



# *Imperial Academy* *Bible Lessons*



**A Miraculous Ministry**

# A Miraculous Ministry

**G**od the Father and Jesus Christ had now set apart 12 disciples. This laid the foundation for the most important organization on Earth, the Church of God. These men served Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. Following Christ's death and resurrection, they would become the 12 apostles leading the first era of the Church.

To fulfill this all-important task, these 12 men needed training. The Bible records several times throughout Jesus's ministry that He took these men apart from the crowds to teach them specially. One of these occasions is known as the Sermon on the Mount.

## BEAUTIFUL ATTITUDES

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them ..." (Matthew 5:1-2). In one of His most important and longest recorded sermons, Jesus Christ instructed His disciples on God's law of love. He began by listing nine blessings that God promises to those who obey and live His way of life. These blessings are referred to as "the beatitudes."

List these nine blessings on the lines below (verses 3-11):

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_

In each of these verses, the word "blessed" can be translated "happy." Happiness is the result of an attitude that is humble, that makes peace, that hungers and thirsts to be righteous like God. These are beautiful attitudes because they are God's attitude.

## THE SALT OF THE EARTH

In Matthew 5:13, Jesus reminded His disciples of how rare they were. He compared them to the "salt of the earth." At that time, salt was extremely rare: It was even used as a form of money. By comparing them to salt, He was reminding His disciples how valuable they were. Salt also does not spoil. In fact, it preserves other foods! He was teaching His disciples how to endure and how to preserve others. Salt is also pure. It was used as a disinfectant (see 2 Kings 2:19-22). True followers of Christ must be pure, uncontaminated by the filth of the world.

As a youth in God's Church, set apart by your parents (1 Corinthians 7:14), you too "are the salt of the earth." To God, you are exceedingly valuable. Herbert W. Armstrong wrote that of all the people God can reach, youths in God's Church are the *most important*.

With God's help, you can remain pure, you can endure, you can be an example to others, and you can help preserve the world and the universe!

"You are the \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_. A \_\_\_\_\_ that is set on a \_\_\_\_\_ cannot be \_\_\_\_\_, ...Let your \_\_\_\_\_ so \_\_\_\_\_ before \_\_\_\_\_,

that they may see your \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ which is in \_\_\_\_\_” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

Those who obey God’s law and deliver His message are a light to the world. Throughout the centuries, the seven eras of God’s Church have been like seven golden lampstands, shining brightly during mankind’s darkest history (Revelation 1:11-13).

### THE EVERLASTING LAW

Many in the world today teach that Jesus Christ came to Earth to do away with the law. They misuse various Bible passages to support this false teaching. But notice what Christ Himself told His disciples.

“Think \_\_\_\_\_ that I am come to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_, or the \_\_\_\_\_: I am not come to \_\_\_\_\_, but to \_\_\_\_\_. For verily I say unto you, Till \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ pass, one \_\_\_\_\_ or one \_\_\_\_\_ shall in no wise \_\_\_\_\_ from the \_\_\_\_\_, till all be \_\_\_\_\_” (Matthew 5:17-18).

Thayer’s Greek-Chaldee Lexicon defines the word “fulfill” as “to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be ...” Christ was telling His disciples that they must obey every aspect of God’s law. Rather than doing away with the law,

Christ was magnifying it! (Isaiah 42:21). To be “great in the kingdom of heaven,” He said, they must do and teach God’s everlasting law (Matthew 5:19). That is the purpose for which He called them.

### PROPER PRAYER

In this sermon, Jesus instructed His disciples how to cultivate good relationships with other people. He taught them how to respond when someone offended them (Matthew 5:38-40, 43-44). He taught what has become known as the “golden rule”: *Do unto others as you would have done unto you* (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31). He taught them the ultimate goal of any Christian who would follow Him: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). To do that, they would need to develop their own relationship with God the Father, primarily through prayer.

“But you, when you \_\_\_\_\_, enter into your \_\_\_\_\_, and when you have \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_, pray to your \_\_\_\_\_ which is in \_\_\_\_\_; and your Father which sees in secret shall \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_” (Matthew 6:6).

Leading religious Jews like the Pharisees prayed in public. Everyone could see their “good works,” yet



God’s law is summed up in the Ten Commandments.



Daily prayer is a fundamental part of the Christian life.

Christ said these people were hypocrites (verse 5). He emphasized to the disciples that what makes prayer important is how it connects us to God, not how other people think of us. That is why He instructed them to pray in private. He also gave them an outline of what types of things to talk to God about. Summarize the seven main parts of this prayer outline (verses 9-13):

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God recorded this outline so you too can use it when you pray to God. It helps you think like Christ thought and talk to God about the types of things Christ talked to Him about. Christ tells His disciples not to let their prayers become “vain repetition.” Your

prayers should be heartfelt: You are praying to your perfect, loving Father, who is even more real than your physical father.

In His Sermon on the Mount, Christ taught about forgiveness, fasting, complete devotion to God and other subjects. His disciples were learning things that they themselves would later be responsible to teach others.

By the end of His message, the audience had expanded from just His disciples to multitudes of people. These people were interested in hearing Jesus and treated Him respectfully, yet He asked them: *Why do you call me Lord but do not the things I say?* (Luke 6:46). Spiritual growth and strength come not from merely agreeing with what God teaches but actually doing it (verse 47-48).

“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29). The Jewish nation had many prominent, influential preachers, teachers and political leaders who spoke about the Scriptures. Yet these crowds of everyday people were much more impressed with the message this man was preaching. Jesus Christ was speaking with authority from God the Father.

**FRUITS OF FAITH**

During His ministry, Christ worked great miracles for those who had faith and believed. In many cases, those miracles involved healing from a physical sickness or disease. One such example demonstrates the spectacular results of *humility* and *faith*.

While in His hometown of Capernaum, four Jewish elders came to Jesus on behalf of a Roman military officer. One of the officer’s young servants was extremely ill and about to die. He was like a son to the officer. The man hoped Christ would come and heal him (see Luke 7:2-3).

The elders described various reasons they thought this officer was worthy of Christ’s help: He loved the Jewish nation and had built a synagogue for the Jews (verses 4-5). But Christ focused on different qualities.

“Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the \_\_\_\_\_ sent \_\_\_\_\_ to him, saying unto him, \_\_\_\_\_, trouble not yourself: for I am not \_\_\_\_\_ that you should enter \_\_\_\_\_ my \_\_\_\_\_: Wherefore neither thought I myself \_\_\_\_\_ to come unto you: but \_\_\_\_\_ in a \_\_\_\_\_, and my \_\_\_\_\_ shall be \_\_\_\_\_” (verses 6-7).

Jesus Christ was impressed by this man’s faith and humility. Even though he was a commander in the Roman army with a higher human office than Jesus, this man still regarded Jesus as his *Lord*. He recognized Christ’s authority and had complete faith in His ability to heal!

“For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers,” the centurion said, “and I say unto one, Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it” (verse 8). This Roman officer knew that when Christ gives an order, it is carried out.

Christ was moved by this man’s faith. He told the elders who were with Him that in all His encounters in Israel, nowhere had He “found so great faith” (verse 9). The centurion then turned back home. He knew at that moment that his much-loved servant had been healed. When his aides returned to the house, there they found the servant to be miraculously healed. This miracle is a spectacular example of the results of humble, bold faith.

Shortly after this astonishing event, Jesus Christ worked another miracle. *He brought a young man back*

*to life* (verses 11-15). This resurrection to physical life astounded those who saw it, and the news of Jesus’s ministry spread across Judea and the surrounding region (verses 16-17).

The news even reached into one of the prisons and the ears of John the Baptist. John sent two of his disciples to observe Jesus’s ministry and determine whether He was the Christ. “Are you truly the Christ?” they asked Him. “Or should we look for someone else?”

Right before their eyes, Christ performed several marvelous miracles: healing the sick, casting out demons, and restoring sight to the blind (verse 21). Here is how Christ responded to the disciples of John:

“Go your way, and tell John what things you have \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_; how that the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_, to the \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_” (verse 22).

The *fruits* of Jesus’s ministry proved He was the Christ. Inspired by what they had witnessed, the two men began their journey back to report to John. Jesus then turned to those around Him and taught them something important about John the Baptist: He was a type of the Prophet Elijah, and his ministry prepared the way for the prophesied coming of the Christ.

Write out verse 27 and then Malachi 3:1 to see Jesus Christ used the same language as the Prophet Malachi. Luke 7:27 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Malachi 3:1 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Christ then said there was no greater prophet than John the Baptist (Luke 7:28). But He added that in the Kingdom of God everyone will be greater than

John was as a man. He then explained the attitude required to make it into the Kingdom of God: We must be zealous and eager! (Matthew 11:12). Many who were witnessing Christ's ministry lacked this zeal.

### 'WOE UNTO YOU'

We have studied a few examples of those who responded to Jesus Christ's ministry positively. Yet the vast majority failed to act on what He taught and to truly repent of their sins. Christ delivered strong rebuke against these unfaithful people.

"Woe unto you, \_\_\_\_\_! woe unto you, \_\_\_\_\_! for if the \_\_\_\_\_, which were done in you, had been done in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, they would have \_\_\_\_\_ long ago in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_" (Matthew 11:21).

Christ rebuked the Jews in these cities because they had witnessed Him accomplishing great miracles, yet they did not repent.

Tyre and Sidon were Gentile cities that had not received special attention from God like Israel and Judah had. People in those cities did not see Christ's miracles firsthand. Christ said that if He had performed miracles among those people, they would have repented!

God will judge these Jews for ignoring Christ and for their lack of repentance even more seriously than the Gentiles. This future judgment is represented by the annual holy day called the Last Great Day (see verse 22).

"And you, Capernaum, which are exalted unto heaven, shall be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in you, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for you" (verses 23-24). Jesus was telling them that even the extremely wicked people of Sodom would have repented if they had received the same witness Judah was receiving!

The people in these cities considered themselves wise. Yet they lacked the humility to believe, repent and act on the truth even when it was delivered to them by the very Son of God! Notice what Christ prayed at the end of this encounter.

"I thank you, O \_\_\_\_\_, Lord of

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, because you have \_\_\_\_\_ these things from the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and have \_\_\_\_\_ them unto \_\_\_\_\_" (verse 25).

Human beings cannot determine the truth: God must reveal it to us. He will only help you understand that revelation if you are humble and contrite.

### A FOOTWASHER'S HUMILITY

God records examples of this crucial humility for us to learn from. That very evening, Christ was invited to dine at the home of Simon, a Pharisee (Luke 7:36-37). As they sat down to eat, a young woman carrying a small container approached Jesus. She dropped down before Him and began washing His feet with her tears and her hair, even kissing them. She then used the precious ointment inside the container to anoint His feet.

This was an act of deep humility and great honor toward Jesus. This woman sincerely recognized that she was a sinner. She desperately wanted to change, and she knew Christ was a man from God.

Simon the Pharisee thought to himself: *If this man were truly a prophet, He would know this woman was a sinner and would stop her from touching Him!*

Jesus Christ, of course, *was* truly a prophet. He perceived what his host was thinking, and spoke to him. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto you," He said. "There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" (verses 40-42).

Simon correctly answered that the man who was forgiven the most debt would love the creditor the most (verse 43). Christ then said: "When I entered your house, you did not give me water to wash my feet. Yet this woman has washed my feet with her tears and hair. You didn't give me a kiss to greet me, but this woman has not stopped kissing my feet since I entered. You didn't anoint my head with oil. This woman anointed my feet with precious ointment." Christ was praising this woman's humble and repentant attitude.

"Wherefore I say unto you, Her \_\_\_\_\_, which are \_\_\_\_\_, are \_\_\_\_\_; for she \_\_\_\_\_ much: but to whom \_\_\_\_\_ is

\_\_\_\_\_, the same \_\_\_\_\_ little. And he said unto her, Your \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_” (verses 47-48).

Those at the meal were stunned that Jesus, who appeared to them to be an ordinary man with extraordinary teachings, would say this woman’s sins were forgiven (verse 49). Yet Jesus authoritatively told her, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace” (verse 50). This woman displayed an attitude of sincere repentance, faith and works—an attitude missing in so many others who witnessed the ministry of Jesus Christ.

**OPPOSITION AND A SIGN**

Shortly after these events, Jesus and the 12 disciples began their second trip through Galilee, traveling through “every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God ...” (Luke 8:1). This hopeful, thrilling message inspired many.

The more people flocked to hear Jesus preach, the more the religious leaders opposed Him. These men held government positions over the other Jews, but they were ruled by the government of the Roman Empire. They feared that if people followed Jesus, the empire would punish them for failing to control the Jews. They actively looked for any possible opportunity to discredit Jesus.



Jesus Christ instituted foot washing at Passover.

On one occasion Jesus healed a man who had been possessed by demons (Matthew 12:22). A Pharisee in the crowd spoke up and said, “This man casts out demons by the power of Beelzebub! He himself is possessed by a devil.” Jesus answered this accusation by exposing a contradiction, and used the opportunity to teach something about the spirit world.

“How can \_\_\_\_\_ cast out \_\_\_\_\_? And if a \_\_\_\_\_ be divided against itself, that kingdom \_\_\_\_\_ . And if a house be \_\_\_\_\_ against \_\_\_\_\_, that \_\_\_\_\_ cannot stand. And if \_\_\_\_\_ rise up against himself, and be \_\_\_\_\_, he cannot stand, but \_\_\_\_\_ an \_\_\_\_\_” (Mark 3:23-26).

Christ then explained that His ability to remove people from Satan’s control was proof that He was more powerful than Satan (Matthew 12:27).

Christ warned the people and the Pharisees that those who were using their words to oppose God’s message were “a generation of vipers,” and then said, “[O]ut of the abundance of the heart [or mind] the mouth speaks” (verse 34). He continued, “A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned,” Christ said (verses 35-37).

This is a strong warning to each of us. You will give an account for everything you say against a friend, sibling, parent or anyone else you talk about, in public or in private. Whether you speak good or evil is up to you.

Proverbs 23:7 says, “[A]s he thinks in his heart, so is he ....” Also, whatever is in your heart is the wellspring of the words you speak. To *speak* good things, you must put good things into your mind and block out evil things.

“Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from you” (Matthew 12:38). They could not disprove His teachings, so now they challenged Him to show them a miracle to prove that He was from God. This was after He had not only preached the truth of the Scriptures with power and authority to masses of people across the region, but had also, through faith in God the

Father, cast out demons, healed the sick, and even resurrected the dead! Yet they refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ.

Christ sternly corrected these confrontational people for seeking after a sign, calling them “an evil and adulterous generation” (verse 39). He then gave them the only sign He ever gave to prove that He was the Messiah: “As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale,” He said, “so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the grave” (verse 40). Christ was prophesying that He would die, remain dead “in the heart of the earth” for *three days and three nights*, and then be resurrected!

This is a miraculous sign that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. Yet when it came, even His own disciples forgot it or failed to understand it. Today, the vast majority of those who consider themselves Christian do not accept this sign: They believe He died on a Friday evening and was resurrected on a Sunday morning, a mere *two nights* and *one day* later!

### **SPIRITUAL FAMILY**

Jesus then delivered a God Family message. His mother and brothers were standing away from the crowd, hoping to get His attention. When He was told that His family was looking for Him, He responded by gesturing toward his disciples and said, “Behold my mother and my brothers!” He then explained, “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Matthew 12:46-50).

What an inspiring statement! Jesus was not disrespecting His physical family; He was delivering a message about His spiritual family. Human beings are made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), and those who do the Father’s will are part of His Family. In fact, those who are led by God’s Spirit and do God’s Work are *literally* the sons of God! (Romans 8:14). That is the wonderful vision Jesus Christ delivered to those people in Galilee that day, which God recorded for everyone to see—and for those, like you, whom He is working with to truly understand.

Even if you are an only child, if you are doing God’s will, you have many brothers and sisters in the Church. The members in your congregation are your spiritual family! That is how God views it—and it should become more and more real to you!

### **PARABLE OF THE SOWER**

“The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. And he spake many things unto them in parables ...” (Matthew 13:1-3). Jesus Christ often spoke to the crowds using stories and metaphors. Why? Most people think it was to make His message understandable to the multitudes. But when His disciples asked Him the reason, He answered, “Because it is given *unto you* to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, *but to them it is not given*” (verses 10-11).

Those parables actually *hid* the true meaning of God’s truth from most people! Christ kept the full understanding from the multitudes because, as their behavior showed throughout His ministry, it was not yet time for them to be called. Had the meaning been plain, all those who heard Christ speak would be held accountable for what they were being taught. Christ reserved the true meaning of the parables for His disciples, who had the Holy Spirit working with them and would later have it within them.

In His “parable of the sower” (verses 3-9), Jesus Christ illustrated this fact. Some of the sower’s seeds fell by the wayside, never established roots, and were devoured by birds. Others fell on stone and sprouted briefly, but then withered under the sun. Some grew fell among thorns, which grew and choked the seeds. Only one group of seeds fell on good ground and grew into productive, fruitful plants.

Most people did not understand this parable. But Christ decoded it for His disciples: It was a metaphor to illustrate what happens to different people who hear God’s message.

“Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower,” He said. “When any one hears the word of the kingdom, and understands it not, then comes the wicked one, and catches away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side” (verses 18-19). These are the people who have heard God’s message from the Bible and from His messengers and His Church (for example, books and television programs by Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Flurry). They don’t understand or believe the message, Satan swiftly takes it from them, and they move on to other things.



The parable of the sower illustrates what happens to different people who hear God's message.

“But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that hears the word, and anon with joy receives it; Yet has he not root in himself, but endures for a while: for when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended” (verses 20-21). This group has initial excitement about God’s message, but their roots are shallow. Temptation, trials and persecution cause them to wither.

“He also that received seed among the thorns is he that hears the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful” (verse 22). These individuals are moved by the truth. They establish roots. But then they follow the “deceitfulness of riches” and other worldly priorities rather than dedicating their lives to God (Mark 4:19), and so they produce no spiritual fruit.

God is working in your life. The seed is sown. Whether it thrives depends on the choices you make. Keep your mind on the things above (Colossians 3:1) and be “grounded and settled” in God’s truth (Colossians 1:23), so that seed will develop

deep roots in “good ground.” Then God will produce amazing fruit in your life—for you, for your family, for those around you, and for God and His Work!

That same day, Christ delivered to that crowd at the Sea of Galilee five more parables: a lamp hid under a bushel (Mark 4:21-23), a seed growing of itself (verse 26-29), a field of wheat and tares (Matthew 13:24-30), the growth of a mustard seed (verses 31-32), and the expansion of leaven (verse 33).

“All these things spoke Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world” (verses 34-35).

Read verses 36-53 for more parables Christ delivered exclusively to His disciples.

### **CALMING A STORM**

Jesus and His disciples then sailed across the Sea of Galilee. As they crossed this large lake, Jesus fell asleep.



Jesus Christ calmed a storm on the Sea of Galilee.

An unusually violent storm arose, creating huge waves (Luke 8:23). Water pounded against the boat and over it. Though some of the disciples were experienced fishermen, as water began to fill the boat, they feared they would sink and drown.

“Master!” one of the men shouted, awakening Christ. “We are about to die!”

Jesus rose up and “rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39). The winds and sea obeyed Jesus Christ’s command!

“Why are you so fearful?” He asked the disciples. “Where is your faith?” (verse 40).

The disciples believed that Jesus was from God and that He was the Christ. Still they were stunned by the power of this incredible miracle. “What manner of man is this?” they asked. “He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him.” They were only beginning to realize that this ordinary-looking man with extraordinary faith in God to perform extraordinary miracles was actually a God Being who had come in the flesh. He was the Word—the Being

through whom God created the universe, the Earth, storms, lakes and everything else!

After reaching shore, Christ was approached by two men possessed by demons. The demons knew that Christ was capable of freeing these men from their hold. “So the devils besought him, saying, If you cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine” that was grazing off in the distance (Matthew 8:31).

Christ simply ordered: “Go.” The demons obeyed, leaving the men and entering the swine. The possessed pigs charged down the steep hills and drowned in the water below.

This upset the townspeople. Rather than being grateful to have a man with the power to cast out demons from their presence, they told Christ and the disciples to “depart out of their coasts” (verse 34).

Back in Capernaum, Christ performed still more miracles. The daughter of Jarius, leader of the local synagogue, had *died*. Yet Christ told the mourning family, “She’s not dead, but asleep” (Mark 5:39). When He held the young girl’s hand and told her to awake, she immediately was resurrected from the dead by the

power of God! This stunned her family and brought them indescribable joy!

Another woman had suffered a blood-related disease for 12 years, yet she had faith that simply touching Jesus's garment would make her whole. She too was instantly healed.

### **REJECTED IN HIS OWN COUNTRY**

Jesus Christ was performing great works for the people of Judah. His ministry was becoming increasingly popular. Returning home to Nazareth, He delivered a powerful sermon in the local synagogue.

However, the people of His hometown couldn't believe that "the carpenter, the son of Mary" could do such great things (Mark 6:3). Even His family members did not support His ministry, and His own sisters were offended by His teaching! After His death and resurrection, however, they would understand, repent and go on to do great things for the Church of God.

Christ was not surprised by the lack of support His neighbors and family offered His ministry. He told the disciples, "A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house" (Matthew 13:57). Because of their lack of belief, Christ did not perform the miracles there that He would have if they had responded to His message with repentance, faith and obedience (verse 58).

### **SENDING FORTH THE DISCIPLES**

Now Jesus Christ's work entered a new phase. As He traveled the region, He was moved with compassion by the multitudes of people in desperate need of help. They were "as sheep having no shepherd" (Matthew 9:36).

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few," He told His disciples. "Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (verses 37-38). There was much work to be done, and Jesus Christ needed help to complete all that God had commissioned of Him during His earthly ministry.

To aid Him in reaching the masses, Christ gave the disciples authority to heal people and cast out demons in His name. He commanded them to visit the lost 10 tribes of Israel and preach the good news of the coming Kingdom of God! (Matthew 10:6-7). He also forbade them from preaching to the Gentiles. This

task would be given to another apostle in the first-century Church.

Christ warned His disciples that they would surely face opposition, but God would always be right there with them, supplying them the words to speak and the power necessary to fulfill their commission (verses 19-20).

Before sending them on their way, Christ taught them an important principle: "[F]reely you have received, freely give" (verse 8). Christ was reminding them that they received God's truth at no cost! Likewise, they must deliver God's truth without exchanging it for physical valuables (verse 9). God's Church today still follows this principle by giving away freely everything it broadcasts and publishes. This is rare, if not totally unique in comparison to all other churches. But because it is God's true Church and it is fulfilling His commission to prophesy again, God provides the necessary spiritual and physical resources, just as He did with the disciples.

Much like at the time of Christ in A.D. 29, God's true Church needs laborers to accomplish His Work. As Christ said, *the harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few*. God needs young people eager to serve His Work and make a difference. Develop your talents today, make the most of the opportunities you are given, and take advantage of the many programs God offers His youth so you too can help God's Work! God is eager to see what the future holds for you—and what *you* will contribute to the spectacular plans He has in store!

