

Well, we're looking at beginnings. We are going very clearly through the entire New Testament one day at a time, one inch at a time if necessary, to take a look at the church as it really, honestly, truly was without a lot of the hoopla and imagination that is usually associated with it, but the actual practical way the church came about.

Now, we have begun with the life of Jesus Christ because the church is an embryo in Him. Then in the twelve, you see the embryo grow. Then on the day of Pentecost, you see the birth. And for the next thirty years, you see the growth. My impression is that God had not completed what He wished, even when the work in Jerusalem had reached its fullness. But even the Lord Himself needed time to get the church where He wanted it to be.

Now then, this morning I'd like to go back to the word, "Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith." He thought up the Christian life. So if you want to know how to live it, look at Him. He thought up the church and became its first member. We are the members of the body; He's the member of the head. The head is a member of the body, and He was the first member of the church, the head of it.

Then, He is also the finisher. Everything you want to know about the church, its principles, anything you want to know about ministry or service to the Lord, you can find in embryo in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, brothers and sisters, this is a shock, because it flips virtually everything we understand about the Christian faith today.

Very quickly, we have gone over some things. The first thing I want you to realize is the tremendous waste the Lord went through while on this earth. He went through it for a purpose...He went through it for the purpose of preparation. I have read a lot of books in my lifetime. Every one of them gives you the impression that the world's in a bad situation, God's in a rush, and one great cataclysmic experience in your life, one big principle that you'll learn, jump on your horse, and ride off in twelve directions. This is not the Christian experience.

I want to come back and say again: even God had to prepare Himself to be a Christian. It took Jesus Christ thirty years to learn to be a Christian. That may not be good theology, but it is good communication. It took Jesus Christ thirty years to learn to be a Christian. I'll put it another way. It took God thirty years to learn to be a Christian. The Lord Jesus Christ wasted the first thirty years of His life.

Some of you may be saved from doing a tremendous amount of work for the Lord in your early years. I don't want anyone to get the impression that we're saying you cannot serve the Lord in your youth, but it is very dangerous to take on full responsibility while you're still a young man and go out in twelve directions. Jesus Christ wasted all thirty of His first thirty years, every one of them, and He learned basically two things. He learned to be human. We're going to see some more of this now this morning when we look at twelve. He also learned to be divine. As a human, He learned to be divine. Or better, He learned to fellowship with the Father; He learned to live in the Father's presence. He learned to live with the Father. The church of Jesus Christ goes through stages. It takes time for the church to grow up. It took time for God to grow up. These are ridiculous

statements. Please understand what I mean. It took time for God in Christ to grow up to full manhood.

I didn't mention this the other day, but—or maybe I did—in the Old Testament, a priest could not be a priest until he was thirty. Jesus Christ began His ministry at thirty. Ezekiel received a revelation at the age of thirty, though he had been preparing for many, many years. All of this speaks to something. It's a principle. It's a tendency of God. Brothers, yesterday I made the comment, “You must not speak beyond your personal experience.” If we speak of the cross, we've got to know the cross. If we speak of the deep things of the cross, we've got to know the deep things of the cross. If we speak of the deep, deep things of the cross, brother, we are not eighteen years old because it is impossible to know the deep things of the Lord, of the cross, at eighteen. It just can't be done.

Anyway, let's forget chronological age and say that your message must always match your experience. As far as that goes, your message should never match your experience. Your experience should always exceed your message. Your experience must be greater than your message. I would even say this to you young brothers: you better know at least ten times as much about anything you say as what you speak, and it is better if you know a hundred times as much on any subject.

I don't want to get too far into that. There were two things Jesus Christ learned to do. He learned to fellowship with the...He learned to be human, and He learned fellowship with the Father. Would you like to follow the Lord? Then follow Him. Brothers and sisters, learn to be human and know the Father. “What is your task?” Very simple. Get to know Jesus Christ. Really, experientially, know Him daily. You may not know a lot of the Book. You may not know a lot of books. You may not know a lot of facts, but if you know Him, really know Him in experience and in all kinds of experiences, you will have something of the understanding of Jesus Christ, of the Father, that Jesus Christ had of the Father.

I want to say that later, as the story of the church unfolds, you will see more of this. It gets so big and so clear. There are so many beautiful things about the Lord. I am still burdened to deal with this subject a little bit, but I can't. We'll just have to pass it. Jesus Christ learned to be human, and He learned to live by the Father. I don't mean He learned to know something about God; I mean He learned God and lived by Him as His source of life.

Now then, He comes to begin His ministry. We just shifted gears. In the first year and a half, Jesus Christ has a spectacular ministry. I'm going to ask a question, and it's a trick question, so be careful the way you answer it. Philip, was Christ primarily interested in the masses? Now, there's an answer to that question. Okay, then here, I think, is the answer. For a year and a half, He spent much of His time with the masses, but there were men there from the beginning. Yesterday morning, we talked about those who were there from the beginning. You remember that? Let's talk about “from the beginning.” He called them, or He made sure the twelve disciples were there from the beginning. Do you realize what that means? That means some people heard the first message Jesus Christ ever delivered. Some people there knew how He got started. They were there on the bottom floor. They watched God begin His work on earth, and how He began His church on earth.

Three and a half years later, 3,000 people were thrown into the lap of the twelve apostles. Now, if you were one of the twelve apostles, how would you start the first day? Well...the first thing you would do is think back and remember how the Lord Jesus began His first day, because you were there from the beginning. You watched Him do it all. You were there from the beginning, and they were there from the beginning...and He kind of kept an eye on them.

For a year and a half, He dealt with the masses. He preached to them marvelous things. He fed them. He healed them. To this degree, He saved them. He cast out demons. His heart went out to the masses. At the end of the year and a half, He begins to withdraw from the masses. During this time, they try to crown Him king; He withdraws. During this time, they try to get to know Him; He withdraws. He never, never gives Himself to these people. He's an enigma and a mystery to them. By the end of the year and a half, He's been keeping His eye out. "There are eleven pretty nice guys, and one of them looks like he's just about right for betraying me." He picks twelve men, each one very deliberate. They were there from the beginning, and now He draws them around Him.

Now then, Jesus Christ is about to pour all that He is, all that He has, all of His purpose into those twelve men. He invested in each the eternal purpose. He invested redemption. He invested the mind of God, the purpose of God, and the being of God. He invested the character of God, the disposition of God, and the work of God in twelve men. I said yesterday, we would not know Jesus Christ at all. Not one of us living here in this room knows anything about Christ either. We learn all we know from them.

Now, was He interested in the masses? Actually, He was interested in the twelve. How could Jesus Christ possibly really minister to all those people? If He had done what we do today, and that's dealing in massive ways, no one could ever relate closely to Him. Everybody gets to know Him a little bit, but He made sure the twelve got to know Him well, and He used the masses as a springboard to teach. He'd say great, sweeping things to the masses, then explain them to the twelve.

Now, was He interested in the masses? I come back and say, very definitely, but He went at it the way God went at it. He started with the twelve. Later, those twelve will work with the masses, and I don't mean later during His ministry. I mean later, after He's died and risen and ascended, they will reach out to the masses. He invested His life in twelve men.

Yesterday we took a very brief look at the relationship of these twelve men to God or to Christ. Yesterday we looked at this: What kind of men did He call? Can you recall what was said? Average men, ordinary folks, not brilliant, not stupid, although they could look pretty stupid sometimes. But average men can look pretty stupid sometimes. What was the one other aspect about them? They were seekers. All twelve of those men were probably followers of John the Baptist.

In that respect, they had a heart for the Lord, and that was their only distinguishing characteristic. Brothers and sisters, I would say this to you: it's got to be your most distinguishing characteristic. You've got to have a heart for the Lord before anything else. I don't care about anything else; I care about the Lord Jesus. You've got to have a heart for the Lord. When you do that, you're going to probably go off on some little tangent one day in your life, and your heart will be what takes you

there. "You know, I'm for the Lord," and off you go. "I'm off for the Lord," and off you go. Brothers, you're not thirty yet. Go off on your tangent. Go off. Go off on your tangent. Every one of those brothers went off on a tangent. They weren't thirty yet. Brother, keep your heart for the Lord. Keep your heart for the Lord. It's alright to make mistakes. Praise God, it's okay if you make mistakes. It's okay if the church makes mistakes too. Okay, they were average men, but they had a heart for the Lord.

Okay, we'll start there. That's good enough. They watch. Let's talk about how Jesus Christ raised up men. Listen very carefully. Look at the twelve; they represent two things. They represent the church; those twelve are really the church in miniature. But look again, and you will also see throughout the Scripture how the Lord Jesus deals with men. It gets bigger and bigger and bigger and bigger. Throughout the whole Scripture, the principle never breaks. It's almost frightening the way this thing goes. It's just so steady. God won't move.

Well, it was really quite a "seminary." It was run twenty-four hours a day. It never shut down. It had no books. It was lived out in the middle of the desert, halfway between towns, around campfires. It was lived out on mountains and hills in front of people. It was lived out beside the sea; it was lived out in the sea. It was lived out on the other side of the sea, and in retreats. For three and a half years, twelve men learned what? They learned the methods of Christ. No. They learned the Scripture. No. They learned how to win souls. No. They learned Christ. Yes.

I said this yesterday morning. I wish to say it again. When you first open your eyes in the morning, you're cold, you know how you feel in the morning, and you look up, and you rub your eyes, and you look around, and about ten feet away from you, there stands God cooking breakfast.

I want to say again, they're in a room. The Pharisees walk in. They begin shooting questions at Him. They watch His demeanor. They watch His bearing. He's just not like anybody else. They watch the pressure build up. He just doesn't react as other folks do. They watch Him fellowship with the Father. They watch some seeker come to Him and the compassion He has with the seeker. They watch some lying hypocrite come in, and sometimes He's rough with him, and sometimes He ignores him. It's very difficult to tie the Lord down, and they learn *that*. They live with God for three and a half years.

I want to come into this just a little bit closer, this relationship between Christ and the twelve, but first I would like to go on and review a little bit more about yesterday morning. During the first year and a half, there is the sweeping spectacular: the healings, the miracles, the signs, the wonders. Is that necessary? Say yes to that, would you please? If a man does not see it, he will be damaged somewhere in his life. Did they do it? The twelve, did they do it? No. For the first year and a half, they did not. They only watched. They only watched.

I know our concepts about evangelism and healing and casting out demons and all of those things. I wish you'd stick around this week. I want to put everything in its proper order. I don't want to take anything from you. I will never do that. I don't deny a verse of Scripture. I don't back away from anything. By God's mercy, I will try never to, but I would put it in perspective. Christ first learned

to be human, balanced, and lived by the Father, who was performing the miracles. The twelve watched, and they learned Christ.

Then He draws them to Himself. He gets them around Him very intimately. He begins to leave the masses, but He knows these brothers' needs. You know, we've got to recognize the need of a brother to do some of these things. We've got dominion. We've got dominion. What are we doing sitting around here if we've got dominion? And pretty soon it just gets inside of you. If we've got dominion, why don't we do something? Do you understand what I'm talking about? You get edgy. Let's go. We've got dominion. Why are we messing around here, letting people run all over us like this? Have you had that feeling? Yes, you have. You have authority. We have the power. The church has power and authority. Why are we letting these people do such and such?" The Lord said, "Okay. All right. I'll let you.

Praise God; the vessel couldn't take it, brothers. The vessel could not take it. They thought they could, but they couldn't. It's okay. The Lord said, 'Go anyway.' The Lord let them make mistakes, and real growth came out of it. He gathered seventy of them together and said, 'Take off.' And boy, they went out preaching everywhere. People heard the gospel and rejoiced. It was probably the highest moment in human history. I'm not taking away from it one bit. I want you to know it was one of the highest moments, if not the highest moment in human history, because for the first time since the fall, men went out and exercised power over Satan.

Now, finally, Satan had somebody over him, and it wasn't God; it was a man. When those fellows came running back in to give their report, Scripture says Jesus Christ looked into heaven and said something not said any time previously in the New Testament. He said, 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven...and earth,' and because twelve men, or seventy men, had gone out and they had bested Satan, a man now had dominion over Satan. Men had dominion over Satan, and this is Satan's territory...no longer. The earth is Satan's territory, but not any longer. 'I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth.' And it said even the Lord Jesus rejoiced.

Now, here's one of those paradoxes. You can catch even the Lord in a switch here, if you will. It says He rejoiced, but they came in, and they went out of their minds. He said, 'Fellows, if you're going to rejoice, rejoice that your name is written in the Book of Life.' He comes back to the center. It is a matter of life, not power. Over and over, He comes back and brings them to life. Know Me. Live by Me. Life. The growth of life is so necessary.

Now, brother, I will not push the matter, but I would like for us to get the tendency, and here's the tendency. Okay, as far as I know, besides those two things, I can tell you everything that the twelve disciples did for three and a half years. One, on one occasion, they passed out food to five thousand men. Two, they went out on a visit as twelve men in six pairs, and on another occasion they went out with fifty-eight other men. And during the last week, two of them went out and rented a donkey. I cannot recall any other real acts of service that those men performed during those three and a half years. What they did was watch, learn, and know during that time.

I will say this, though. You've got to watch real carefully. When they came back, they did report. They did fellowship about what had happened. They got carried away, but they did report. They

always came back to fellowship together about what had happened. Now, there's something of the church there. We share our experiences of the Lord and what He has done. So I wish to kind of balance what I've just said. They came back and shared together.

Now we've got to look a little bit closer at these twelve men. We must, because, brothers, these twelve men contain so many things the church today must know if we are going to be fully mature and fully restored.

I would like you to see what the Lord did. One thing He did was pick twelve men. Now that may seem highly insignificant. To me, it is not. Yesterday I said one significant thing is those who were there from the beginning. A dear brother introduced me to the principle of first things some years ago. Anytime the Lord does something as a new beginning, this brother said to me, 'Those who are in it on the ground floor have been specially selected by the Lord.' That's all he said. Well, these men were there on the ground floor.

Okay, here is another thing, and that is the twelve. The twelve. All of you are familiar with certain group sizes in the New Testament. There is the "one" size group. That is always something of God, divinity, the Lord. What is the "two" size group? What's the two-size group, brothers? Yes, I would say okay, that's correct. I'm going to walk down another road besides that one. Two is always a witness. The two is a witness. Today we're familiar with the "one." We're familiar with the two. We're familiar with the hundred, the hundred and twenty, and the thousand, but we don't know much about the twelve-size group.

Now then, I haven't read a book on some method. Is there a twelve-size group throughout the New Testament? Throughout the whole New Testament. I wouldn't give you a can of beans for it if it's just in the Gospels, but is it throughout the New Testament, the twelve-size group? Yes. Definitely, there's a twelve-person group throughout the New Testament, both as it relates to the church and to this matter of servants; the Lord bringing forth servants.

Okay, the twelve-size group. Why the twelve-size group? Why did He call twelve men? Why was it twelve men? Now you explain that to me. Why twelve? Why twelve? Okay. The Old Testament, twelve. We got any other? I'm going to give you a very simple answer. It's because God decreed it. Now let me say something to you. The twelve-size group is in your blood veins. You need the twelve-size group. It's part of social order; the Lord's social order, not man's. It's in your blood vein. What are you talking about?

Do you need Christ? Right. Do you need a brother? You need twelve brothers. Twelve brothers and a sister. Where did this theology come from? (laughter) Okay, now then let me explain what I'm talking about. We will see this develop throughout the early church. The church always met as one in a city. Each city had one church. Until then, there was no division, but even though it was one, it met all over the city.

Well, how many met all over the city? I'm not going to hold it to twelve. I'm just going to say that when they spread out all over the city meeting, they were in small groups. Boy, I've heard of "small groups" junk all my life; just don't think in these terms with me. Please don't. Let us go deeper into

this. I want to say to you, the church, one church, met all over the city. Why? Because it was convenient. Because it was hard to walk halfway across the town. There were no trolley cars, automobiles, or bicycles. They met conveniently, and every once in a while they'd have a real blowout and get together, but they'd have to start an hour or two early and walk or ride a donkey. It was just that way, but there was something basic in it.

Now I would like just to hold that and go back to the twelve. Is that a small space right there? That's a small space. I want twelve brothers to come get in it. Let us just stand right here for the next three and a half years...and let's not get out of this spot for the next three and a half years. One of you brothers has got a real body odor problem, huh? Woo...somebody needs Pepsodent. Michael, do you realize you have the worst snoring problem? You stepped on my toe, Bill. Mike, get out of my way.

Now look, brothers, do you get my point? You keep these twelve men right here in these small quarters for three and a half years, and you are going to have problems you never dreamed of. Is that true? That's why the church needs the twelve-size group. It's got to have the twelve-size group. If you are always in a hundred-size group like in this room, you're never going to get rubbed on. If you're always in the two- and three-size buddy group, you're not always going to get rubbed on. As far as that goes, you're probably going around massaging one another, but when you get in the twelve-size group, you've got problems. I don't think I can stand you, brothers, anymore. Will you please leave? (laughter)

So here is the principle of the twelve-size group. First of all, a small group of men—we're now talking about servants—a small group of men lived with the Lord and got to know God well. They got to know God better than any man in history ever had, I guess since...on a person-to-person physical basis. Yes, better than any, but brothers, there's something else involved here too. They also had to live in close quarters with one another for a long time.

Now you've heard me say this before. The first six months were pure joy. Hot dog. Did you hear Him say that there's going to be a kingdom on earth? And we are His twelve. Then one day the Lord said, "Peter, would you and James and John come here?" He'd never done that before. The Lord comes over, sits down, and talks to Peter, James, and John—Andrew kind of walks by. Thomas just watched the sectarian spirit grow up here for a moment. A few days later, He does it again.

For a couple of days, things are really quiet around here. Little by little, the brothers learn that there's the thousand-size group, the hundred-size group, the twelve-size group, and even the three-size group in God's order. They started off all happy and delighted with one another, and then they began to wrinkle one another, and the joy and the fun of being first in the kingdom of God got down to, 'Who's got my blanket? Why don't you ever have change in your pocket to leave a tip?' I'm trying to put this on a very practical basis, but they kept on living with one another. They were very average men, but average men are the worst, hardest people on earth to live with. They had to learn how. It had to be done, and it didn't take a week.

Then division grew up. They weren't thirty years old yet, brother. Will you listen? Will you listen, please, carefully? They weren't thirty years old. You don't throw the baby out with the bathwater just because it's not thirty years old. There were twelve brothers, but each one heard the Lord differently.

One day the Lord was out preaching. Each man is different. Every man responds to the Lord differently. They've just really been rubbing one another, and they're beginning to get edgy with one another. But none are thirty yet, and they've been put in close quarters, and they're beginning to rub one another.

James comes over to Thomas and says, 'Have you seen Matthew this morning?' 'No, what's he done this time? Go talk to him.' Thomas walks over to Matthew. Here's Matthew. 'Oh, Brother Thomas...oh, praise the Lord.' Thomas says, 'What's eating you?' Matthew says, 'Oh, nothing, oh, brother Thomas, I just wish to be your brother.' Thomas says, 'What's eating you, Matthew?' Matthew says, 'Oh, I just want to be meek. I just want to be so meek. I want to be meek.' Thomas says, 'I think I got it. You want to inherit the earth, right?'

One day, Andrew comes up to Thomas and says, 'Did you see Matthew again?' 'Nope. What did he do this time?' 'Watch him.' So here he is. 'Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the...oh, behold the lilies of the field.' Thomas says, 'He's memorized the whole Sermon on the Mount. What earthly good could that ever do anybody?'

I don't think you caught that. Thomas has had it. 'There's Matthew. I don't care if we're going to have a kingdom. This whole thing is going mad.' Does Matthew have a heart for the Lord? Does Thomas? Be patient with one another. Be patient with one another.

I've got a burden, and that is that the church in Goleta has more twelve-size experiences; a lot more. I really do. I think we're going to have to learn to count as the Lord counted. I didn't understand this some years ago, but experience shows that we have to count the way the New Testament counted. They always counted by men. Did you notice? Almost always. There were five thousand men, not counting women and children.

So I would say twelve men. Twelve men. Because after all, a wife is somewhat of an extension of her husband anyway. The sisters can all have their twelve-size problems in the same situation. We need brothers who don't match one another. We really do. We need a Matthew and a Thomas. We really need a Matthew with a Thomas, and then we need a little time. We all need to learn how to be human, and we all need to know the Lord and know nothing but the Lord. That's what the Lord subjected them to for three and a half years. You may think that that doesn't appear again. Brothers, hide and watch. The principle won't move. The principle won't move.

The church here, and any church, must go through many, many stages. Don't write it off at any stage. Give it time to learn to be human and get to know the Lord. We must not prejudge anything. I have said this once or twice before; I want to say it again, and I was hoping you could answer me quite frankly. If you walked into a fellowship of the body of Christ, and the first meeting you went

to was the Lord's Supper, and everybody got roaring drunk on the Lord's Supper...I guess some of you may not think that's possible. Well, I'll tell you, it's not only possible that it did happen, but it's also still possible that it can happen. I'm very grateful that one night we had grape juice when we took the Lord's Supper out here. Do you remember? Were you there? Boy, if that had been wine, we would have had ourselves a problem. It was all joy.

You stay a few days, and you find out there are four factions in the church. There's the Jesus group, the Paul group, the Apollos group, and the Peter group. You stay a little longer and find out gross immorality has broken out, and nobody will name it. You go to the next meeting, and ten men get up at the same time and start preaching. And while they're doing that, six or seven others are speaking in tongues, and two or three others are interpreting. That must have been quite a meeting, right?

You've all recognized the church by now, haven't you? I could go on and on and on and on and on about that church and say things about it you wouldn't believe. I really believe most of you have no idea what was going on in that church. Now you tell me how old it was when that happened. How old was that church when it was in that kind of a mess? And it was a mess. That church was six years old. I really mean this: unless the Lord gives us some real insight and revelation and opens our hearts, I'm afraid most of us in this room would pack our bags and leave. Would you not say so? Who said no? All right. Praise the Lord, I said, most of you. Be careful that you don't get caught being a silent figure because, brother, I'll tell you, sometimes when the situation gets bad, you can cave in fast. I mean, I really admonish you all. Sometimes when a situation gets bad, you can cave in fast.

Brothers and sisters, the Lord's been very merciful to us up until now; I really mean that. May His mercies continue, but we're going to have to learn some of those other passages of Scripture in the New Testament that say something like being patient, forbearing, forgiving, you know, and waiting until our brother gets to be thirty years of age.

I want you to know something. I have not seen anything that disturbs me. I've seen brothers cut off their hands, pluck out their eyes, and pull a Thomas and all these other things, but just give everybody a chance to be thirty years old. Take a little time, and we'll make it. We're going to make it. With real confidence in one another, learning to be human, and if we give our time less to doctrines, thoughts, or concepts and more to knowing the Lord Jesus, we'll make it.

Alright, this was the twelve-size group, and this is what the twelve went through. This is what the twelve went through.

Now, just one more word: brothers, in those last few days, the Lord threw off all things. This is the end of the train. He threw off all interest in everyone else. It has been estimated that Jesus Christ spent the last four months of His time with the twelve. The last week, except for coming into the city of Jerusalem on the donkey, He was never seen anywhere except with the twelve. I mean, the twelve were not seen anywhere but with the Lord. He spent almost all the last few months of His ministry with those twelve men, and at this time, He reveals the deep things. Brothers and sisters, you can praise the Lord for every one of those fellows, because each of them made a contribution.

Two apostles wrote Gospels. Who were they? Matthew and John. What kind of a Gospel did Matthew write? He wrote an outward Gospel. Are you grateful for that? What kind of Gospel did John write? An inward Gospel. Yet they saw exactly the same thing. I praise the Lord we had a John and a Matthew.

Praise God. Those men reached thirty years of age, brothers. They grew up in the Lord Jesus. But if you notice, so much of what they say they learned in those last few months is because the Lord began to put deep confidence in them. It takes some time to really lay down the heavy things.

May the Lord give us a spirit of understanding in all these matters. He spent the last few hours utterly with them, and yet they forgot everything He taught them, and a lot of it they didn't even remember in the first place. There should have been more Matthews memorizing the Sermon on the Mount. Only when the Holy Spirit came later and illumined them internally could they see what their Lord was really talking about. It takes time, then one day the switch comes on. The man is a man, and the man fellowships with the Lord, and suddenly he can deal with revelation.

Those twelve men were two things. They were properly trained as servants of the Lord in a way that we have never conceived, and they were also the first real picture of the church. The worker comes out of the church, and the church comes out of the worker, and the worker and the church come up together. In many ways, the experience must be identical yet sometimes separate.