

Jesus' ministry has been going on for some time. He has collected a group of disciples. He has selected twelve of them to be apostles. They have been with him when he performed many miracles, probably hundreds if you count the unnamed ones. Two of them were the raising of persons from the dead. They have seen him walk on water. They have seen him calm a rough sea. They know that he is the son of God.

They have been with him when he preached the Sermon on the Mount. They have been with him when he fed the five thousand and the four thousand. He has told them that he is here to do his Father's will. He has explained his kingdom to them and has given them examples of its worth and how it will grow.

They have done their internship and passed it very successfully. They understand a lot, but they still have questions. One of the things he has not explained to them is his coming crucifixion and his return to the Father.

When Jesus declares his spirit is from God and not Beelzebul, some of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law asks for a miraculous sign. Jesus answered, "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." Matthew 12:38-40.

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' ¹⁴ They replied, 'Some say, John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' ¹⁵ 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' ¹⁷ Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.'" Matthew 16:13-17. Then, in verse 20, he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he is the Messiah.

Jesus is now ready to talk to them about his crucifixion. They need to understand the purpose of his crucifixion and that he is going back to the Father.

"From that time on, Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

²² Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'

²³ Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.'" Matthew 16:21-23. Peter loved and admired Jesus so much that he wanted to protect Him. But Jesus knew God's plan.

And to give them a time prospective, Jesus adds, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.” Matthew 16:28. Of the twelve we know all but Judas were still alive at Pentecost.

“After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. ² There he was transfigured before them. His face **shone** like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. ³ Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. ⁴ Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.’ ⁵ While he was still speaking, a bright cloud covered them, and a voice from the cloud said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!’

⁶ When the disciples heard this, they fell facedown to the ground, terrified. ⁷ But Jesus came and touched them. ‘Get up,’ he said. ‘Don’t be afraid.’ ⁸ When they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus. ⁹ As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, ‘Don’t tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.’” Matthew 17:1-9. Then Jesus explains that John the Baptist was the Elijah who was to come first.

It is interesting that his face shone. When Moses came down the mountain with the two tablets of stone containing a new covenant, his face was radiant. Jesus is bringing a new covenant. In three ways God made it clear they should listen to Jesus. Jesus’ face shone like the sun, Moses and Elijah disappear from the vision, and God spoke from the cloud expressly saying “Listen to him!”

The next major event in teaching the apostles was raising Lazarus from the dead. He lived in Bethany with his sisters Martha and Mary. The sisters sent word to Jesus in Galilee that Lazarus was sick. “When he heard, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.’” John 11:4. Jesus waited two days and then they started back to Bethany. Knowing that the Jews there had tried to stone him the disciples did not want to go. “So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead, and for your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him.’” John 11:14-15.

“On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days.” John 11:17. After some discussion and mourning with the family, Jesus asked for the stone to be removed from the grave. Martha said there would be a bad odor after four days. But they took away the stone. “Then Jesus looked up and said, ‘Father, I thank you that you have heard me. ⁴² I knew that you always hear me, but I said this for the benefit of the people standing here, that they may believe that you sent me.’

⁴³ When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come out!’ ⁴⁴ The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’” John 11:43-44. That was the third and most important raising of someone from the dead.

Why was this miracle so important? If Lazarus can be resurrected after four days, the raising of Jesus after three days will be believable. Jesus' power upset the Chief Priests, so they make plans to kill him and Lazarus. Knowing this, Jesus and his disciples go to Ephraim for a time of serious teaching before returning to Jerusalem.

“Now, Jesus was going up to Jerusalem. On the way, he took the twelve aside and said to them, ¹⁸ ‘We are going up to Jerusalem, and the **Son of Man** will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death ¹⁹ and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!’” Matthew 20:17-19.

While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table. Matthew 26:6-13. Jesus is properly anointed to be king.

Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the benches of those selling doves. ¹³ “It is written,” he said to them, “‘My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’” Matthew 21:12-13. Jesus had cleansed the temple at the beginning of his ministry. They were angry then. This time they will demand his death.

“Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” John 12:27-28. And in verse 32-33 he adds, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.”

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he said to his disciples, ² “As you know, the Passover is two days away—and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” Matthew 26:1-2. Jesus then tells them to set up what we call, The Last Supper. During that supper, several things are revealed. The following are some of them.

1. The time is near. “And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’” Luke 22:15.
2. He designed his own memorial. “And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ ²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” Luke 22:19-20.
3. He identifies his betrayer. Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.” John 13:26.
4. He tells them that his return to God is a good thing. “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. ² My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.” John 14:1-3.

5. Jesus tells them he will not leave them alone. “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—¹⁷ the Spirit of truth.” John 14:16-17a.

Then Jesus told them, “This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: “‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”³² But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” Matthew 26:31-32. He may have been planting in their minds what they should do. When he was arrested, he said, “If you are looking for me let these men go.” And they did except John, lovingly, and Peter fearfully were at his trials.

I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” John 16:28.

“After Jesus said this; he looked toward heaven and prayed: ‘Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you.’² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him.³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.⁴ I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.⁵ And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.” John 17:1-5.

“When he had finished praying, Jesus left with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was a garden, and he and his disciples went into it.” John 18:1. This was the Garden of Gethsemane where he took Peter, James and John and prayed three times that the cup might be taken from Him. In the end, He said, “May your will be done.”

“Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples.³ So Judas came to the garden, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and the Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons.” John 18:2-3.

Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. “Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, ‘Who is it you want?’⁵ ‘Jesus of Nazareth, they replied.’” John 18:4-5. When He asked the question the second time and received the same answer “Jesus answered, “I told you that I am he. If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” Peter did not want to give up that easily. He took his sword and cut off Malchus’ ear.

When Jesus told him to put his sword away and healed Malchus’ ear, it appears that Peter lost his nerve. When Jesus is bound and taken away, the disciples flee. Jesus’ explanations are over. He will not talk to his disciples again until after his resurrection.

We probably think our faith would have been stronger. I doubt it. We are human, too.