

## Misconceptions

I'm sure you've noticed that society often renames things in order to make them appear less sinful or not sinful at all. For instance, a certain lady, whom I will not name except to say she would have been a U.S. President if someone hadn't trumped her bid-----

Well, this lady told a tall tale.

Now I'm doing it.

No, she didn't tell a tall tale, she told a lie in order to get attention.

But she got caught, and eventually admitted that she had *misspoken*.

Yes, she had misspoken.

And maybe misspeaking isn't as bad as it used to be, as we're now being told we are living in a *post-truth* age.

An age where politicians routinely supply us  
with *alternative facts*.

Now, when I was a boy, the alternative to a  
fact was a fiction, and *misspeaking* would  
have been immediately identified as a  
downright lie.

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However, we're not going to be talking about  
lies this morning, although we will be  
mentioning gossip, which in many cases is  
the first cousin to a lie.

But, for the most part, we will be talking  
about *misconceptions*.

Now, misconceptions aren't really lies, but  
they are untrue.

For instance, before 1492, everyone believed  
the earth was flat.

It was the conventional wisdom of the day,  
just like evolution, which is equally

untrue, is the conventional wisdom of our day.

And misconceptions, just like gossip, can be harmful.

Certainly, they were very harmful in the case of Jesus' ministry, and certainly He took action against them.

But before I rush on, let me take a long step back.

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Isn't it amazing that Adam was created as a mature adult, while Jesus entered this world as a helpless baby, just like the rest of us.

For instance, at the time of His incarnation, the Son of God couldn't walk.

But as time moved on, I can see Him launching forth from the hands of His

anxious mother, taking a few wobbly steps and crashing into the arms of Joseph. And for the most part, Mary would have been the one who taught Him how to *talk*. Years later, when He taught in the temple, the accent He had inherited from His mother would have marked Him as a Galilean, a distinction that was not all that helpful.

You see, the Judeans rather looked down on the Galileans as being a backward people. In fact, this bias was so prevalent that Philip didn't receive a very enthusiastic response when he told Nathanael---"**We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote.**"

Everything was going well until he mentioned the fact that the Messiah was Jesus of *Nazareth*, to which Nathaniel replied ---"**Can anything good come out of *Nazareth*?"**

That's because Nazareth was in Galilee, and everyone knew there had never been a prophet come out of Galilee.

In fact, this so-called fact had been used to silence Nicodemus when he objected to his fellow Pharisees' bias against Jesus. Yes, they shut him up with the words---"**Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee.**"

And there was another problem concerning Jesus' birthplace.

John 7:40-42 **"Therefore many from the crowd, when they heard this saying, said, "Truly this is the Prophet." Others said, "This is the Christ." But some said, "Will the Christ come out of Galilee? "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"**

Well, they were right on about that.

Micah's prophecy had pinpointed the  
Messiah's birthplace as Bethlehem in  
*Judea*, not Galilee.

But they were wrong about the historical  
facts.

The truth is—Jesus had been born in  
Bethlehem, just 5 miles from Jerusalem.  
And since this event occurred a mere 31 to  
32 years ago, it shouldn't have been too  
hard to find someone who could have given  
them an eyewitness account.

And they were wrong about that other piece  
of conventional wisdom.

Both Jonah and Elijah were *Galileans*.

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However, even with these destructive  
misconceptions muddying up the water,  
Jesus was attracting very large crowds.

In fact, His popularity seemed to be creating a problem.

Turn with me to John 3:22-24 **"After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison."**

Yes, Jesus and John were ministering in roughly the same area.

Obviously, it was God's will that they worked in tandem for a while.

But John's disciples didn't see it that way.

V26 **"And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified-- behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!"**

In their minds, Jesus, who had been baptized by John, should have been John's follower, not going off on His own.

But they were wrong; and it was time to set them straight.

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John was the last of the Old Testament prophets, and it was his job to introduce the Messiah to Israel.

But to a certain extent, he seemed to understand what we might call *the great transition*.

In fact, he had first introduced Jesus as---  
**"The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"**

And after that greatest of all events, Jesus would begin the process of taking a bride.

I am not sure what John really understood, but it's interesting to note that he used



this context to explain his place in God's plan.

John 3:27-30 **"John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. "He must increase, but I *must* decrease."**

No, there was no jealousy on John's part.

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But there was a problem, and Jesus was aware of it.

The **"Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John,"** which was true.

But if there was anyone who could put an evil spin on this innocent fact, it would be the Pharisees.

Before you knew it, gossip would be flying around that Jesus and John were in competition with each other.

So what should Jesus do?

If He had quietly gone to John and said, "Look, John, you've done a good job, but now it's time to leave," John would have been happy to comply.

But that wasn't God's plan.

John must be allowed a few more weeks to fulfill his commission.

As a result, Jesus simply stepped aside.

Actually, He did a great deal more than step aside.

**"He left Judea and departed again to  
*Galilee.*"**

And by the way, that would involve a trip of about 50 to 75 miles.

However, He didn't take the usual route that most Israelis would have taken, crossing the Jordan twice in order to avoid Samaria.

No, He went right through the middle, not only crossing a geographical barrier but a *social* barrier, and in the process received a stinging rebuke.

**"How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans."**

But it wasn't long before His opposition became His ambassador.

John 4:29 **"Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"**

Well, maybe He could, and the Samaritans  
streamed out of the city to investigate.

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Certainly, there is a great deal we could  
learn from Jesus' time among the  
Samaritans, but this morning, we are  
going to content ourselves with answering  
just two questions:

*Why* did they believe? and *what* did they  
believe?

Don't forget, they hadn't seen a single  
miracle.

John 4:39-42 **"And many of the Samaritans of  
that city believed in Him because of the  
word of the woman who testified, "He told  
me all that I ever did." So when the  
Samaritans had come to Him, they urged  
Him to stay with them; and He stayed  
there two days. And many more believed  
because of His own word. Then they said**

to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard *Him* and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

Certainly, this woman's testimony had a great affect, but **"many more believed because of His own word."**

And, as you will notice, they believed that He was---**"the Christ, the Savior of the world."**

Yes, not only did they believe He was their Messiah, but they were convinced that He was---**"the Savior of the world."**

Jesus would never receive such a response from Israel.

And if He had been running His campaign on the basis of popularity, He would have never left.

But that wasn't His motivation.

He had been sent to the **"lost sheep of the house of Israel."**

So after two days, and perhaps with a sigh, He moved on.

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However, the Samaritans wouldn't be forgotten, and in just a few years, we would read, in Acts 8:5-6---**"Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did."**

Yes, Philip was even allowed to do miracles.

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But for the present, Jesus would be heading for *Galilee*.

John 4:44-45 **"Now after the two days He departed from there and went to Galilee."**

**For Jesus Himself testified that a prophet has no honor in his own country."**

I wonder why the Holy Spirit inserted Jesus' words right here.

After all, He had made this statement some time ago when the residents of His hometown had rejected any notion that He was their Messiah.

Perhaps, as He trudged down the road to Galilee, He was thinking about the wonderful reception He had received in Samaria, and the one He was likely to receive in Galilee.

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Certainly, God's ways are not our ways, and Jesus' choices of late might have set us to wondering.

First of all, He had left Judea when His disciples could hardly keep up with the

enthusiastic crowd who were requesting baptism.

And then He left the Samaritans, a people who had accepted Him wholeheartedly.

Now He was heading to Galilee, an area that reminded Him of the negative response He had received in Nazareth.

Why would He do that?

The answer is simple.

It was God's plan, and He was God's Servant.

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However, His initial reception wasn't all that bad.

John 4:45 **"So when He came to Galilee, the Galileans received Him, having seen all the things He did in Jerusalem at the feast; for they also had gone to the feast."**



Obviously, the news of His miracles and teachings were having their affect, even in Galilee.

But then something happened that we would have passed over, but Jesus detected a much deeper problem.

V46-49 **"So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you *people* see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe." The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"**

So what was the problem?

Hadn't God provided these signs and wonders  
for the very purpose of convincing Israel  
that His Son was the Messiah?

Well, yes, He had, but in this particular  
case it wasn't so much *if* the man  
believed, but *what* he believed, and in  
fact, what *Israel* believed.

If Jesus had to travel all the way from Cana  
to Capernaum, a distance of about 12  
miles, in order to heal this man's son,  
then He was being regarded as a prophet  
and nothing more.

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So why do I say that?

Of course I can't be 100% sure, but as you  
will remember, Elijah, who had been cared  
for by a widow during the famine, raised  
her son from the dead by making physical  
contact.

1 Kings 17:21 **"And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, I pray, let this child's soul come back to him."**

And then there was the case of the prophet Elisha.

When the Shunammite woman came to him with the news that her son was dead, he sent his servant ahead to lay his staff on the child's face, and then he traveled all the way to her house where he **"lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth"** and so on.

Of course, this was not always the case. This same prophet had sent a messenger to tell Naaman the leper to **"wash in the Jordan seven times."**

Nevertheless, I wouldn't be surprised if Israel had gotten into the habit of

associating physical contact with their prophets' ability to heal.

And Jesus wasn't averse to this method.

In the case of Jairus' daughter, He was quite willing to comply with her father's requests to **"Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live."**

Jesus even put out His hand and touched a leper, saying **"I am willing; be cleansed."**

But this case was different.

If Israel didn't recognize Him as their Messiah, and indeed the Son of God, they couldn't enter the kingdom.

And in the nobleman's opinion, Jesus' ability to heal was limited both by distance and by death.

**"Sir, come down before my child dies!"**

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And to make matters worse, this certainly hadn't been a requirement in the case of a Gentile centurion whom Jesus encountered under similar circumstances.

At that time, Jesus was in Capernaum, and you might say the man's home was just around the corner.

But when Jesus said **"I will come and heal him,"** the man responded----**"Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed."**

That must've been music to Jesus' ears, for He turned to the crowd and said---

**"Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"**

And He wasn't finding it at the moment.

John 4:50-51 **"Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed**

the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told *him*, saying, "Your son lives!"

At last, a Jew with the faith of a Gentile!

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Well, it wasn't long before Jesus was heading south again.

Yes, He was leaving Galilee and returning to Judea.

John 5:1 **"After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."**

But He wasn't going to the temple.

No, He was heading for the sheep gate, and the much more unhealthy smell of the pool of Bethesda.

V2-4 **"Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these**

lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had."

The name Bethesda means "house of mercy," and for some, it had been just that, but not for all.

No, V 5 tells us, **"a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years."**

Actually, we're not told how many years this poor man had been sitting by the pool.

We don't really know if Bethesda had been his first choice, or his last resort.

But we do know 38 years is a long time.

In fact, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the man had been disabled for 4 or 5 years already.

And we don't know exactly what his infirmity was, but it was serious enough to greatly affect his mobility.

So here we have a man who could hardly walk, and his only hope of a cure was his ability to *run faster* than everyone else.

Now, if that isn't a hopeless situation, I don't know what is.

V 6-7 **"When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been *in that condition* a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."**

----"Do you want to be made well?"



The answer should have been obvious, but all the poor man could do was tell Jesus why such a thing was impossible, and I don't think you could blame him.

For years he had been inches away from the mercy of God, and had missed it every time!

But now the mercy of God had come to him!

John 5:8-9 **"Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath."**

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Jesus had given him two commands.

He was to rise, and he was to take up his bed and walk.

And the second one got them into a lot of trouble.

V 10 **"The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."**

Obedying Jesus often gets us into trouble, doesn't it?

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I'm quite sure the Jews hadn't seen the miracle.

The pool of Bethesda wouldn't have been their kind of place.

But they had certainly witnessed a blatant piece of Sabbath-breaking.

V 10-12 **"He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'" Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"**

Isn't *selective hearing* wonderful?

They completely missed the words, **"He who made me well,"** but they didn't miss a

syllable of the words **"Take up your bed and walk."**

So, here was a man who was walking for the first time in 38 years, and all they could think about was the fact that he was carrying his bed on the Sabbath.

However, the man didn't know who it was who had asked him to do such an awful thing, as Jesus had blended into the crowd almost immediately.

Was Jesus afraid of this very situation?

No, He wasn't, and I'll tell you why.

First of all, Jesus could have healed the man on any day of the week, but He deliberately chose the Sabbath.

And, secondly, if Jesus wanted to hide His identity, He certainly wouldn't have confronted the man in the temple.

He taught regularly in the temple, and He had stirred up some very dangerous opposition.

This man would have been hard-pressed to find anyone in the temple who couldn't identify Him.

And V16 says **"For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath."**

So why did Jesus make it so easy for them to find Him?

Well, it was because He wanted to make a point, a point that was closely connected to one of their misconceptions.

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You see, the Pharisees believed the Messiah would be the son of David, not the Son of God.

It was a common misconception, in spite of some very clear evidence in God's Word to the contrary.

For instance, Isaiah 9:6 says---"**For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

Did you get that---"**Mighty God, Everlasting Father.**"

And we're talking about the Messiah here.

V 7 "**Of the increase of *His* government and peace *There will be* no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever."**

Yes, "**even forever.**"

And again in Micah 5:2 **"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."**

And of whom else but God could it be said---  
**"Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."**

And we could go on.

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On another occasion, Jesus took them to task concerning this misconception.

In Matthew 22:42 He said---**"What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"**  
**They said to Him, "The Son of David."**

(Yes, the Messiah would be a man, the son of David)

But then, referring to Psalm 110:1, He asked another question:

Matthew 22:43-44 **"---How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool?"**

And then He asked a question they could not or would not answer---**"If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?"**

And now, He had deliberately healed a man on the Sabbath in order to connect the dots.

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Certainly, the Pharisees were correct in defending the Sabbath.

Sabbath-keeping is one of the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:10 **"but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work---."**

But Sabbath-keeping was meant for man, not God.

God only rested on the first Sabbath, after creation, and He has been working ever since.

And it was on this very premise that Jesus rested His case.

Returning to John 5:17 **"My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."**

And they got His point loud and clear.

V 18 **"Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God."**

Yes, Jesus was **"making Himself equal with God,"** and He agreed with them.

And if my memory serves me correctly, I believe that was the only thing they ever agreed upon.



And so, having established His claim, He continued to expand upon it.

V19 **“---Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”**

By this time, their blood pressure must be going right off the charts.

However, with much cooler heads, we have the opportunity of learning something else about Jesus in V 20.

In spite of the fact that He had left the ivory palaces about 31 years ago, there had been no communications gap--- **“For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.”**

And then He describes what some of those **“greater works”** would be.

V 21-23 **"For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to *them*, even so the Son gives life to whom He will. "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son, "that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."**

Yes, these same Pharisees would be meeting Jesus again, and this time they wouldn't be the accusers.

At the great White Throne Judgment, the books will be opened, and their works will accuse them.

However, the very Judge Who will sit on that throne has made a way for the vilest sinner to escape His judgment.

V 24 **"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall**

**not come into judgment, but has passed  
from death into life."**

Yes, believers in Jesus have everlasting  
life already. It is a present  
possession.

Their salvation is history, for they have  
**"passed from death into life."**

And in the future, they **"shall not come into  
judgment."**

I'm so glad of that fact, aren't you?

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However, in spite of this wonderful  
provision, the Pharisees continued to  
hang on to their misconceptions.

And they continued to cling to another  
misconception that has prevailed right  
down to this present day.

It is a common misconception which many of  
our friends and relations are committed  
to.

And perhaps there is someone here this morning who is convinced that his or her good works can earn them a place in heaven.

I have to tell you that God's Word makes no such claim.

In fact, Ephesians 2:8-9, says the very opposite---"**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.**"

And Titus 3:5 assures us that it is "**---not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.**"

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So what's wrong with good works?

Well, the answer is—absolutely nothing.

In Matthew 5:16 Jesus said **"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."**

And Titus 3:8 reminds Christians---"**that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works.**"

Yes, good works are *important*, and God will reward His children who maintain them.

But good works are not able to secure our place in heaven.

That's not what they were designed for.

Let me illustrate my point.

An automobile fits the bill if we want to travel from Kitchener to London, Ontario. It's way ahead of walking.

However, if you want to go from Kitchener to London, England, you better take an airplane.

An automobile will never get you there, not even if you over-inflate the tires. And good works will never get you to heaven. No, when it comes to gaining an entrance through those pearly gates, Jesus says---  
**"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."**

But why is Jesus the only way to heaven? Isn't it possible to get there on our own? Well, Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane should have answered that question for all time.

Matthew 26:37-39 **"And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me." He went a little farther and fell on His face, and**

**prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;---"**

He was referring to our *cup of sin*, a cup that was so repulsive to His sinless nature.

And He was referring to the very *cup of iniquity* that would keep us out of heaven.

**"O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me;"-----** and there was silence.

If there had been any possibility that *good works*, long pilgrimages, or even a lifetime of penitence could prevail, this would have been the time for God to declare it.

Surely, with His Son sweating as it were great drops of blood, a loving Father would have answered---"You're right, Son.

Come home to our ivory palaces, and we'll let them work it out for themselves."

But there was silence.

There was silence because **"the wages of sin is death"** and those wages must be paid.

So then, because it was God's will to save ruined sinners, it would be His will to make---**"Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**

Jesus knew that.

He had always known that.

And so, in the briefest moment of time, He ended His appeal with the words----

**"nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."**

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Some misconceptions can be quite harmless.



For most people, back in the 1400s, their firm belief that the world was flat really didn't make that much difference. That's because most people never traveled any further than a horse could take them. But when it comes to our eternal destiny, misconceptions are deadly.

So don't be satisfied with *alternative facts*; the alternative of a fact is a fiction.

The real truth is found in the Word of God. Certainly, I have only been able to give you a bare outline in this message, but our elders, and indeed many in this assembly, both men, women, and young people, would be happy to answer any of your questions from God's Word.

Just ask them.

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Well, we have been walking in the steps of the Master, and I trust the Holy Spirit has enriched each of our lives.

And I don't think the walk was too long, was it?

Although, most of us weren't too disappointed when we missed out on that 12-mile walk to Capernaum.

But the good news is, we can continue *walking with Jesus*.

Not only has He promised to never leave us nor forsake us, but He told His disciples---"**I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.**"

**"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"**