



The Gospel of Luke - Chapter Eleven

V. [Luke 9:51-19:27 - The Journey to Jerusalem \(continues\)](#)

V.a [Luke 9:51-13:21 - The first mention of the journey to Jerusalem \(continues\)](#)

Summary of Chapter Eleven

In response to their request, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray through what we now call the Lord's Prayer, a fuller version of which is in Matthew Chapter 6. Jesus reminded them of the need to pray continuously, especially for things that hadn't appeared to be realised or remained unfulfilled. If you keep asking in the name of Jesus, one day the prayer will be answered. All who ask will receive, all who seek will find and the door will be opened before them. The Holy Spirit will be given freely to all who ask Jesus.

Jewish leaders claimed that, because of his miraculous works, Jesus was working in league with the devil. Jesus replied that any house divided would fall and the work he was doing was proof that the Kingdom of God was already among the people on earth.

Jesus taught that when an evil spirit leaves a person it will return unless they hold on to the truth. If it finds that the person has regressed in terms of their sinful nature, then it will repossess them with even more power than before. The people who are really blessed are those who hear Jesus and obey God's will.

The religious leaders kept demanding a sign from Jesus to show he was who he claimed to be. Jesus called them evil as they would not believe what they had seen and that the only sign they would get would be the sign of Jonah. The people who failed to believe in this sign would, in turn, be symbolically condemned by the people of Nineveh. Believers were told to let their light shine so that salvation could be brought to the entire world.

The Pharisees found another complaint against Jesus. One of them invited Jesus to his home to eat and commented that he failed to follow basic hygiene requirements by washing his hands. Jesus in turn was critical of the Pharisees, who were more worried about cleaning what was on the outside, rather than the man on the inside, i.e. the heart. He further accused them of cheating people through incorrect teaching and of not loving God in the way they should. Jesus ended up proclaiming a number of woes on the religious leaders.

The following discourse is commonly known as the 'Lord's Prayer'. However, some of us might prefer to think of it as the 'Disciples' Prayer' and to consider the 'Lord's Prayer' to be the one found in John Chapter 17.

Luke portrays Jesus as a man of prayer, always in communion with the Father. Although the following is the only time in Luke that we see the content of his prayers, we get many occasions where Jesus is either in prayer or is teaching on the need for persistent prayer. <<In return for my friendship they accuse me, but I am a man of prayer>> (Psalm 109:4).

The following table lists the major occasions in Luke where Jesus prayed:

<u>Reference:</u>	<u>Occasion:</u>
Luke 3:21	The Baptism of Jesus
Luke 5:16	Prior to his first major encounter with the scribes and Pharisees
Luke 6:12	Prior to choosing the 12 apostles
Luke 9:18	Prior to Peter's confession
Luke 9:28-29	The transfiguration
Luke 10:21-24	Prayer after the mission of the seventy-two
Luke 11:2-4	The Lord's Prayer
Luke 11:5-13	The Parable of the Midnight Friend
Luke 18:1-8	The Parable of the Unjust Judge
Luke 21:36	The Watchful Prayer
Luke 22:32	Intercession for Peter
Luke 22:39-46	Prayer at Gethsemane
Luke 23:34,46	Prayer on the Cross

A fuller account of these prayer instances can be found in the support material.

A summary of the need to pray from these records would include:

1. The need to be bold and confident and to pray with perseverance.
2. Pray for what is needed; not for what is wanted.
3. Pray predominately for others rather than for self.
4. We can be bolder if the problem is not of our own making.
5. Pray instantaneously and in faith.

All prayers are answered if we are persistent: either the specific thing we are praying for will come to fruition; or the thorn in our flesh will be removed; or we will find that God's grace is sufficient for us to overcome the situation.

The bible tells us: <<Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened>> (Matthew 7:7-8). The amazing aspect of grace is that it doesn't matter who or what you are: <<This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles>> (Psalm 34:6).

These verses include a prayer Jesus taught his disciples (vv.1-4), a parable about prayer (vv.5-8) and various encouragements to pray (vv.9-13).

¹One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.

Luke 11:1

Jesus was praying, Lord, teach us to pray. The request of the disciples is for a distinctive prayer that they can pray as his disciples. Usually referred to as the Lord's Prayer, it would be better to understand this as the 'Disciples' Prayer', i.e. as the prayer that uniquely binds them together in a community of worship and intercession and, as such, it is therefore a distinctively Christian prayer. The prayer underscores the unique relationship of Christian believers to God as their Father. This is confirmed in Romans 8:14-17 <<because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory>>, and in Galatians 4:4-7 <<But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, Abba, Father. So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir>>.

² He said to them, When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

Luke 11:2

As stated previously but worth saying again, Father in Greek is *patēr* and in Aramaic *Abba*. The latter was the everyday language spoken by Jesus, as confirmed in Mark 14:36, Romans 8:15, and Galatians 4:6 (see v.1). It was the word used by Jewish children for their earthly fathers. However, since the term in both Aramaic and Greek was also used by adults to address their fathers, the claim that *Abba* meant daddy is misleading and runs the risk of irreverence. Nevertheless, the idea of praying to God as 'Our Father' conveys the authority, warmth and intimacy of a loving father's care. While in heaven reminds believers of God's sovereign rule over all things. The theme of 'Heavenly Father' is found throughout the OT, for example, in Deuteronomy 14:1 and 32:6, Psalms 103:13, Jeremiah 3:4 and 31:9, and in Hosea 11:1. Jesus' disciples are invited into the intimacy of God the Son with his Father.

Hallowed be your name: The first petition is a request that God's name would be honoured and treated with reverence. His name includes his reputation and all that is said about him.

Your kingdom come has twofold emphasis:

1. It is first a prayer that God's rule and reign would continually advance in people's hearts and lives until the day Jesus returns and brings the kingdom in perfect fullness. Christians are called to pray and work for the continual advance of God's kingdom on earth; the second petition. The presence of God's kingdom in this age refers to the reign of Christ in the hearts and lives of believers and to the reigning presence of Christ in his body, the church, so that they increasingly reflect his love, obey his laws, honour him, do good for all people and proclaim the good news of the kingdom.
2. Thus it also refers to the future consummation of the kingdom already realised in part by Jesus' coming, see v.20.

³ Give us each day our daily bread.

Luke 11:3

Daily bread includes all the believer's physical and spiritual needs, which the Lord supplies, not once for all, but day by day. Our food also comes from God: <<He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for man to cultivate – bringing forth food from the earth>> (Psalm 104:14).

⁴ Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation'.

Luke 11:4

Forgive us our sins refers not to initial salvation but to the continual confession of sins and is confirmed by: <<If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness>> (1 John 1:9), which is needed to maintain a relationship with God.

It does not mean that believers need to ask daily for justification since believers are justified forever from the moment of initial saving faith, as stated by Paul in Romans 5:1, 5:9, 8:1 and 10:10. Rather, this is a prayer for the restoration of personal fellowship with God, when fellowship has been hindered by sin, as confirmed in: <<And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption>> (Ephesians 4:30). Those who have received such forgiveness are so moved with gratitude toward God that they also eagerly forgive those who are debtors to them.

On sin as a debt owed to God, we find that in the Greco-Roman world, the 'record of debt' was a written note of indebtedness. Paul uses this as a word picture to characterise each person's indebtedness to God because of sin. God himself has mercifully resolved this problem for all who put their faith in Jesus by taking this note and nailing it to the cross, where Jesus paid the debt. The image comes from the notice fastened to a cross by the Roman authorities declaring the crime for which the criminal was being executed.

For we also shows that asking God's forgiveness requires forgiving others.

Sins against us, and indebted to us in other translations, are synonyms as we recall in these words: <<Two men owed money to a certain money-lender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more? Simon replied, I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled. You have judged correctly, Jesus said>> (Luke 7:41-43), and in: <<Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little. Then Jesus said to her, Your sins are forgiven. The other guests began to say among themselves, Who is this who even forgives sins?>> (Luke 7:47-49).

Lead us not into temptation. The use of the second person plural us throughout, emphasises that the petitions of the Disciples' Prayer are not primarily for the individual but for the entire community of believers.

The word translated temptation can indicate either temptation or testing. The meaning here most likely carries the sense 'Allow us to be spared from difficult circumstances that would tempt us to sin' as found in Matthew 26:41. Although God never directly tempts believers, see James 1:13, he does sometimes lead them into situations that test them as confirmed in Matthew 4:1, in Job Chapter 1, and in 1 Peter 1:6 and 4:12. In fact, trials and hardships will inevitably come into believers' lives and believers should: <<Consider it pure

joy>> (James 1:2a), when trials come, for they are strengthened by them, see James 1:3-4. Nevertheless, believers should never pray to be brought into such situations but should pray to be delivered from them, for hardship and temptation make obedience more difficult and will sometimes result in sin. Believers should pray to be delivered from temptation as we see in Matthew 26:41, Luke 22:40 and 22:46, 2 Peter 2:9, and Revelation 3:10; and be led in <<paths of righteousness>> (Psalm 23:3b).

⁵ Then he said to them, Suppose one of you has a friend, and he goes to him at midnight and says, 'Friend, lend me three loaves of bread, ⁶ because a friend of mine on a journey has come to me, and I have nothing to set before him'.

[Luke 11:5-6](#)

The idea of having nothing to set before a guest was unthinkable for a host in Jesus' day and would have been a source of personal shame for them.

⁷ Then the one inside answers, 'Don't bother me. The door is already locked, and my children are with me in bed. I can't get up and give you anything'.

[Luke 11:7](#)

Don't bother me. The omission of friend as used v.5 reveals the man's aggravation.

My children are with me in bed. The entire family is sleeping and opening the door to the guest would probably awaken everyone. This friend's unwillingness to help is in contrast to God's great desire to help his children as in vv.9-10, and is confirmed in Luke 18:1-8 'The Parable of the Persistent Widow'.

⁸ I tell you, though he will not get up and give him the bread because he is his friend, yet because of the man's boldness he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

[Luke 11:8](#)

Boldness or Impudence is the Greek word *anaideia*, which occurs only here in the NT. In all of its other known uses in ancient literature, the term means lack of sensitivity to what is proper, impertinence or impudence. It describes being without respect or modesty. Impudence then would indicate that the friend is shamelessly and boldly awakening his neighbour and, of course, the neighbour will give him whatever he needs. On this interpretation, Jesus' point is that even if a human being will respond to his neighbour in that way, then Christians should go boldly before God with any need they face, for God is more gracious and caring than any human neighbour. Some other interpreters believe that *anaideia* means persistence even though there are no other known occurrences of that meaning. Such a reading does fit the context, however, for the very next verses emphasise that believers must keep seeking, asking and knocking, (vv.9-10).

This would make the parable similar to Luke 18:1-8. Both ideas, a kind of shameless persistence, are possibly intended by this unusual term.

⁹ So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Luke 11:9-10

Jesus tells his followers to ask God, which is a common term for pray. We also need to know what to pray for through the Spirit so that our requests are in line with God's will.

Seek God, as in Deuteronomy 4:29 <<But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul>>, or as in Isaiah 55:6 <<Seek the LORD while he may be found; call on him while he is near>>, and again in Isaiah 65:1 <<I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me; I was found by those who did not seek me. To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here am I, here am I'>>.

Knock at the gates of God for mercy as written in vv.5-8.

The three verbs, ask, seek, and knock are all present imperatives and in this context of teaching a general principle they encourage prayer as a continual habit of life as confirmed in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, which simply states: <<pray continually>>.

In summary then:

- Ask: Disciples should come to God in humility and awareness of need.
- Seek: Connects one's prayer with responsible action in pursuing the will of God.
- Knock: Suggests perseverance. Disciples are to persist in prayer, confident that their Father will provide whatever is best for them, according to his sovereign, gracious will.

The promised result is that it will be given and opened by God. For God has said: <<I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the LORD, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth>> (Isaiah 62:6-7).

Everyone who asks receives does not mean that believers always receive what they ask for because God is wiser than they are, and has better plans for his children than they could imagine. For example: <<And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose>> (Romans 8:28), and: <<However, as it is written: No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him>> (1 Corinthians 2:9).

It should be noted however, that, unlike the neighbour who gave in because he was badgered, God wants us to care passionately enough to keep persisting. He won't give in to our requests as a man might; he gives graciously and justly to those who ask for the right things, at the right time and in the right way. It is a matter of being aligned with Jesus.

¹¹ Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? ¹² Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? ¹³ If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

Luke 11:11-13

This concluding example of Jesus' teaching on prayer (vv.1-13) is a 'lesser to greater' argument: granted the truth of vv.11-12, the concluding statement (v.13) must be even truer. We will see this method used in some of the upcoming chapters as well.

Fish and eggs were common foods in Palestine, while snakes and scorpions were regular hazards.

If you then, though you are evil. Human sinfulness would be readily acknowledged by Jesus' audience, refer to Genesis Chapter 3 and Romans 3:10-23. Most earthly parents have an innate impulse to do what is best for their children yet they are flawed as a result of sin's corruption of all humanity through the fall of Adam and Eve. This can be demonstrated through the words of Paul: <<Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death for before the law was given, sin was in the world. But sin is not taken into account when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who was a pattern of the one to come>> (Romans 5:12-14), and the fact that the quality of human parenting does not match God's. This is an example of a 'how much more' argument frequently used in Matthew and Luke.

A far more important gift than material blessings is the powerful anointing and guidance of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life, e.g. <<But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you>> (Matthew 12:28), <<Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert>> (Luke 4:1), <<Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside>> (Luke 4:14), <<But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth>> (Acts 1:8), <<For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God>> (Romans 8:13-14), <<In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express>> (Romans 8:26), <<All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines>> (1 Corinthians 12:11), and: <<But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law>> (Galatians 5:18).

V.a.vii Luke 11:14-23 - Jesus and Beelzebub

Jesus is accused of collusion with Satan. An account of this event is recorded in Matthew 12:22-30.

¹⁴ Jesus was driving out a demon that was mute. When the demon left, the man who had been mute spoke, and the crowd was amazed.

Luke 11:14

A demon that was mute. A demon in some way prohibited the man from speaking. The demon is distinguished from Satan (v.18), who is the prince of demons.

The man who had been mute spoke providing proof that the demon has been cast out.

¹⁵ But some of them said, By Beelzebub, the prince of demons, he is driving out demons.

Luke 11:15

Beelzebub or Beelzebul means 'master of the house' and refers to Satan. The accusation that Jesus, the real 'master of all', was really Satan is shockingly perverse. How much more then should Jesus' own disciples expect to be falsely accused and maligned.

The Pharisees were unable to recognise that God was doing something unique in the teaching and works of Jesus, so they attributed his powers to the only other existing source,

since they could not deny the reality of the miraculous works that Jesus had done. But the truthfulness of Jesus' teachings, the moral excellence of his character and his ministry of doing good should have convinced them otherwise. Practicing magic, by Satan's power, was a capital offense, punishable by stoning. This view of Jesus as a sorcerer was common among Jews, even into the early centuries of Christianity.

¹⁶ Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven.

[Luke 11:16](#)

Asking for a sign. Jesus knew that no sign would overcome their unwillingness to believe.

Hard-heartedness and rejection of Jesus prevents the Spirit's healing ministry, just as they prevent forgiveness of sin. The Holy Spirit does not force his miracles on a hostile, sceptical audience. After all, it is all about faith.

¹⁷ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them: Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall. ¹⁸ If Satan is divided against himself, how can his kingdom stand? I say this because you claim that I drive out demons by Beelzebub. ¹⁹ Now if I drive out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your followers drive them out? So then, they will be your judges.

[Luke 11:17-19](#)

Jesus knew their thoughts is an indication of his deity.

Jesus' defence consists of two arguments. The first involves two analogies: a kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, i.e. through civil war, as we saw when Israel split from Judah some 700 years or so before Jesus' time. Likewise, a house divided against itself will fall. Thus the idea that Satan was working through Jesus to undermine his own work was absurd (v.18).

The second argument (v.19) indicates that the same charge (v.15) could be levelled against the casting out of demons by your followers.

Your followers are possibly associates or disciples of the Pharisees. Extra-biblical Jewish literature contains stories about strange rituals for casting out evil spirits (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 8.45-48; Tobit 8:2-3; and Testament of Solomon), but it is unclear that they were successful. The account of the sons of Sceva in Acts 19:13-16 was anything but successful!

The amazement of the crowd in Luke 4:36 <<All the people were amazed and said to each other, What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!>>, indicates that Jesus' authoritative casting out of demons 'with a word', was unprecedented: <<When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick>> (Matthew 8:16). No example of people casting out demons is found in the OT, although an evil spirit did torment Saul and was soothed by David's music, see 1 Samuel 16:14-23.

²⁰ But if I drive out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you.

Luke 11:20

Jesus explains that his casting out of demons reveals that the Kingdom of God has come. He was plundering Satan's kingdom (vv.21-22), and confirmed in Luke 10:17-19 <<The seventy-two returned with joy and said, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name. He replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you>>, by transferring people into his own new kingdom. Jesus' miracles, taken as a whole, indicate that the Kingdom of God has broken into this specific time and place in history, as demonstrated by his life and work, as we read: <<After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. The time has come, he said. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!>> (Mark 1:14-15), and: <<But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law>> (Galatians 4:4).

But if I drive out demons by the finger of God. Jesus' amazing power over demons was due to the power of the Holy Spirit working through him. The Kingdom of God is inaugurated, though not completely realised, in the ministry of Jesus. He is not only the messianic Son of David but the King who exercises God's own kingdom power against Satan and his agents, and overcomes the kingdom of Satan through his much greater power. Examples are: <<He put on righteousness as his breastplate, and the helmet of salvation on his head; he put on the garments of vengeance and wrapped himself in zeal as in a cloak>> (Isaiah 59:17), putting on the full armour of God in Ephesians 6:10-20, and the final battle in Revelation 19:11-21.

²¹ When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are safe. ²² But when someone stronger attacks and overpowers him, he takes away the armour in which the man trusted and divides up the spoils.

Luke 11:21-22

The someone stronger is Jesus and the strong man in v.21 is Satan. Jesus has overcome him.

Jesus was able to expel demons because he had bound Satan the strong man. Beginning with Jesus' victory over Satan during the temptation in the wilderness in Luke 4:1-11, Jesus demonstrated that Satan was powerless to prevent him from proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and demonstrating the reality of its presence through his work and his words. Satan's house represents the sinful world over which, until the coming of Christ, he had such power. Jesus has come to plunder his house and rescue people for the Kingdom of God. As Paul puts it: <<For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves>> (Colossians 1:13).

²³ He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters.

Luke 11:23

This verse combines the metaphors of fighting: not with me is against me, and farming: does not gather with me, scatters. Neutrality with respect to Jesus is not possible.

This verse probably refers to a believer outside the circle of the Twelve: <<for whoever is not against you is for you>> (Luke 9:50), and is the reverse of v.23. The two sayings should be seen as complementary. Those who cast out demons in the name of Jesus are his friends, those who attribute Jesus' casting out of demons to Beelzebub, and thus do not believe in him, are his enemies.

Paul, speaking of those who preach out of envy or rivalry of him, makes a similar argument in [Philippians 1:17-18](#) <<The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice>>.

The disciples are to focus on their task and leave the rest up to God not being quick to criticise others who also follow Christ but who do not belong to their group. Such generous acceptance, however, does not apply to those who do not follow Christ at all, as confirmed in [Matthew 12:30](#) <<He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters>>.

V.a.viii [Luke 11:24-26 - The return of an unclean spirit](#)

This is teaching that should have all disciples on their guard. There is no room for complacency.

²⁴ When an evil spirit comes out of a man, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it. Then it says, 'I will return to the house I left'.

²⁵ When it arrives, it finds the house swept clean and put in order. ²⁶ Then it goes and takes seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that man is worse than the first.

[Luke 11:24-26](#)

[Evil spirit](#). Cleansing from sin must be followed by obedience to God's word, not complacency.

[The house swept clean and put in order](#). The demon has been cast out.

[Seven other spirits](#) signifies a full contingent of demons as with Mary Magdalene in [Luke 8:2](#) and Legion in [Luke 8:30](#). The significance of seven is linked in scripture with completion or perfection; here perhaps signifies the completeness of demon possession once the demon returns.

Peter is probably alluding to this when he writes: <<If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning>> ([2 Peter 2:20](#)).

To guard against this we must truly surrender to Christ and allow the Spirit to indwell with full control of our lives. The number seven is usually associated with perfection or completion. Some scholars look to it as being in direct conflict with the seven spirits as noted in [John's letter](#): <<To the angel of the church in Sardis write: These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars>> ([Revelation 3:1a](#)).

V.a.ix [Luke 11:27-13:9 - Various warnings and teachings](#)

As they continue their journey toward Jerusalem, Jesus gives his disciples additional instruction. Amid all the activities of his ministry of teaching, healing and making disciples, Jesus 'set his face' for his final journey to Jerusalem.

²⁷ As Jesus was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you.

Luke 11:27

Blessed as with: <<Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God>> (Luke 6:20b).

Blessed is the mother or womb is a prime example of synecdoche, which is a literary device in which a part of something stands for the whole. This is further confirmed in Genesis 49:25 <<Because of your father's God, who helps you, because of the Almighty, who blesses you with blessings of the heavens above, blessings of the deep that lies below, blessings of the breast and womb>>.

²⁸ He replied, Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it.

Luke 11:28

Hear the word of God and obey it. This implies not just hear but listen to, absorb it and then put it into practice. That is the essence of obedience to God.

V.a.ix.1 Luke 11:29-32 - The sign of Jonah

Jonah was a prophet, who was instructed by God to take a prophecy against the Assyrian capital of Nineveh. His initial response was to run away and he sailed out of Joppa on a ship, only for God to bring upon them a violent storm. As Jonah was the cause he was thrown off the ship, swallowed by a large fish and spent three days and nights inside it, before being deposited alive on the sea shore. The full story can be read in the Book of Jonah in the OT.

²⁹ As the crowds increased, Jesus said, This is a wicked generation. It asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.

Luke 11:29

The account in vv.29-32 answers the request of v.16 from those who were testing Jesus by seeking a cosmic sign in spite of already having seen many miracles.

This wicked generation does not refer to everyone then living but to the leaders and others who rejected both John the Baptist and Jesus, who were still the dominant force in the culture. Jesus never rebukes people who seek healing out of genuine need, but he knows these opponents have malicious motives. Jonah's rescue by God was a sign to the people of Nineveh that his message was from God. Jesus' death and resurrection will likewise be God's sign to the present generation and for all generations to come.

None will be given. For the meaninglessness of a sign when hearts are hardened we see in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man: <<He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead>> (Luke 16:31), and the Jews reaction to the resurrection of the other Lazarus in John 12:9-11 <<Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him>>.

Even recipients of healing are a threat to Jesus, so beware!

The sign of Jonah refers first to Jonah's three days and nights in the belly of the great fish as we noted earlier, which foreshadowed the Son of Man being three days in the heart of the

earth, i.e. a reference to Jesus' death and resurrection. Additionally, the sign of Jonah draws attention to the need for a concrete response of repentance, as was the case of Nineveh in response to Jonah's message.

³⁰ For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ³¹ The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

Luke 11:30-31

The Queen of the South refers to the queen of Sheba as recorded in 1 Kings 10:1-13 and 2 Chronicles 9:1-12.

Rise at the judgement with the men of this generation and condemn them because she came a long distance to see Solomon and listen to his wisdom as recorded 1 Kings 10:1-4 and 10:7, whereas one greater than Solomon, i.e. the Son of God and his wisdom has come to them, and the people reject this and ask for a sign.

Sheba was most likely the home of the Sabæans in south-western Arabia in present-day Yemen. Jesus claims that he is greater than the temple in Matthew 12:6, the prophet Jonah in v.32 and the wise king Solomon. He thus elevates himself and his message of the kingdom to be greater than, as well as the fulfilment of, the three greatest institutions in Israel; priest, prophet and king.

Jonah was a prophet from Galilee: <<The word of the LORD came to Jonah son of Amittai>> (Jonah 1:1), and: <<He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher>> (2 Kings 14:25). Yet the Jewish leaders rebuked Nicodemus when he suggested, quite correctly, that the Law said that Jesus should at least be heard before being condemned. This passage states: <<They replied, Are you from Galilee, too? Look into it, and you will find that a prophet does not come out of Galilee>> (John 7:52). Despite all their learning, they used erroneous information to support their own viewpoints.

³² The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.

Luke 11:32

Even though the Ninevites were wicked they at least repented at the preaching of Jonah.

Jesus' words affirm the historicity of the story of Jonah. He says that the men of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment thus predicting an actual future event and that these same men repented at the preaching of Jonah, which resulted in: <<The Ninevites believed God. They declared a fast, and all of them, from the greatest to the least, put on sackcloth>> (Jonah 3:5), indicating that Jonah's preaching in Nineveh was an actual historical event.

How much greater condemnation will there be then for those who refuse to repent at the teaching of Jonah's Lord, who is the one greater than Jonah. Jesus is both the ultimate wise man (v.31) and the ultimate prophet (v.32).

V.a.ix.2 [Luke 11:33-36 - The lamp of the body](#)

This brief passage is often referred to as the Parable of the Lamp. Jesus used a similar analogy in Luke 8:16, which some people also refer to as this parable.

³³ No-one lights a lamp and puts it in a place where it will be hidden, or under a bowl. Instead he puts it on its stand, so that those who come in may see the light.

[Luke 11:33](#)

[Lamp](#) is a metaphor for Jesus and his mission. Also see comments made on Luke 8:16.

³⁴ Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness.

[Luke 11:34](#)

An [eye](#) that is [good](#) or healthy describes a spiritually healthy way of looking at things.

A [bad](#) eye or evil way of looking at things results in a life [full of moral and spiritual darkness](#).

³⁵ See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. ³⁶ Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you.

[Luke 11:35-36](#)

When a person is filled with the [light](#) of Christ it will cause his or her whole being to become [completely lighted](#) or wholly bright.

The sign of Jonah equates to the Resurrection, which is the greatest sign our faith has to demonstrate Jesus is the Son of God. As the eye is the window of the soul, and if the soul is full of Christ's light, then it will receive and live by the Gospel that is truthfully, boldly and persistently proclaimed by those that are in the light.

Pride, envy and the love of the world and our treasures, darken the soul. We must not be blinded by partiality, prejudice or sinful desire.

V.a.ix.3 [Luke 11:37-54 - Six woes](#)

Jesus is bringing condemnation upon the Jewish religious leaders. It is not because he does not care about them or even recognise their zeal for God and piety. It is their resolute determination to stick to the misinterpretation of scripture and to serve the laws of Moses rather than God. Their misguided teaching was preventing the bulk of the Jewish people from entering into the Kingdom of God.

³⁷ When Jesus had finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat with him; so he went in and reclined at the table.

[Luke 11:37](#)

[Pharisees](#) were previously discussed in depth in Luke Chapter 5.

³⁸ But the Pharisee, noticing that Jesus did not first wash before the meal, was surprised.

Luke 11:38

To wash before the meal was an extra-biblical tradition involving ceremonial cleanness and not ordinary hygienic practices. Jesus was not in breach of the law; just the traditions of the Pharisees.

³⁹ Then the Lord said to him, Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. ⁴⁰ You foolish people! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? ⁴¹ But give what is inside the dish to the poor, and everything will be clean for you.

Luke 11:39-41

You Pharisees clean. Keeping the traditions that they had added to scripture was like cleansing the outside of the cup but leaving the inside full of greed and wickedness. While seeking external purity, the Pharisees were oblivious to the corrupt internal condition of their hearts.

With regard to greed: <<The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus>> (Luke 16:14), and: <<They devour widows' houses>> (Luke 20:47a).

What is inside are the things in a person's heart. If the believer first offers his heart to God then everything will be clean. That is, God will accept the good he does even if he does not follow the outward ceremonial washing required by Jewish traditions.

According to Psalm 139:14, the body is fearfully and wonderfully made and it is right that we should care for it. How much more then the soul?

⁴² Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practised the latter without leaving the former undone.

⁴³ Woe to you Pharisees, because you love the most important seats in the synagogues and greetings in the market-places.

⁴⁴ Woe to you, because you are like unmarked graves, which men walk over without knowing it.

Luke 11:42-44

After giving, what was left was considered clean for them, i.e. for their own pleasure.

Jesus directs three woes against the Pharisees. The woes are a mixture of condemnation, regret and sorrow. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees are false leaders, who have drawn the people away from the Kingdom of Heaven instead of towards it.

The first woe targets their hypocrisy in tithing garden herbs, such specific detail is not mentioned in Leviticus 27:30-33, Deuteronomy 14:22-29, or 2 Chronicles 31:5-12.

Mosaic Law required giving a tenth of all that one produced for the ongoing work of the Lord through the Levites and priests. The Pharisees were so scrupulous in following this injunction

that they paid a tithe even of their smallest garden crops. Jesus does not say that they were wrong in this, without leaving the former undone, but that they should do this without neglecting the far more important matters, such as neglecting justice and the love of God.

The second woe focuses on their love of the most important seats as illustrated in Luke 14:7-11 <<When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honour at the table, he told them this parable: When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honour, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat'. Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place'. Then you will be honoured in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted>>.

Seating at banquets was assigned to guests based on their rank or status. With regard to the best seats in the synagogues, excavations at early Galilæan synagogues indicate that bench seats were built along the sides of the synagogue. In any meeting places some seats are regarded as better than others.

The third woe compares them to unmarked graves. According to OT law, coming into contact with a grave made a person unclean as recorded in Numbers 19:16b <<anyone who touches a human bone or a grave, will be unclean for seven days>>.

The Pharisees were like tombs, which, in Jesus' day, could be outwardly very beautiful but within held nothing but death and decay. These tombs were customarily whitewashed to identify them clearly to passersby, since as we have already noted, people would be rendered unclean for seven days through the contact with them.

But if the grave was in the ground and had no marking, people might walk over it and become unclean without knowing it. Likewise, people who follow the Pharisees are deceived, for they become unclean before God without even knowing that the Pharisees have led them astray.

⁴⁵ One of the experts in the law answered him, Teacher, when you say these things, you insult us also.

Luke 11:45

The second set of woes (vv.46-52) is directed at experts in the law or lawyers, which is another expression for the scribes.

The scribes and the Pharisees were two distinct groups, although there was some overlap between them. The scribes were the professional interpretative experts on the Torah itself while the Pharisees were experts in theological matters that the Torah raised.

⁴⁶ Jesus replied, And you experts in the law, woe to you, because you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry, and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them.

Luke 11:46

We do not know the motivation for the invitation to dinner; whether good or bad. Jesus is never afraid of the bad and will stand his ground. He will use the good for further advancement of the Gospel and for the saving of those who are present. Jesus' private discourse with the Pharisees and lawyers in these verses is basically publically stated in Matthew Chapter 23. Jesus stated quite clearly: <<I said nothing in secret>> (John 18:20). In public or privately; whether to individuals, groups or crowds, Jesus remains the faithful witness (Revelation 1:5).

This shows that, although we should be careful who we mix with, we do not need to fear the world or those whose company we find ourselves in, providing we remain faithful witnesses to God's word and his presence in our lives.

The first woe involves the lawyers (v.45) loading people down by interpreting the law in light of their extra-biblical traditions and making it something they can hardly carry or is hard to bear.

Worse still they do not lift one finger themselves, i.e. they make no effort to help people keep these laws.

Jesus recognised the Pharisees' official function as interpreters of the Law of Moses and, insofar as they accurately interpreted scripture, they were to be obeyed. However, it does not include the Pharisees' later extensive additions to Mosaic laws, which rabbinic teachers made. Jesus is about to show that much of the Pharisees' practice, and their extra-biblical tradition, is wrong.

To load people down with burdens describes the extra-biblical tradition of the rabbis that was a pillar of the Pharisaic branch of Judaism. It was intended as a means of making the OT relevant to new life situations but its massive obligations had become burdensome and oppressive.

Lawyers failed to teach properly the messianic scriptures, thus 'blinding' the people, and themselves, to the reality of what was occurring in their own lifetime. This, and the love of their privileged lifestyle, were the primary factors for them failing to heed the Gospel when it came, as Jesus confirms elsewhere: <<Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to>> (Matthew 23:13).

⁴⁷ Woe to you, because you build tombs for the prophets, and it was your forefathers who killed them. ⁴⁸ So you testify that you approve of what your forefathers did; they killed the prophets, and you build their tombs. ⁴⁹ Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute'. ⁵⁰ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, ⁵¹ from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.

Luke 11:47-51

The second woe involves the lawyers' hypocrisy in building monuments to the prophets although it was their forefathers who killed those same prophets and they themselves would continue to kill and persecute them (v.49). This would include their part in persecuting John the Baptist,

Jesus and his disciples and apostles. Their failure to heed the message Jesus gave them would be their ultimate downfall, for it was they: <<who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. In this way they always heap up their sins to the limit. The wrath of God has come upon them at last>> (1 Thessalonians 2:15-16).

From the blood of Abel in Genesis Chapter 4, to the blood of Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22, signifies the beginning of the first to the end of the last book in the Hebrew bible.

The interval from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah encompasses all the OT biblical history. Abel was the first person murdered in the OT and Zechariah is the last murdered, since 2 Chronicles, where the murder of Zechariah is recorded, is the last book of the Hebrew canon. See 2 Chronicles 24:20-22.

There is a difficulty with the phrase 'son of Barachiah' however, since in 2 Chronicles 24:20 Zechariah is called the son of Jehoiada, while the more famous prophet, who wrote the book of Zechariah, is the son of Barachiah, as stated in Zechariah 1:1.

Several solutions have been proposed:

1. Just as Zechariah the prophet can be called either the son of Barachiah (Zechariah 1:1), or the *son of Iddo (Ezra 6:14), where Iddo was his grandfather, so the Zechariah in 2 Chronicles 24:20 could have been the son of an otherwise unrecorded Barachiah, with Jehoiada, who lived 130 years according 2 Chronicles 24:15, being Zechariah's grandfather.
2. As was the case with a number of people in the OT, the father of Zechariah mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20 could have been known by more than one name, i.e. Jehoiada and Barachiah.
3. The reference may not be to Zechariah the priest in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 but to Zechariah the prophet as is suggested by some extra-biblical Jewish literature that includes a tradition telling about the murder of Zechariah the prophet, who comes near the end of the OT prophets.
4. The phrase son of Barachiah could have been a very early textual addition by a scribe who thought Zechariah the son of Barachiah was intended; one significant early manuscript, Sinaiticus, in fact omits the words the son of Barachiah.

*Note: Although the NIV translation states 'descendant of Iddo' in Ezra 6:14, most translations have it as son of Iddo.

Each of these proposed solutions presents a plausible possibility. although there is not enough information to determine which is most likely.

⁵² Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.

⁵³ When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, ⁵⁴ waiting to catch him in something he might say.

Luke 11:52-54

The last woe condemns the lawyers for their interpretations of scripture that deprive the people of the key to knowledge needed to understand God's plan of salvation. Not only do they refuse to enter into God's plan and be saved, but their distorted interpretations keep others from truly knowing God.

Began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him describes a continual attempt to ambush Jesus or waiting to catch him out. Isaiah describes it as: <<those who with a word make a man out to be guilty, who ensnare the defender in court and with false testimony deprive the innocent of justice>> (Isaiah 29:21).

We have a similar example as Paul's nephew informs the Roman commander in Jerusalem of a plot against Paul. He says: <<Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request>> (Acts 23:21).

Something he might say that could be used to condemn him as confirmed by Luke 22:66-23:25. They were hoping that this informal setting would lure Jesus into saying something they could turn against him, as it is written: <<All day long they twist my words; they are always plotting to harm me>> (Psalm 56:5).

Part of God's retribution, particularly against the Pharisees, would come via the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. By this, Jesus' condemnation of 'this wicked generation' was fulfilled.