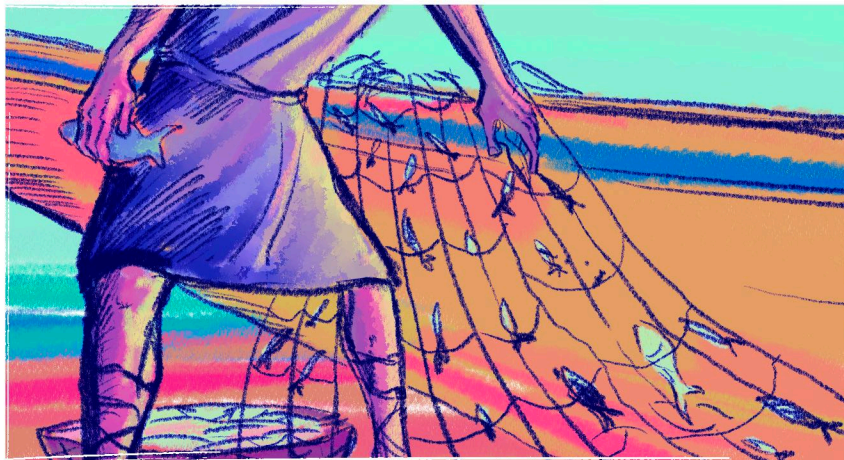
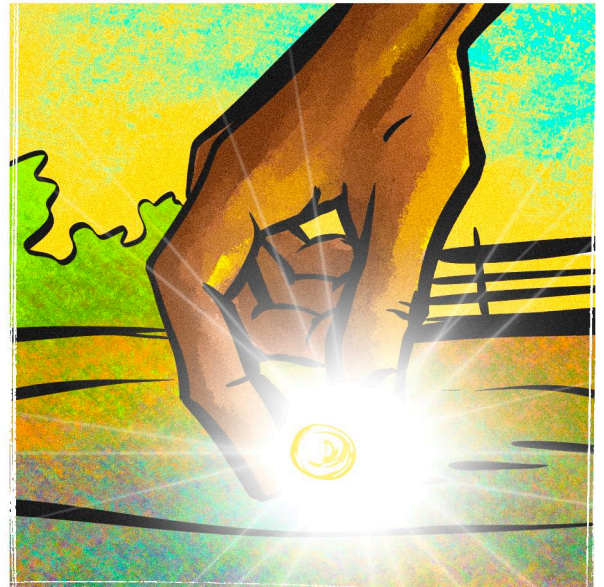
13:31--32 IS A PARABLE ABOUT A MUSTARD SEED THAT NORMALLY GROWS TO BECOME ONLY A **SMALL** PLANT. BUT IN THIS CASE, IT GREW UP **UNNATURALLY** AND BECAME A **HUGE** TREE. GOD INTENDS THAT EACH LOCAL CHURCH BE A **SMALL** GROUP OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHO **KNOW** EACH OTHER, **LOVE** ONE ANOTHER AND MANIFEST **HIS LIFE** TO OTHERS IN THEIR **LOCALITY**. BUT PREACHERS CAN EASILY GATHER LARGE CROWDS, BY **LOWERING** THE STANDARDS OF **HOLINESS** AND AVOID TALKING ABOUT REPENTANCE AND SELF-DENIAL. WHEN WE INCREASE THE SIZE OF YOUR CHURCH THIS WAY, WHAT HAPPENS NEXT WILL BE THE BIRDS OF THE AIR (AGENTS OF THE **EVIL** ONE -- 13:4, 19) COME AND SIT ON THE **BRANCHES** OF THE TREE.



IN 13:33, JESUS SPOKE ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN BEING LIKE **LEAVEN**. THIS IS A PROPHECY ABOUT HOW **CORRUPTION** WOULD SPREAD IN THE **LOCAL CHURCH**. AGAIN AND AGAIN, JESUS **WARNS** ABOUT THE **DANGERS** THAT WOULD FACE THE CHURCH -- BAD GROUND, TARES, DEMONS SITTING **INSIDE** THE CHURCH, AND LEAVEN. IF CHRISTIAN **LEADERS** HAD PAID ATTENTION TO THESE PARABLES, THEY COULD HAVE **SAVED** THEIR **CHURCHES** FROM **SPIRITUAL DEATH** -- AND THEY WOULD HAVE **EMPHASISED DISCIPLESHIP**.



THEN JESUS SPOKE TWO PARABLES WHERE HE EXPLAINED WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A **DISCIPLE**. IN 13:44, HE SAID THAT THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN WAS LIKE A MAN WHO HAD FOUND A **FIELD** WITH A **TREASURE** HIDDEN IN IT. THE MAN SOLD ALL THAT HE HAD AND BOUGHT THAT FIELD. THIS IS A PICTURE OF A PERSON WHO IS WILLING TO GIVE UP **EVERYTHING** THAT IS **PRECIOUS** TO HIM, IN ORDER TO BE A **DISCIPLE** OF JESUS -- AND THUS POSSESS GOD'S KINGDOM. THE SECOND PARABLE, ABOUT A MAN WHO BOUGHT A VERY **EXPENSIVE PEARL** AFTER SELLING ALL THAT HE HAD, **EMPHASISED** THE SAME TRUTH. NOTICE IN BOTH CASES, THE EXPRESSION '**ALL THAT HE HAD.**'



IN 13:47--50, JESUS SPOKE ABOUT THE **OUTWARD** EXPRESSION OF GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH HAVING TWO TYPES OF **FISH** -- THE **GOOD** AND THE **BAD**. BUT AT THE **END** OF THE AGE, THE **ANGELS** COME IN AND **SEPARATE** THE **RIGHTEOUS** FROM THE **WICKED** (VERSE 49).



IN 13:52, WE HAVE A GOOD WORD FOR **STUDENTS** OF THE **BIBLE**. A **SCRIBE** IS ONE WHO CAREFULLY **STUDIES** THE SCRIPTURES. BUT IT SAYS HERE THAT THE **SCRIBE** MUST BECOME A **DISCIPLE**. THEN, WHEN HE PREACHES, HE CAN BRING FORTH FROM HIS **TREASURE**, **NEW TRUTHS** AS WELL AS THE **OLD TRUTHS** WITH **FRESHNESS**. IF WE **REMAIN** SCRIBES, HOWEVER, OUR MINISTRY WILL BE DEAD.



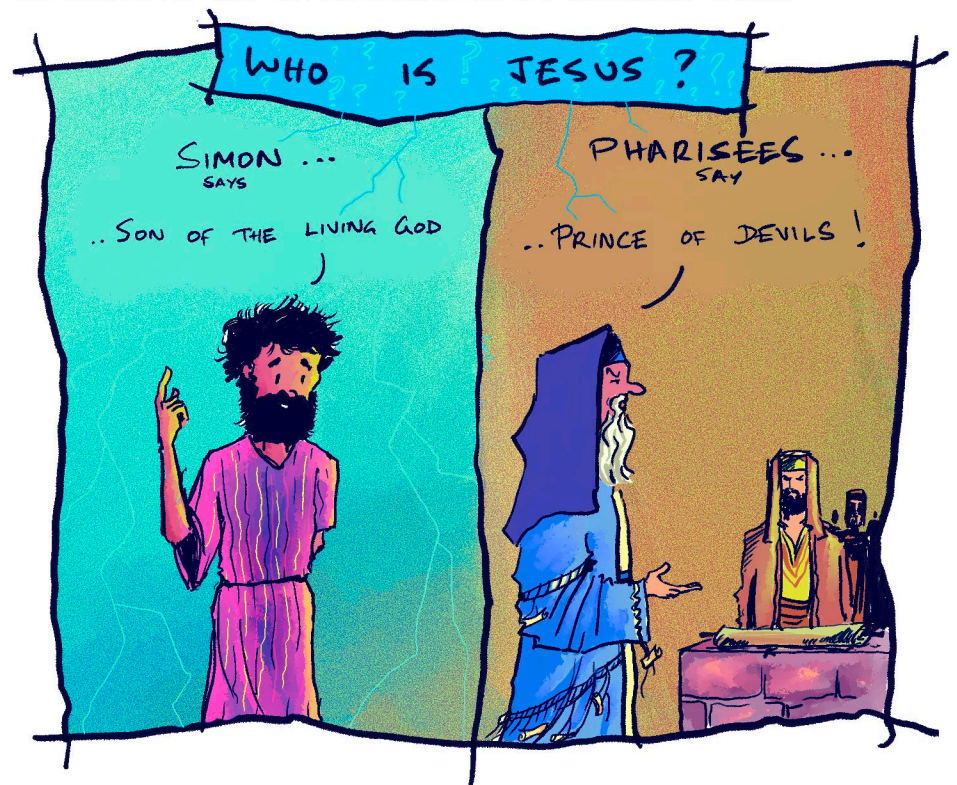
IN 14:25--31, WE SEE JESUS **WALKING** ON THE **WATER**. BUT THE **GREATER** MIRACLE HERE IS THAT **PETER ALSO** WALKED ON THE WATER. THIS IS A PICTURE OF THE **OVERCOMING** LIFE. WHAT IS IT THAT PREVENTS US FROM WALKING ON WATER? IT IS THE LAW OF **GRAVITY** THAT PULLS US **DOWN**. THE LAW OF GRAVITY PULLED JESUS DOWN TOO. BUT BY THE **POWER** OF **GOD** HE **OVERCAME** IT AND WALKED ON THE WATER. THE LAW OF GRAVITY WAS **NOT** NEGATED OR DESTROYED, BUT **OVERCOME**. AS LONG AS PETER **LOOKED** AT **JESUS** AND TRUSTED HIM, PETER ALSO WOULD BE ABLE TO OVERCOME THE LAW OF GRAVITY.



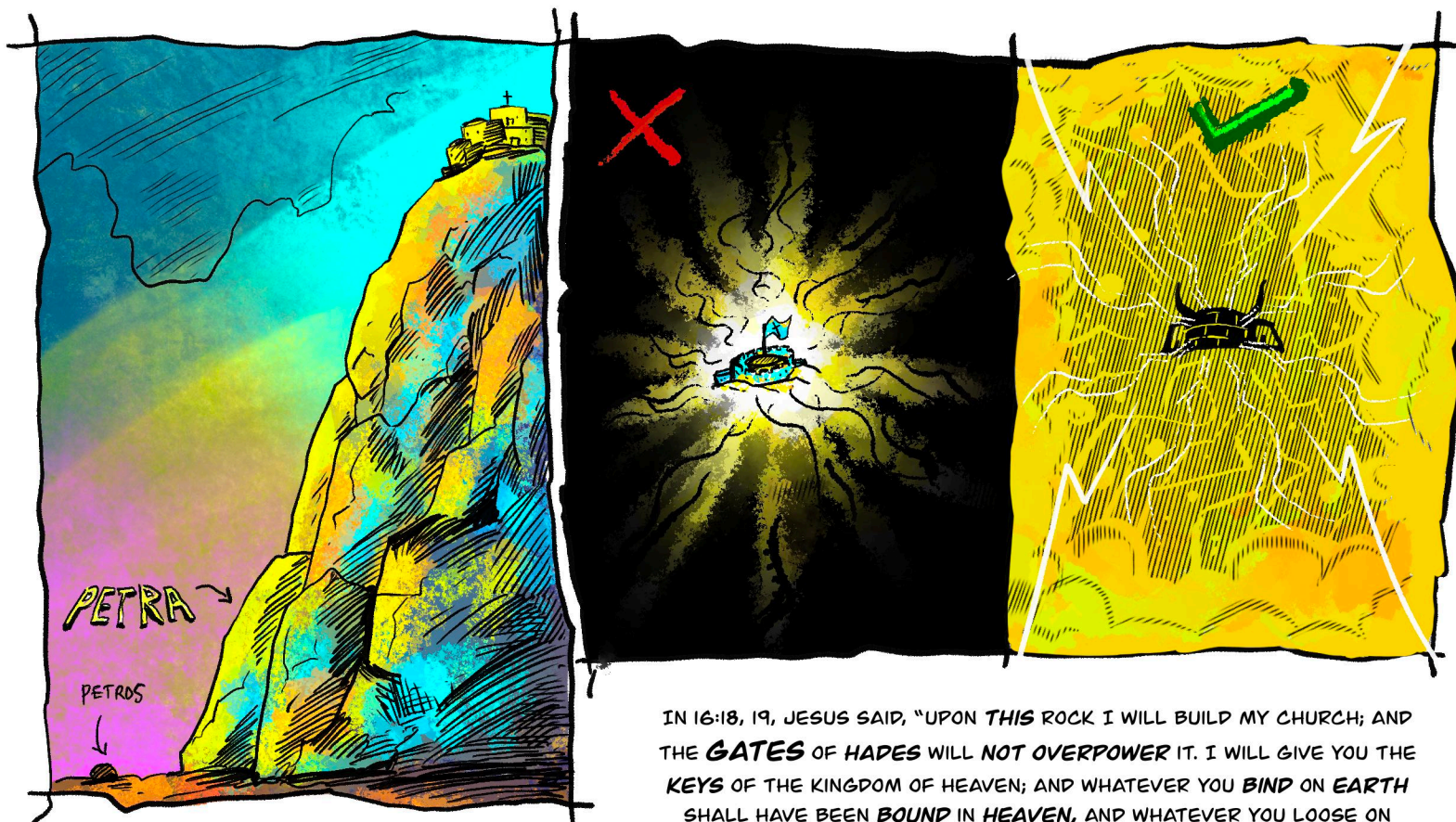
THE LAW OF SIN IS ALSO LIKE THE LAW OF **GRAVITY**. TEMPTATION SEEKS TO PULL US. JESUS TOO WAS TEMPTED EXACTLY AS WE ARE (HEBREWS 4:15). BUT HE **OVERCAME** THE DOWNWARD PULL OF **TEMPTATION** BY THE **POWER OF GOD** -- AND SO HE **NEVER SINNED** (MATTHEW 4:1--10). IF WE LOOK TO HIM FOR THE **SAME POWER**, WE TOO CAN **OVERCOME** AS HE OVERCAME -- BUT ONLY AS LONG AS WE KEEP **LOOKING** TO HIM (REVELATION 3:21; HEBREWS 12:1, 2). TO HAVE "**FAITH**" IS TO LOOK AT JESUS. AND "**GRACE**" IS THE **SUPERNATURAL** POWER OF GOD. WHEN WE ARE "UNDER THIS GRACE, SIN CANNOT RULE OVER US" (ROMANS 6:14). THE MOMENT PETER LOOKED **AWAY** FROM THE LORD, HE WENT **DOWN** -- AND SO WILL WE. AND IF WE DO GO DOWN, WHAT SHOULD WE DO? DO WHAT PETER DID. HE CRIED OUT SAYING, "LORD, **SAVE ME**". HE DIDN'T WAIT UNTIL HE REACHED THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA. NO. HE CRIED OUT **AS SOON AS** HE WAS **BEGINNING** TO SINK.



IN 15:13, JESUS SAID, "EVERY PLANT WHICH MY HEAVENLY **FATHER** DID NOT PLANT WILL BE **ROOTED OUT**." THE QUESTION HERE IS **NOT** WHETHER IT IS A **GOOD** PLANT, OR A **BIG** PLANT, OR ONE THAT OTHERS **APPRECIATE**. THE QUESTION IS "WHO PLANTED IT -- MAN OR GOD?" WE CAN HAVE OUR **OWN BRIGHT** IDEAS TO DO GOD'S WORK AND PRODUCE SOMETHING THEREBY THAT **LOOKS VERY IMPRESSIVE** IN THE SIGHT OF **MEN**. BUT IN THE FINAL DAY THE LORD WILL SEE WHETHER THIS IDEA ORIGINATED WITH GOD OR IN OUR OWN BRAIN. GOD IS THE ONLY **LEGITIMATE ORIGINATOR** OF ANYTHING IN THIS UNIVERSE. **WAIT** ON THE LORD AND **ALLOW HIM** TO PUT HIS **THOUGHTS** INTO YOUR MIND.



IN 16:15, WE SEE JESUS ASKING SIMON, "WHO AM I?" SIMON REPLIED, "YOU ARE THE **CHRIST**, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD." JESUS IMMEDIATELY PRAISED HIM PUBLICLY SAYING, "BLESSED ARE YOU, SIMON, SON OF JONAH, BECAUSE YOU DID **NOT** UNDERSTAND THIS THROUGH YOUR **OWN INTELLIGENCE** OR CLEVERNESS. MY **FATHER REVEALED** IT TO YOU." NOTICE THE WORD 'REVEALED' HERE. THIS IS A **NEW-COVENANT WORD**. THE **HOLY SPIRIT** OPENED PETER'S HEART TO SEE SOMETHING THAT HE COULD NEVER HAVE DISCOVERED WITH ANY AMOUNT OF HUMAN INTELLIGENCE. THERE WERE **CLEVERER** PEOPLE THAN HIM IN ISRAEL AT THAT TIME, WHO HAD **STUDIED THE BIBLE MUCH MORE** THAN HIM. BUT THEY THOUGHT **JESUS WAS THE PRINCE OF DEVILS!!**



IN 16:18, JESUS SAID TO SIMON, "YOU ARE PETER (PETROS -- GREEK), AND UPON THIS ROCK (PETRA -- GREEK) I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH."

HE CALLED SIMON "PETROS" ("A SMALL STONE") AND SAID THAT THE CHURCH WOULD BE BUILT ON THE "PETRA" ("A LARGE ROCK") THAT SIMON HAD JUST CONFESSED BY REVELATION -- CHRIST THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD. SIMON PETER WAS NOT THE ROCK-FOUNDATION.

IN 16:18, 19, JESUS SAID, "UPON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH; AND THE GATES OF HADES WILL NOT OVERPOWER IT. I WILL GIVE YOU THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN; AND WHATEVER YOU BIND ON EARTH SHALL HAVE BEEN BOUND IN HEAVEN, AND WHATEVER YOU LOOSE ON EARTH SHALL HAVE BEEN LOOSED IN HEAVEN." THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT JESUS SPOKE ABOUT THE CHURCH -- AND HE SPOKE OF THE CHURCH FACING BATTLE WITH THE FORCES OF SPIRITUAL DEATH -- "THE GATES OF HADES". WHEN I FIRST READ THIS, I PICTURED THE CHURCH BEING ATTACKED BY SATAN ON ALL FOUR SIDES, AND THE CHURCH MANAGING TO HOLD ON AND SURVIVE UNTIL THE LORD RETURNS. BUT THAT WAS NOT WHAT JESUS SAID. HE DID NOT SAY THAT THE GATES OF HADES WOULD ATTACK THE CHURCH, BUT THAT THE CHURCH WOULD ATTACK THE GATES OF HADES AND OVERPOWER THOSE GATES.



IN THOSE DAYS, A CITY WAS SURROUNDED BY WALLS AND COULD BE ENTERED ONLY THROUGH ITS GATES. IF YOU GOT THROUGH THE GATES, THEN YOU HAD OVERPOWERED THE CITY. SO JESUS SPOKE OF AN ATTACKING CHURCH THAT WOULD BE ENGAGED IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND OVERPOWER THE FORCES OF EVIL -- BINDING SATAN'S ACTIVITIES AND RELEASING PEOPLE WHO WERE HELD CAPTIVE BY HIM. THIS IS NOT A DEFENSIVE BATTLE, BUT AN ATTACKING ONE. WE GO AGAINST THE FORTRESSES OF SATAN IN THE WORLD AND REGISTER THE VICTORY OF THE CROSS IN ONE PLACE AFTER ANOTHER. WE DON'T SIT IN A CORNER AND SAY, "O LORD, HELP US TO HOLD ON UNTIL YOU COME". THE PICTURE WE MUST ALWAYS KEEP IN OUR MIND IS THAT OF A TRIUMPHANT CHURCH FOLLOWING A TRIUMPHANT CAPTAIN AND ATTACKING THE DEVIL.



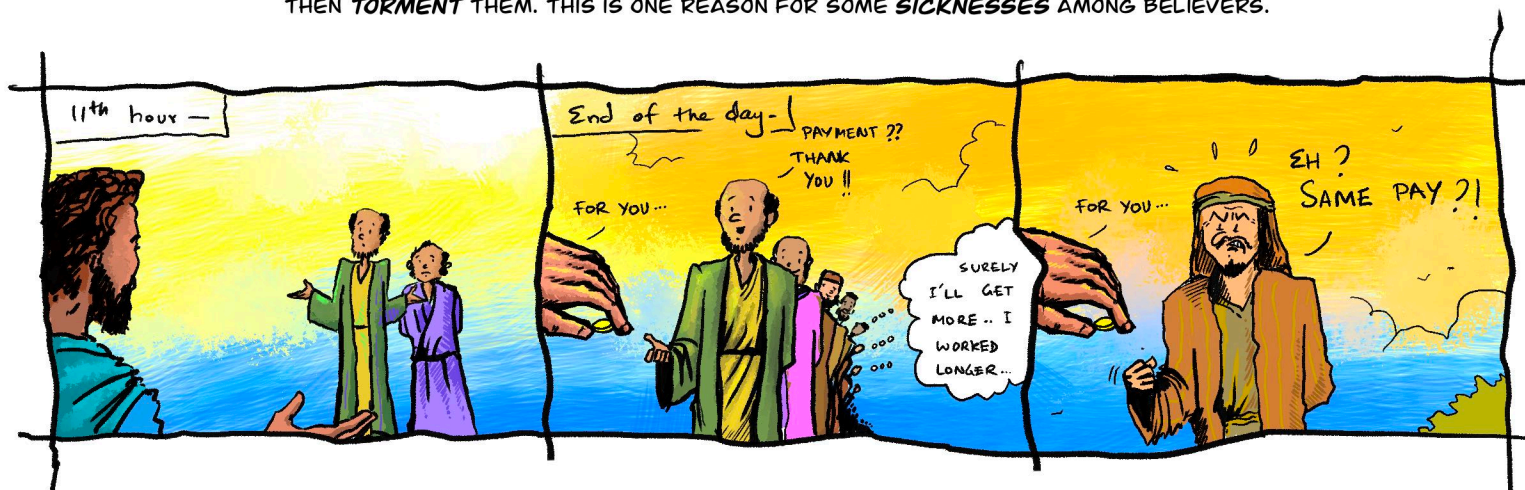
IN 18:3, JESUS SAID, "UNLESS YOU BECOME **CONVERTED** AND BECOME LIKE **CHILDREN** YOU SHALL **NOT** ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." JESUS WAS SPEAKING ABOUT **HUMILITY** HERE. "WHOEVER **HUMBLES** HIMSELF LIKE THIS CHILD...". IN OTHER WORDS, JESUS WAS SAYING HERE THAT **HUMILITY** IS THE **FIRST** AND **FOREMOST** REQUIREMENT FOR ENTERING GOD'S KINGDOM. JUST AS THE LORD WANTS US TO BE **BOLD** WHEN **CONFRONTING SATAN**, HE WANTS US TO RECOGNISE OUR **HELPLESSNESS** AND **DEPEND** ON HIM **TOTALLY**. THIS IS THE **DUAL PICTURE** OF THE CHRISTIAN: A **FEARLESS WARRIOR** WHEN FACING **SATAN** AND HIS EVIL FORCES, BUT A LITTLE **CHILD** BEFORE **ALMIGHTY GOD**. KEEP IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS, WE ARE **IGNORANT** AND **FOOLISH** AND DON'T EVEN KNOW OUR A,B,C. THAT IS WHY WE **CLING** TO THE LORD ALWAYS -- AND THEN WE WILL BE PERFECTLY **SAFE** AND WILL ALSO BE **PROTECTED** FROM SAYING AND DOING MANY **FOOLISH** THINGS.



IN 18:18--20, WE SEE THE SECOND TIME THAT JESUS SPOKE ABOUT THE CHURCH. HERE HE SPEAKS ABOUT THE **AUTHORITY** OF THE CHURCH TO **BIND SATAN** AND TO **LOOSE BELIEVERS** HELD IN HIS GRIP. BUT THIS AUTHORITY CAN BE EXERCISED ONLY BY A **MINIMUM OF TWO BELIEVERS** WHO ARE **UNITED**. WHEN TWO BELIEVERS ARE **ONE** IN THEIR SPIRIT, THE LORD COMES INTO THEIR **MIDST** (18:20). ONLY THEN CAN THEY BIND **SATAN'S ACTIVITIES**. A **HUSBAND** AND **WIFE** CAN KEEP SATAN OUT OF THEIR HOME FOREVER IF THEY ARE **UNITED**. TWO **ELDERS** CAN KEEP SATAN OUT OF THEIR **CHURCH** FOREVER IF THEY ARE **UNITED**.



IN 18:21--35, JESUS SPOKE THE PARABLE OF THE **UNMERCIFUL** SERVANT WHO DID NOT FORGIVE HIS FELLOW-SERVANT. HE WAS TEACHING HERE THAT EVEN IF OUR SINS ARE ONCE FORGIVEN BY GOD, THEY CAN THEN BE "**UN-FORGIVEN**", IF WE DON'T FORGIVE JUST ONE OTHER PERSON!! THIS KING FORGAVE THE SLAVE A **HUGE** DEBT. BUT WHEN THAT SLAVE DID NOT FORGIVE HIS FELLOW-SLAVE, HIS **OWN** FORGIVENESS WAS **CANCELLED**. AND THEN JESUS SAID, "SO WILL MY HEAVENLY FATHER DO TO YOU IF YOU DON'T FORGIVE YOUR BROTHER FROM YOUR HEART" (VERSE 35). ALL THE SINS GOD FORGAVE US WILL BE PUT **BACK** TO OUR ACCOUNT IF WE DON'T **FORGIVE** SOMEBODY ELSE, AND WE WILL GO RIGHT ON TO HELL. NOT ONLY THAT, JESUS ALSO SAID THAT THAT SLAVE WAS HANDED OVER TO THE **TORTURERS**. THIS MEANS THAT GOD WILL WITHDRAW HIS **PROTECTION** FROM BELIEVERS WHO DO NOT FORGIVE OTHERS, SO THAT DEMONS CAN THEN **TORMENT** THEM. THIS IS ONE REASON FOR SOME **SICKNESSES** AMONG BELIEVERS.



IN 20:1--16, JESUS SPOKE A PARABLE ABOUT LABOURERS WHO CAME TO WORK FOR THEIR MASTER AT DIFFERENT HOURS OF THE DAY. THE FIRST FOUR GROUPS .. WHO WORKED FOR 12 HOURS, 9 HOURS, 6 HOURS AND 3 HOURS -- ALL WORKED ON THE BASIS OF A **CONTRACT**, FOR **PAY**. THE **LAST** GROUP ALONE -- WHO WORKED ONLY FOR **ONE** HOUR -- WORKED WITHOUT ANY CONTRACT, WITH **NO ASSURANCE** OF ANY PAY. AT THE END OF THE DAY, THAT **LAST** GROUP GOT THE **SAME** WAGE AS THE **FIRST** GROUP. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY RECEIVED **12** TIMES THE **HOURLY WAGE** OF THE FIRST GROUP!! WHAT THE LORD WAS TEACHING - THOSE WHO SERVED THE LORD FOR REWARD, WOULD GET THEIR REWARD LAST, EVEN IF THEY LABOURED FOR HIM FOR MANY, MANY YEARS. BUT THOSE WHO SERVED THE LORD OUT OF **GRATITUDE** AND **JOY**, WITHOUT **EXPECTING** ANY REWARD, WOULD GET THE **HIGHEST** REWARD IN HEAVEN, **EVEN** IF THEY LABOURED ONLY FOR A VERY **BRIEF** TIME.

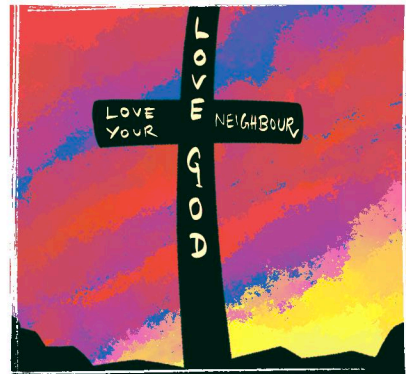


WE CAN ENTER GOD'S KINGDOM ONLY IF WE RECEIVE THE **FREE** ROBE OF THE **RIGHTEOUSNESS** OF **CHRIST** (VERSES 1--14).

IN CHAPTER 22, WE SEE **THREE** IMPORTANT TRUTHS:



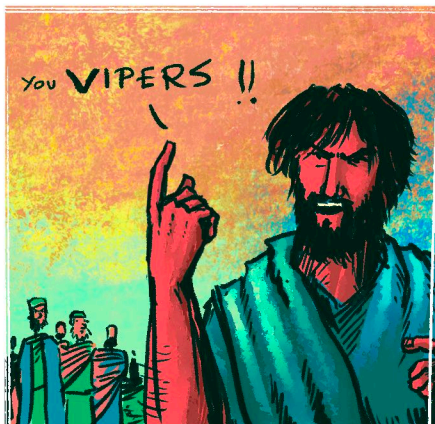
WE MUST CLEAR OUR **DEBTS** TO **MAN** FIRST ("CAESAR" REPRESENTS TODAY, THE **GOVERNMENT** AND ALL HUMAN BEINGS), BEFORE WE GIVE ANY **MONEY** TO **GOD** (VERSE 21).



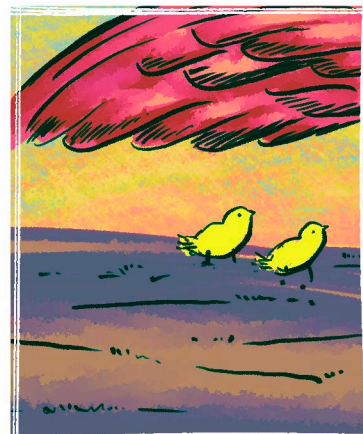
THE MESSAGE OF THE **ENTIRE** BIBLE CAN BE SUMMED UP IN TWO STATEMENTS: **LOVE GOD** WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND **LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR** AS YOURSELF (VERSES 37--40). THESE ARE GREAT TRUTHS WORTH MEDITATING ON -- FOR MANY PEOPLE GO ASTRAY IN THESE AREAS, FOLLOWING THE TEACHINGS OF **MEN** RATHER THAN OF OUR LORD.

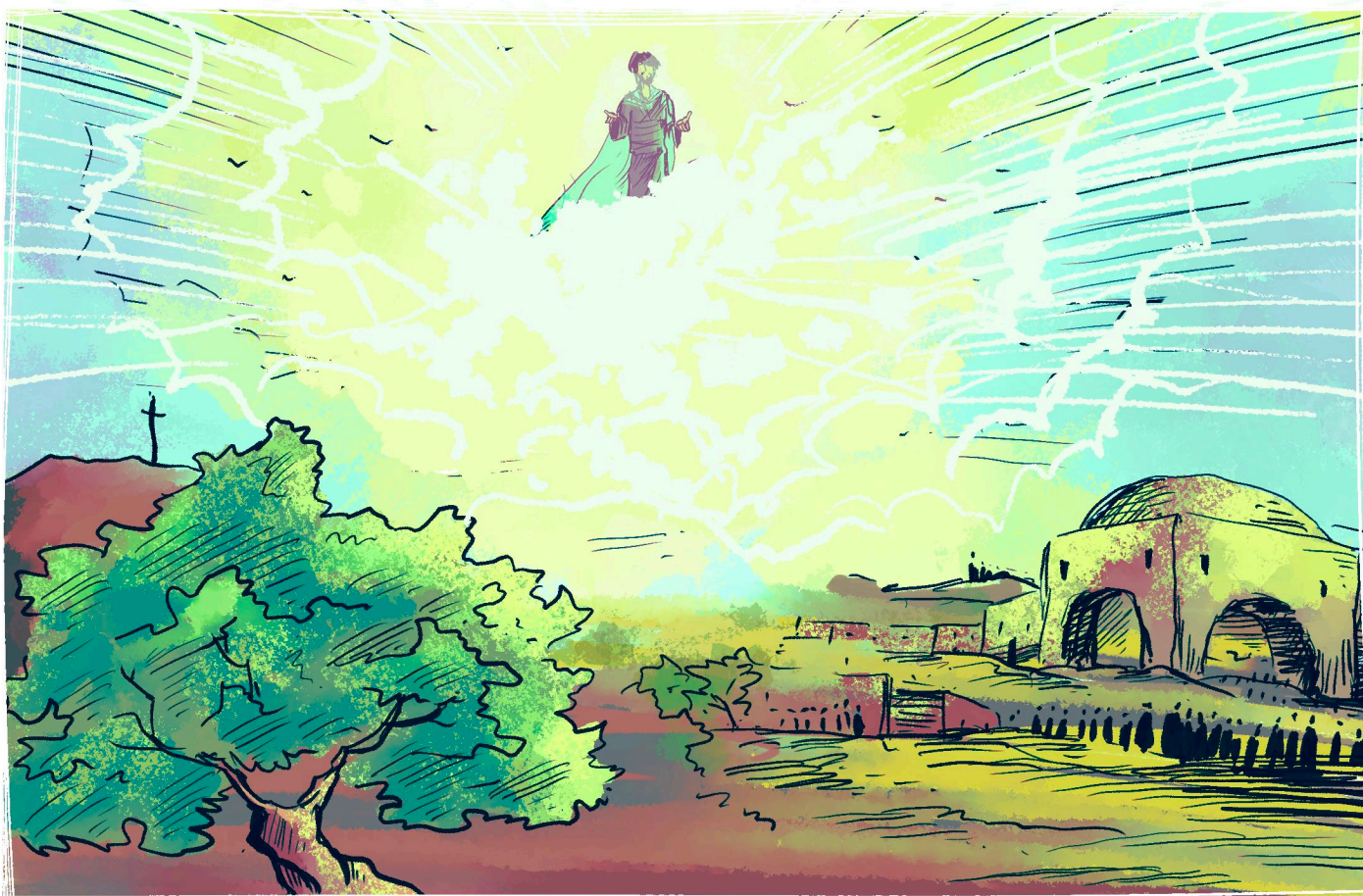


IN CHAPTER 23, JESUS EXPOSES THE **HYPOCRISY** AND **COUNTERFEIT** RELIGION OF THE PHARISEES. THEY **FASTED**, **PRAYED** AND **TITHED**, THEIR **DOCTRINES** WERE ALL **CORRECT**, AND THEY EVEN HAD A **MISSIONARY** PROGRAMME (23:15). THEY RESIGNED THEIR JOBS AND TRAVELLED TO DISTANT LANDS TO MAKE **CONVERTS**. BUT JESUS SAID THAT THEIR CONVERTS WERE **DOUBLE** THE CHILDREN OF HELL. THAT IS WHAT EVERY LEGALIST IS -- AND WHEN HE CONVERTS ANOTHER PERSON TO HIS **LEGALISTIC** VERSION OF **CHRISTIANITY**, HE MAKES THAT PERSON TWOFOLD A CHILD OF HELL. IT IS EASY TO GET PEOPLE TO CHANGE **EXTERNALLY** AND TO FOLLOW A **FORM** WITHOUT HOLINESS. LET US NOT IMAGINE THAT **ALL** MISSIONARY ACTIVITY IS OF GOD. IT IS ONLY WHEN WE MAKE DISCIPLES AND TEACH THEM TO **LOVE JESUS SUPREMELY**, AND TO **LOVE OTHERS** AS CHRIST LOVED US, THAT WE **DELIVER** THEM FROM HELL.



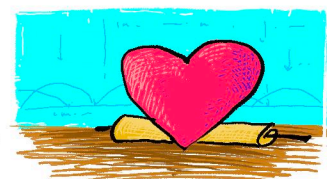
JESUS DENOUNCED THE PHARISEES WITH VERY STRONG WORDS, CALLING THEM "**VIPERS**" (23:33). HE HAD THE RIGHT TO DO THAT, BECAUSE HE WAS GOING TO **DIE** FOR THE **SINS** HE **DENOUNCED** IN THEM. HE HAD **SOUGHT** FOR YEARS "TO GATHER THEM AS A **HEN** GATHERS HER LITTLE **CHICKS** UNDER ITS **WINGS**" (23:37). WE TOO CAN HAVE THE RIGHT TO DENOUNCE SIN IN OTHERS ONLY IF WE ARE WILLING TO LAY DOWN OUR LIVES, IF NECESSARY, TO SAVE THEM FROM THEIR SIN. IF WE DENOUNCE SIN, **WITHOUT LOVING** PEOPLE LIKE THAT, WE ARE MERELY "**SELF-APPOINTED PROPHETS**" -- AND **HYPOCRITES**.





IN CHAPTER 24, JESUS SPOKE OF HIS FINAL RETURN TO EARTH. THE FIRST SIGN OF THE LAST DAYS (THAT HE SPOKE OF REPEATEDLY) WAS THAT THERE WOULD BE A GREAT DEAL OF **DECEPTION** IN THE LAST DAYS (VERSES 4, 11, 24). THEN HE SPOKE OF THE **FIG TREE** (A PICTURE OF THE NATION OF **ISRAEL**) THAT WAS **CURSED** BY HIM FOR HAVING ONLY **LEAVES (RELIGION)** WITHOUT **FRUIT (SPIRITUALITY)** (MARK 11:13--21), PUTTING FORTH ITS **LEAVES (RELIGION WITHOUT SPIRITUALITY)** ONCE AGAIN (MATTHEW 24:32, 33). THE NATION OF ISRAEL WAS SCATTERED 40 YEARS AFTER CHRIST'S CRUCIFIXION, BUT THEY HAVE COME BACK TO THE LAND AND **REPOSSESSED** JERUSALEM FOR THE FIRST TIME ONLY IN OUR LIFETIME -- IN 1967. THUS WE KNOW THAT OUR LORD'S COMING IS **VERY NEAR**. JESUS ALSO TAUGHT HERE THAT HE WOULD RETURN TO TAKE HIS CHILDREN UP TO BE WITH HIM, **AFTER THE GREAT TRIBULATION IS OVER** (VERSE 29). HE ALSO SAID THAT WHEN HE COMES, **EVERYONE** WOULD **SEE** HIM, FOR HE WOULD COME LIKE THE **LIGHTNING** (VERSE 27).

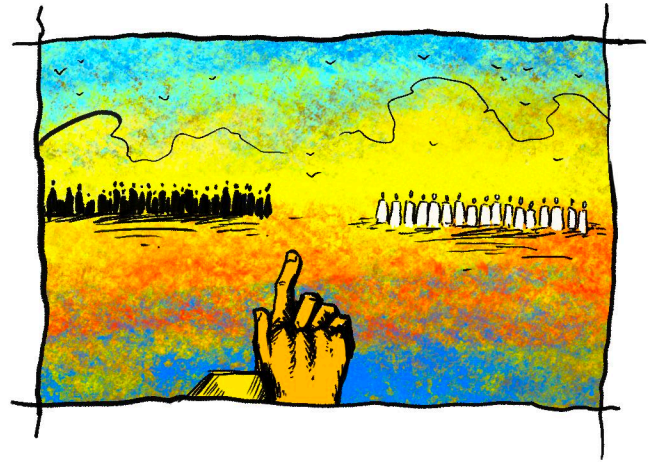
IN CHAPTER 25, JESUS EXPANDED ON HIS TEACHING (IN THE CLOSING VERSES OF CHAPTER 24) THAT PEOPLE SHOULD BE READY FOR HIS COMING, WITH **THREE PARABLES**. THE WAY TO PREPARE FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST IS **NOT** BY UNDERSTANDING THE TIMETABLE OF HIS COMING AND BY STUDYING PROPHETIC CHARTS, BUT BY BEING **SPIRITUALLY** READY. OUR **HEART** IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN OUR **MIND**.



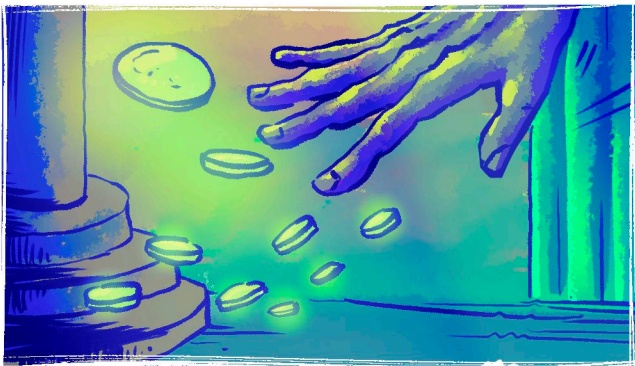
THE FIRST PARABLE WAS ABOUT **HEART-PURITY**. THE TEN VIRGINS REPRESENT CHRISTIANS WHO ARE CLEAN ON THE **OUTSIDE**. THE **FIVE** WISE VIRGINS WHO HAD "**EXTRA OIL**" IN THEIR VESSELS" REPRESENT THOSE WHOSE **HEARTS** ARE FILLED WITH **LOVE** FOR **CHRIST** BY THE **HOLY SPIRIT** (VERSES 1--13). IF LOVE FOR CHRIST IS NOT THE **MOTIVE** FOR ALL THAT WE DO FOR THE LORD, THEN EVEN IF WE ARE **PURE EXTERNALLY**, WE ARE **FOOLISH**. THE CHURCH IN **EPHESUS** BECAME LIKE THESE FOOLISH VIRGINS, HAVING LOST ITS "**FIRST LOVE**" (REVELATION 2:4).



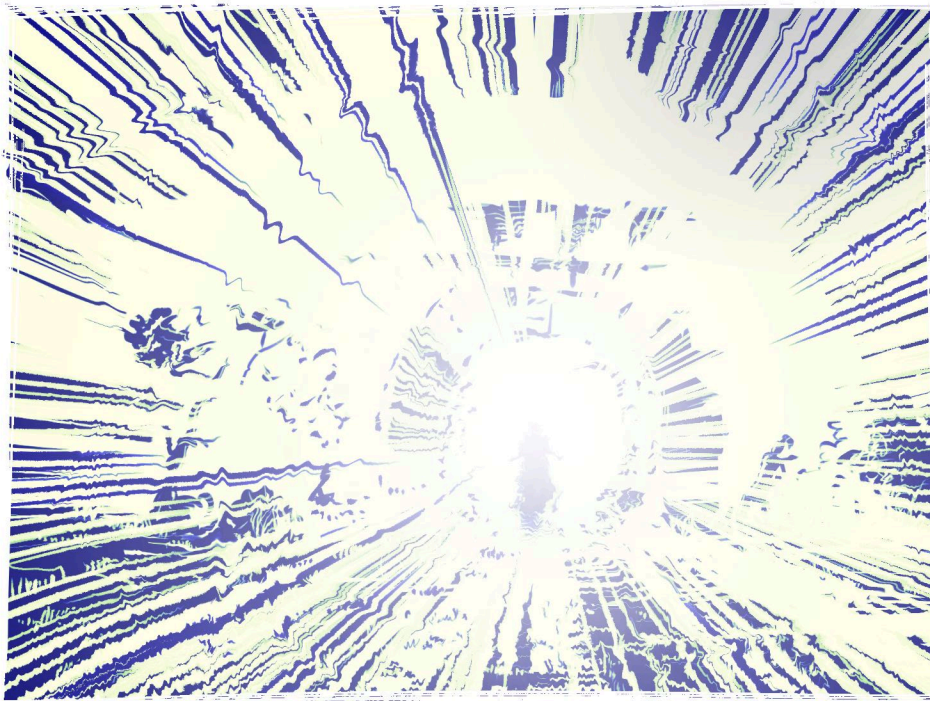
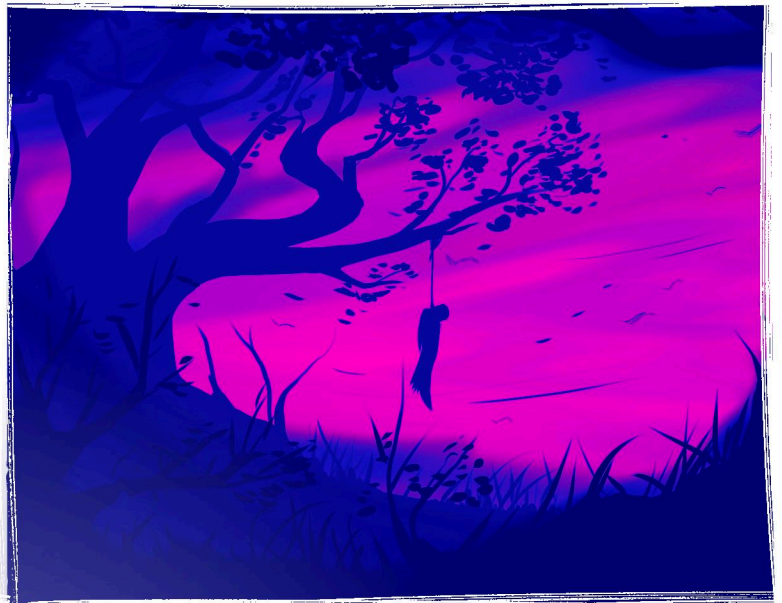
THE SECOND PARABLE RELATED TO BEING **FAITHFUL** IN USING THE **GIFTS** GOD HAS GIVEN US, FOR HIS **KINGDOM** (VERSES 14--30). GOD HAS GIVEN US **DIFFERENT** DEGREES OF **ABILITIES** AND **OPPORTUNITIES** TO **SERVE** HIM. AND HE EXPECTS US TO PRODUCE **FRUIT** ONLY ACCORDING TO THE **MEASURE** OF WHAT **HE** HAS **GIVEN** US -- NOT MORE. THAT WAS WHY THE PERSON WHO PRODUCED FIVE TALENTS RECEIVED THE **SAME REWARD** AND COMMENDATION AS THE PERSON WHO PRODUCED ONLY **TWO** TALENTS (VERSES 21, 23).



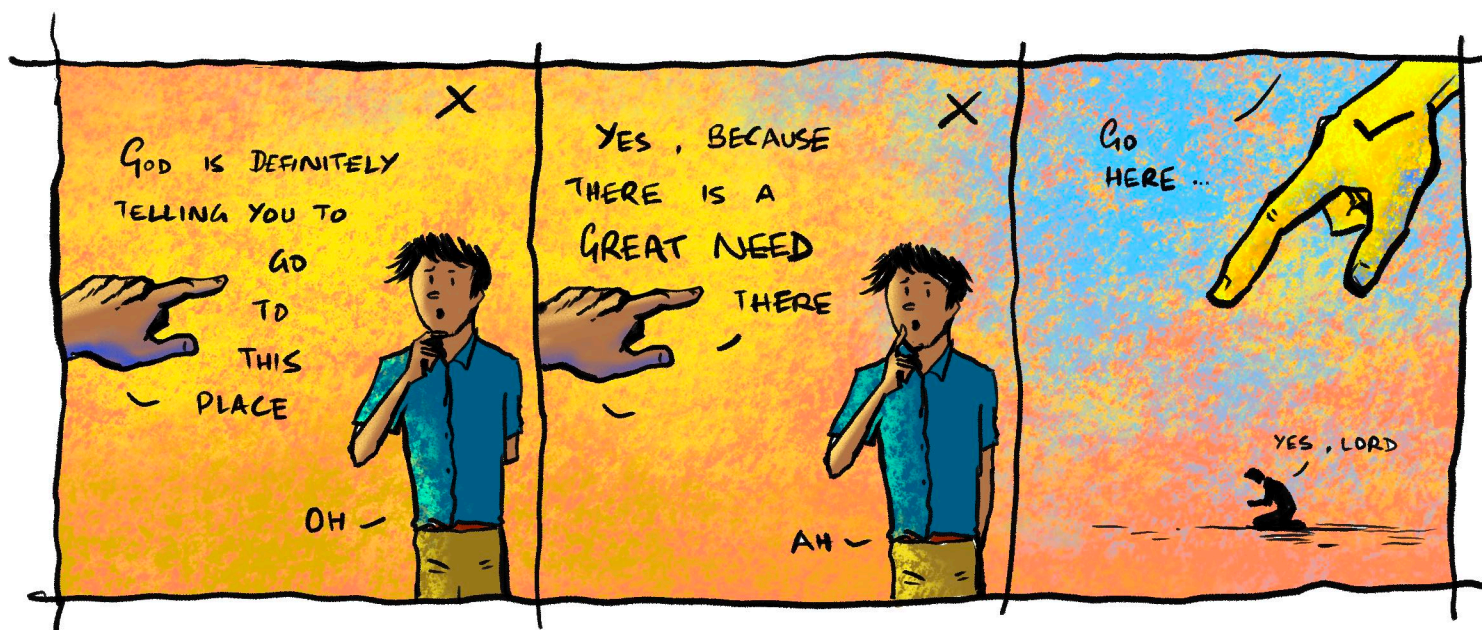
THE THIRD PARABLE (OF THE **SHEEP** AND THE **GOATS**) SHOWS US THAT WE WILL BE REWARDED BY GOD ACCORDING TO THE WAY WE TREAT OUR **FELLOW-BELIEVERS** WHO ARE IN **NEED** (VERSES 31--36). THIS IS THE PROOF THAT OUR **FAITH** IS **LIVING** AND **GENUINE** (JAMES 2:14--17).



IN 27:3, WE SEE HOW EVEN "**REPENTANCE**" CAN BE **HOLLOW** AND **INSINCERE**. JUDAS HAD SOME SORT OF REPENTANCE (**FEELING** OF **SORROW** FOR HIS SIN), BUT INSTEAD OF GOING TO THE **LORD** AND CONFESSING HIS SIN TO **HIM**, HE WENT TO THE **PRIESTS** (LIKE MANY DO TODAY). SO HE WENT TO HELL. THE **LORD ALONE** CAN **FORGIVE** US OUR SINS -- NO-ONE ELSE.

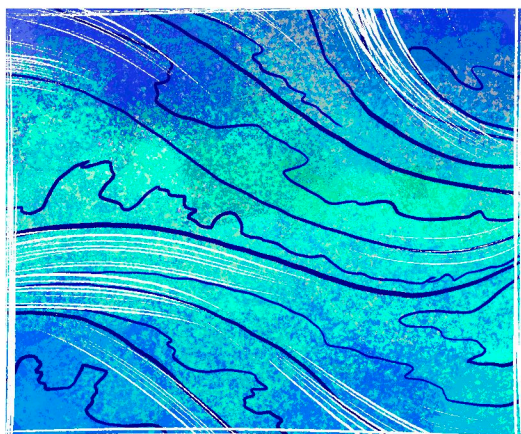


IN THE FIRST FEW VERSES OF CHAPTER 28, WE READ OF THE **RESURRECTION** OF CHRIST. WITHOUT HIS RESURRECTION, HIS DEATH WOULD HAVE BEEN IN **VAIN**, FOR THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO **PROOF** THAT HE WAS WHO HE CLAIMED TO BE -- THE SON OF GOD. CHRISTIANITY RESTS ON THIS **TWIN UNSHAKEABLE** FOUNDATION -- THE **DEATH** OF CHRIST FOR OUR SINS AND HIS **RESURRECTION**. THIS IS WHAT MAKES IT **DIFFERENT** FROM **ALL RELIGIONS**. NOTICE THAT CHRIST HAD LEFT THE GRAVE **BEFORE** THE ANGEL **ROLLED** AWAY THE STONE (VERSE 2). THE ANGEL ROLLED AWAY THE STONE, **NOT** FOR THE **LORD** TO **LEAVE** THE GRAVE, BUT FOR HIS **DISCIPLES** TO GO IN AND **SEE** THAT HE HAD **RISEN**.



IN 28:18--20, WE READ OF THE GREAT COMMISSION THAT JESUS GAVE HIS DISCIPLES -- AND TO US. THE BASIS OF THE GREAT COMMISSION IS THAT **ALL AUTHORITY** IN HEAVEN AND EARTH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO OUR **LORD**. WE **DON'T GO** TO MAKE DISCIPLES BECAUSE THERE IS A **NEED** SOMEWHERE OR BECAUSE SOMEONE **URGED** US TO GO.

WHAT ARE WE TO GO AND DO IN EVERY NATION? WE ARE TO MAKE **DISCIPLES** -- NOT **MERE CONVERTS**. WE ARE NOT TO JUST GET THEM TO "ACCEPT CHRIST INTO THEIR HEARTS". A DISCIPLE IS A **LEARNER** AND A **FOLLOWER** OF THE **LORD JESUS**.



ONLY THOSE WHO ARE **WILLING** TO BECOME **DISCIPLES** SHOULD BE BAPTISED. BAPTISM IN THE THREEFOLD NAME IS **NOT** OPTIONAL. IT IS **ESSENTIAL**. WE ARE **NOT** TO BE LIKE THE INTER-DENOMINATIONAL GROUPS THAT SAY, "WE WON'T PREACH ON BAPTISM BECAUSE THAT WILL **DISTURB** OUR UNITY." WE WILL PREACH ALL THAT OUR **LORD** TOLD US TO PREACH.



THE GREAT COMMISSION IS VERY CLEAR. FIRST: **GO**. THEN, MAKE **DISCIPLES**. THEN **BAPTISE** THEM. THEN, SPEND THE REST OF THE TIME **TEACHING** THEM TO **OBEY** EVERY SINGLE THING THAT JESUS COMMANDED. THIS GREAT COMMISSION IS SURROUNDED ON EITHER SIDE BY A **STATEMENT** AND A **PROMISE**. FIRST, "ALL AUTHORITY IS GIVEN TO THE LORD JESUS." AND AT THE END, "I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS UNTO THE END OF THE AGE." MANY LIKE TO CLAIM THAT PROMISE OF THE LORD, "**LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS**." BUT TO **WHOM** WAS IT GIVEN? IT WAS GIVEN ONLY TO THOSE WHO GO AND MAKE **DISCIPLES**, AND THEN TEACH THEM TO OBEY ALL THAT JESUS **COMMANDED** (28:19, 20) -- AND NOT TO BELIEVERS WHO GO HERE AND THERE TO MAKE **MONEY**.