

***The
Bible Believer's
Handbook***

JOHN

W. Max Alderman

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This book is dedicated to my father, Harmon M. Alderman, who went to be with the Lord during the time that I was writing this book. No greater example for me, than he....

This book is also dedicated to a man who was like a father to me, who also went to be with the Lord during the time that I was writing this book. In a prayer that he prayed shortly before he died, Brother C. L. Roach asked God to give me prudence, power, and protection for my ministry.

In Appreciation

1) To my dear wife and family who “shared” me with the book of John for over three years.

2) To my daughter, Amy Thompson, who helped finalize the book, making it ready for publishers.

3) To my dear church family who have encouraged me along the way.

4) To Mrs. Pam Eastridge who typed my “hen scratching” and kept a smile while doing so.

5) To Mrs. Shirley Hughes who proofed my book.

6) To the fine restaurants and their waitresses who would let me “tuck away” with a cup of coffee and write to my heart’s content:

R J’s Seafood & Steakery
Snooky’s Restaurant
Boyd’s Barbeque

7) To the many others who may have contributed in some manner, as well as to you who will read and benefit from this study.

8) To, above all else, my Saviour who made this all possible.

Introduction

It was during a revival service that God spoke to me about doing a study on John. I had long recognized the Book of John to be a great study on *belief*. With this being true, I felt that it would be appropriate to call my book, *The Bible Believer's Handbook*.

Each chapter begins with the question, "What do you believe about...?" Taking this approach has thrilled and blessed my heart. This approach allows one to probe and study a particular truth in its Biblical setting. Though this is a verse-by-verse study, one may also consider each chapter independently of the other.

It is my sincere desire that this study on John will be a blessing to you and cause you to have a greater appreciation of the many benefits of faith.

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Contents

<u>Chapter</u>	<u>What Do You Believe About:</u>	<u>Page</u>
1	Creation? (1:1-18)	13
2	The Record of John? (1:19-34)	17
3	The Call of God for Service? (1:35-51)	21
4	Miracles? (2:1-11)	26
5	The Holiness of God? (2:12-25)	31
6	The New Birth? (3:1-16)	37
7	The Doctrine of Condemnation? (3:17-21)	44
8	The Glory of God? (3:22-36)	51
9	Jesus – The Living Water? (4:1-30)	57
10	Real Hunger? (4:31-42)	64
11	Long Distance Miracles? (4:43-54)	69
12	Sin and Sickness? (5:1-16)	75
13	Judgment? (5:17-29)	81
14	A Witness' Qualification? (5:30-47)	88
15	The All-Sufficient One? (6:1-14)	95
16	The Bread of Life? Part I (6:15-40)	102
17	The Bread of Life? Part II (6:41-71)	108
18	The Doctrine of Christ? Part I (7:1-29)	115
19	The Doctrine of Christ? Part II (7:30-53)	122
20	The Wise Teacher? (8:1-11)	129
21	The True Light? (8:12-30)	136
22	The Truth Versus The Lie? (8:31-59)	143
23	Spiritual Blindness? Part I (9:1-12)	151
24	Spiritual Blindness? Part II (9:13-41)	160
25	The Good Shepherd? Part I (10:1-18)	167
26	The Good Shepherd? Part II (10:19-42)	175
27	Resurrection Power? Part I (11:1-26)	182

Chapter	What Do You Believe About	Page
28	Resurrection Power? Part II (11:27-43)	191
29	Resurrection Power? Part III (11:44-57)	198
30	True Worship? Part I (12:1-11)	205
31	True Worship? Part II (12:12-26)	212
32	The Purpose of His Crucifixion? (12:27-33)	220
33	Jesus As Light? (12:34-50)	228
34	Love's Posture? (13:1-20)	236
35	Demon Possession? (13:21-38)	244
36	God's Solution for Troubled Hearts? Part I (14:1-4)	251
37	God's Solution for Troubled Hearts? Part II (14:5-31)	258
38	The True Vine? (15:1-17)	266
39	The World's Hatred of the Christian? (15:18-16:6)	275
40	The Operation of the Holy Spirit? (16:7-15)	284
41	His Return? (16:16-33)	291
42	The High Priestly Prayer? (17:1-26)	297
43	The Arrest of Jesus? (18:1-12)	306
44	Peter's Denial? (18:10-27)	314
45	Pontius Pilate? (18:28-19:16)	322
46	Jesus' Death? (19:17-37)	328
47	The Empty Tomb? (19:38-20:9)	334
48	His Resurrection Appearances? Part I (20:10-31)	341
49	His Resurrection Appearances? Part II (21:1-25)	348

Chapter 1

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT CREATION?

John 1:1-18

Certainly you believe something about creation. The humanist educators will teach you that you were evolved, not created. Those who embrace the teachings of Scripture are taught that God made all things. This teaching is true. Yet, theologically, we find it necessary to build upon that truth and to expand our thinking in accordance with God's taught Word.

During the first century of the Church, beginning with the apostolic age, there were two different mindsets pertaining to Creation. There was the "Hebrew mindset" and the "Greek mindset." When I refer to the Greek or Hebrew mindset, I am simply conveying that the Hebrews and the Greeks were "set" in their thinking as to what they believed.

The Hebrews found no difficulty believing in God and believing Him to be the Creator God. The Greeks, however, were more prone to an atheistic or an agnostic position. The Apostle Paul's approach was different when he spoke to the Hebrew and Greek cultures.

As he spoke to the Hebrews, he could immediately preach the Gospel to them because they believed in God and also in creation. In preaching to the Greeks, he first presented Christ as the Creator God, then gave them the Gospel.

I. NOTICE THE POWER BEHIND THE CREATION 1:1-3

A credible creation (vv. 1-3a). What you believe about the creation is determined by what you believe about the Creator. Who made us? What was the source of His power for such an event? Consider the magnitude of creating out of absolutely nothing everything that is. When stating that the Word created all things, John was confirming the deity of Christ. Christ or the Word is God.

"Word" in the Greek is "logos," which means "word, thought, concept, and the expression thereof." God expresses Himself through His Son. When God the Son walked

JOHN

upon the earth, He was doing the will of the Father. Literally, He was expressing the Father's will. He was demonstrating the awesome power of His deity as He did so. Though He limited Himself while upon the earth, while walking as a man, He was certainly no less God. He could weep and tire, but He also could create and heal. He was able to die as a man, but only He could be raised in resurrection splendor as the Eternal God.

The power of His deity allowed Him to manifest His power in His duty. God commissioned Him to do the initial work of creation, but also he was commissioned to do the work of Salvation as the Light of the world.

A credible Christ (v. 3b). Christ's credibility is established in the miracle of creation, it is believed upon in the miracle of salvation. God communicated the account of Himself through His Son, the Word. Those who believe in and receive Him, become the sons of God. It is the duty of the "Word" to say everything the Father wants said to His creation. For that reason, the Son declares that He came not to do His own will, but the Father's.

The purpose of Christ the Word is clearly spelled out in John 20:31. He communicates the heart of God the Father through the Word by His seven sign miracles. They are: 1. The turning of the water into wine (2:1-11); 2. The cure of the nobleman's son (4:46-54); 3. The cure of the paralytic (5:1-18); 4. The feeding of the multitude (6:6-13); 5. The walking on the water (6:16-21); 6. The giving of sight to the blind (9:1-7); 7. The raising of Lazarus (11:1-45).

During the course of these miracles, people either received or rejected the Person and the work of Christ.

II. NOTICE THE PURPOSE FOR THE CREATION vv. 4-10a

The Creator's purpose (vv. 4-5). Everything God does has purpose. Just as Christ Himself had a purpose in the economy of God, there was also purpose in the creation work. Each element of the creation was designed to compliment, assist, serve, support, sustain or in some way perpetuate life. Even the ecosystems testify to this purpose.

CREATION

Verse four says, *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”* Men who are in darkness are blinded in spiritual death. They cannot see or reckon on a spiritual plane because they grope about in a dimension of spiritual darkness. They are dead! Their death is their separation from the Light. When the Life comes, light also comes. Only then are men able to comprehend. They see; they discern; they understand. Every conversion is predicated on the basis of Life. Jesus declares that He is the Resurrection and the Life. Without Christ Jesus we are all in darkness, dead.

There are many worldly systems, which have been designed for the masses that walk in darkness rather than light. The Word tells us that even though light came into the world, *“men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:19). The secular universities, the public school system, the entertainment industry, the pornographic presses, and vulgar video have all come under the influence of this system.

The creation prophesied (vv. 6-10a). Our text reminds us that John (the forerunner or Baptizer) had the role of bearing witness to the Light. Prophecy had already spoken of the coming of John the messenger (Malachi 3:1). And what a message it was: There is light for this sin cursed, sin darkened world.

It is interesting to note that John came as a “witness.” As a witness, John met satanic opposition, which ultimately led to his martyrdom, just as the term witness implies. Today, because of the satanic darkness, those who are true witnesses will suffer persecution. The witnesses who have continued to let their light shine have made their illuminating mark throughout the annals of history. Thank God for the bright lights who are shining in dark places. Each time the Gospel witness goes forth with the Truth, it is for the saving benefit of God’s creation.

III. NOTICE THE PROBLEM AFTER THE CREATION vv. 10b-18 *He was not recognized* (vv. 10b-13). The incarnate Son

JOHN

of God walked upon the very earth that He created as an unknown stranger: “... *the world was made by him, and the world knew him not*” (v. 10). The Creator’s fingerprint is on all things. The Scriptures tell us that He made all things. The Greek word *panta* refers to all things individually, not collectively or in bulk. Even with the minuteness and the totality of His creation being made known, He was not known. It is said about Him that the foxes have dens and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath not a place to lay His head.

God has given us the Bible and the preached Word to introduce His Son to this lost and dying world, yet He is still very much unknown. This is a problem, a very serious problem that affects us all. When people really know Christ, they reflect Him that others may know Him.

There is the problem of not knowing Him, and there is the problem of not receiving Him. Verse 11 tells us that “*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*” He was rejected by His own people. The Jew today has blindness and does not accept Christ as the Messiah Saviour. Thanks be unto God for the exceptions. Though the masses have a problem in not knowing Him or accepting Him, “*few there be that find it*” (Matthew 7:14b), there are still those who are born into the family of God through the new birth by believing on His name.

He was not received (vv. 14-18; cf. v. 11). John tells us in verse 14 that the “*Word*” is the incarnate Son of God or God in the flesh. God, who is the image of the Father (Hebrews 1:2-3), came to earth to speak to us. Just as the law came by Moses, grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (v. 17). The “*Word*” came to communicate everything His Father wanted to say. The cross that the Son died upon was the expression of both the love and demands of the Father.

The message from the cross speaks volumes. God told the world that He was giving His very best to the very worst that men might be saved. God declared this through His Son the Word!

The Word has spoken....

Chapter 2

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE RECORD OF JOHN?

John 1:19-34

“And this is the record of John...” is the way this next section begins. May we ask the question, “What do you believe about the record of John?”

For anything to be worthy of being a record, it certainly must meet some rigid requirements: Is it factual? Is it of historical importance? Is it significant? Does it meet a need? Does it clarify or in any way reveal truth?

The word “record” is synonymous with the word “witness.” John boldly announces to the priests and Levites that he is a faithful and true witness to that which is asked of him.

I. WHAT WAS JOHN ASKED? vv. 19-22

The people asking the questions (vv. 19-21). Certainly, all the questions asked of John are of importance; else they would not be preserved in God’s Word. Of equal importance are those who are asking the questions, and the purpose for which the questions are asked.

The Jews sent the priests and the Levites to ask John who he was. John came on the scene as a “Baptizer” and did not have the credentials authorizing him as a religious leader that the Jews supposed he should have had. The priests, as recorded in Malachi, lost their respect due to their neglect, corruption, and false teachings. By the time of the New Testament, the Scribes and the Pharisees were overshadowing the priests. The Jews that commissioned the priests and the Levites to question John may have been the Scribes and the Pharisees (v. 24).

The priests and the Levites are spoken of often in the Bible as if they were practically the same. Their close relationship is traceable to their common origin. The priests and Levites were of the tribe of Levi, with the priests coming from

JOHN

Aaron's lineage in the tribe of Levi.

The purpose of asking the questions (v. 22). There were several possible reasons for the religious ambassadors to question John. There could have been a sincere desire to determine if the predicted Messiah had come. Also, there may have been fear that an impostor had appeared to invade the religious stronghold of the scribes, Pharisees, priests, and Levites. Their questions addressed the possibility of either the Messiah, a prophet, or Elijah being in the personage of John.

John clearly stated that he was NOT the Christ. Just who was this person we call John? John had a major role in the economy of God as a subject of Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 40). John's birth was within the timing and purpose of God (Luke 1:7, 13); he was "*filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*" (Luke 1:15); he was a man "*sent from God*" (John 1:6); he was to prepare the way of the Lord (Matthew 3:3). John was granted the special privilege of being the forerunner of Christ and of baptizing Him.

The term *charisma* is used to describe a person having a dynamic personality, or some other quality that attracts. John attracted the attention of large crowds, of whom he would baptize the converts. But instead of him being a charismatic figure, John's commanding righteousness drew the large crowds. It was that reputation that captured the attention of the religious leaders, causing them to inquire of him.

Borrowing from Old Testament Prophecy, the religious leaders were looking for "Christ," "Elijah," and "that Prophet." John the Baptist answers "NO" to each of the questions attempting to identify him as one or the other. They finally ask, "*Who art thou?*" (v. 22).

II. WHAT WAS JOHN'S ANSWER? vv. 23-34

His answer was prophetic (v. 23). John's answer was a clear reference to Isaiah 40:3. He knew that he was prophetically the person referred to in Isaiah's prophecy. His answer was a Biblical answer, "*I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord, as said the*

THE RECORD OF JOHN

prophet Esaias.”

Again, he did not claim to be the Messiah. He claimed rather to be *“the voice of one crying in the wilderness.”* There is a distinction in the usage of “Word” and “voice.” So much is the distinction that it may be better to say that the words are in contrast to each other.

The proper noun “Word” transcends time and is eternal. The written Word is forever settled in Heaven. Christ the living Word is never in contradiction to the written Word. The Word is truth and truth never changes.

The “voice,” referring to John, was limited to a certain moment of time for a particular, passing purpose. His voice was a cry to announce the beginning of the dispensation of Grace. This beginning coincided with the ministry of Christ.

His answer was proper (vv. 24-34). The priests and Levites questioned John’s authority for baptizing if he were neither Christ, Elias, or that Prophet. John made no attempt to authenticate himself before his interrogators; instead he wished to pass on the glory to the One he was introducing. While he was having a baptismal service, and being questioned, he said, *“I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose”* (vv. 26-27).

John made it evident that he was not appearing to put himself in the limelight. He was determined to focus entirely upon the One he called *“the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* All the sacrifices, all the slain lambs, from Abel’s lamb to the desired best sacrificial lamb of Malachi’s day, were a bleeding testimony pointing to this Lamb. What a contrast John the Baptist was making when comparing himself to the Christ or the Messiah. It is as though he was saying, “To God be the glory.”

Our ministries should be designed to radiate God’s glory instead of our own. John demonstrated great humility, instead of pride, as he served the Lord. As the God-called preacher stands to proclaim the *“unsearchable riches”* of the Grace of God, or the singer stands preparing hearts for the

JOHN

Word of God, they need to have the spirit of John the Baptist. May we decrease as God increases!

John continues to further identify the Lord by saying that he witnessed the Spirit descending like a dove on the Son of God. John told them, *“but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost”* (v. 33). John says that he had seen exactly that take place when he baptized Jesus, and by doing so he was able to identify that He truly was the Son of God.

Chapter 3

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE CALL OF GOD FOR SERVICE?

John 1:35-51

The call of God to salvation is unlike any other call. It is a call that is very necessary for one to be saved. A man cannot inherit the Kingdom of God unless he answers the call of God. The call of God is a very powerful call. The Lord uses the gospel witness to powerfully proclaim the Truth to convict and arrest the sinner. The Lord is *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (II Peter 3:9).

The powerful call of God is also a personal call. God powerfully delivers the gospel to the individual. God does not save in mass but individually. *“Whosoever will may come.”*

This section introduces God’s call to several of the disciples. Just as there is a call to salvation, there is also a call to service. From observing the call of the disciples, one may note the similarities that exist in the way God calls servants today.

I. THE CURIOSITY OF THE DISCIPLES v. 35-36

The great expectation (v. 35). We live in the “information age.” This is an age in which messages are being communicated around the globe at the speed of light. These same messages are becoming easier and more conveniently sent. But just as this period has been called the “information age,” it very well could be called the misinformation age because of the scarcity of truth. The same was true during the time John the Baptist was introducing the Lamb of God. There was then a hunger and curiosity for the true things of God considering that there were several centuries when there was no word from Him.

The great proclamation (v. 36). After the silent years, John explodes on the scene and cries, *“... Behold the Lamb of God!”* He, whom the prophets had spoken of, and the people had waited for, was now being introduced. Providentially the

JOHN

stage is now set, the curtain is soon to be raised, the great drama of the ages is about to unfold. John, who introduces the principal player, has already aroused the audience to behold the one who is to be thrust upon the center stage. "... *Behold the Lamb of God!*"

John introduced the Lord as the Lamb of God. The Lamb of God was predicted throughout the Old Testament, beginning with Abel's lamb. Abel's lamb was sacrificed for a person. The Passover lamb was available for a family; the Lamb of Isaiah 53 was for a nation. Now, John introduces that Lamb, Jesus, who is the sacrifice for the whole world.

The religious world had known the common teachings prophesying the coming of the Lamb. They knew that He was to be a scion of David's kingly line that He was to be born in Bethlehem. They also knew that He was to be born of a virgin, that He was to be a sojourner in Egypt for a period of time.

"Could this really be the One that we have looked for?" they must have thought. The declaration John made of Him was as though He was crying; "He is here!" When He was later raised from the dead, as the Sacrificial Lamb, they were able to cry, "He is risen!" One day the saints will cry, "He has returned!"

Just as there was curiosity surrounding His first coming, there is now curiosity having to do with His Second Coming. There are many questions that relate to the new millennium. There are many concerns pertaining to "Y2K." There are those suggesting a worldwide crisis resulting from the "Y2K" phenomenon, which also could signal the beginning of the tribulation, preceded by the rapturing up of the church.

Even so come quickly!

II. THE CALL OF THE DISCIPLES vv. 37-45

How God uses the Word in the call (v. 37). The call of two of the disciples was a direct result of the spoken word. One of the two is identified as Andrew; the other was probably John the author of the Gospel of John, and also the Revelation prophecy. John, while emphasizing the principle of giving

THE CALL OF GOD FOR SERVICE

the glory to the Lamb, when writing about John the Baptist, seemed to be practicing what he was preaching. Very likely this was the reason for him not identifying himself.

Just as these disciples *“heard him speak, and they followed Jesus”* (v. 37), we should also listen to Him speak through His written Word. David knew the meaning of following God’s Word when he said, *“Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight”* (Psalm 119:35).

While serving the Lord there must be a sense of direction and of purpose. The direction and the purpose are clearly defined in God’s Word. The Word illuminates the path of the servant (Psalm 119:105). The servant gains wisdom to serve by asking of the Lord (James 1:5). To ask of the Lord is to ask of His Word. The servant gains protection in his serving by hiding the Word in his heart (Psalm 119:11). The Word directs the servant to the Lord who is his Shield (Psalm 119:114). The same Word that helps the servant to ascertain his call also points him in the right direction, gives him purpose, and provides for his protection.

How God uses the will in the call (vv. 38-45). The sensitive servant is open to instructions from the Lord relative to his being called. The sensitive servant will be directly singled out. God using His Word, by His Spirit, can call His servants directly from the throne room. A call of this nature may take place while the Christian is in a period of meditation and prayer. He also may sense the call while listening to the preacher preach from his pulpit. He may even be working on his job when the Lord impresses him with a call from above. In either instance the call is directly from the Lord. Then it is as the person will say, “I will” in answer to the call.

Just as the call of salvation is different from person to person, the call to service usually originates in a set of different circumstances. John the Baptist announced the “Lamb of God” and Andrew and John began to follow Jesus. When they were convinced of the realness of Jesus as being the Messiah, Andrew went and found his brother Simon Peter, saying, *“... We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ”* (v. 41).

JOHN

Both Andrew and Peter were fishermen (Matthew 4:18, Mark 1:16-18) from Bethsaida (John 1:44), on the northwest coast of the Sea of Galilee. They also had a house at Capernaum. Andrew bringing his brother Simon to meet the Messiah serves as a model or type for all that brings others to Christ.

Andrew is not mentioned as much or as often as Simon Peter but will receive the rewards of Peter for having brought him to Jesus. Though the Scriptures do not extremely detail Andrew's life, tradition says Andrew was martyred at Patrae in Achaia by crucifixion on an X-shaped cross. Andrew called Jesus' attention to the boy with five barley loaves and two fishes (John 6:5-9) at the feeding of the 5000.

After Simon Peter was brought to Jesus, Jesus said to Simon, "*Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone*" (v. 42). This pronouncement may have startled Simon Peter because we learn that Peter at the beginning was anything but a "stone." Yet God can see the end from the beginning and knows what is written on the very last page. After much testing and training, Simon Peter became a "Rock of Gibraltar" in the faith!

The call of Philip was another example of how each call was different. Jesus personally called Philip. Jesus went into Galilee and found Philip. Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.

Philip then found Nathanael or Bartholomew, as he was also called. Philip told Nathanael that, "*We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph*" (v. 45).

III. THE CONVICTION OF THE DISCIPLES vv. 46-51

To establish a call there must be a sense of having been called and having a conviction that settles that call. Nathanael who was a native of Cana in Galilee was troubled when told that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. He knew that Nazareth, the town where Jesus grew up, was not mentioned in the Old Testament prophecies. He questioned whether any good thing could come out of Nazareth (v. 46).

THE CALL OF GOD FOR SERVICE

In the case of Nathanael, he recognized the omniscience of Christ. He found that Christ already knew him; only a prophet could have known him and about his most recent activities. In this particular case, the Prophet, was also Priest and King. Nathanael addressed Him as “*Rabbi*,” “*Son of God*,” and the “*King of Israel*.”

Jesus’ earthly ministry began with a call to salvation, and a call to service. As we progress in our studies of this wonderful book, we will see that service is within God’s plan. Christ Jesus came, as the lowly servant to do His Father’s will just as we are to do His will today.

Serving is a great privilege. It is the privilege of seeing the Great Master, and what a privilege that is. Also, the servant will receive a generous payment. “...*Well done, thou good and faithful servant...*” (Matthew 25:21).

Chapter 4

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT MIRACLES? John 2:1-11

In theology there is a hermeneutic or interpretation principle called “the law of first mention.” This law tells us that when a certain word or concept appears in Scriptures, to gain a clue as to its meaning, determine how it is used in its first appearance. Considering the miracles of Jesus, one would go to Cana of Galilee and observe the very first miracle of Christ as He turns the water into wine.

While observing, one would be a wise student if he determined as much as possible concerning the reason for this first miracle. For example, why did it take place? What was the reason for it? What purpose did it have? What practical and prophetically significance was there?

There are those today that believe miracles have a rather common occurrence. There are charismatic figures that demand one or more miracles in each of their meetings. Some have even been guilty of fabricating “miracles” to impress their audiences.

Miracles are not as common as these personalities would have you to believe. Yet I strongly believe in miracles, and know that they continue to take place. It is very important to be grounded and have a foundational understanding of what miracles are all about.

Miracles may fall into two major categories. There are “creation miracles” and there are “providential miracles.” The creation miracle was and still is less common than the providential miracle. The turning of water into wine was a creation miracle; the feeding of the 5000 was a creation miracle, as was the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch was a miracle of providence. God the Spirit directed Philip to the Gaza Strip at just the right time to encounter the eunuch and lead him to Christ. An example of a providential miracle occurring today

MIRACLES

would be when a person has a financial need and prays for help. God, in turn, begins to speak to someone else that may be geographically removed by many miles from the person that has the need. That person senses the need of the one who has prayed for the help and then puts a check in the mail for the exact amount. These miracles of providence are more common. Perhaps the reason is that this gives the Lord an opportunity to use people to touch people.

This first miracle, as already mentioned, is a creation miracle and is also one of the seven sign miracles.

In this study may we consider the Occasion of the Miracle, the Occurrence of the Miracle, and the Outcome of the Miracle.

I. THE OCCASION OF THE MIRACLE vv. 1-3

The place of the miracle (v.1). There was on the third day a marriage in Cana of Galilee. John gives the chronology for several days of the events taking place. Just as this miracle took place on the third day, so also did the miracle of the resurrection.

Verse two tells us that Jesus was called to the wedding. Perhaps the call was issued because of their need for the wine. Otherwise He would have come as an invited guest. Then again, the “call” may have been a proper invitation that He received. In either case He was there and was immediately made aware of a very practical, basic need that they had.

The wine was a symbol for joy. They wanted to experience the gladness of the wedding but were hindered by not having the wine. Their need could have been attributed to their poverty. Things that we would consider as common to us may have been uncommon to them. Today, weddings can be very expensive and may have also been then. In this particular wedding they may have started out with a smaller quantity of wine than they anticipated that they needed, and found as the festivities increased to be very much in want.

The purpose of the miracle (vv. 2-3). It is therefore reasonable to believe that this first miracle took place, at least in

JOHN

part, to satisfy a very practical need.

Another purpose of the miracle may have been to meet a prophetic need. Everything that Jesus Christ was doing had significance. Theologians recognize this miracle as being the first of the sign miracles. The signs have been seen as reflecting Jesus' lordship over quality (water into wine), space (the healing of the nobleman's son at a distance), time (the healing of a man who had been lame for 38 years), quantity (the feeding of the five thousand), nature (walking on the sea), misfortune (the healing of the man born blind), and death (the raising of Lazarus). The purpose of the signs was to manifest His glory and to motivate His disciples to believe in Him (2:11).

Prophetically, this miracle may have also been a clear message to the future that each marriage needs the joy that comes only from Jesus. There also are teachings pertaining to Israel, that would require a study all of its own, while considering it prophetically.

II. THE OCCURRENCE OF THE MIRACLE *vv.* 4-8

A proper interpretation (v. 4). Mary indicated to Jesus the need that they had for the wine. The response given by Jesus has prompted many various interpretations from theologians. Some have said that this was an attempt on the part of Mary to get a public statement from Jesus clearing her of giving birth to an illegitimate child. Others say this was a mild rebuke telling Mary it was not the proper time for her to involve Christ.

To interpret this passage in such a manner could not be supported but only implied. *"Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come" (v. 5).*

With the use of "woman" it is generally understood that that expression is not a harsh reference to His mother, but just as respectful as if He had said, "Mother."

The use of the word "woman" in our culture often carries with it a negative connotation. As we read this statement, *"Woman, what have I to do with thee?"* and with our colloquial

MIRACLES

way of interpreting that statement, it is almost like Him saying, "Woman, don't bother me!" That is not the interpretation, nor the spirit of Jesus. To paraphrase what I interpret, as the actual meaning of what Jesus was saying, it would read something like this, "Mother, what is it that I can do to help you?"

The further expression "*mine hour is not yet come*" could simply mean, "I'm not dead yet, I'm still available."

Immediately after making that statement, "*His mother said unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.*"

The Lord's work, in most instances, is a cooperative effort. It involves people working with people, or, better, people working with God. Revelation 22:17 gives an example of this, "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come...*" Our text shows that the Lord instructed the people to cooperate with Him by doing what they could do. He then performed the miracle of turning the water into wine, which they could not do.

A practical interpretation (vv. 5-8). In our churches today, God blesses people who are busy, but who are also dependent upon Him. There are two dangerous extremes in serving God ineffectively. One, when we serve alone; not sensing the need for God, and two, when we think God does not need us. God does not use humanoids or robots to do His work: God uses people! Many of our church members are suffering because they can neither cooperate with God nor each other.

Had the servants not obeyed the Lord in filling the water pots, the Lord would not have performed the miracle. When we fail to fill our spiritual water pots, we do not experience the miracle of the water being turned into wine. The filling of the spiritual water pots may be in the form of reading your Bible, tithing, church faithfulness, praying, or witnessing. The filling of the water pots demonstrates a faithful obedience to the Lord. May we fill the "water pots" that God gives us and receive the joy of God's blessings.

The same servants who had a part in putting in had a part in taking out. They put in the water; they took out the wine. They put in their "abilities," they took out God's "abilities." We give the Lord what we have; He gives us back what He has!

JOHN

As mentioned earlier, this miracle was the first miracle, and also the beginning of the Lord's earthly ministry. In performing this creation miracle, God took the existing water and transformed it into wine. A creation miracle of the highest magnitude transpires when a poor wretched sinner is transformed into a saved saint!

The servants were told to do two things: Fill up and draw out. Then they were told to take it to the governor of the feast, who in our day would be the headwaiter. The governor was to taste the wine without an explanation that the water had been turned to wine. The servants had seen a miracle, but also trusted the "quality" of the miracle even before it was proven.

III. THE OUTCOME OF THE MIRACLE vv. 9-12

The governor of the feast was much impressed with how very good the wine was. The truth being known, there could have been none any better. Whatever God does, He does well. He does His very best. When God created man, he was not an inferior representative of man, as we know him today. Instead, Adam was of perfect body, soul, and spirit. The evolutionist must fantasize a less than perfect specimen to add credibility to his absurd theory.

Primarily, the purpose or function of the miracle was to meet the very humble request of Mary and the wedding party. They simply needed the wine. When God performed the rest of the miracles, while upon the earth, they too were to meet some very practical needs. They also were performed to meet a spiritual need or teach a spiritual lesson.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to observe Christ turning the water into wine? There was no "hocus pocus" involved and the people knew that to be the case. When God really moves in our services, there is no "spiritual hocus pocus" involved! Many times we have to conjure up a service; so we think! If we will let God into our services, He will perform all the miracles needed to make our services spiritual.

When it is obvious, as it was at the first miracle, that God is in control, our faith will be strengthened.

Chapter 5

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLINESS OF GOD?

John 2:12-25

As the Lord began His earthly ministry, He went immediately to the Temple, and confronted those who were abusing the Temple. In doing so, the Lord demonstrated His anger when the Holy things of God were being defiled. The word “holy” basically means “to make a difference.”

The demands that true holiness require makes holiness either an unpopular or unknown subject in Christianity today. Yet the Lord addressed the subject with great passion at the beginning of His ministry. With the emphasis that He placed upon holiness, may we properly define the word as we examine its usage.

The word “holy” means a moral and ethical wholeness or perfection; freedom from moral evil. God, who is Holy, requires Holiness of His people. Holiness may also be rendered “sanctification” or “godliness.” God instructed Moses to “consecrate Aaron and his sons” (Exodus 29:9) to the priesthood. The nation of Israel was admonished to “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8). Both the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and the Temple at Jerusalem (Exodus 26:33; Hebrews 9:1-9) had the most sacred “Holy of Holies.” Elisha, in the Old Testament, was called a “holy man of God” (II Kings 4:9), as John the Baptist, in the New Testament, was known as a “just man and an holy” (Mark 6:20).

Holiness may be used ceremonially to describe the priest when he met the 146 external requirements of the priesthood. The main use of holiness is to describe God’s righteous nature or the ethical righteousness demanded of His followers (Isaiah 1:10-11; Matthew 12:7). Holiness is a unique quality of God that cannot be separated from His nature. The Scriptures declare this concept when it says, “Who is like unto thee, O LORD...?” (Exodus 15:11). “There is none holy as the

JOHN

LORD..." (1 Samuel 2:2). God expected this quality of holiness from His people: "*And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation*" (Exodus 19:6); "*Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy, for I am the LORD your God*" (Leviticus 20:7).

Jesus, as He began His earthly ministry, personifies the Holiness of God. Thus He went straight to the Temple, to what should have been a holy place, denouncing and scattering those who were defiling the Temple of Jerusalem.

I. THE CONDEMNATION BY THE HOLY ONE vv. 12-17

Jesus' trek to Jerusalem coincided with the "*Jew's Passover*" v. 13. The Passover or the "*feast of the Passover*" is one of Israel's great yearly festivals (the other two being Pentecost and Tabernacle). This celebration was held on the fourteenth of Nisan (March-April) and commemorated the deliverance from Egypt on the night when God "*passed over*" the homes of the Israelites during the slaughter of the firstborn.

The Passover was a night that demonstrated and described what holiness was all about. Borrowing from the definition of holiness, meaning to "*make a difference,*" those who applied the blood to the "*two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses*" made a difference from the houses occupied by the Egyptians, and were spared of God. (Exodus 12:7). Passover night was a very somber and holy night. This spirit of commemorating God's holiness has been lost and this was apparent at the Temple. Josephus, the historian, describes the Temple as consisting of three parts. (1) The first enclosure, which surrounded the whole building, and was open for all, contained the porches and piazzas in which the people assembling the animals for sacrifice were bought and sold, and the money-changers' tables placed. This was the outer count, or court of the Gentiles. (2) The second enclosure, which was ten steps higher, was divided into the court of the women and the court of the priests; was the place where the sacrifices were prepared and offered, and could only be entered by such as were clean. (3) The inner edifice, the Temple proper, into which alone the priests could enter, con-

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

sisted of the Sanctuary or Holy place, and the Holy of Holies.

The Temple cleansing was required because the forecourt, which was to be reserved for the sacrificial offerings and other religious exercises, had been converted into a common cattle market and pigeon fair, under the guise of religion.

The Lord dealt firmly with the defilers. Some use this text to support the theory that Christ lost His temper. Not so! The Scriptures when properly interpreted destroy this theory or accusation. The Word of God as someone has said, "contains no excess baggage, nor is anything left out." The evidence of Scriptures shows that the Lord had His anger under complete control as in the spirit of Ephesians which says, "*Be ye angry, and sin not*" (4:26).

Verse fifteen, from our text, tells us that the Lord took the time to make a "*scourge of small cords*." Had His anger been without control He would never have taken the time to make the whip. Anger has its proper moments. The Lord illustrated this truth in cleansing the Temple.

The spoken word of God was effectively and simply used to clarify the Lord's reason for His actions. "*Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise*" (v. 16).

In this statement of truth, the Lord established His authority and announced His Deity. God in flesh had spoken. God's attitude of holy hatred towards sin has not changed nor diminished. Christ was jealous for the holiness of His Father's house.

In a different sense, the Holy House of God, the church has been also defiled. We have brought into our churches a carnival like atmosphere with a calculated desire to make the church "user friendly," keep everyone in the comfort zone, discard sermons against sin, and keep everyone happy. The music has prostituted the church with the world. The offspring of such a union is a powerless worship service that embraces the sensational instead of the supernatural. May God help us, for His attitude of holiness has not changed!

JOHN

II. THE DEMONSTRATION BY THE HOLY ONE vv. 18-23

One of the marks of the Jew is that religiously they look for or require a sign. This sign could either be a miraculous token or some word that was uncommon in its occurrence. In either case, it made a supernatural impression that coached them or helped them nurture their faith. Though they had the Old Testament with its history and prophecy, they did not have the New Testament, complete, as we have it today.

With this partially being the case, the Jew desired signs to authenticate truth. The tongues or language phenomenon recorded in Acts at Pentecost and the "*cloven tongues like as of fire*" were signs for the benefit of the unbelieving Jew (Acts 2).

Characteristically of Jews, they wanted a sign to prove the authenticity of Christ being the Messiah. Instead of Christ giving them an instant answer, He gave prophecy of Himself that required an element of faith for that which was yet future. Jesus told the Jews, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" Immediately they reminded Jesus that the same Temple that He had purged took forty-six years to build. He who did the creation work in six days and was standing before them, could have spoken the Temple back into existence in one word, was now speaking of His resurrected body. This prophecy concerning Himself, was later fulfilled at His resurrection, causing the disciples to believe His word.

As Christ Jesus speaks He is demonstrating holiness as a prophet. His words are truth. Truth and holiness are inseparable. They must cling together; they always complement and never contradict each other. There are religious charlatans today, however, who profess to be holy, but are very vile and deceitful in their ways.

Not only did Christ declare prophecy that they knew not of, He demonstrated a power that they knew not. The book of John contains miracles that prove not only His power, but also declare His Holiness. His miracles were not designed to sensationalize His earthly ministry but to make a spiritual impact upon the world. Many religious, charismatic figures are mak-

THE HOLINESS OF GOD

ing a mockery of the Holy things of God as they showcase their religious trinkets and tricks to glorify themselves rather than Almighty God. Help us in these perilous days to be more discerning.

III. THE EXAMINATIONS BY THE HOLY ONE vv. 24-25

Not only did the Lord know this particular group from the past, He knows ALL men, even those yet future. We often pretend that we have done something sinful that no one will ever know. We have the “perfect crime” mentality. Yet God knows all things. He knows our words; He knows our thoughts. He even knows our motives.

The many that believed, believed wrongly. James reminds us that there are different kinds of belief. There is a belief that is satanic (James 2:19). Many today are devout and sincere in their beliefs, but sincerely wrong. I recall years ago going to Argentina and touring a Roman Catholic Cathedral. I saw this elderly lady on her knees crawling until her knees would either be callused or bloody while counting her rosary and doing penance. She undoubtedly was sincere in what she believed, but according to Scripture she was sincerely wrong. Christ also knew the motives of those who gathered around Him that day back then.

What are you thinking? What do you think? God knows: He who is the Holy One can appraise our thinking according to His standard of Holiness. *“For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...”* (Proverbs 23:7).

In the United States we have the American Bureau of Standards that contains a representative standard of weights, measurements, quantities and qualities, etc. to keep us honest. If there was ever a deviation from a certain quantity or quality it could be “tried” by the American Bureau of Standards for its accuracy. Likewise, Christ who is Holy is the Standard for all Spiritual comparisons. For this reason the Scriptures declare that *“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23).

Because we lack, as sinners, the Holiness of God, there must be a new birth. In our next study we will be asking,

JOHN

“What do you believe about the new birth?” In doing so, the Scriptures will show us how to have His holiness. May God bless each of us to be more like Him!

Chapter 6

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE NEW BIRTH JOHN 3:1-16

When Jimmy Carter was elected to the presidency of the United States of America, he publicized that he was born again. The use of this term became rather common then and also rather popular. On the surface one would have thought that a great revival was sweeping across the country. Yet with closer observation it was to become apparent that many who professed the new birth were not really saved at all.

During this time, it was not uncommon to hear Roman Catholics using this “new birth” terminology, when previously it was practically unheard. Any religious phenomena could be referred to as a new birth. Even dieters when being encouraged with their dramatic weight loss would exclaim, “I’ve been born again!”

The Lord Jesus told Nicodemus, *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (v. 3). With the Lord requiring the new birth as the means of being saved, certainly a doctrinal and theological understanding of this truth is imperative. The concept of something being wrong with the natural first birth of man was taught even in the Old Testament when the law was given (Leviticus 12).

Though the birth of a child was a joyful, glad occasion, it was also a reminder that another sinner had entered into the world. Leviticus 12 required that the mother be banned from performing religious duties for forty days with the birth of a baby boy. With the birth of a baby girl she was banned for eighty days. The difference could be to emphasize the idea that when a baby girl is born she too would one day bring a sinner or sinners into the world. After the ban was over, the mother would then offer a burnt offering and sin offering unto the Lord. Mary had to make such an offering at her purification to meet the requirements of the Law, but not because

JOHN

she had given birth to a sinner. Of all women, she was the only woman to give birth to a child who was not a sinner!

Excluding the Christ child, every other person born has been born into the world as a sinner. Romans 5:12 says, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:”* Because we all have sinned, we must be born again. While considering the doctrine of the new birth, may we look at the “man,” the “mystery,” and the “miracle.”

I. THE MAN – NICODEMUS ILLUSTRATES OUR GREAT NEED vv. 1-7

Nicodemus coming with a great need (vv. 1-2). The gospel narrative that is renown for its treatment and teachings concerning the new birth begins with the man Nicodemus seeking after Jesus. The Scripture narrative does not answer all the questions that we might have concerning his motives and reasons for coming to Jesus. Nicodemus was described by Jesus as “the teacher of Israel,” implying his training and proficiency in Old Testament law and tradition. Nicodemus, who was respected by his people and a descendant of the patriarch Abraham, was also a wealthy, educated, and powerful man. Nicodemus is much like those today who are religious and known for their moral piety, but do not know Christ as their Saviour. There are those who spend a lifetime in pursuit of varied religious themes, only wishing deep down inside that there was some convincing religious leader like Jesus that they could approach while no one was looking. There is in this kind of person a mixture of “pride” and “searching,” knowing that their religious system does not really satisfy their deep spiritual longings. Yet they, because of their pride, are reluctant to deal with their need and many will die in their sins.

Nicodemus, who came to Jesus by night, began to commend Christ for those things that Christ had done saying, *“no man can do miracles that thou doest, except God be with him”* (v. 2). But Christ did not entertain a discussion with him but immediately confronted Nicodemus with his great need.

THE NEW BIRTH

Nicodemus confronted with his great need (vv. 3-5). Nicodemus was confronted with his greatest need by the one who knew all about him. Christ knows each of us and our total need. The Bible tells us that He knows when the sparrow falls from the sky and that our very hairs are numbered.

The God of omniscience was standing before a “religious Pharisee” not in the least impressed with his credentials, or in his heritage, but saw the darkness of Nicodemus’ sinful heart. He was born wrong; Nicodemus needed to be born again. *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God”* (v. 3).

Not being born again prohibits one from seeing the kingdom of God. Paul in Romans tells us what the kingdom of God is not, as well as what it is. *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 14:17).

Many are disillusioned in thinking that being born again is having all your physical needs met, such as “meat and drink.” But by definition, the kingdom of God is having the righteousness of God with a peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. When Jesus said, *“Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again”* He was referring to those spiritual benefits that cannot be understood or experienced by the unregenerate sinner (I Corinthians 2:14). The sinner in this condition is searching for some earthly gratification only to find that it is so temporal and fleeting. Men will build their empires and carve their statutes only to leave it all behind.

When Nicodemus was confronted with “truth in urgency,” he began to consider his great need. The phenomena of being “born again” were new and radical to this religious practitioner. He was accustomed to performing all the external demands of his belief system but to no lasting satisfaction. Nicodemus’ questions indicated that he was focusing on the physical birth, which is understandable realizing that the idea of being “born again” had never been introduced. But at least he was thinking in response to the urgent requirements of this “teacher come from God,” when told that he must be

JOHN

born again.

The same is necessary today when men are converted to Christ. First, they must be confronted with their need. They must isolate the message to themselves. It is not a message in “general” but one in “particular.” The requirements are particular to their own personal need. As the old song goes, “It’s me, it’s me, it’s me O Lord, standing in the need of prayer.”

Nicodemus considers his great need (vv. 6-7). Then they also must consider their need. They must consider that to be born again means both a physical and a spiritual birth. “*That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*” (v. 6). To be born “again” is radically different from the physical birth. The new birth experience is not just an ecstatic expression but an actual occurrence just as real as the first birth. To be born again certainly carries the requirement of being born from above. The change that occurs is just as obvious as a baby crying for the very first time.

In the practical experience of life the inward change that occurs after the new birth is manifested in its outward expressions. A drunk will become sober, a harlot will become pure, and a drug addict will lose his addiction. A prior proud religious person will have a deep sense of his unworthiness apart from God’s guiding presence.

After acquainting Nicodemus with the differences associated with being born again, Jesus then illustrates the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit in one’s conversion. He uses the wind for this purpose.

II. THE MYSTERY – THE WIND LIKENED UNTO THE HOLY SPIRIT vv. 8-13

The law of the wind (v. 8). In many ways the wind is mysterious. The wind may be described easier than it may be explained. The Lord wisely used the wind to describe the working of His Spirit. The wind is an unpredictable phenomenon of which everyone is acquainted. It has the far-reaching potential of affecting everyone that lives upon the earth. The wind blows everywhere, but everywhere it blows, it blows dif-

THE NEW BIRTH

ferently. The wind cannot be captured, or contained for it is sovereign. Just as the wind is sovereign, so is the Spirit of God.

The Greek word for wind is *pneuma*. *Pneuma* means both wind and spirit. And just as no one tells the wind when to blow, no one can tell the wind where to blow. The wind of God's Spirit blows according to His purpose and plan. It most certainly is true that God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. It is also true that God's Spirit will not always strive with man (Gen. 6:3). As God blows His wind of conviction upon a person it is a very serious and precious occurrence. It is never to be lightly considered; one should never risk the chance of hardening his heart to the Spirit of God.

The lesson from the wind (vv. 9-13). Early in my ministry I recall a man called "Red" who came to our church revival after several of his teenage daughters were saved. We were thrilled in knowing that "Red" was there and hoping that he would be saved. On the first night when the invitation was given "Red" was marked by Holy Ghost conviction. I remember that he was holding on to the pew in front of him so tightly that his knuckles began to turn white. Yet he would not budge. The next night he came back, but as the invitation was given he held more loosely with less evidence of conviction. By week's end he seemed to be "cool as a cucumber" with no indication of being under conviction. As far as I know, he never came to the Lord. It is a dangerous thing to lightly regard the wind of Holy Ghost conviction. It is the Lord that saves.

Just as the Holy Spirit is necessary for conviction and salvation, faith also must be present. The Lord Jesus Christ used a miracle in the wilderness to illustrate the value of faith or belief.

III. THE MIRACLE – THE WILDERNESS MIRACLE THAT ILLUSTRATED FAITH. vv. 14-16 (cf. Numbers 21:4-9)

The raised serpent gave us a type (v. 14). Paul stated in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith;

JOHN

and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." The miracle in the wilderness illustrates very clearly these verses. The consistency of the Scriptures allows truth to never contradict itself. Everywhere you venture into the Word of God there is perfect harmony; not one spiritual note is off key.

In Numbers 21 after the nation of Israel had experienced a military victory against King Arad the Canaanite, they began to embark on a journey that brought much discouragement (v. 4). With this discouragement they began to speak against God and against Moses (v. 5). This prompted God to send fiery serpents among the people. The people who were bitten began to die (v. 6). After this the people went to Moses admitting their sin, and requesting that Moses pray to God for their deliverance.

The Lord told Moses in verse 8 of Numbers 21, *"Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live."* Moses did that and the people lived when they looked to the brazen serpent.

When we look back to this Old Testament miracle and rejoice in the way that God provided those rebels with mercy and grace it reminds us that we are no different. We are all benefactors of God's mercy. His provisions are so adequate for all of our needs.

Can you image how those who were healed witnessed to others the miracle of looking at the *"brazen serpent on a pole"* and living after being bitten by the serpents? They testified of God's graceful provision. The same way, we should witness of God's saving mercy. We need to help people acknowledge that Satan who is the serpent of sin has bitten them. Let them know that God raised up His only begotten Son as a provision for their deliverance and salvation. Just as the brazen serpent on the lifted up pole was the object or provision for Israel's healing, the Son of God on the cross of Calvary is the provision for our salvation today.

The raised Saviour gave us triumph (vv. 15, 16). The brazen serpent was the focal point then, the Lord Jesus Christ is

THE NEW BIRTH

today. If men would but look to Jesus by faith they may live. Verse 15 tells us, *“That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”* There is no greater good news gospel than what this is. Verse 16 has been reverently referred to as the “Gospel in a Nutshell.” *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Everything that the Lord Jesus Christ told Nicodemus was summarized in that great verse. The greatness of that verse has been extolled throughout all the centuries since then. No one has been able to fathom the depths of meaning that John 3:16 conveys. It is only when a poor lost sinner upon realizing his terrible wretched condition, is able to appreciate the fullness of John 3:16. When he believes upon the Lord and is converted to Christ, he then can appreciate the great doctrine of the new birth.

What you believe about the doctrine of the new birth will determine where you will spend your eternity.

Chapter 7

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF CONDEMNATION?

John 3:17-21

The laws of man are only respected when they are properly enforced and when they carry with them a penalty that is proportionate to the crime. Fear properly employed in law enforcement grants the executor of the law more respect. This fear is of two kinds; there is a reverential fear of the law, and a fear of the consequences of breaking that law.

With this kind of fear it ensures that the law enforcer *“beareth not the sword in vain”* (Romans 13:4).

The law is a wonderful thing. The Scriptures tell us that the law is good. Can you imagine the chaos and anarchy that would grip our land were it not for our structured legal system?

The Lord uses the legal word *condemnation* to describe the state of all man kind beginning with those who have transgressed and broken God’s law in the Garden of Eden. When the man Adam originally sinned he judicially brought the state of *condemnation* upon the entire human race. Romans 5:12 tells us: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* Mankind today is connected all the way back to the first Adam as a sinner. The judicial state of condemnation rests upon all men. Romans 5:18 explains the concept scripturally, *“Therefore as by the offense of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”*

The word *condemnation* means to declare a person guilty and worthy of punishment. Condemn and condemnation are judicial terms, the very opposite of the words *justify* and *justification* (Matthew 12:57; Romans 5:16, 18). Because of the Holy demands of God’s righteousness, man who is in the state of being condemned is also spiritually dead and will suf-

THE DOCTRINE OF CONDEMNATION

fer eternal death as his punishment.

To be under condemnation is an awful state. Yet a recognition of this condition is so necessary for a person to really see and understand his awesome need. Just knowing that we are guilty sinners, lost and condemned should make up appreciative of the gift of salvation. Sadly, however, so many have become hardened in their sinning and either have no awareness of their sin state or no longer care.

The purpose of this study is to create a proper understanding of the doctrine of condemnation so that no one needs to remain in this awful state. May God bless as we consider who the condemned are.

I. WHO ARE THE CONDEMNED? vv. 17-18

They have broken the law intellectually (vv. 17-18). The condemned are not those who are condemned by the Lord Jesus Christ but are those who are under the condemnation of the law. A man today cannot have the law executed upon him unless there is a law to be broken. Romans tells us that sin is not imputed where there is no law (Romans 5:13).

God gave man an awareness of his state of condemnation by his inability to keep the law. The law that was given by Moses shows man that he is a law breaker in every way. It is better stated that when a man breaks one law he is guilty of having broken them all. It is also true that you do not have to teach your children to be bad, to lie, or do evil things. Instead they must be taught to be good, and to be truthful.

Some, including Nicodemus, may have felt that Jesus Christ had come to intensify the state of condemnation. But we are told: “*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved*” (v. 17). God is a merciful and loving God yet He cannot compromise His Holiness. He is not walking around Heaven looking down upon earth with a gigantic bully whip. But He also is not able to pardon the sinful transgressor or excuse him until he looks up to Jesus by faith and is born again. The condemned are simply those who continue in their lost state and are not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

JOHN

Those who do not believe fall into two major categories. There are those who are not believing ignorantly, and then there are those who are not believing foolishly.

Ignorance is not always bliss. Especially in regards to your salvation. Yet many people across our world are ignorant of the Gospel Truth. In a world where people are more acquainted with the Coca-Cola soft drink than they are with the Lord Jesus Christ is a shame. The Coca-Cola industry had its beginning around the turn of the last century; Christianity, on the other hand, has been birthed for nearly 2000 years. Yet it is reported that Coca-Cola has been carried into many places that the Gospel has not even touched.

One must realize that there are many heathen countries who do not have a clear presentation of the Gospel; but it is sad to know that there are increasing numbers in the United States who do not know either. Many like this, in the States, are being born into families who have turned blatantly from God to “serving idols.” Romans 1:28 explains this condition, *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do these things which are not convenient;”* Verses 29 through 32 further explains this condition. The effect that this condition has on their offspring is horrifying. It is as though these children are being born into “cultural heathenism.” Their parents are refusing the teachings of God, and removing themselves from those who do teach the Truth. Their children have no opportunity to hear the Truth which means that they are growing up ignorant of that Truth. Thus, they are “cultural heathens.”

Many who embrace intellectualism and much of its humanistic teachings find themselves unwilling to accept or believe the plain and simple teachings of the Scriptures. They profess themselves to be wise but are only fools. They are, *“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (II Timothy 3:7).

Psalms tells us that, *“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”* With God’s fingerprint on every act of His creation and with the Scriptures as a testimony of truth, there is no excuse for not believing the creator God. Yet men are

THE DOCTRINE OF CONDEMNATION

foolishly rejecting Him.

They have broken the law experientially (v. 18; cf. v. 19). Not only do people reject Christ Jesus intellectually, but they also reject Him experientially. They experience the fact of His existence but they foolishly reject Him because of their love for the things of this world. Satan, who is the god of this worldly system, “decorates or adorns” this world for the “carnal consumption” by the masses. The word “world” in this sense comes from the Greek word *cosmos* from which we get the word cosmetics.

I John 2:15-17 reminds and commands us to, *“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”*

Whether it be an intellectual or pleasure “snare” that keeps one from believing, the results are the same. CONDEMNATION!

II. WHAT IS THE CONDEMNATION? vv. 19-20

A textbook definition of condemnation has already been given, but scripturally what does it really mean to be under condemnation? Jesus when speaking to Nicodemus said, *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* Condemnation is described with a comparison and with a contrast. The comparison is “light” and “darkness.” Who are you like? Who do you really compare to?

The contrast is “Truth vs. Lie.” Satan is a *“liar and the father of it”* (John 8:44). Christ Jesus is the *“true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”* (John 1:9).

The purpose of light is to dispel darkness. The Lord Jesus Christ came with His primary mission of bringing the Light into this sin darkened world. Never in history has there been widespread spiritual and moral darkness as there is today.

JOHN

Dare to pick up a paper or turn on the news broadcast without seeing or hearing of some wicked and obscene activity taking place. At this very writing, while in Trinidad, I picked up the Trinidad newspaper and saw the 48-year-old neighbor of the ex-sheriff of Port-of-Spain, sprawled out dead after having been shot twice. The ex-sheriff shot his neighbor because “they could not get along.” Any newspaper will bear this kind of “news.” Sexual perversion, lying, stealing, vulgarity, nudity, and violence all further darken this world today. Wicked television programming, ungodly video and ungodly music are further indicators of where we are spiritually. But praise God, the light did come and as believers we too may be “bright lights shining in dark places.”

When Jesus came with the Light, it was as though the masses were saying, “Thanks, but no thanks.” Their love for darkness was greater because “*their deeds were evil*” v. 19.

Admittedly, the attractions of this world are very enticing. Satan sees to that. Yet the pleasures delivered this way are only temporal, “*for a season*” (Hebrews 11:25). Many are guilty of chasing their “elusive butterfly” but never finding the lasting peace and joy for which they are so desirous. All that Satan gives is counterfeit, but all that the Lord gives is real and meaningful.

To enjoy the pleasures of sin while rejecting The Light means spending eternity in Hell where there will be eternal darkness. Is this not a terribly high price to pay for just a moment of fleshly gratification? Yet “... *wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction*” (Matthew 7:13).

III. WHAT HAPPENS TO THE CONDEMNED? v. 21

(cf. v. 36)

Those who believe and are no longer under condemnation “*doeth truth*” and “*cometh to the light*” verse 21. “*Cometh to the light*” is in the perfect tense in the Greek meaning that he keeps on coming, he comes again and again ... and again. By doing so the believer demonstrates that he is “*wrought in God*” (v. 21).

My father and mother testified to the truthfulness of this

THE DOCTRINE OF CONDEMNATION

statement as well as anyone that I have ever known. They were saved after living many years outside of the church. My father was 44 when he was saved and my mother was 40. Until then they both along with my sister had never even attended a church. My father was a drunkard who would put his liquor bottle under the seat of his car and drink from it. I would ask; "Daddy, what's that?" He would reply, "That's my bottle, son."

After he, my mother, and sister were saved, and after attending church for the very first time, their lives were radically changed (II Corinthians 5:17). At this time my father purchased a 1951 Ford in which the car seat went all the way to the floor. I remember asking my daddy, "Where are you going to put your bottle now?" He pulled me real close and said, "Son, I won't need a place now!" Praise God!

From that time on there was a great difference in each of their lives, with their faithfulness being recognized by everyone who knew them. I had the honor of preaching both my sister's and mother's funeral knowing that upon their being born again they are now in Heaven.

Even as I am writing this, having just landed at Miami International Airport on my way home, I carry great concern. My father, while I was on a mission trip to Trinidad and Grenada, was stricken with pneumonia and had a heart attack. He is in a coma; it looks grave, but I have the blessed assurance that all is well because he is no longer under condemnation, but has passed from "death unto life." To God be the glory!

God's mercy is wonderful and it is everlasting, but His Truth and Holiness is not compromised so that He condones the sinner. We are often guilty of teaching our children and being taught ourselves that sin does not have its consequences. There are less and less clear absolutes. People are being taught humanistically an amoral position in life. They do not teach nor practice morals. In their lost condition, they are inviting the wrath of God. "*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him*" (v.36).

JOHN

“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Romans 1:28-32).

The condemning judgment of God is assured to all those who reject God's grace. Remember, Christ did not come to earth to condemn the world, but to save those who believe. Those who reject the Saviour will face the eternal wrath of God and hear the words “Depart from me” The Judge has spoken!

(I returned to my father on Thursday night and sat with him until Sunday morning, which was his coronation day!)

Chapter 8

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE GLORY OF GOD?

John 3:22-36

The faithfulness and character of John the Baptist is once again demonstrated. Before John is cast into prison, he is to be observed doing the work of the Lord that now identifies him. He is baptizing; John the Baptist is baptizing those who were believing in Christ. Christ Jesus, by His disciples, was also baptizing His converts (John 4:1-2).

The disciples of John were concerned that maybe John's ministry was diminishing. Certainly these disciples were showing their love and loyalty to John, but they also were showing their immaturity in the faith.

It is so easy to measure our effectiveness by some visible indicator. We even call these indicators "key indicators" of growth. Yet it is possible that being faithful to God does not immediately calculate into visible results. The prophet Jeremiah of old is a classic example of this truth. He labored and wept for his people and never saw even one convert. Yet he continued to be faithful. God measured his faithfulness as we would tend to measure only the visible results. Jeremiah because of his faithfulness is listed in faith's hall of fame (Hebrews 11).

John knew the importance of giving the glory back to the Lord. In this spirit he was able to say, "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*"

I. TO WHOM DOES THE GLORY BELONG? vv. 22-30

The glory defined (vv. 22-27). In this section of study it is difficult to separate the terms "authority" and "glory" in meaning and also in their usage. John wisely knew that the glory or authority that was his really came from the Lord. He knew that, "*the powers that be are ordained of God*" (Romans 13:1).

Though not referred to in our text, it is easy to see the truth of Romans 13 clearly on display. John knew that there was no authority or power that could be held in command or exercised

JOHN

unless God permitted it. Satan could not even touch Job unless God allowed it to be so. For our ministries to have impact and purpose, God must exercise His authority through us. John knew this truth to be so. Yet many ministries are suffering today because their ministers are not claiming God as their authority. Each step that we take ought to be God ordained. We must recognize the value of Spirit-led ministries with Christ giving us the authority to exercise His purpose and plan. When we pray, we should direct our prayers to the throne room of God arming ourselves with the power, glory and the authority to do “thus saith the Lord.” Never should we walk alone, nor beyond the realm of His purpose. John proved by his example that he practiced this. He was content in knowing that God gave him his ministry. He knew that his ministry was totally dependent upon God. *“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”* (John 3:27).

People today are so protective of “their” ministries that they live in a spirit of fear. They are jealous of any ministry that may be in close proximity to their own. We must be reminded that *“the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47). A jealous spirit probably does more harm to the cause of Christ among ministers than any other cause. God help us to be more like John the Baptist in spirit and in actions.

The Lord’s priestly prayer enlightens us to the way God’s glory and authority is given to men for the purpose of Christ Jesus being *“glorified in them”* (John 17:10). The Lord further states: *“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one”* (John 17:22).

The word “glory” is used in three senses in the Word of God. There is the moral beauty and perfection of character that belongs only to Christ Jesus. This divine quality is beyond man’s understanding and obtainment (Psalm 113:4). Paul tells us in Romans 3:23 that, *“all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”*

The glory displayed (28-30). There is also a visible mani-

THE GLORY OF GOD

festation of beauty, power, and honor that was expressed in the Old Testament. Some of the examples from the Old Testament are the pillar of cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21), the Lord's deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea (Exodus 14), and especially His glory in the tabernacle (Leviticus 9:23-24) and Temple (I Kings 8:11).

In the New Testament the glory of God has been shown mainly in Christ (Luke 9:29-32; John 2:11) and in the members of His church. The priestly prayer of Christ further indicates that Christ now gives His divine glory to His followers (John 17:5-6). This glorious process allows the lives of Christians to be transformed into the glorious image of God (II Corinthians 3:18). The full glorification of man will take place at the end of time in God's heavenly presence (Romans 5:2; Colossians 3:4). At this time the glory of God will be seen everywhere (Revelation 21:23).

Perhaps this is the way it was in the garden before sin came. Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed while in the Garden of Eden which seemingly indicated that they were enveloped by God's shekinah glory; this was before the advent of sin and the curse resulting from that sin.

The third way that the glory of God is used in the Bible is relative to the honor and audible praise which His creatures give to Him (Psalm 115:1; Revelation 5:12-13). When Christ ministered upon the earth there was not only glory but there was power and glory. If a servant of Christ is to accomplish much in the Christian realm he needs the power and glory which only God can supply. John came with the authority to introduce Christ but not to take the glory away from Christ. A person who is spiritually endowed with the power and glory that is given to him from above will be careful to give that glory back to Christ.

When it appeared that John's ministry was diminishing he did not become alarmed but stated emphatically that he was not the Christ. John wanted his followers to know he had a "sharing" opportunity to rejoice while presenting Christ to the world.

John uses the analogy of a wedding to express his rela-

JOHN

tionship to Christ. *“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled”* (John 3:29).

In explaining his unique position as the forerunner of Christ, John calls himself the friend of the bridegroom. The friend or *shoshben*, had a prominent place at a Jewish wedding. He was the liaison between the bride and the bridegroom. He was instrumental in the arranging of the wedding and the inviting of the people to the wedding. He brought the bride and the bridegroom together and guarded the bridal chamber making sure no false lover came in. He had to recognize the bridegroom’s voice before opening the door. Once he did all these things, he willingly and graciously faded out of the picture. This attitude of John is expressed in verse 30, *“He must increase, but I must decrease.”*

II. FROM WHERE DID THE GLORY COME? vv. 31-34

John declares that Jesus Christ is truly the preeminent One who is worthy of all glory and that He embodies the full glory of God in His incarnation. The absolute glory of God is expressed by His Son. In Hebrews 1:3, this is said concerning Him, *“Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power...”*. *The express image of his person, literally means the exact representation of God’s essence or nature. The word brightness means effulgence or flood of resplendent light or radiance. The word means “an outshining,” not a reflection* (Ryrie).

John is in effect saying, “God has brought himself from glory to earth in all His Own Glory.” The Glory – One truly came to man to clearly express the Glory of God to all mankind. John is also reiterating his position, “I do not need the glory that belongs to Him!” Yet for the purpose intended John had all the glory and power that he needed. It was as though John was acknowledging his time of service for his particular life given purpose was coming to a close.

Any ministry and opportunity we have to serve is for a

THE GLORY OF GOD

passing moment of time. We should live with that kind of awareness knowing that what power and glory we have been entrusted with will soon return to Him. Even the rewards and crowns we receive at the Judgment Seat we gladly will humbly cast at His feet and proclaim "All glory and honor and power belong to Him!"

Still you may feel yourself tucked away in some insignificant, unheard of location and feel your ministry is void of true purpose. Yet God gives you the same glory and authority to do your ministry as the pulpiter who speaks to thousands. He will reward you in direct proportion to your faithfully doing what He has entrusted you. Whether you are a preacher in "them thar hills" or a professor in a Bible college "uptown" you will get all the glory you need from the throne room above to accomplish your real purpose in ministry.

III. FOR WHAT PURPOSE IS THE GLORY GIVEN? vv. 35-36

The love of God for His Son prompted Him to give all things to His Son with the result of those believing on the Son having everlasting life. To reject the Son is to invite the wrath of God. God is jealous of His Son and of His glory. When a soul rejects the Son he also is rejecting the glory that belongs to the Son. A saved person finds it a joy to glorify the Son of God. He does it in his songs, his sermons, his praying, his giving, and his thanksgiving. In every part of his life he begins to glorify the Lord. He recognizes that all he is or hopes to be he owes to the Lord.

When the servant is filled with the Spirit of God, he is also filled with the glory of God to render the service that God intends. Glory is never given for only a selfish inward gratification, but given with the purpose of an outward manifestation of God to others. The servant's highest compliment is to remind others of Jesus.

I remember in my first pastorate having an elderly white headed preacher named Floyd Jenkins preach for me. One of our dear ladies remarked about him, "When I see Floyd Jenkins, I am reminded of Jesus." No greater compliment can be

JOHN

bestowed upon mankind than that.

God's Glory to me in all its power
Hath He shared.

My God my Saviour, to me
He's shown that He truly cared.

He giveth more glory and grace
Helping me to witness my stand.

All the power that I need
Comes from His strong Right Hand.

Chapter 9

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS - THE LIVING WATER? John 4:1-30

Jesus illustrates by leaving Judaea that He was not in a contest with John the Baptist. His mission was of a much greater magnitude than that. He had a foreordained purpose in coming to earth and it was not to establish Himself as the greatest evangelist; though He is. Nor was He only interested in making a comparison to other inferior members of the human race; though He is superior. He is the preeminent one as the Colossians' book reminds us.

Doing only those kind of things is what we typically do as members of the human race. It seems that we "learn" to impress, and then "live" to impress. The degrees, the scholarships and the honors that we receive, we strive for them. In a proper and spiritual setting this kind of ambition is not wrong. It is only when we proudly aspire for greatness no matter the cost to others.

Either Christ Jesus was sensitive to John and removed Himself so that John would not be hurt, but more than likely Jesus moved away to avoid His purposes from being thwarted.

There was no idle time nor unnecessary encounters, nor were there any wasted appointments. He was here on planet earth for the sole purpose of accomplishing the Father's will. Each miracle and each discourse was within the frame work of His plan. He was not slowed down by public opinion nor was He speeded up by His own peers. When in verse four it says, *"And he must needs go through Samaria,"* He must have needed to go or else He would not have gone. The way He chose to go to Galilee took nearly twice as long had He only gone the most direct route. His foreknowledge, coupled with His omniscience saw a thirsty, needy "woman of Samaria" who was waiting for Him. May we remind ourselves

JOHN

as we are waiting for Him that He is always on time! (Matthew 26:18; John 7:6).

When Jesus left, he left the masses for just one person. In doing this He signifies the value and worth of a precious soul. Later in time the Ethiopian eunuch was ministered to because Philip the Evangelist was also willing to leave the masses and minister to just one (Acts 8). There is no greater example for us to follow than that of Christ. More than just studying about Him, we should be careful to study “Him.” To illustrate this need of ours even further, it is “not enough to just know about my wife; I need to KNOW my wife.

I. THIRST AS BEING COMMON vv. 1-7

As the Lord ministered upon the earth, He ministered as the incarnate Son of God. Philippians 2:7 says that Christ, “*made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.*” In theological terms this “emptying” of Himself is called the *kenosis*. In this state He would hunger, tire, sweat, and thirst, etc., but He did not surrender any of His attributes of deity while upon the earth.

The Lord after making His journey was sitting on the well resting. It was mid-day, which means that the sun was beaming down. He was thirsty as well as weary from His journey. Yet He was right on time for this woman of Samaria. She came to draw water from Jacob’s well (v. 7). As she did, Jesus asked her for water to drink. He was thirsty. Thirst is not having anything to drink. Thirst is normal, but it is also very necessary for the sustaining of life. People of all ethnic, national, and racial backgrounds have the potential for thirst, and do thirst.

Jesus declared to Nicodemus the necessity of being born again. While speaking to Nicodemus he used the common term of birth. He now uses the common phenomenon of thirst while still relating to man’s greatest need. It was even the rich man in hell, who had enjoyed all that there was on earth yet was pleading for one drop of water to cool his parched tongue while in hell. A thirst of that kind, in that

JESUS-THE LIVING WATER

place will never be satisfied. The thirst there will never end.

Now the most uncommon one of all has a very common need. He said to the woman of Samaria, *“Give me to drink.”* Yet in that humble request begins one of the greatest encounters of all time. Such a simple request was this. Yet in this simple request, He was able to build a bridge of communication from Himself to her that otherwise may have never taken place. When illustrating the very common aspect of thirst, Jesus was able to teach great spiritual truths. Throughout His ministry the application of common things characterized His teaching ministry. In this study, He uses the concept of thirst to teach how men are thirsty spiritually. He used the wind to teach about the Holy Spirit. He used the sower and the seed to teach evangelism. He identified with the fisherman and said, *“I will make you fishers of men.”* He performed a miracle involving bread to show that He was the “Bread of Life.”

Abraham Lincoln said, “The Lord sure must have loved the common man, for He sure made a bunch of us.” The Lord, in His teachings, always puts the “cookies on the bottom shelf” where anyone who desires may have one. Thanks be unto God for the simple application of truth while using the common things.

II. THIRST AS A CONCEPT vv. 8-14

The unidentified woman at the well could have been anyone. She could symbolize the unknown by-product of this worldly system who has tried many ways to satisfy the deep thirst of her carnal nature. Her name is not important here; her need is! She recognizes that she is perceived as a member of an inferior race. She questioned Jesus, *“How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans”* (v.9).

Not only did this woman feel herself to be inferior to Jesus, she because of her lifestyle was probably a moral outcast by her own people. The place where she had come to get water was nearly a half mile from Sychar where she lived. She also was getting water during the hottest part of the day.

JOHN

Again this could have been because of who she was. In many ways she was the contaminated scum and the filth of the earth, but Jesus did not label or indict her that way; He simply honored her as a fellow human being and asked for a drink of water.

This wonderful trait of Christ revealed in our study shows how sympathetic He is to others. It shows how considerate He is of others and how unprejudiced He is of others.

Immediately as the dialogue with the woman continued, Jesus began to let this woman know that she was not just talking to someone who was considered of a superior race and even a superior sex, but who was God in the flesh.

Jesus used the term “living water.” This was a term that only meant to her fresh running water as opposed to still, stagnate water. But He, as He did with Nicodemus, took a physical concept and elevated it to a spiritual plane. Nicodemus thought at first Jesus was only referring to a physical birth. In answer to this thinking, Jesus said, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit”* (John 3:6).

The woman at the well likewise took what He was saying and confirmed it to the physical realm (John 3:10, 12). Certainly there is a common thirst that is only physical. We all, as mentioned earlier, have it. But there is also a thirst that is Spiritual. The prophet Isaiah knew of this kind of thirst when he said, *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ...”* (Isaiah 55:1). The Psalmist David knew also when he said, *“As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?”* (Psalm 42:1-2).

This illustrates thirst from a Biblical position. The world also has its own ways of expressing its thirst. When I was a teenager, the words of a popular rock song went something like this, “I can’t get no satisfaction ...” This group was expressing not only its thirst, but also its inability to quench that thirst. The world thirsts after so many different things. There are those thirsting after money, sex, fame, popularity and a

JESUS-THE LIVING WATER

host of many other things yet not having that thirst quenched. Satan offers many oases in this dry thirsty world. But the thirst always returns. Ted Bundy is an example of this as he would rape, molest, and kill the beautiful women that were his victims. He said that each experience would have to be more exciting than the last. He would create more and more grotesque ways of satisfying his perverted sexual passions only to have the horrifying thirst return in full force. It all began for Ted when as a child he would look at his grandfather's pornographic magazines and stir his lustful passions. The time came when the thirst was so great that the magazines were not enough; he had to have "raw flesh."

As vulgar as this is, it only shows how intense the thirst can be when it is without any lasting satisfaction. Though Jesus was referring to drinking water when He said, "*Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again,*" the results are the same when man attempts to satisfy his thirst apart from the Lord's living water.

Christ Jesus offered the poor pathetic needy woman all that she would ever need. Verse fourteen says, "*But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.*" In Jesus her thirst could be conquered!

III. THIRST AS IT IS CONQUERED *vv. 15-30*

The woman at the well upon hearing that there was some water that will satisfy eternally said, "*Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*" At first it appears that the woman is asking for a special kind of water that will eliminate any present and future thirst that she might have. But it is much more than that. I believe that she is wanting that inward thirst satisfied as well as her respectability gained back. She is saying I am tired of having to come "here" in the heat of the day. "Is there anything that I can do to recover from my wicked state?" "Can I be accepted again?"

With the attitude and desire for change the Lord told her

JOHN

to “Go, call thy husband, and come hither” (v. 16). She admitted her inability to bring to Him her husband, and as she did, the Lord probed even further. With His complete knowledge of her, she recognized that He was a prophet (v. 19). May we be reminded that the Lord knows each of us. There is nothing about us that’s hidden from Him. He is the all knowing God.

This woman at the well had certainly enjoyed “the pleasures of sin for a season;” (Hebrews 11:25). Now she is suffering the horrible effects of what sin has done to her.

Just think of the broken relationships, the shame of her infidelity, and the guilt of all of her transgressions constantly plaguing her. Think of her attempt to avoid the scorn and ridicule which always drove her to this remote well. Yet even she could not escape her conscience. This was probably what she meant when she said, “*that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.*”

Much of the effects of sin cannot be erased, nor removed, but there is forgiveness that can cause you to get on with your life. She trusted in Christ once she faced her sin and learned from Christ what true worship is. “*The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he*” (vv. 19-26). The woman at the well wanted the living water; she recognized who the Messiah really was; she then believed upon the Messiah unto salvation. She repented! She then symbolized her belief by leaving her waterpot. She, as a new creature, was going to face

JESUS-THE LIVING WATER

her new life by leaving the past behind.

Thanks be unto God for the many thirsty souls who have been satisfied by the “Living Waters.”

“In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38).

Chapter 10

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT REAL HUNGER? John 4:31-42

The Lord neglected His own need of satisfying His physical thirst so that He could take care of someone else's spiritual thirst. Within the same context He is now neglecting His need for food to teach His disciples what their greatest hunger should be. What do you hunger mostly for? Admittedly hunger is a blessing from the Lord to ensure that we stay fed and have the energy to function. With our physical hunger we develop an appetite for different kinds of foods. People grow up enjoying certain food groups, depending on how their "palates were touched."

Before processed baby foods were available, mothers as they would wean their babies, would chew the food for the baby. She then would place the food on her finger and touch the palate of the baby creating an appetite hoping that the baby would eat and enjoy that food.

As a traveler to different countries I observe how different cultures have different food tastes. Many times the hostess would show concern if I did not have an aggressive appetite for her favorite dish. The food was great I am sure, but my palate had not been previously touched to allow me to enjoy it as such. Spiritually our appetites for different things are produced by what we allow to touch our palate. For this reason extreme care should be exercised when raising our children making sure that they are touched only by that which is pure and wholesome. When first looking at the spiritual and practical applications that I could make in regards to one's appetite, it seems that the applications for hunger would be very similar to that of thirst. Yet I am sure that the Lord has these two basic needs of the appetitive nature in our text for a different purpose. Certainly there are some similar applications that can be made, but may we notice the shades

REAL HUNGER

of difference as well.

While Jesus was ministering to the woman at the well the disciples were looking for meat (John 4:8). They may have excitingly made their journey back to where Jesus was while thinking that they had found His favorite food. The response they received surely was not what they expected. Jesus chose to use this opportunity to teach a valuable lesson on the subject of “spiritual appetite.”

May we notice the disciples as they returned with the meat.

I. THEY RETURNED WITH THE MEAT v. 31 (cf. v. 8)

“Master, eat.” These are the words that introduce this section. Certainly the disciples were wanting to please the Saviour. They wanted Him to look at the food and commend them on their excellent food choice. At least this is what I would have wanted. This did not happen, not because the food was not acceptable but Jesus wanted to show them that there was a satisfaction that he had that was even greater than their food. More than that, He wanted them to know that He had something that was of greater “sustenance.”

When thinking of thirst the key word is probably “sustenance.” This does not mean that food does not give satisfaction, for it does. But the primary purpose for food is for the sustenance that is necessary “for survival.”

While the disciples were away they were busy finding food that they thought would be enjoyed by all if their search was true to human nature. Have you ever been with a group of people near the dinner hour? You began to discuss and even become obsessed with the subject of food. For that period of time nothing else in the world seems to matter. Everything else is blocked out.

Now get the picture, the disciples were likely caught up just like this. After all, the appetite for food is one of the strongest appetites that man can have. Yet while they were anticipating a feast after their return to where Jesus was, Jesus was preoccupied with other concerns. Even as the disciples exhibited a strong desire for their scheduled dinner, Je-

JOHN

sus had a greater desire that was eternal in nature. He called it his “meat.”

II. HIS REFUSAL OF THE MEAT vv. 32-33

I am a married man knowing what it would be like letting my wife slave in the kitchen preparing my favorite meal and come in later telling her that I found something better, somewhere else. I would be in trouble.

The emotions were probably the same on the part of the disciples as they would have been by my wife. Jesus said unto them, “*I have meat to eat that ye know not of*” (v. 32). This is not to say that Jesus was disregarding nor was He unappreciative of what the disciples had done for Him. Jesus would have done nothing that would have been sinful or inconsiderate.

There was something, however, that was of greater importance to Jesus than just drinking or eating. He had a different kind of appetite that took his mind off of anything pertaining to His body. He had as His consuming desire a determination to see His Father’s will accomplished. Within the framework of doing His Father’s will there was a desire to see souls come to salvation.

He was conveying to His disciples an example of where their strong desire should be found. Even today we need to question our appetites. We desire and hunger after so many things that do not impact our lives but for only a moment of time. We seem to forget the eternal values. This is not to say that it is entirely wrong to have physical appetites. For God created us with our appetites. But when He used the metaphor “meat” to describe His greatest appetite, He was demonstrating where our priorities should be. A summary statement of this section which deals with hunger and thirst would be Matthew 5:6. It says, “*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*”

Also in regards to controlling our appetent nature the Lord gives a great formula in dealing with our priorities. Matthew 6:33 says, “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto*

REAL HUNGER

you.” The Lord taught this concept in His sermon on the mount. He taught that there are many things that we need and God is completely aware of these things. He taught that these needs we have will be met once we understand that the Father knows what our needs are. We also must understand that we seek first “God” and then “things” rather than first “things” then “God.”

III. THE REVELATION ABOUT HIS MEAT vv. 34-42

Christ reveals that His meat is in doing and finishing the work that His Father had given Him to do. He senses the urgency of doing this. The time of ministry is so urgent that it must not be put off. He told the disciples, “*Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest*” (v. 35). Notice the phrase, “*Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields.*” The eyes, though not absolutely necessary, play a very important part in our making choices as well as in creating our appetites. The eyes see and communicate to the brain that which is placed before us. We look and in our observing we began to select that which we desire from the “buffet” that is spread out before us. Those who prepare the food know there are certain qualities that should be expressed to help guide a person in making his selections.

I recently spoke to a gourmet chef asking him to describe some of the ways of making the food more appealing; this is what he told me: “As a gourmet chef I have been trained not only to prepare food for the purpose of making it palatable to the taste but also appealing to the eyes. One method for achieving this is a process that we call blanching. To blanch food means to place fresh vegetables in hot boiling water for varying periods of time, then removing the vegetables and placing them in chilled water. By doing this, it helps the vegetables to retain their fresh, crisp appearance without compromising the color. Another technique to make the meat more appealing to the eye is a technique called basting. This involves taking a marinade, or its own juices and brushing it

JOHN

back on top of the meat allowing those juices to brown and give flavor. “With desserts there are a number of techniques such as sifting, glazing, icing, etc. which add color and personality to a particular dish making it more attractive to the palate and the sweet tooth.”

When the Lord said, “*look on the fields,*” it was as though He was saying, “Let this be your meat; let this be what satisfies you the most!” The Lord’s meat was doing the Father’s will and finishing His work. As we look on the fields, we must desire a harvest of souls more than we would desire rich food from the scrumptious buffet. He tells us there is a rejoicing that comes for the sower and the reaper (vv. 36-37). This joy comes from having a faithful appetite for the souls of man. The appetites should not require some spiritual gourmet chef creating an illusion to attract us to the souls of man. The fact of souls without Christ should be enough. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have such a strong desire to see souls saved that we would much rather be busy witnessing than eating? The Lord dealt with thirst and hunger within the same context, may we remember from this that He was contrasting two positions.

The position of the wayward, wicked soul thirsting for living waters pictures the lost person; the position of having an appetite or desire to see souls saved pictures the saved witness.

May we have the same desires as our wonderful Saviour!

Chapter 11

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT LONG DISTANCE MIRACLES?

John 4:43-54

Believing that the places that Jesus went were of great purpose and importance, it would be an interesting study to detail and examine each of these places. Why did He almost immediately return to Cana of Galilee where He performed His first miracle? Why did He perform His second miracle there? Is there some significance in bridging the two places together? As we probe and pray, may God give us the necessary interpretation to answer these questions. May we not pretend to make the insignificant significant nor the significant insignificant.

Miracles as we discussed earlier are of two major types “providential” and “creational.” With this being the case, the next miracle may be examined and categorized as either or both. The nature of this particular study requires a more literal interpretation with practical applications, than investigating with the emphasis only upon the typical and prophetic. Lest I be guilty of employing “spiritual tunnel vision” to my interpretation, I will, when necessary, give the typical or prophetic.

To answer the question, “Why did Jesus return to Cana of Galilee for His second miracle?,” requires going back to John 2:23-25 and there asking John. The last commentary that John gave us goes like this: *“Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast days, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”* Notice the phrase *“many believed ... when they saw ...”* This statement is referred to by Jesus when answering the nobleman’s request, *“Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe”* (v. 48). Could it be that Jesus goes back to Cana of Galilee because

JOHN

He has some unfinished business? Does He return to select those who would be willing to believe Him only at His word? While in Samaria it is said, *“And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world”* (v. 41-42). Those in Galilee did not have this simple belief, they had to see the “signs and wonders” to believe. May we study these related thoughts by considering first, “the return to the place of the first miracle.”

I. THE RETURN TO THE PLACE OF THE FIRST MIRACLE vv. 43-46

When studying this section, I cannot help but be reminded of Genesis when Abram went back to Bethel (Genesis 12 and 13). There are not many similarities, but just as Abram went back to Bethel, Christ went back to Cana of Galilee. Abram went back to Bethel after having sinned. He had his wife lie about their relationship as husband and wife, having Pharaoh to think that she was only Abram’s sister. After the Lord brought plagues on the house of Pharaoh, Pharaoh released Abram and Sarai. It was then that they returned to Bethel and called again on the Lord.

Abram’s return was for the purpose of recovering from his lapse of faith; the Lord’s return seemed to be for the purpose of teaching the value of trusting God without the “signs and wonders.” This second miracle that took place in Cana of Galilee showed that Jesus is the God of space and of distance.

As Jesus was returning He made this comment, *“a prophet hath no honour in his own country.”* He seemed to be directing this statement towards Judaea. He had been so graciously received in Samaria. The people believed Him without the miracles. There He was greatly honored but in Jerusalem and in Judaea this was not the case. They only were attracted to Him because of His miracles. Later John will write saying that the Lord *“had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him”* (12:37).

LONG DISTANCE MIRACLES

Though Jesus made the statement “*a prophet hath no honor in his own country,*” that did not hinder Him from ministering in His own country. He also saw many converts. Though the honor may be diminished or not at all, that does not excuse a person from ministering to his own country. The thoughts towards Jesus may have been something like this: “Why He’s no prophet; He is only a carpenter’s son. You know ... Joseph.”

I pastor in my home town, in my home church. I am sure there are those in my home town who still say about me, “Yes, I went to school with him. I can’t imagine Max being a preacher.” Yet when people are in Christ they have a respect that is different than those of the world. The focus is no longer on “who we are” but instead the focus is on “Who He Is.” For this reason I am not viewed as “the kid from down the street,” but as a brother and pastor in Christ.

When Jesus arrived in Galilee, “*the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast*” (v. 45). Today there is so much spurious religious activity taking place with more and more sensationalism required. Auditoriums are now being wired for “sound.” This is not just the sound to be heard but the sound and the lighting that would allow a rock concert to be held in each service. The rock beat with its lyrics has done more to destroy the mind than most any other media. This murdering of the mind is called, “musical mentalcism.”

We have allowed this satanic force to come into our churches and be condoned and accepted as though it were spiritual. All of this is orchestrated into our churches to make our church more appealing to the world and more like the world. God forbid.

Yet this same desire for the sensational is what prompted many of those who came to Jesus. They came looking for another miracle, not just coming for truth’s sake. The nobleman when he came to Jesus was desperate. His son was dying. He needed nothing short of a miracle for the healing of his son.

II. THE REQUEST FOR ANOTHER MIRACLE vv. 47-52

The nobleman wanted Jesus to go to where his son was and while there heal him. Or at least the nobleman thought that would have to be the way it was done. The “modern day healing service” requires this kind of atmosphere and display. In such a setting the focal point is on the healer. The healer and the person being healed are in the spotlight.

Yet in this instance the Lord is going to perform a miracle that will not even require His presence. Before Naaman’s leprosy was healed he resented Elisha not coming out to where he was. It was only when he was willing to trust the man of God at his word without all the “fan fare” that he was miraculously healed. The modern day healing service could easily be labeled as a performance with the theatrics to match. I must address this concern as a strong warning against everything that is designed to remove the glory from God. All glory belongs to Him and to Him alone.

After the nobleman made his request to Jesus for his son’s healing, he received a rebuke from Jesus. The rebuke was for the purpose of addressing his low level of faith. His faith like the others required the seeing rather than just believing. Hebrews 11:1 tells us clearly what faith is, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” The Word of God goes on to say that “*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*” (Romans 10:17). You cannot remove or separate the Word of God from faith. Faith and the Word must be connected. The rebuke was based upon a “signs and wonders” mentality that the nobleman had. The rebuke served the purpose of preparing the nobleman’s heart for belief. “*Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way*” (v. 50). It may be argued that the nobleman had a weak faith, but he did believe. The Word tells us that if we had faith the size of a mustard seed that we could move mountains. I am grateful to the Lord that it does not say, “If you have faith the size of a mountain you could move a mustard seed.” God honors even our little faith. Faith is simply believing and then acting upon the

LONG DISTANCE MIRACLES

word. Our text illustrates this truth when it says, *“the man believed the word” ... “he went his way.”*

His faith increases as he journeys to the place of the miracle. The Lord let his servants meet him with the good news that his son was going to live. The good news must have been written all over their faces. As God honors our feeble steps of faith we become more confident in the workings of the Lord. The Lord is so very consistent and completely dependable. Because this is true, as you walk in faith you also grow in faith.

The nobleman began to inquire of the hour that the son began to mend. He was told, *“Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house”* (vv. 52b-53).

Notice the pattern or steps that Jesus used to increase the nobleman’s faith. First, he was told to *“Go thy way; thy son liveth.”* This big first step involved the nobleman believing the Word. Had he not believed the Word he would not have received the miracle. The nobleman demonstrated a degree of faith as he called upon the Lord. Even his calling upon the Lord was a result of hearing the Word or report of what Jesus had already done. Now after calling on the Lord, the Lord gave him instructions as to what he should do next. The second thing that he did was to embark on the journey of faith while anticipating seeing his healed son. The third thing that happened was that the servants met him, thus strengthening further his faith. The report that the servants gave further authenticated the miracle of Christ.

This miracle demonstrates that we can pray and expect God to perform His miracles without any limitations in regards to distance or space. Prayer can be made for those who are on the other side of the world, knowing that God is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think!

III. THE RESULTS OF THE SECOND MIRACLE vv. 53-54

In Capernaum, where the miracle took place there must have been great joy. Certainly there was great joy among the

JOHN

family members, but the servants and friends were able also to rejoice in knowing that one who meant so much to them was going to live. The son lived and gave testimony to the fact that Jesus had healed him. The nobleman's family believed on Jesus also as a result of what Jesus did. All the evidence clearly indicated that the Lord healed and then the nobleman and his house believed. Whether this is an indication of his family believing unto salvation I am not sure. One theologian put it this way, "Previously he had believed the Lord's promise (4:50); now he believed the Lord's person" (Phillips).

Many of Jesus' miracles lend themselves to our making spiritual applications pertaining to salvation. The nobleman could represent the person who is concerned for someone else's need of salvation. That person like the nobleman's son has a terminal sickness; sick unto death. He is without hope. In his hopeless state, the Lord touches him making him whole. His healing or salvation touches others, who also come to Jesus. I have enjoyed this as a pastor. Someone in the family is saved and then other family members come to the Lord. This was the case in my own family.

May we have a compassion for the souls of men even as the nobleman had for his son.

Chapter 12

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT SIN AND SICKNESS?

John 5:1-16

Can you imagine living in a world without sickness? In such a world there would be no need for physicians, hospitals, health clinics, or nursing homes. There would be no sickness with fever, no crippling due to disease, no need for glasses and no loss of teeth. You say, you must be describing Heaven. The answer could be “yes,” but actually I am describing the earth. I am describing an actual place identified in the Scriptures located upon the earth. The place is the garden of Eden before Adam and Eve sinned.

After their sinning, things changed drastically. There was a “quantum leap” from a world free of disease and death to a world plagued by disease and death of all description. The original sin ushered in viral and bacterial invasions that began to make war against all the living. The Book of James tells us in chapter one, verse 15, *“Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.”* To die, many times that death must be preceded by sickness.

All sickness is a by-product of man’s original sin. But all sickness, when incurred is not always a result of a particular sin. However, in I Corinthians 11:29-30 it says, *“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”* The sin associated with the sickness mentioned here was not properly confessed and judged and therefore there was the chastening hand of God which resulted in sickness and finally death (I Corinthians 11:32).

There is a natural occurring of disease caused by either sinful habits or sinful lifestyles. Cirrhosis of the liver is often caused by alcohol consumption, whereas hardening of the arteries results from gluttony. Smoking can cause lung and

JOHN

vascular problems leading to sickness and death. There are also sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS and different forms of venereal diseases that are the results of sinful lifestyles.

Also to be considered, there are many sickly, dying saints who have not been guilty of a particular sin or a sinful lifestyle. They have simply been called on to minister through their own personal suffering. This study is not to judge every sickness to determine for what purpose it is. Only God can ultimately do that. Yet a careful examination of our text discloses that this “certain man” had his sickness due to some sin. For thirty-eight years he suffered because of that sin, and after he was healed he was warned to “*sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*” (v. 14). As we look at this man and his malady, may we observe, “the place that the sick man was found.”

I. THE PLACE THAT THE SICK MAN WAS FOUND

vv. 1-6

While the Jews were piously observing their religious festivities, the certain man of our text was pitifully passing time in hopes of some measure of deliverance from his awful dilemma. Yet for thirty-eight years nothing had happened. The place where the man lay was a place of shelter for those who were sick. It also was a place of on-going suffering of the sick.

This pool was called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda which means “house of mercy.” This pool had five porches. As a student of the Scriptures, I could not help but notice the typology of the text. The number five in Bible hermeneutics speaks of God’s grace or of His goodness. The pool was called “mercy” and borrowing from that beloved pastoral, the twenty-third Psalm, the last verse says, “*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.*” As pathetic and miserable as this person must have been, after having suffered for thirty-eight years, he was still under the providential watch care of God’s “*goodness and mercy.*” Regardless of how wicked we may find ourselves to be, and how miserable in

SIN AND SICKNESS

that state of wickedness we may be, we cannot escape the goodness and mercy of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

The poor miserable creature that lay in hopes of moving himself to the “moving waters” was enjoined by those who were described as “impotent folk, blind, halt, and withered.” Again in the study of numbers, the number four is the world or creation number. There are four seasons: Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. There are four directions: North, South, East and West. The typical message here is there are four listed groups. These four groups represent all people of the world in their “sin-sickened” state. All are needy. The Lord Jesus visited one of these souls in his desperate need. The Scriptures tell us that it was a “certain man” He was after. God is a God of certainties. He refers to certain men and things throughout the Gospels. Just as there was a certain man here who was a benefactor of the goodness and mercy there was also in Luke a “certain rich man” who rejected God’s grace and mercy lifting “*up his eyes being in torments*” (Luke 16).

This certain man had laid by the pool with false hope in thinking that someday he would be able to slip into the pool and find healing. Typically, the pool represents what the law could do. The only problem was he was unable to obtain and meet the requirements of the law. He may have gotten very close to the healing pool, but he always seemed to come up short. Many today are like that man in that they are trying to achieve the righteousness of God by their own efforts, yet miserably fall short. Romans 3:23 says, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.*”

II. THE PROBLEM THAT THE MAN HAD vv. 7-13

The pool may have been inches away, but for his personal healing it just as well have been miles. The certain man admitted to Jesus two problems. The Lord asked, “*Wilt thou be made whole?*” The man not recognizing that Jesus could heal him said sadly, “*Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.*”

Can you imagine his patience, but with frustration, in

JOHN

such a dilemma? In answering thusly, he was admitting his total inadequacy to heal or help himself in any fashion. When a person spiritually comes to the place that he knows that he cannot save himself, he then is in position to trust the One who can.

Satan the deceiver will continue to “move the waters” giving you false hope while at the same time watching you struggle. Even if the waters at Bethesda had healing value, for this man they just as well not. For he in thirty-eight years could never get there. He needed someone that really could help him. It was Jesus who said, “*Rise, take up thy bed, and walk*” (v. 8).

This man who had lain in weakness because of his wickedness has now been raised and healed. John 5:9 says, “*And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.*” A great miracle took place. This man immediately was cured and was just as quickly criticized. The “religious crowd,” the Jews, accused him and Jesus of violating the Sabbath. They religiously had become a law unto themselves. In this spirit of the law there was no rejoicing, there was only requiring.

Similarly, when a person comes to the Lord you would think that the world would be rejoicing. Yet “*men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*” (John 3:19). The light exposes and condemns, the people become uncomfortable around new converts. The same person is now saved who once condoned and enjoyed their wicked and worldly lifestyle. What a difference Christ makes.

Before the man was healed, in strength he was powerless and in hope he was pitiful. After his healing he was walking and worshipping. The Lord found him in the Temple. There He gave him a protective warning.

III. THE PROTECTION THAT THE WELL MAN WAS OFFERED vv. 14-16

For a staggering thirty-eight years this impotent man had opportunity to think about and rehearse his reason for being in his weakened state. We can only speculate as to what sin

SIN AND SICKNESS

he committed that caused him to be where he was. Through the outreach of our church nursing home ministries we are often brought into contact with people who suffer different debilitating injuries that confine them to the bed or wheelchair for the remainder of their natural lives. One person in particular received a spinal injury because of a gang fight. As a result of this injury his wife left him. He was removed from close contact with his friends, and left by himself in a depressing, lonely state.

When we first met this person there was much bitterness in association with his injuries. Yet God's mercy and grace appeared as Steve led him to Christ.

The certain man in our text could have been where he was for similar reasons. People today are often paralyzed or even die by consuming a deadly drug cocktail in hopes of experiencing some degree of high.

When the Lord approached him in the Temple He said, *"Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee"* (v. 14).

It was as though the Lord was showing surprise at the impotent man being whole; such is not the case. Here is what I believed happened. When Jesus saw him in his weakened condition He told the man to, *"Rise, take up thy bed, and walk."* The man did just that, but because of the multitude Jesus had to "convey himself away" and did not get to converse with the man that He had healed (v. 13).

This is the reason that the man did not even know who had healed him until he met Jesus later in the Temple. Jesus found him in the Temple and said, *"Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee."* This verse gives evidence that the reason for his condition was "sin."

Now He is telling the man not to sin again lest something worse happens. That warning statement must have "shook him in his boots." He must have been thinking, "No! Never do I again want to experience what I have just experienced." Every time he thought of the possibility of that being the case, he must have shuddered.

JOHN

As sad as it is many today pretend that there are no consequences for sinning. Yet there are consequences for sinning. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 12:6, *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.”* Verse 11 says, *“Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.”* As difficult as the chastening may seem, it is wonderful that God cares enough for us to minister His discipline upon us.

Hebrews 10:26-27 reminds us of the severity of sinning against God: *“For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”*

God’s mercy and grace is wonderful; His forgiveness is precious, may we be challenged not to invite sickness because of sinning. If we have been delivered may we not go back lest He visits us again with something worse!

Chapter 13

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT JUDGMENT? John 5:17-29

The subject of judgment is introduced as the Jews are judging the healed man carrying his bed and the One who did the healing. The traditional law of the Jewish authorities, under the direct influence of the Pharisee, has so degenerated that the giver of the law is now being indicted. *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ”* (John 1:17). The strict rendering of the law was never as demanding as what the Pharisees made it. Luke 11:46 says, *“And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.”* The law was given to establish a “helpful boundary” not to be a “hurtful burden.”

“Grace and truth” are dynamite words whenever they stand alone, but so much more when they are coupled together. Christ Jesus is illustrating the meaning of “grace and truth” as He told the man to take up his bed and walk. The greatest burden or work for a newly healed man is not walking with his bed (similar to a bed roll or sleeping bag), but his lying down in a weakened condition and having to stay there. His very existence had been with great toil. Christ Jesus came to remove that from him and give him his first rest after thirty-eight years. The Jewish authorities as they broaden their phylacteries, just to impress those around them, angrily demanded nothing less than the execution of the falsely accused lawbreaker. The One, Christ Jesus, was guilty only of healing and helping. Today this Spirit of the Pharisees has done more to destroy the Spirit of Christ than has the local taverns. Those in the taverns know that they are “rascals,” but so often the self-righteous, proud and critical have no idea how wicked they really are.

My wife recently heard someone almost shouting, “You

JOHN

are going to hell!” while she was shopping in a department store. She saw the person and recognized that this person had the reputation of judging every person that did not “measure up.” The only problem, the standards that she required no one could keep – short of God, and He probably would not have kept those requirements Himself.

We can mimic the Pharisees of old, and if we are not careful, we can end with the same evil results.

To answer the accusations of the Jews, Jesus established His deity as He answered them, “*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*” That one singular statement of truth not only connected Jesus to His Father by relationship, but also showed Himself to be equal with God. Those who were guilty of judging now are about to be judged by the Judge. Their future judgment is also going to be described. Even as Jesus deals with them He offers them everlasting life (v. 24), so that they might be able to escape the judgment of damnation (v. 29).

I. THE RIGHT TO JUDGE w. 17-23

The right to judge is not a demanded right. A good legal system will not permit this to happen. Instead there must be an appointment. The one appointing must be either equal or superior in authority, or if involving a group, that group must be in agreement to the selection of the judge. The judge must also have an understanding of the law that he is called upon to represent. In the case of Jesus that right is committed unto Him by the Father. God the Father gave the right to His Son who also is God. God knows all things. The law of Moses was given by God at Mt. Sinai. Just as Moses by right of commitment was the lawgiver in the Old Testament economy, even so Christ Jesus is the lawgiver in the New Testament economy. Hebrews teaches the fullness of this truth. Hebrews 12:22-24 says, “*But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made*

JUDGMENT

perfect.” These verses teach us that God is the “*Judge of all*” and that Jesus is “the Mediator of the new covenant.”

Jesus at the beginning of His earthly ministry had to reveal these things about Himself as He ministered His Father’s will. Jesus already has conveyed to us that He came, “*to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*” (4:34). In verse 17 the Lord in agreement with the Heavenly Father says, “*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.*”

The right to judge is predicated on the fact that Jesus said, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise*” (v. 19). The purpose of God giving the right to judge to His Son, Jesus, was that Jesus would also have the honor. It was the purpose of the Father that all men, “*honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*” (v. 23).

It was the Father’s will that Jesus raise up the man who had been diseased for thirty-eight years. If the entire religious system had elected to stand against Jesus, it would not have made what He did less right. Praise God, Truth never changes, not even if it is violated by tradition.

For one to appreciate the law of judgment, he needs to have a concept of the way the law is implemented. Many systems are built upon a triangular relationship. A Christian marriage has a God, husband, wife relationship. The closer that the husband and wife get to God, the closer they get to each other in this relationship. The physical creation is represented by the triangular relationship of solids, liquids, and gases. Fire also may be described within its triangular relationship. For there to be a fire there must be fuel, heat, and oxygen. Any firefighter knows that if either of the three is removed the fire goes out.

Judgment also may be described as a triangular relationship with these three components. First, there is *the Provision of the law*. This is the law itself. There could be no judgment without the law. There could not be correct judgment without a good law. When Christ established His own Deity, when answering the criticism of the Jews, He also was declar-

JOHN

ing the inherent strength of the law. If He is God, as the Son of God and all law comes from the throne room (Romans 13:1-2), then He has the right to state the law and act upon it. God is without imperfection, therefore His law is also flawless without imperfection. The Pharisees tampered with the law thinking that they were strengthening the law when in reality they were attacking the very law that they pretended to be upholding. For God's law to be at its best, it must not be altered.

Secondly, there is the *Protector of the law*. This is the judge. The judge is respected according to his relationship to the law, if the law is weak or flawed then the judge is perceived as such. The judge needs to be conscious that there be a proper interpretation of the law. He must not be biased, impartial, nor emotional in his true interpretation and carrying out of the law. A judge who fits this description is to be praised or as our text renders it, he is to be honored. The heavenly Father is transferring the right to judge from Himself to His Son, "*For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him*" (vv. 22-23). In a well ordered court system those in the courtroom will stand giving honor to the judge as he comes to the bench. How much greater honor should come to the "Judge of the judges."

Thirdly, there are those *Protected by the law*. Can you fathom an existence without the law? When men lack the courage to implement or execute the law then those who are under the umbrella of its protection began to suffer and feel betrayed. As I write this there are those in our community who feel betrayed because the one who was guilty of breaking the law received only a "slap on the wrist." As weak as this slap was, it was felt throughout our community. The people are concerned that with such a weak execution of the law that the enforcement of such future laws will be hindered.

The personal impact of what has happened touches me even at this very moment. A man whom I have respected and

JUDGMENT

admired for over four decades took a public stand on an issue that will render the law less efficient. A strong law, properly executed, is a safeguard and protector of the people. May we have men of character and conviction to execute the laws of the land with a conscience towards God.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITY OF JUDGING *vv.* 24-27

The Judge is the executor of the law (*v.* 27). The Father gave this responsibility to the Son. It has been mentioned that the judge needs to be competent in the law. The judge also needs to be very much aware of the evidence that is put on display, not to be swayed, but to be fair. The Lord Jesus Christ has all the evidence at His disposal. Nothing escapes His omniscience. Even though He is the all knowing God, He still records the evidence of every person's life to be recalled at the day of Judgment. For the unbeliever, the judgment will be done according to their works (Revelation 20:12).

Within the scope of God's omniscience He is still communicating mercy to the lawbreaker. Verse 24 says, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*" Here the Judge is issuing a warning so that men may escape the terrors of judgment. A judge who knows the law also knows that there is a punishment for the lawbreakers. It may be observed that there are also three components of the law being executed.

First, there is *the evidence* that's already been referred to. All evidence must be in some way related to or pertaining to the law itself. The criterion for weighing the evidence is the law. A trial defendant lawyer will do all within his power to gather evidence to prove the defendant innocent. The evidence will only be valuable relative to its relationship to the law. God the Son will have the evidence in perfect relationship to the law. There will be no argument against either the law, nor against the Judge.

Secondly, there is the *actual interpretation* or judgment based upon the law. What does the law say relative to the

JOHN

one charged? The strength of the charge is based upon the interpretation of the evidence. The evidence usually must be meticulously given, leaving out nothing. All the gaps must be filled for the purpose of arriving at a proper interpretation. God the Holy and Righteous Judge will certainly render a proper interpretation of the evidence. He will leave no gaps. He knows even those things supposedly done in the “closet.” Those things thought to be private will be exposed and judged.

Thirdly, there is *the actual execution of the sentence* in punishing the wrong doer. This is a vital and necessary part of making the law strong. Sin must have its consequences. A lawbreaker must fear the breaking of the law as Romans 13: 1-4 tells us, “*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*” This passage gives a Biblical perspective of the way and the reasons the law must be executed properly. A strong, good law will honor these requirements.

It is the responsibility of the judge to carry out the sentence. His authority is backed by the state just as all authority originates in the throne room of God’s presence.

III. THE RESULTS OF JUDGMENT wv. 28-29

Just as a good government will maintain its laws in such a way as to free the innocent and punish the guilty, the Lord also will reward the good and punish the wicked. The Bema Seat, or The Judgment Seat of Christ will be to reward the faithful believers. The Great White Throne Judgment will be reserved to punish the wicked dead. Those who are unbeliev-

JUDGMENT

ers will stand at this judgment.

This fifth chapter tells us that the authority to do this has been given to the Son. Revelation 20:12-15 shows us the way it will happen, *“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

With all the demanding requirements of the law there is still the availability of God’s grace. The opportunity to escape the terrible judgment against sin is available because Jesus, Himself, was judged for our sins upon the cross of Calvary.

Will you accept His grace and forgiveness? Now, today is the day of salvation.

Chapter 14

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT A WITNESS' QUALIFICATION?

John 5:30-47

The Jewish authorities were acting out the part of vigilantes as they were persecuting Jesus in hopes of capturing Him and executing Him for the things that He did on the Sabbath (John 5:16). It appears that the Jews are placing Jesus on trial, when in reality He is putting them on trial. This method of “turning the tide” is not a new phenomena being introduced by Jesus. For example, when one answers a question with a question, he is employing the Socratic method. It is said that Socrates made popular this method as a means of rebuttal. Jesus is simply putting the pressure back on them.

Jesus states His own defense as He answers by whose authority He does those things that He does. He supports His statements and acts by giving the witness of others. The word “witness” appears nine times in this section plus the synonym “testify” for a total of ten times. The number ten in Bible numerology has reference to governmental perfection. Here law, judgment, and government, in the spirit of a courtroom drama is being examined with Jesus being the chief witness and is being supported by other witnesses. He demonstrates His purpose within His own government. As He does, He proves that His “government” is perfect. It is theirs that is flawed. In proper law enforcement there must be, as we previously considered, a triangular relationship involving the provision of the law, the protector of the law, and the protected by the law. There also is another triangular relationship involving the actual evidence, the interpretation of the evidence, and the execution based upon the evidence. A third triangular relationship involves the witness. In this relationship we will consider: the choosing of the witness, the character of the witness, and the contribution by the witness.

As we consider the qualifications of a good witness, may we observe how Jesus is relating to His own qualification as a

A WITNESS' QUALIFICATION

good witness while denouncing the qualifications of the Jewish authorities. Perhaps the biggest accusation Christ made against the Jews was when He said, *"But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you"* (v. 42). They had already demonstrated an over zealous attempt to enforce the law by trumping up a charge that Jesus had broken the Sabbath by healing the impotent man and telling him to take up his bed and walk (5:8). Yet with their great zeal to enforce the law they did not at all demonstrate the love of God.

Many of our churches are plagued with this kind of spirit. Sadly, the Pharisees and hypocrites are alive and well in many of our churches. God help us to witness the love of God as we embrace truth.

With the word "witness" being the recurring theme of this section, it is most necessary that we have a correct understanding of how this word is used with its proper meaning. The word "witness" as used here carries the meaning of testifying on behalf of someone else. It also means to "deliver facts." To meet the requirements of this definition, Jesus said that His power and authority to "do" came from seeing the Father "do" (v. 19). Also He included another necessary ingredient, *"I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which sent me"* (v. 30). This verse illustrates the next quality of a good witness. It is the quality of hearing. The characteristics of a good witness is "seeing" and "hearing." We will examine this further as we now consider what qualifies a witness.

I. THE CHOOSING OF A WITNESS v. 30

The actual choosing or the selection of the witness is of critical importance. A proper rendering of the evidence is paramount to the proper deliverance of truth. Jesus plainly said, *"the Father ... hath sent me"* (v. 30). When choosing the witness it must be determined if the witness' *testimony is reliable*. An unreliable witness is of no value and serves no good purpose. Quite the contrary, a poor witness can jeopardize the case. In our spiritual application a good, reliable witness

JOHN

can point many souls to Christ. He can be respected and trusted to deliver the truth. A lying witness is a poor witness, hurting more than helping. Jesus declares Himself to be a truthful witness in John 14:6, *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* Everything that He did upon the earth was within the will of the Father.

One of the purposes of Christ walking upon this earth was to manifest life as a witness and to be a witness. The two qualities of “seeing” and “hearing” for the purpose of declaring truth is illustrated in the First Epistle of John, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ”* (vv. 1-3).

When Jesus walked upon this earth, He was a reliable witness who came to give us an understanding of Himself and of the Father. I John 5:20 tells us this, *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.”*

Those who question the reliability of Jesus and also His deity are rejecting the truth of God’s Word while calling God a liar (I John 5:9-12).

Also when choosing a witness, will His *testimony be relevant* to the case? A witness must see and hear things relevant to the case under consideration. The presentation of non-related information makes no contribution to the case. A witness who does not have pertinent information helpful to the case should not be chosen. When God commissioned His Son to come down to the earth, He was chosen with great purpose. He came to reveal the Father to this lost and dying

A WITNESS QUALIFICATION

world. He came as “*the express image of his person*” (Hebrews 1:3). We who are victims of sin needed a witness to come who could identify not only with the Father but also with us. Christ Jesus came as our Priest. The Latin word for “priest” is “pontifex” which means, “bridge builder.” He also is our mediator or go-between with the Father.

Christ Jesus in His relevancy connects us back to the Father, in the sense that He is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. It is as though Jesus is showing God how we feel and then showing us how God feels.

When Christ said that He did what He saw and heard His Father do, He was doing what the Father would have done in healing the impotent man. In this sense He was standing as a witness against the Jewish authorities. They did not have the love of God as He did. His witness of God certainly revealed the Father and was relevant to the will of the Father that sent Him.

The third requirement of a good witness is that His testimony be remembered. It was said that on an average, that during every thirty-two seconds of testimony that President Clinton gave in the Monica Lewinsky hearings that He said, “I do not remember.” It is vital that a testimony be remembered and not forgotten to insure that there be a complete witness to the case. Christ when witnessing the attributes of the Father, left out nothing. He said and declared everything within the scope of the Father’s will. He was able to say that He had finished the works of the one who sent Him. Every miracle that was performed illustrated some aspect of the Father’s will. Certainly the raising of the impotent man, who was in misery for thirty-eight years, testifies to this.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THE WITNESS vv. 31-42

Apart from the evidence, there is no greater importance to the case than the character of the witness. Can anyone attest to and agree to the good character of the witness? Does he have those who have observed the pattern of his life and recognizes his good characteristics? His good *character must be supported by others.*

JOHN

Just as Bethesda had five porches which gave witness to all the sick and suffering, who lay underneath its protection, the Lord has five witnesses to all that He is. In verse 31, Christ acquiesces to the arguments of His opponents that His witness alone (without other witnesses) is not true. But He goes on to remind them that another, His Father, witnesses to the validity of His claims (vv. 32-37). Other witnesses cited are John the Baptist (v. 33), His miracles (v. 36), the Scriptures (v. 39), and Moses (v. 46) (Ryrie). He goes on to claim in chapter 8:14 that His witness is indeed true. In fact, His witness was true; but legally there had to be two or three to agree to qualify as a bonafide witness.

As a testimony, God wants us to be witnesses. *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth”* (Acts 1:8). The use of the word “witness” here is one of the strongest uses of the word in the Bible. The word here means that you will deliver even if it means death, what you have seen, heard, or do know. Can we be observed and be known to have that kind of witness, to take a stand on the recommendation of others? In our daily activities do we witness the radiance of God as John did? *“He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light”* (v. 35).

The first light that John was compared to was a burning oil lamp. To me that pictures his consistency. He was a faithful, unchanging witness. Too many are unlike John today in that there is no consistency. They are nothing more than shooting stars. They shine brightly for just a few moments of time and then go out. They pop into your churches “blazing a trail” having you to think that they will make some of the greatest church members ever, only to fizzle out.

The second word is *phos*, which is translated “light” from which we get our word photograph from *photo* (dative case) and *grapho*, “write” - writing by light. This teaches us that John was to be seen as a good witness who also witnessed on behalf of Jesus.

A WITNESS QUALIFICATION

The Heavenly Father and John the Baptist validated the truthfulness that Jesus is God. The miracles also witnessed that Jesus is God. A chief Pharisee, Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews had acknowledged, *“for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him”* (John 3:2).

Another strong witness is the Scriptures. The Scripture declares the fullness of Christ as being very God (Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:15, 19).

The Jewish authorities would not humble themselves and believe the very Scriptures that they worshipped. The Scriptures revealed Christ, but they would not come to Christ. Proudly they would receive someone coming in their own name, but not Christ coming in His Father’s name. Even today people are quite willing to accept most any tinsel counterfeit of the real thing, but avoid the unadulterated truth as though it were the plague. It is becoming more and more difficult for a pastor with old time Bible convictions to be called as the pastor. There are so many demands and requirements on the pastor to only tickle their ears. II Timothy 4:3-4 says, *“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”*

The fifth witness listed is Moses. Christ said in verse 46, *“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.”* The Jews were so proudly bound to their own tradition that they would not even accept the witness of Moses.

There was great character in all five of the witnesses mentioned. May we be challenged to have the character of a worthy witness.

III. THE CONTRIBUTION BY THE WITNESSES vv. 43-47

As simple as it may sound, the main purpose of a witness is for him to make a contribution to the case. He is contributing what he knows to support the outcome for the purpose of bringing about a fair judgment. His contribution will be measured by what truth he can recall and reveal. He will not be

JOHN

honored as a silent witness. He must speak out.

Spiritually, we need to be worthy witnesses as we tell sinners the gospel. As gospel witnesses we need to faithfully reveal to this world the truth concerning the death, burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross so that all may come to Him.

There are those who teach only of being witnesses in your style of living. This has been called “lifestyle evangelism.” The proponents of this philosophy of witnessing say that your lifestyle shows that you are a Christian. On the other end of the spectrum there are those who say the important thing is getting the gospel out regardless of your testimony. Neither of these positions are correct.

The Bible gives the correct requirements of the witness. In Matthew’s Gospel, chapter 5:13-16 we are taught that both “confrontational” and “lifestyle” are necessary for a correct witness.

This means that we are to let our “light so shine” in our way of living, but also that we must confront men with the truth, even as salt which burns and purifies. In this manner of witnessing God will be pleased even as He was with His Son.

Chapter 15

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ONE?

John 6:1-14

The theme of this lofty portion of Scripture cries aloud with a clear, clarion voice, “Little is much when God is in it!” I am learning to believe that statement to be true. When I was ordained to the gospel ministry as a young twenty-three year old preacher, that was the name of the song that the ordaining church chose to sing. I thought at the time the people were magnifying my youthfulness. I would even hear some say, “We are proud of our little preacher.” While growing up, many times I would hear the words “little Max” spoken in reference to myself.

One day I admitted that, “I am little,” “I do need someone much bigger than me.” From that time on, God began to truly teach me, “Little is much when God is in it.” God has repeatedly shown me His “all sufficiency.” In so many myriad ways I have seen His gracious provisions. I truly lack nothing. There was a time when I gave God my “few crumbs” and He gave me His all. I recognize, appreciate, and accept His wonderful grace. His grace is sufficient!

John the Baptist, when introducing the Messiah, introduced Him as the Son of God (John 1:34). John the writer, told us that He is the Creator God. Jesus Himself declared His deity. Yet the disciples that surrounded the Creator God, who is the Messiah, have not yet learned His sufficiency. Though they were with Him, they were lacking in the sense that they did not have the “canon of truth” as we have it today. We have the Bible in its entirety. Yet even with the precious Word of God, with all its promises, we tend to forget that God is the all-sufficient One. He is able to meet all of our needs with the reserves of Heaven and also with His creation power. Yet we, like the disciples, worry and wonder, scheme and stumble while refusing to trust Him to be the all-sufficient One.

This section reveals further that God is working out His

JOHN

plan. As He feeds the five thousand plus, He is doing more than just meeting hunger needs. He is performing this sign miracle to demonstrate to the multitude that there is a “miracle bread” which can satisfy the spiritual hunger of the world. After Jesus performed the miracle, He was able to declare, *“I am that bread of life”* (John 6:48). This “creation miracle” is one of the favorites of all students of the Bible. However, the great lesson pertaining to this miracle is often left unconsidered. This miracle serves as a foundation upon which the truths pertaining to the discourse of the “Bread of life” will be laid. If one studies only the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, He will fail to grasp the teachings intended to show the all-sufficient Christ as the Saviour of the world. May we consider these three thoughts: (1) The plea for food, (2) The power of faith, (3) The people are fed.

I. THE PLEA FOR FOOD vv. 1-6

A religious feast was soon to take place. Yet a multitude were showing signs of another kind of hunger but without the promise of a feast. The spiritual significance of this could be a contrast that is found in today’s world. There are those who hunger and lust after many things with the potential of their desires being met, yet they continue to hunger. In our scenario here, there are those who are hungry, but there is also one who really cares; that person is God. *Tenderness* is a characteristic of the love of God. Those who are cold, callused, and uncaring do not demonstrate at all the love of God. Jude says, *“Keep yourselves in the love of God”* (v. 21). Tenderness, love, and compassion must be at least “first cousins.” Jude 22 says, *“And of some have compassion, making a difference.”*

The compassionate, tender care of the Lord is demonstrated when John 6:5 tells us, *“When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”* (v. 5). The feeding of the five thousand is not the greatest lesson from our text, but it is a great lesson on considering the need of others. When Jesus *“lifted up his eyes”* He saw others. In

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ONE

being preoccupied with ourselves we often forget the need of others. Our churches should be populated with people who are lifting up their eyes of compassion, being conscious of the need of others. Sadly, outside the doors of many of our churches the world is sinfully going to Hell and no one has even noticed. They are out there with their spiritual hunger pains but receiving not one offer of a morsel of bread. We need to care as He cared.

Just as Jesus had *tenderness towards the multitudes*, He has a *test for the disciples*. “*Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*” This question was not asked for the purpose of obtaining knowledge, but to identify and invoke a response from Philip. His answer revealed His level of faith. It also indicated to what degree he trusted and believed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. His answer was focusing upon the impossibility of the situation, not realizing that with God “*all things are possible.*” Philip gave a very human answer, “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little” (v. 7). With this answer, Philip is calculating only in human terms.

Quite often we are guilty of trying to help God instead of just trusting God. To trust God requires a simple faith. One proves this degree of faith in his obedience to the Word and then acting upon the Word. Philip was at least appraising the situation and sizing up the need. It was as though Philip was telling Jesus if one would work from eight months to a year and then take the proceeds from his earnings and buy food that it still would not be enough to feed the multitude. There is nothing wrong in calculating unless the calculating excuses God or does not consider God. This seems to be the case here, but it very well could be that Philip was only answering Jesus’ question.

The Scriptures tell us that He was asking Philip the question to prove Philip “*for he himself knew what he would do.*” Jesus may have wanted to show Philip his need to rely upon Him and not even think in human terms. Would it have been more spiritual for Philip to have answered, “Lord we know that thou can doest all things; create and supply the need; I be-

JOHN

lieve?" The word "prove" in verse 6 comes from the verb *peirazo* having three successive meanings: (1) test, (2) prove by testing, (3) approve as the result of testing. It is obvious that the first meaning is intended here (Earle).

Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, said in verse 9, "*There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?*" The "quality" and the "quantity" may have been lacking, but when Jesus gets through there will be more than enough and the taste will be delightful. Barley is a poor man's food, the fish were too. Yet when the miracle was performed, that which may have been "fishy" became a real feast.

II. THE POWER OF FAITH vv. 7-9

There is a strong and perfect faith; it is not the faith of man, but of God. Jesus could do nothing unless He saw and heard the Father do (5:19; 30). Jesus came to accomplish the Father's will. The Father's plan was His plan and He "*knew what he would do.*" The Son acted with complete confidence in doing His Father's will. When Philip and Andrew answered in the way that they did they were certainly considering the large number and need. If there were five thousand men, there could have easily been that many women and children. The number may have been well over 10,000 people. Most people would certainly have considered and questioned the means of feeding a multitude of this size with no obvious resources available.

Abraham also had an impossible condition apart from the miraculous working of God. He was promised the opportunity of being a father of many nations. Romans 4:18-20 says, "*Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*" Abraham, who had several earlier experiences which proved that he was

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ONE

weak in the faith, now is said to be strong in the faith. Verse 19 tells us that *“he considered not”*; verse 20 says, *“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief.”* Abraham’s faith had grown in such a way that anything that God promised him would not at all have been questioned nor considered. This is the kind of faith needed by Christians today to accomplish the work of God that they have been entrusted.

Faith is knowing! Jesus knew what He was going to do. He knew what He was going to accomplish, and how He would accomplish it. Hebrews 11:1 says, *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* “Now faith is,” when a person has this degree of faith he does not say, “Now faith may be,” but *“faith is actuality.”* Faith is substance or as indicated faith is actuality. There is nothing wrong in “sitting down and counting the cost.” This principle of protection is certainly given to us. When God gives a call there is a cost. The sitting down and counting the cost aspect is not to determine whether you should say “yes” or “no” to that call. When God calls it should be similar to the military draft. “You have been chosen to serve your country” or “Uncle Sam wants you.” You, at that point, “sit down” in the interest of making your arrangements to depart. When God calls, you calculate the investment that you are to render to Him and then go.

The cost may involve giving up a lucrative job and going to a place without promised support. Yet in faith, you will trust God and resign from your job. The cost may involve selling your house and not being sure of where you will live. You will pack your bags and by faith make the appropriate move. The spirit of trusting God this way is becoming rare. It seems that one must have a guaranteed place of opportunity before making any commitment.

There is no way to calculate the power of faith. But remember, *“without faith it is impossible to please him”* (Hebrews 11:6a). Even though there is great power in great faith, we are so prone to “cast away” our confidence (Hebrews 11:35) and not capture the reward. Jesus demonstrated the power of trusting the heavenly Father when He

JOHN

performed the miracle of feeding the multitude.

III. THE PEOPLE ARE FED vv. 10-14

In our city wide crusades there are ways to prepare for the large crowds that leave the impression that the planners have it down to a science. The name of the game is organization. The most efficient organizational strategy is cloaked in the garment of simplicity. While a student at Tabernacle Baptist Bible College, Dr. John Waters would insist that as often as possible employ the KISS principle. That was an acronym for “Keep it simple, stupid.” Good organization needs a simple, clearly, defined path in which to follow. The Lord gave simple commanding instructions, *“Make the men sit down.”* John’s careful observation noted to us that there was much grass available on which to sit.

As the 5000 men were seated the Lord took the five barley loaves and gave thanks and distributed the loaves and the two fishes feeding the people as much as they wanted. Never read over or lightly consider the significance of what may seem insignificant. Notice the number of loaves and the number of fishes. Evangelist C. L. Roach taught me the value of examining in detail the Word of God. I remember sitting with him at “Ma Hawkins Café” in the late seventies, as a young preacher. “Brother Roach, I want to take a speed reading course so I can read more of the Bible.”

He looked over his glasses almost like a school teacher saying, “Son, you don’t need a speed reading course; you need to learn to read one verse at a time and know what you’ve read.” What he said spoke volumes to my heart. Thank God for what he told me that day. Practicing what he told me, I have found many Bible nuggets waiting to be unearthed. As I think of the number of loaves being five, I am reminded that number five once again is the grace number and the number two is the number for witness. The fish also has been a symbol for the gospel witness. It was as though the Lord was communicating and showing forth His grace to the hungry multitudes, witnessed by all. To me it was no accident that the numbers add up this way. Speaking of “adding

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ONE

up,” the addition of five plus two equals seven, which is a perfect or complete number.

It was not accidental that the little lad with his little lunch had these numerical combinations. It was very much providential. Jesus when testing Philip knew what He was going to do, even as He also knew what was going on. This is the fourth sign miracle which Jesus performed. The first thing that He distributed was the bread. The bread will be the subject of the discourse in the next section. So once again what Jesus does is marked by purpose.

After this miracle was performed there was more than enough. There were twelve baskets left over which would be enough for each of the disciples to take home, as a witness to the power of God in providing all of our needs. Truly He is the all-sufficient Christ!

Chapter 16

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE BREAD OF LIFE?

Part I

John 6:15-40

The feeding of the multitude shows that Jesus keeps His promises. He was going to show, “*greater works than these, that ye may marvel*” (5:20). He made this statement to the Jewish authorities. It was as though He were saying, as we would colloquially, “You ain’t seen nothing yet!” Their questioning pertained to the subject of His deity. They would not accept this carpenter’s Son as the Messiah. Thus the miracles would serve the purpose of authenticating His ministry, proving Him to be the Son of God.

Though Jesus had come to earth as man, He was demonstrating that He was no less God. He was not a magician with a “bag of tricks.” He was very God. The feeding of the multitude further proved the validity of His claims.

In verse fourteen, the men, after they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, “*This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.*” Upon recognizing who Jesus was, the multitude wanted to take Jesus by force making Him their King. He removed Himself to a mountain staying there alone (v. 15). When it was evening the disciples began their journey toward Capernaum (v. 17). When it was dark, Jesus came to them.

Jesus began to walk on the sea. As He did, a strong wind started blowing. The blowing wind along with His walking on the sea produced a very eerie setting. One indicates that they actually thought He was a ghost. In two of the Gospels He said, “*Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.*” The additional expression, “*Be of good cheer*” is offered in the midst of demonic attack. Apparently the demons of hell were lashing out at Jesus to demoralize Him and His followers. The only response that Satan could invoke from Jesus while blowing in his wicked fury was, “*Be of good cheer.*”

THE BREAD OF LIFE

This response by Jesus should be our response. When Satan is working against us, may we be reminded, “If Christ be for you who can be against you.” If Christ be for you, as someone said, “It doesn’t matter who is against you!”

When the disciples received Christ into the ship another miracle took place, they were “immediately” on the land (v. 21). A simple statement of truth could be rendered in this fashion, “Things sure go better when you let Him on board.” True to human nature, we often go on with our futile rowing while wondering how we are ever going to get through the storm, forgetting that the Master knows that the tempest is raging. We also forget that Jesus told us that He would never leave us nor forsake us.

Everything taking place in verses 14 through 25 serves as a transitional link between the feeding of the multitude and the discourse on the bread of life.

The persistence of the followers is made evident as they found means to get to the other side. They were enthralled by His miracles but perhaps even more, they were motivated by having their fleshly desires satisfied.

This study will be considered in two parts: (1) Truth revealed about the bread of life (2) The reaction to the bread of life. In part one, may we consider: what He said about them – a rebuke and a challenge; what He said about Himself – a revelation and a correction; what He said about the Father – a requirement and a consideration.

I. WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THEM – A REBUKE AND A CHALLENGE vv. 26-29

Just as Jesus answered Nicodemus by changing the subject, He does also here. They said unto him, “*Rabbi, when camest thou hither? Jesus answered them and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled*” (vv. 25b-26). This statement could very well be considered as a rebuke. There is so much “phony baloney” in the world today. It was no different then. Just as Jesus perceived that the multitude was trying to take Him by force mak-

JOHN

ing Him their King, He also sensed the real reason the people were seeking after Him. They may be pretending one thing, but He knows the heart.

The United States has been blessed in having an unusually high degree of peace and prosperity. The prosperity we enjoy has caused us to give too much attention and worth to that which is temporal and fleshly. The inflated value system we have lets the sports figure and movie star make far more than the Governor, Doctor, or even the President, not to mention the Preacher of the Gospel. Maybe the prosperity is not really a blessing after all, but instead a curse.

Lately, moral leaders have been urging a return to a proper value system. The decline in our morals is very much in proportion to our hedonistic lifestyles. We have become gluttonous not only for food, but gluttons for sex, drugs, money, and power. We, as a nation, are becoming less aware of and having less of a conscience toward God.

The rebuke by Jesus was not a harsh, caustic rebuke as if they were in rebellion against Him. It was rather a rebuke to get the multitude to focus on those things which have an eternal worth and value. There was a man I was witnessing to years ago who illustrates what I am referring to concerning misplaced values. He was sitting at his kitchen table across from me as I was pleading with him to trust Jesus and turn from his wicked ways. I kept telling him to get his heart right with God. While we were talking, he made excuse after excuse why he did not want to get saved. He also suffered a heart condition that brought on an angina attack from time to time. I knew with his heart condition he needed not to put off his greatest need.

While witnessing to him, he reached for a small brown medicine bottle I recognized to be nitroglycerin tablets. Before he could grab the bottle I grabbed it. "What are you doing, Preacher!" he cried. I immediately told him, "Ray, you don't need these tablets." "But Preacher, if I don't take one of those I may have a heart attack and die!" I told Ray that I had been talking to him about his eternal heart and he did not even seem to care. Yet the moment his physical heart

THE BREAD OF LIFE

began to pain him, he was reaching out in fear. As far as I know he never did get saved; he later died of a heart attack.

We certainly have mixed up and warped priorities in this life. For this reason the Lord said, *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed”* (v. 27). This is a warning not only to the multitude who followed Jesus, but a warning to all of us. We are often guilty of laboring for that which does not really satisfy. Isaiah 55 gives the formula for receiving what he calls real “soul delight.” *“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness”* (vv. 1-2).

The people said unto him, *“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”* (v. 28). Jesus’ answer was, *“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent”* (v. 29). The key then, and now is, “faith.” Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us this also, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

II. WHAT HE SAID ABOUT HIMSELF – A REVELATION AND A CORRECTION vv. 30-35

The gathered multitude wanted a sign to convince them of the authenticity of what Jesus was saying was true. Sadly, they were rejecting the miracle of feeding the multitude and Jesus walking on the water. Instead of believing Jesus they belittled Jesus by saying, “Moses did more than what you did.” They were in effect saying, “Moses took care of our fathers for forty years in the desert, you only took care of one meal” (vv. 30-31). *“Then Jesus said unto them, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and*

JOHN

giveth life unto the world” (vv. 32-33).

In these verses, Jesus is correcting them. He tells them that the manna came from God not Moses. It is becoming more common today for men to be worshippers of men rather than worshippers of God. There is a trend for many of our college and university students to worship confessing to Buddha or Muhammad rather than the true and living God. Those who are involved in the drug cultures find some of the eastern religions to be a convenient means of bridging their “meditating” and “hallucinating” together. The “true bread” does not come from Moses, nor from any other religious personage. The True Bread is from Heaven.

After Jesus makes a *correction concerning Moses*, He makes a *revelation concerning Himself*. In verse 35, “*Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.*”

It is quite interesting how Christ chose manna to represent Himself. The manna foreshadowed Christ in several obvious ways. We know that manna was a gift of God from Heaven. The Lord told Moses, “*I will rain bread from heaven for you*” (Exodus 16:4). Manna was heavenly in origin, a product which man had no part in producing. There was no opportunity to work for it because it was a provision of free grace. Man could only recognize and appropriate it (Stevens).

Unlike the manna in the wilderness, the True Bread will bring satisfaction where one will neither hunger nor thirst. The woman at the well learned this truth leaving her water pot; she found real satisfaction in the living water that she found nowhere else.

III. WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THE FATHER – A REQUIREMENT AND A CONSIDERATION vv. 36-40

These verses prove that Jesus, The Bread of Life, came down submissively to meet the requirements of His Father. Verses 38-40 prove His reason and purpose for coming. “*For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father’s will which,*

THE BREAD OF LIFE

hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."

These verses give us the scope and purpose of the Lord's coming. To receive the full impact of what is being introduced in these verses it would be profitable to do a detailed study on the "Kinsman Redeemer Law." The basic requirements for the kinsman redeemer is noted in three parts. (1) He must be of close kin to the one he redeems. (2) He must be willing to perform the part of a kinsman redeemer. (3) He must be able to perform the part of the redeemer. Usually people and land are involved in redemption. This was the case involving Ruth and Boaz. Before Boaz could act the part of redeemer, he had to find someone who was of closer kin to her deceased husband. When this closer of kin was unwilling to do the work of redeemer, that freed Boaz to perform the part. The marriage of Boaz to Ruth gave her an inheritance that she had lost at her husband's death. In the same way, Jesus came to earth as a close Kinsman, willing and able to regain back that which had been lost to sin. For a further study of this truth, refer to Revelation chapters 6 and 10 noting how Jesus was "worthy" to regain all that had been lost to sin. When Adam and Eve sinned the world came underneath the sin curse, as well as did all the living. Romans 8:20-23 also describes the effects of the curse in view of redemption.

Verse 39 tells us that it is the Father's will that Jesus, "*should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*" The word "it" indicates only the physical creation not involving the souls of men. Verse 40 also says the Father's will is not to lose those who are born again but to "*raise him up at the last day.*" The word *him* refers to the souls of men. As our most honorable and worthy Kinsman Redeemer, Christ Jesus will raise our old bodies with the sin curse removed and the glorified bodies as our eternal bodies. Everlasting life is the blessed result of believing.

Chapter 17

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE BREAD OF LIFE?

Part II

John 6:41-71

For nearly forty years the nation of Israel was being patiently taught the means of their survival. They could not survive en masse, nor individually apart from the gracious provisions of the Lord. Daily the “unknown” substance called manna rained down from Heaven. God was so dependable to an undependable people. Does that not show clearly His grace, even back then? The story of grace is indelibly etched throughout the eons of time.

There are no people of any dispensation who have been without the umbrella of God’s marvelous grace. The nation of Israel was so undeserving yet they were incubated by God’s grace. They were like little chicks scurrying round for a grain of corn. Yet, as dependent as they may have been, they never needed to have lacked for anything.

The lessons they learned, concerning the provisions of God, were told to their children. Then each generation would pass on to the next generation how God blessed under the leadership of Moses. The Jews in our study are recalling the way God blessed and met their needs under the leadership of Moses, but forgetting where the manna really came. In Moses’ day the glory that should have been God’s alone is now being given to Moses. In the same spirit, the glory that should have belonged to Jesus is being withheld. Sadly, the same multitude that had previously enjoyed the miracle involving the two fishes and five loaves are now murmuring and questioning the deity of Christ.

May we notice: (1) The murmuring pertaining to the bread of life; (2) The Messiah explaining the bread of life; and (3) The means of obtaining the bread of life.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

I. THE MURMURING PERTAINING TO THE BREAD OF LIFE vv. 41-47

The murmuring was a response to His declaration. Jesus declared that He was the bread which came down from Heaven (v. 41). Jesus also stated that He was the bread of life (v. 35). He said *"I am the bread of life."* This is the first of the seven "I am" titles of Christ found in this Gospel, and found no where else. The others are, *"I am the light of the world"* (8:12); *"I am the door"* (10:9); *"I am the good shepherd"* (10:11); *"I am the resurrection and the life"* (11:25); *"I am the way, the truth, and the life"* (14:6); *"I am the true vine"* (15:1).

Moses was instructed of God while at the burning bush to go to Egypt and stand before Pharaoh. He was to command Pharaoh to let the children of God go forth into the wilderness to worship Jehovah. When Moses asked, who shall I say hath sent me?, the answer was, "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3:14). Jehovah (I AM) in the Old Testament is the same Jesus in the New Testament. With the use of these seven metaphors, in conjunction with His title, "I AM," Jesus is progressively revealing Himself as the true God.

The strong, but simple declaration that Jesus made startled the Jews. In their pride, they did not accept Jesus as the giver of life. This declaration statement by Jesus served as a catalyst to cause the Jews to murmur, thus revealing their depraved heart. They did not have an *aptitude* for the things of God. Paul was communicating this truth when he said, *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (I Corinthians 2:14). Their *attitude* was also non-receptive to the sayings of Jesus. Not only did they not understand what Jesus was telling them, but they also did not believe what Jesus claimed regarding His deity.

The murmuring was a rejection of His deity. The Jews could only see Jesus as being the natural son of Joseph and Mary. Many had observed Jesus growing up; they probably

JOHN

saw Him working in the carpenter's shop along with Joseph. Had deep spiritual qualities not set Jesus apart from the common man, they would have had reason to reject the deity of Christ. Yet God allowed His Son to perform the miracles called "signs and wonders" for the purpose of proving His statements to be true. These miracles proved that Jesus was more than just a natural man. He was the God-Man. Yet stubbornly they would not cross over their own barrier of unbelief to embrace Christ Jesus as the true Messiah. Paul said about them, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (Romans 10:1-4).

The murmuring was a revealing of their depravity. They indicated by their murmuring that they had not *"learned of the Father"* (v. 45). Had they learned of the Father, they would have come to Jesus and partook of the bread of life. Their hunger pains would have forced them to do so. In using the metaphor of Him as the bread of life, all that pertained to the partaking of the bread should be considered. Yet instead of desiring Him, they have no appetite at all. With no appetite and with no eating, there is no life. In that condition, they revealed themselves to be totally depraved. Just today, I had the joy of visiting the sick in our local hospital. Before I walked in, I saw two ladies sitting on the bench outside. I kindly ministered to them, asking about their sick. I left them both a gospel tract offering to be of any further help. When I came out of the hospital the ladies were gone and the "good news" in the form of the gospel tract that I had given them was laying on the bench. They were given an opportunity to receive eternal life by reading and trusting the Word of God. Yet in their state of depravity there were no hunger pains to cause them to eat of the bread of life. Verse 44 reminds us

THE BREAD OF LIFE

that there must be the “drawing’ of the Father. The Father’s drawing is likened unto the appetite one has for the bread of life. Maybe at a later time, those two ladies will find themselves hungry. Pray that they do not wait too late!

II. THE MESSIAH EXPLAINING THE BREAD OF LIFE

vv. 48-55

His bread is different (vv. 48-50). Christ re-emphasizes again that He is “*that bread of life*” (v. 48). Instead of Jesus “soft pedaling” the Truth, He does the opposite. He reveals additional, weighty doctrines that causes the Jews to continue to strive in their arguing. He contrasted Himself to the temporary qualities of the manna in the wilderness. The manna offered then, as gracious as it was, did not compare to the “bread of life.” So many today are striving (a form of the word laboring) for that bread which does not satisfy eternally. They partake or eat of the bread of this world becoming empty again and again; eventually they die (v. 49). Those who have digested the “bread” of fame and fortune are permitted to eat it for just a little while, then it is gone. They need the different bread that giveth everlasting life. I John 2:15-17 warns us of pursuing after the wrong things having the wrong appetites. “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (John 2:15-17).

His bread is delivered (vv. 51-54). Jesus reminds them that this *different* bread has been *delivered* (v. 32) by the Son as a gift from the Father. John 3:16 says this truth very well, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*” When He says “should not perish,” He uses the Greek word *apollumi* in reference to judgment. Yet when one eats of Jesus, he also will not perish in hunger. His needs will be met and his hunger satisfied.

JOHN

This special delivery is delivered straight from the heart of God. God looking down on earth saw its intense hunger. Recognizing the spiritual hunger, He must have said, "Just as I met the daily needs of the wilderness wanderers, I will meet the eternal needs of *whosoever will*." Praise God for His watchful care.

His bread is delectable (v. 55). The world has its own counterfeits. Money and merchandise have been counterfeited. There are those with the aid of hi-tech equipment able to copy the real thing with such precision that the real is often confused with the counterfeit. More and more techniques and safeguards have been implemented to ward off those who attempt to counterfeit money. Just as there are those busy counterfeiting merchandise and money, Satan is also busy.

Satan is the great counterfeiter who strives to counterfeit the "real thing," especially when counterfeiting salvation. Christ Jesus said that His flesh is meat indeed (v. 35). It is the real thing. He is insisting to those who question His deity that, "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*" (v. 53). When He says that He is meat indeed, He means that He is the singular source of life. He completely satisfies. A person must by faith appropriate Christ by eating and drinking of Him. This is not a doctrine on cannibalism, nor is it a catholic doctrine on transubstantiation. Jesus, the Bread of Life is simply stressing the importance of partaking spiritually of Him as one would partake of daily substance.

III. THE MEANS FOR OBTAINING THE BREAD OF LIFE

vv. 56-71

It may be freely received (vv. 56-58). As hard as this saying may have seemed to some, the life bread was available to all who would eat of Him. Christ Jesus was using the metaphor of His flesh and blood to convey to those left that He was going to make the ultimate sacrifice in giving Himself. All that He said was pointing to His sacrificial death on the cross. Those anxious to make Him king did not want one who they

THE BREAD OF LIFE

perceived to only be the common carpenter's son of Mary and Joseph. Yet this most generous gift of eternal life belongs to every person willing to totally consume Him by faith. Hebrews conveys this great truth in chapter 6:4-5. *"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come."*

The phrases "have tasted of the heavenly gift" and "have tasted the good word of God" refer to the spiritual idea of eating the Living Bread.

It may be foolishly rejected (vv. 59-65). The rich man in Luke 16 had all the physical amenities a person would desire, yet in all of his banqueting and his feasting he never once partook of the Living Bread. Many eat the bread of this world while at the same time saying, "Man, this is living." In reality they are only pretending to live; they are actually dying. They are no different than the rich man, who in hell lifted up his eyes being in torments.

Apparently many who heard what Jesus said were offended. While He was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum (v. 59), many began to question His doctrine as a "hard saying." Verse 66 tells us, *"From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* Many will not frequent a church today if the pulpit provides straight and solid Biblical preaching. They will refer to the preaching as being hard.

Recently, I was invited to preach a revival in a church. The church was blessed with a young pastor who had a zeal for God and a desire to accomplish much for Christ. From the very beginning of the meeting, I was determined to be compassionate but also careful to preach the Word without compromise. As I preached, I sensed a turning away from the truth by some of the people. Sadly there were only a few there who wanted the plain teachings of Scripture. The verses in our text, verses 66-68, are now more clearly understood after the meeting just described.

It may be faithfully recognized (vv. 66-71). Simon Peter

JOHN

was asked if he would also go away. He answered, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”* When one has been confronted with the True Bread of Life and tasted it, he knows there is none other like it. Peter had no knowledge of anyone else to whom he could go. By the question, *“Lord, to whom shall we go?”* he was acknowledging that Jesus was the *only* one who has the words of eternal life.

The group now has been reduced to a much smaller number. Jesus now speaks to the twelve, telling them this, *“Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* With this question by Jesus, there is not a weakness on the part of Jesus in choosing Judas but on the part of Judas not accepting Him. Judas serves as a warning to us all. Judas had the privilege of being taught by Jesus as well as having the privilege of time spent with Jesus. Yet he still went to Hell. One may have the benefits of God’s grace in many different forms. It may be preaching, witnessing, or receiving a gospel tract, and still refusing it only to wake up in Hell. When God gives you an offer to accept the True Bread of Life, may your appetite be for Him!

Chapter 18

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST?

Part I

John 7:1-29

Sin originated in the garden of Eden with a lie. Satan lied to Eve, which led to her and her husband's transgression of God's law. Satan is the father of lying, as John 8:44 tells us, *"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it."*

Satan's lying spirit is infused into the entire human race. A lie is a contradiction of truth. "Lie" and "truth" are never compatible. A lie to be believable must rest close to the truth. Satan, the originator of the lie, would not totally remove truth. Instead, he would integrate together a truth and a lie. In his subtleness, he was able to deceive Eve by using as much truth as needed and as little lie as possible. Satan did not need a blatant lie for it to be effective; for he knew that any departure from truth would constitute a lie. Though the lie has a common occurrence, God's attitude towards the lie has not changed. Revelation 21:8 reveals to us God's intense hatred of the lie, *"But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*

In John's Gospel, Christ reveals Satan as the originator of the lie and contrasted Himself as the embodiment of truth (John 8:44; 14:6). It is obvious to the student of the Scriptures that there has been an ongoing conflict throughout the ages. After the incarnation of Christ, the conflict focused on the places where Jesus walked and worked. Great tension increased with every activity of Jesus. The words, "belief,"

JOHN

“believe,” “truth” and “judgment” appear often in the book of John to not only support that Jesus was true but the Truth.

The healing of the impotent man prompted the questions concerning His *deity*. The next question pertained to Christ and His *doctrine*. Someone said that doctrine is one’s “do-trend” or the trend of what one does. Certainly the book of John serves the purpose of revealing Christ and His “doings.” Jesus’ brethren asked Him to show Himself to the world, “*If thou do these things.*” In saying this their attitude revealed unbelief. It was indicated by their use of the word, “*If*” (v. 4).

May we consider the way the Lord ministered to their unbelief, as we examine first:

I. THE SUBTLE SUGGESTIONS OF THE UNBELIEVERS v. 1-9

The brethren mentioned were His unbelieving kinsmen. Their suggestions were an attempt to force Christ to show His powers. They had heard the reports, but had no confidence in what they had heard. It was their desire to be shown; then if they were convinced that His works were real they would believe upon Him. At least that appears to be their motive in requesting Jesus to go into Judaea.

Their suggestions were demonic. Another consideration is that this was a diabolical scheme of Satan’s to get Jesus to go to Judaea in hopes that He would be killed. The truth to Satan’s involvement is hinted at by the use of the word “*If.*” On at least three other occasions “*If*” was used by Satan. The first occurrence was at the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry during His temptations by the devil. Luke 4:3, “*And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.*” Notice, “*If thou be the Son of God*”; then verse 9 reads, “*And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.*” Again, “*If thou be the Son of God.*” The second event where the language of unbelief was used is when Peter walked upon the water. Matthew 14:28, “*And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.*”

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

His sinking may have been in association with his doubt ... *“if it be thou.”* The Lord had already told Peter that it was Him in verse 27, *“Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.”*

When the brethren said, *“If thou do these things, shew thyself to the world”* they must have also known the danger that Jesus knew. In verse one, Jesus, *“would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.”* A careful examination of the text indicates that Satan is suggesting through the brethren that Jesus go to Judaea. Satan wants Jesus dead.

Their suggestions were deadly. Satan, John 8:44 tells us, was a murderer from the beginning. He will use any means to bring about death or harm to God’s choice servants. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Herod attempted to locate Jesus, not to worship but to kill him. Herod, when unable to locate Jesus, angrily had all the children in Bethlehem who were two years old and younger slaughtered. Satan also tried to kill Jesus during his temptation (Matthew 4:6).

The brethren appealed to Jesus by suggesting that no one did in secret what Jesus was doing. *“Show the world,”* they said. *“Let the world see what you can do,”* *“Put yourself in the lights.”* What the brethren said to Jesus is so typical of the suggestions that Satan makes today. Many servants of the Lord have succumbed to the subtle suggestions of Satan. They begin by receiving the recognition and the accolades of men. Yet this recognition comes with a great price. The price is *“compromise.”* Someone said that an example of compromise is *“the act of dividing a piece of cake where everybody thinks he is getting the biggest piece.”* A compromised position with the world is a no win situation. The brethren were attempting to get Jesus to compromise His agenda for the purpose of meeting theirs and Satan’s agenda. Jesus did not compromise at all.

Their suggestions were denied. Jesus always stayed focused, or as rendered in the Book of Ruth, *“stedfastly minded.”* I Corinthians 15:58 tells us to be steadfast, *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”*

JOHN

Jesus denied the suggestions of His brethren, seeing through their diabolical scheme. Jesus had come for the purpose of doing His Father's will and that alone. Everything that He did was on His and also His Father's schedule. Verse six tells us this, "*Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is alway ready.*" This verse reveals that Jesus knew what the end result of their suggestion would be. It could have meant His death.

However, it may have been possible that they, under the influence of Satan, did not realize the end results of their suggestion. In their mind they may have only been trying to get real proof of who Jesus was. Satan certainly uses people to touch other people. Satan even uses people to murder other people. One of the greatest danger of the alcohol and drug users is that Satan uses them while intoxicated to do his bidding. Many miserable souls wake up with no recollection of what they did the night before. Police records testify that most of the criminal activity taking place is in association with alcohol and drug use. Satan is able to take a person like this and influence him with great ease. As believers we need to put on the "whole armor of God" lest we also succumb to Satan's ploys in perhaps other ways.

II. THE STIRRING SURPRISE OF THE UNBELIEVERS

vv. 10-18

Jesus remained in Galilee until after the brethren left. He then secretly went to the feast. The Jewish authorities were looking for Him there. The Scriptures tell us that there, "*was much murmuring among the people concerning him*" (v. 12). The group murmuring seemed to be split in their opinions of Jesus. Some thought Him to be a good man. Others thought Him to be a deceiver. Yet no one would openly divulge their feeling for fear of the Jews.

It must be terrible to have an opinion yet be too afraid to express it. The fear that gripped the hearts of the people originated in Satan. "*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind*" (II Timothy 1:7). Though the people were afraid, Jesus was not. His

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

going to the feast in secret was not a result of fear. He was operating on His schedule. Verse 14 tells us that midway through the feast, the Lord went into the temple. The feast of the Tabernacles lasted eight days. According to our text, the feast has been going on for about four days. *Where did His doctrine come from?* The Jews marveled; they could not understand one who had not been formally taught speaking as He did. They certainly did not realize that the One who knows all was their teacher. He, being their teacher could expound on any subject with perfect knowledge. As creator God, He knows the origin of the worlds; the mystery of the universe, the chemistry of the body, the effects of sin, the composition of the atom, and the energy that the atom contains. He knew Einstein's theory of relativity before Einstein was even born. There was no legal question that He could not answer. He understands all the legal questions pertaining to the law. He is more than proficient in questions concerning the psychological. He knows all about us.

While in the temple His teachings were likely confined to the theological. Yet He was teaching those things that should have been learned only through other teachers. They marveled that He taught, "... having never learned" (v. 15).

Whose is His doctrine? Jesus said, "*My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me*" (v. 16). The teachings that Jesus delivered were heavenly in origin. He was a messenger delivering another's message. As the triune God, Jesus was also delivering His own message. For His message and the Father's are the same. Those of us who have been privileged to preach the gospel must admit that we deliver another's message, but as we embrace it as truth; it becomes our message as well. As gospel ministers we should feel the weight of delivering the message in such a way as to give all the glory to God alone. The Holy Spirit reminds me often that we are so prone to want the glory for ourselves. May God help us to give the glory to Him!

Who can know His doctrine? Doing the will of God is the key to knowing His doctrine (v. 17). Jesus was telling the people that the privilege of knowing the doctrine could belong to

JOHN

anyone who would do the will of the Father. Jesus was the perfect example as doing His Father's will. He was always, "*about His Father's business*" (Luke 2:49). Doing the Father's business should be the purpose of every church. There should be a strong desire with great purpose to preach doctrine. Many churches know nothing of the Lord's will because they have taught their own doctrines rather than the doctrine of Christ. A strong church must be correct in its doctrine. We need to preach unapologetically the doctrine of Christ. The last days are marked by a departure from the faith as I Timothy 4:1 tells us, "*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.*"

One thing is for sure, Jesus was not a wimp. He, in His own time, with courage and truth confronted those who questioned Him. In some instances, if it were more appropriate, He would remain silent. Even then His silence spoke volumes. There were those in Jerusalem who recognized the courage of Jesus when they said, "*... he speaketh boldly*" (v. 26).

He rebuked them. He said that a person could have the doctrine of the Father by keeping it. Then, He rebuked those who gave glory to Moses by telling them that they did not even keep Moses' law. He also accused the law breakers of going about trying to kill Him (v. 19). Things have not changed that much today. We are so prone to excuse our own failures while magnifying the failures of others. But in this case, Jesus had done no wrong at all. The rebuke by Jesus causes the people to answer, "*... Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?*" (v. 20).

He responds to them. All the questions and the tension was a result of the "one work" of healing the impotent man on the Sabbath. The Jewish authorities had already made His "crime" punishable by death. In their minds Jesus was a guilty criminal for doing good. He reasons with them on the basis that Moses' law permitted circumcision on the Sabbath. He told them that circumcision was permitted and was good. He then reasoned that the healing of a man's impotence was

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

also good and that it did not constitute the breaking of the law of Moses. Some of them recognized the boldness of Christ. When men have the truth as their sole authority, they, like Christ can also speak boldly.

He reminds them. Jesus cried aloud reminding them that they knew Him but did not know the Father. Jesus was saying in effect that they knew Him only as the natural Son of Mary and Joseph but did not know Him in a spiritual, saving relationship. Jesus declared, *“But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me”* (v. 29). In the business world we talk about the “bottom line.” This is the “bottom line” in this study. Unless you know the Lord Jesus by faith you do not really know Him. One may be religious and moral but still lost. Years ago Dr. John R. Rice preached a sermon entitled, “Religious but Lost.” I am afraid many today are just that: RELIGIOUS BUT LOST.

Chapter 19

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST?

Part II

John 7:30-53

Jesus is confronting a confused and angry world. Their anger is so intense that they again attempt to arrest Him. All of their anger grew out of an act of kindness on the part of Jesus. Jesus performed a miracle which gave a man who had been in a helpless, pitiful condition for 38 years an opportunity to be whole again. He did not do or commit a wicked crime; He only did good. Very patiently Jesus had reasoned with the religious crowd, who were comprised mostly of the Jewish officials. These Pharisees were so demanding in their legal requirements that they gave no room for compassion. They even made the law more requiring and demanding than God ever intended, thus the phrase, "they had become a law unto themselves."

The first indication that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus is recorded in chapter 5, verses 16 and 18. *"And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day. Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God."* Now, as Jesus speaks in the Temple there is still a desire to capture and kill Him but they could not. It was not in God's timing. May we consider more carefully the opposition to Jesus.

I. THE OPPOSITION TO JESUS vv. 30-36

The hatred they had for Jesus then is no different than today. When He was here in body, the world wanted to kill His body. Today the world wants to kill His very spirit. A way in which this is being attempted is through the teachings of humanism. The removal of prayer from the schools, the outlawing of manger scenes, and the removal of the Ten Command-

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

ments from our courthouse walls are ways that the Spirit of Christ is being attacked. In the classroom, teachers are told not to teach a Biblical basis for our existence, but to instruct them in believing the teachings of evolution. Students in school are permitted to curse in God's name but not to pray in His name.

Several years ago, my brother was asked by a university president to pray at a campus function. The president told my brother as he prayed not to pray in Jesus' name, to avoid offending "our Jewish brethren." My brother told him, "I'm sorry, if I can't pray in Jesus' name, you will need to call on someone else to pray."

They were disabled in their opposition (v. 30). Even though the offenders were instructed to arrest Jesus, they could not, "because his hour was not yet come." All the armies of Rome could not have pierced the armor of God's will and purpose. It was as though God has disabled them. God had a plan for Jesus to be on earth and a time to accomplish His plan. God still has His plan in operation. Every servant of Christ has the same protective blessings of God upon him while he serves. The Psalmist David must have understood this when he said, "*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?*" (Psalm 27:1). We should never be afraid as long as we are operating in the will of the Lord. Joshua knew the protective presence of the Lord. In Joshua 5:14, he worshipped the, "... captain of the host of the Lord" Yahweh (Joshua 6:2) acknowledging that this was His war and that the Israelites were but a part of the Lord's hosts (which also included angels and the forces of nature). (Ryrie)

Even as the officers then were unable to arrest Jesus before His time, God still has His means of protecting His faithful servants. Be assured wherever God sends you into this world, He will take care of all your needs, "Where He leads, He provides."

They were divided in their opposition (vv. 31-32). Verse 31 tells us that, "... many of the people believed on him ..." From this verse it appears that there were those believing

JOHN

what He had told them, yet not fully realizing, or at all realizing, that He was the Messiah. At this point, their faith is similar to Nicodemus' when he came to Jesus by night. Nicodemus, if you recall, said to Jesus, "*Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him*" (John 3:2). At this time, Nicodemus only saw Jesus as a teacher sent from God. Similarly, those who have heard Jesus' testimony are believing the same way. Notice the wording in verse 31, "*And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?*" "*Many believed on him ...*" sounds good, but notice the next part of the verse, "*... and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?*" They are believing on Him because of His miracles. They are looking for someone to do even more miracles. The phrase, "do more miracles" characterizes many of our religious movements. Sadly, there also seems to be a carnal emphasis today on the sensational rather than the spiritual.

The belief they had, as low-level as it may have been, caused the people to murmur about, "*such things concerning him*" (v. 32). This gendered fear in the hearts of the Pharisees, causing the chief priest to send officers to take Him.

They were dismayed in their opposition (vv. 33-36). Jesus told them that His time in the earth was only for a little while, for He would go back to the one who sent Him. They were not thinking in terms of Him going back to Heaven. They were only thinking in earthly terms. They could not at all comprehend what Jesus was saying. As Paul told the church at Corinth, "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Everything that Jesus had told them made either little or no sense to them. An unregenerate person does not enjoy the things of God, until he is saved, nor can He appreciate and understand them. Such was the condition of the Jews. They would not receive the doctrine of Christ.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

II. THE OPPORTUNITY FROM JESUS vv. 37-39

The Jews are even more perplexed concerning the doctrine of Christ. In their unregenerate state they can only probe and inquire in their searching for truth. If only they were not dull of hearing and blinded by their own traditions, they would recognize that the Truth is in front of them. Are not the masses like that today? This is especially true in America. There are very few places where the gospel is not available and being preached, yet few are believing the doctrine of Christ.

A person can be satisfied (v. 37). A spiritual thirst and hunger characterized the Jews who were murmuring about the doctrine of Christ. They were no different from the woman at the well, Nicodemus, the impotent man, nor the multitude that was fed. Jesus certainly recognized that thirst and once again offered to satisfy their thirst. In making His offers He could have been capitalizing on a custom or ceremony associated with the Feast of Tabernacles. Though it is not mentioned in the Old Testament, the Jews had a ceremony of carrying water from the Pool of Siloam and pouring it into a silver basin by the altar of burnt offerings each day for the first seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. On the eighth day this was not done, making Christ's offer of the water of eternal life from Himself even more startling. (Ryrie)

Christ never once broke the law but He did not mind at all defying tradition. Much of the religious symbolisms today is buried in tradition. The ritual in many cases has become more worshipped than the God that the ritual represents. Once again Christ is attempting to direct their focus on the true and living God. He does this by offering a living water that satisfies. He says in verse 37, *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."* Only Jesus can satisfy.

A person can be spirit filled (v. 38-39). *"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"* (v. 38). This verse is a word of prophecy and many recognize Jesus to be a prophet when He quoted this Old Testament truth (v. 40). Jesus reveals more concerning the "doctrine of Christ" in the whole body of truth

JOHN

that relates to Christ. He is now introducing the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ Jesus did not come only to offer a trickling stream, He came to offer a flowing river. Often commentators who write about this portion of Scripture, who have had the privilege of viewing Niagara Falls, compare the Spirit's work to the Falls. I understand why.

I recall standing on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls within a few feet of the falling, cascading water utterly amazed at what I saw. So much water, and never exhausted, the water kept flowing. If only we would stand in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ claiming the fullness of God's overflowing, abundant Spirit. He wants us to be filled. We also can be filled. God's filling is an imperative as Ephesians 5:18 tells us, *"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."* When a person is saved he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live forever in the believer. But the filling should occur many times and is available to the believer for a serving purpose. Claim it as freely as the water flowing from Niagara.

III. THE OBSERVATIONS ABOUT JESUS vv. 40-53

Jesus did not come to the earth to live a passive and uncomplicated life. He did not come to avoid all conflict, sailing only in placid waters, nor did He come to purposely antagonize those in which He came in contact. He came delivering Truth and he came as the embodiment of Truth. When truth is presented it always provokes a response. Verse 40 indicates this when it says, *"Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet."* Even the response of the people showed that they based their belief in response to truth. In these next several verses, may we notice the observations made by the different groups here mentioned.

Some may have been delighted (vv. 40-42). "Could this be a prophet sent by God?" they must have asked. "Could this really be the Christ?" Actually, they said, *"Of a truth this is the Prophet"* (v. 40) and others said, *"This is the Christ"* (v.

THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST

41). As skeptical as they may have been, at least some must have been hoping that this indeed was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Relatively speaking, the number may be small, but there are people now who would be very delighted to see the Lord's return. I am one of these people.

As it was in the days of the Lord's first coming, leading up to His crucifixion, even so it is today leading up to His second return. There is much turmoil and moral decline as we live in these perilous days. The more wicked our world becomes, the more anxious the believer is for His eminent return. Paul spoke this truth in II Timothy 4:6-8; *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."*

The prophets had predicted the first coming of the Lord which produced a spirit of anticipation among the religious, but Satan in his perversion would blind the minds of the hearers. In their confusion, they were as men groping about in darkness. For this reason, some were divided in their opinions about Christ (v. 43).

Some were divided (v. 43). John records three divisions in regards to Christ. There is a division here concerning His *person*. In John 9:16, there is a division concerning His *power*. Thirdly, there is a division concerning His *passion*. To be divided one must choose. Joshua of old made a choice as recorded in Joshua 24:15, *"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."*

The church should be divided from the world, but there should never be divisions in the church. Paul was addressing this problem as found in the church at Corinth. In I Corinthians 1:10-13 note Paul's beseeching them not to be di-

JOHN

vided. *“Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?”*

The division mentioned in our text pertains to the different ways that each group perceived Christ. They were divided in their perception of Him. Today, there are also groups that perceive Christ differently. To some, He is a great example, to others He is no more than a mythological creation. Then to believers, He is God Almighty. Even as there were those divided in their opinion of Him, some were also disturbed because of Him.

Some were disturbed (vv. 44-53). The disturbance that Jesus brought to the religious empire is very noticeable. We have related to this disturbed religious world on numerous occasions. The officers who were commissioned to capture Jesus and bring Him back were unable to do so. *“Why have ye not brought him?”* they were asked (v. 45). *“The officers answered, Never man spake like this man”* (v. 46). This brought a greater disturbance to the Pharisees, shown when they asked, *“Are ye also deceived?”* (v. 47). The Pharisees were then questioned by Nicodemus, who called for a fair judgment. Thus ends chapter seven (48-53), as every man went unto his own house.

Chapter 20

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE WISE TEACHER?

John 8:1-11

The wise teacher had to prepare for His class. His early arrival marks Jesus as being a diligent teacher who is prepared and anxious to teach His pupils. The last verse of the previous chapter tells us that all the pupils went into their own houses. The first verse of the eighth chapter tells us that Jesus went unto the Mount of Olives. The Scriptures do not even hint at the reason for the contrast found in the closing verse and the first. We can only speculate as to the reason why Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. One strong reason is that He had no other place to reside. Just as possible, Jesus went to prepare for the obvious encounter that He was to have with all those who would come to the Temple as He taught. The preparation involved much prayer. There is no greater preparation for the ministry than that of prayer. Verse two tells us that *“all the people came unto him.”* The word “all” here is not all without exception; it is *all without distinction*. This use of the word “all” means that people of all ethnic, cultural, social, age, and religious persuasion could have been represented. With this great representation of people, the Teacher is going to be challenged by the scribes and Pharisees. Yet Jesus will handle the challenge brilliantly.

May we consider: (1) The Interruption of the Teacher (vv. 1-6a); (2) The Instructions of the Teacher (vv. 6b-9); and (3) The Interrogation of the Teacher (vv. 10-11).

I. THE INTERRUPTION OF THE TEACHER vv. 1-6a

The presentation of the woman – The scribes and the Pharisees have used every ploy and trap to cause Jesus to stumble. This attempt is certainly no exception. As they bring the guilty woman to Jesus, they bring her not as a person that they would like to rid themselves of, because of her immoral and wicked lifestyle, but as an object to entrap Jesus. Their

JOHN

reasoning is thus. If Jesus is to release her only out of sympathy, He will have violated the law of Moses. If Jesus required her to be stoned, then He would not have exercised compassion. Certainly there is a dilemma, but not for Jesus. He will not violate any facet of the law, but will let the law be interpreted and carried out with wisdom and fairness. He will be the wise Judge as He handles this case.

The woman was set in the midst, being accused of adultery, having been caught in the very act. The woman who was presented is a representative type of us all. We are all guilty; we are all sinners; we have all come short. Jesus knowing that this woman was a terrible sinner, must have still looked upon her with compassion. The Jesus, whom I know, is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. The most wicked sinner cast into hell will still have the compassion and love of Jesus, but without pardon. To reject the grace of God in this life is to forfeit the mercy of God for all eternity. This study of John will continue to remind us that there is an age of grace, a time to turn from our sins to Him.

The accusation of the woman – The setting of the woman in the midst to be judged was such a pathetic display of hypocrisy. Her accusers were not in the least concerned about the woman's wicked lifestyle, they were only intent on taking Jesus. Their own wickedness would equal or surpass the accused. The reason that she was caught in the act, likely was due to her accusers' familiarity with her behavior, as possibly contributing to it themselves. They wanted to victimize her only to get to Jesus. That is not to say that she was not guilty, for she was. It is like "the pot calling the kettle black."

The Pharisees were so religiously deranged, yet in their proud and prating ways were not even aware of it. They could not accept Jesus as the Messiah and could only accuse this woman to implement their devilish scheme. The blindness that covered their eyes would not let them discern spiritually what they were really doing. They thought what they were doing was proper. Very similarly, President Bill Clinton introduced wicked laws and committed impeachable offenses

THE WISE TEACHER

thinking that he was doing a service to our country. As sincere as he may have been, his agenda was not at all Christian.

The woman's accusation was based upon the law of Moses, "*Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?*" (v. 5). The law of Moses was not evil; the Scriptures tell us quite the contrary, saying that the law is good. The law has a strong moral purpose. The law also gives its provisions for dealing with the lawbreakers. Some feel that Jesus' dilemma comes from having a law that he does not wish to have. They forget that the law given to Moses originated with God. Therefore Jesus will not at all violate even the spirit of the law. The way that Jesus handles this situation is not a compromised solution. He will keep the law completely, and instruct the sinning woman not to sin anymore. We will note later how this is done.

The temptation by the wicked – Though the accusation is proper and even necessary in the interest of enforcing the law, their motives were corrupt and wicked. They were not interested in pursuing justice, they were interested only in persecuting Jesus. The world has not changed. The Altogether Lovely One would be on trial today if He were here. Those who embrace Christ Jesus also would be on trial with Him.

Though the accusing of the woman is a trap, there still must be a legal resolution involving the accused versus the accusers. Even if their motives were improper, the due process of the law must be carried out. Jesus will take the evidence and then wisely implement the law. He will pursue a course of action based upon truth and fairness.

II. THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE TEACHER vv. 6b-9

Though Jesus, the Master Teacher, was rudely interrupted, He continued to teach. The students were able to observe an ongoing class in Old Testament law. The brilliance of the teacher was put on display as He simply sorted out the diabolical dilemma presented by the scribes and Pharisees. Their flimsy trap would not hold, but neither would the legal

JOHN

system be compromised by incorrectly executing the law.

The mystery of His writing (v. 6b). Many scholars have attempted to extract a proper interpretation of why Jesus stooped and wrote and what was written. Some are even “sure” of their reason and logic. There is certainly a mysterious element to this action of Jesus. “Why did He stoop to write?” or “What was He writing?” These questions have been on the mind of every serious reader of this section throughout the ages. It very well could have been on the minds of those who were the accusers. Yet in their case it could have been like this, “Does He know about me?”; “Is He writing my name?” Again, at the best, we can only imagine and speculate as to what Jesus was doing.

What Jesus did, though it remains a mystery, may be considered a classic. From the literary standpoint, what He did is not an expected progression of events. Instead of Jesus being startled, dumbfounded and distracted by His dilemma, He is in control. The accusers have brought to Jesus their toughest case that seemingly had a no-win solution or at least a no-easy solution and He does not even appear to be focused on the questions that they were asking Him. Perhaps in His calm handling of the very difficult, He was speaking volumes by what He did not say. When the time is right, at His perfectly calculated moment Jesus lifts Himself, and said unto them, “*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*” (v. 7). Jesus at this prescribed moment renders the execution of the law. We may refer to it as the beginning of “due process.”

The manifestation of His wisdom (v. 7). He wisely grants the witnessing accuser without sin the right to cast the first stone. This was done in the spirit of Deuteronomy 17:6-7, “*At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward, the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.*” Ryrie has an interesting note concerning the custom of executing the sentence. “A minimum

THE WISE TEACHER

of two witnesses was required, and they had to be sure enough of their own testimony to be willing to cast the first stones. In a stoning, the victim was stripped naked and his hands bound; then he was paraded out of town, where he was placed on a scaffold about nine feet high. The first witness pushed him off the scaffold; the second dropped a large stone on his head or chest. Then bystanders pelted the dying man with stones. No mourning was permitted for the dead man." If the fornicator and adulterous had to face this degree of punishment today this wicked sin would not be nearly as common. Some would deem it too harsh, but think of the terrible heartbreak and suffering that occurs because of this terrible sin.

The movement of the witnesses (v. 8-9). After Jesus wisely instructed the one without sin to first cast the stone, He again stooped down and wrote on the ground. What God wrote in the presence of Belshazzar caused his knees to "smote one against another." In Daniel 5:5-6 the Scriptures tells us about this, "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

Whatever Jesus wrote after He instructed the one without sin to first cast a stone at her, convicted them. They went out one by one as verse 9 tells us, "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst." Not one person remained as an innocent witness. They were admitting that they all were guilty of the same sin. Could the God of Omniscience have been writing out the evidence of others breaking the same law? We must remember there is nothing that escapes the mind of Christ. He is all knowing.

III. THE INTERROGATION OF THE TEACHER vv. 10-11

Jesus originally came to the Temple to teach some element of theology. At least it was of some spiritual purpose, even though the Scriptures do not tell us what He was teaching. Very likely it was a continuation of the debates that had previously been the subject of His discourses. When He was interrupted by the scribes and Pharisees, He taught much in the realm of theology and demonstrated the correct way of processing Old Testament law. Now that the accusers were dismissed, Jesus reveals another necessary aspect of the law. This was crucial to the actual execution of the law. This aspect involved the requirement of the witness. Many misinterpret this portion of Scripture in thinking that Jesus had an ultra-tolerant and ultra-forgiving attitude towards the sinning woman. The misinterpretation of this very demanding portion of Scriptures conveys the false message that sin does not have its consequences. That is not at all what is being taught here. Instead, a correct and impartial rendering of the law is what is being considered here. How do you properly execute or process Old Testament law? One ingredient that we have emphasized is that the witness is to be an executor of the sentence. Jesus called for the executor to step forward. The only problem was the executor of the sentence also needed to be executed.

Notice the questions asked (v. 10). The witness or accusers had all disqualified themselves, leaving the accused behind. In their doing so a major issue of Old Testament law was at stake. There were no witnesses to the crime. Jesus asked, “*Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?*” (v. 10). According to the law of Moses there had to be at least two and preferably three witnesses. The wisdom of God requiring this number was to protect the innocent from being falsely accused. Remember, this woman was caught in the very act. She was guilty but could not be condemned unless there were the required number of witnesses. Though the witnesses did not stay to have a part in carrying out the execution, that is not to say that she got away “scot-free.” The agony of having to live with the

THE WISE TEACHER

thoughts of having sinned and hurt so many must have constantly plagued her. It may have been more humane had she been stoned, at least she could have trusted Jesus and went to Heaven. Those who are on death row for murder often plead with the court systems to speed up their execution to free their minds of the horrible crimes that they have committed. Many turn to Christ before their execution.

The question answered (v. 11). The woman answered Jesus' question, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" In verse 11, "She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Jesus, who is all knowing, could have constituted a legal witness, had only one other witness remained. Yet because that one witness did not remain, Jesus, in fulfilling the requirements of the law could not have condemned her. Had He done so, He would have destroyed the law. He did not come to destroy the law. When Jesus said, "go, and sin no more" He was telling her that he knew that she was guilty but could not be condemned for lack of a legal number of witnesses. Some may say, that the law is imperfect. This is not so, the law is good. The element of human weakness spells failures not only in the breaking of the law, but also in the execution of the law.

As we concluded in an earlier study, whether it be the keeping or the execution of the law, everything must be relative to one's attitude towards the law. Paul, to the church at Rome, explains this concept in Romans 3:19-20, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

Relative to the law the blessings come when our iniquities are forgiven, and our sins covered (Romans 4:7). Romans 4:8 says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." May we have these blessings on each of us!

Chapter 21

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE TRUE LIGHT? John 8:12-30

A moral and spiritual darkness grips the land. A morally corrupted band of accusers have just failed in bringing condemnation to a woman caught in the very act. They failed because their own moral failures were just as pronounced. Wholesale slaughter would be required to rid the land of its morally defiled. The moral and spiritual darkness that lay like a heavy shroud may have been a reason for Jesus saying, "I am the light of the world." The accusers did not really bring the "caught" woman to serve justice upon her as we already have learned. They only wanted to indict Jesus, and she was the tool for that purpose. These next several verses give, "The Record of the True Light" (vv. 12-18); "The Rebuke by the True Light" (vv. 19-27); and "The Revelation from the True Light" (vv. 28-30).

I. THE RECORD OF THE TRUE LIGHT vv. 12-18

A declaration by Jesus who is the True Light (v. 12). Those who were in position to serve as legal witness forfeited that right by their own wicked deeds. Verse nine says they were convicted by their own conscience and went out one by one. A sense of their own moral bankruptcy may have set the stage for Jesus declaring Himself to be the Light of the world. Even today, we believers have been admonished to let our lights so shine that others might see Christ in us. The writer, John, had already been prompted by the Spirit to declare that Jesus was the "light of men" (1:4) and also said in 1:5, "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." It was the forerunner, John, who "came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe" (v. 7).

John stressed that he was not the light, but was simply bearing witness of that light (v. 8). The faithful ministering of

THE TRUE LIGHT

John had already prepared the sin darkened world for the “I am” statement that Jesus delivered. John the Baptist had stressed to the world that there was arriving on the scene a light who was “The Light.” Certainly Jesus was a bright light shining in dark places. John 3 already told us that, “*men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*” (v. 19). All the previous verses and statements made pertaining to the coming of “The Light” was in preparation for this moment. Now the moment had arrived.

A denial by the Jews against the True Light (v. 13). Once again the Pharisees are challenging the statements of Christ. Christ had already demonstrated His unusual wisdom and even His omniscience. What He wrote in the sand may have “shed light” on the case involving the woman. Yet they were still reluctant to believe Him. When the Pharisees said, “*Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true*” (v. 13), they were saying in effect that a witness by just one person will not stand up in a legal setting. The word must be established by at least two witnesses.

They also knew the implications of such a statement. It was more than Jesus just saying that He was some great religious leader. He was declaring Himself to be the Messiah. John the Baptist, as the forerunner, had already indicated that one of the identifying marks of the Messiah would be in reference to Him being addressed as “The Light.” One reason for such darkness was that there had been no prophetic utterance for the six hundred years known as the silent years. There was neither “voice” nor “light” coming from the Lord during this time. The prophets were silent or non-existent. This gap known as the silent years was bridged when John the Baptist appeared on the horizon.

A defense by Jesus (vv. 14-18). Jesus’ defense was simply a statement of truth; He said, “*Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true.*” The word *record* and *witness* are synonymous. So in effect Jesus was saying, “My witness is true.” As Jesus gives His defense, He reminds them that He is qualified to answer the way He does because He knows His every activity within the scope of His eternity. They did not

JOHN

know when Jesus would either come or go; their minds were limited, His was not.

Jesus goes on to support His position on the basis that He is meeting the legal requirements of having a qualified witness to confirm what He was saying. They were still thinking about their inability to provide a legal witness to carry out the execution of the woman caught in the act of adultery. Yet such is not the case with Jesus; He has a valid witness. His Father, that sent His Son Jesus into the world, beareth witness of Him (v. 18).

II. THE REBUKE BY THE TRUE LIGHT vv. 19-27

“Where is thy Father?” they asked. “Where is your witness?” is what they were really asking. The miracles and the discourses have convinced some but not all. There were those still not believing that He was the Bread sent down from Heaven. In His answer to their questions, Jesus was identifying their real problem.

He told them their problem (vv. 19-20). Their lack of discernment or their spiritual darkness was attributed to a lack of knowledge. Just as Hosea, the prophet of old, had cried that the people were destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:1, 6), here the problem is the same. There is also a moral and spiritual darkness that grips our land today because of a lack of knowledge. Sadly, when people and nations deviate or drift from truth, there are indications of this that begin to appear in every aspect of life. The government is affected; our homes are affected, and our churches are affected. This condition takes place when the real or true is replaced with the counterfeit. If Christ is the True Light, and He is, then Satan is the counterfeit.

Many of our social programs are simply counterfeit replicas of the real. The Word of God illuminates giving knowledge to truly deal with and cope with any problem that we may face. We do not need governmental programs as a “quick fix.” We need God’s program for the ages, the Bible. A steady diet of the Word of God is the best counsel that a person can have.

THE TRUE LIGHT

From time to time I have people coming to me seeking counsel. Often these people are experiencing problems as a result of their unfaithfulness to the church or lack of time spent in the Word of God. They desire a “quick fix,” only to be told by me that their problem did not occur overnight but was a process. I tell them the best counsel comes from hiding the Word of God in their hearts. The Psalmist David said, *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee”* (Psalm 119:11).

He put them in their places (vv. 21-24). In the Old Testament Moses had a spiritual sense of direction because God revealed Himself as *“a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillow of fire”* (Exodus 13:21). When either the pillar of fire or the cloud moved, Moses and the people moved. God gave these two visible means of directing His people through the prophets. The prophets spake the oracles of God with great authority and many believed.

In our text, God is revealing Himself and the Truth by His Son. Yet they refuse Him and will die in their sins. Hebrews 1:1-4 tells us that in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son.

Now that Jesus has ascended back to the Father He communicates to us through His Word. Even as Christ was rejected in His day, the Word of God is rejected in our day. There was an animosity against Christ Jesus then, and there is today an animosity directed against Jesus and His Word. Jesus told the unbelievers that they were going to die in their sins. They could have known Him but refused. Jesus drew a line of demarcation when He said, *“I go my way and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come”* (v. 21).

There are countless souls thinking that their religious deeds will be enough to usher them into Heaven. Cain thought that he could substitute the “blood way” for his counterfeit “better way.” His better way was totally unacceptable to God who offered His perfect Lamb to be a propitiation for our sins. All the typology, the miracles, and the prophecy were like arrows all pointing to Jesus. All the shadows and

JOHN

the figures were just that. Christ Jesus was the substance.

He told them His purpose (v. 25-27). After telling them that they would die in their sins, Jesus stated His purpose as The Word (John 1:1,14). He told them in verse 26, *“I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.”* Jesus, as the Word, was God’s spokesman as we learned in chapter one. All the chapters in John contribute to the revealing of the Godhead. The triune God is revealed through Jesus. There is no contradiction between the Father and the Son. He came to do His Father’s will and to reveal His Father’s will. Our ministry is certainly no different. Everything that we do ought to magnify and to reveal Christ. The word Christian means Christ-like. If we use the label “Christian” we must deserve it. God’s purpose for us is that we be conformed to the image of the Son, *“that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”* (Romans 8:29). By the Spirit of God and the Word of God, many are being conformed to the image of Christ.

Many of the trials that we face cause us to lean more heavily upon the Lord and His Word. Just as a woodcarver ploughs into, or minutely chips away the unnecessary wood to reveal his work of art, the Lord is revealing Christ in us. Sometimes the Lord needs to remove a large portion of something that is not needed in our lives. It may be a sinful habit, a carnal appetite, or unholy affections. To remove such may be very painful. At other times He only needs to remove a little burr to produce His desired effect in our lives. The words “conformed” and “transformed” as used in Romans 12:2 are in reference to an ongoing continuous process of being changed from the inside out.

Christ came to reveal the Father, and then ascended back to the Father leaving us here to reveal Him. May we show Christ, and live Christ-like in all that we say or do.

III. THE REVELATION FROM THE TRUE LIGHT vv. 28-30

As the Lord continues to minister to those who refuse to believe upon Him, He tells them when they will finally believe. This section seems to be a transitional point as Jesus begins to focus attention upon the real reason for His coming to

THE TRUE LIGHT

earth.

He told them when they would believe (v. 28a). The crucifixion was predicted first in Genesis 3:15. Now, the Victor to whom Genesis 3:15 referred is standing in their presence. He is telling them when they lift Him up in crucifixion, “*then shall ye know that I am he*” (v. 28). Just as the crucifixion was central to their belief, likewise it is central to the belief of sinners today. Satan despises the Saviour's cross. Satan impresses the carnal songwriters to remove from the songs lyrics, lines, and words that make a strong reference to the cross. I recall how apostate religious leaders referred to the churches that sang about the blood and preached sermons on the cross as practicing “slaughterhouse religion.” I heard those kind of references over thirty years ago. In what terms would they describe us now?

The cross is central to the preaching of the gospel. Not only is the cross necessary for belief, but is beloved by the believer. Had there not been a cross there could have been no Saviour. The cross was the place of execution. Jesus bore our sins on the cross which was symbolized by the brazen altar. On the altar of Calvary Jesus was totally consumed, paying fully and completely the awful and awesome sin debt. One of the three aspects of the gospel demands believing that Jesus had to die by crucifixion. The death, burial, and the resurrection are the three components of the salvation gospel, with the death being only by crucifixion. At this time Jesus is calling their attention to the actual crucifixion with no further mention of burial and resurrection. Later in His own time He will reveal more. Perhaps this gives us a clue as to how we are to present the gospel. It is by patiently ministering and delivering the truth.

He told them what they would believe (vv. 28b-30). Many of those who were antagonistic to Christ and did not believe would know who Jesus really was at the crucifixion. Many of the events surrounding the crucifixion showed that an ordinary man had not been crucified. They would recognize that it was the God-man, the one that they slandered, persecuted and falsely accused. The lowly one, as a Lamb,

JOHN

would come forth as the Lion. What Lamb-like qualities while moving towards the cross; what Lion-like qualities when moving away from the cross! The Bible reminds us that every tongue shall confess and every knee shall bow in the presence of His majesty! Oh what glory and triumph because of the Christ of Calvary, the crucified One who now lives!

Chapter 22

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE TRUTH VERSUS THE LIE? John 8:31-59

There seems to be a scarcity of truth. The courtroom judge asks, "Do you swear (or affirm) to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?" Yet the courtroom is plagued with lies and liars. Men do not tell the truth. They imitate over and over again the first liar. Satan is a liar and "the father of it" (John 8:44). One does not need to be taught to lie. Lying is a by-product of sin. It was the lie that set the trap capturing the first sinner. Eve succumbed to the lie.

Truth never changes and never requires a change. Even as I am writing this, I overhear someone saying, "I asked him, why did you have to lie?" The truth is, one does not have to lie. But all do lie or at some time have lied.

"How may the lie be best examined?" one might ask. The most revealing way is to lay the lie next to truth. Yet, even this way is not always conclusive because of the very nature of the lie. The lie most efficiently employed, requires that it be adorned with a certain degree of truth. For this reason the judge asks, "Do you tell the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth ..."

As deceiving as the counterfeiter of truth may be, real truth has its very distinguishing marks. The truth ultimately "feels" different, as the banker will tell you after handling real money and then touching the bogus.

As we examine further the discourse and teachings of Jesus, may we focus intently on the concept of truth while squeezing out its very essence. We will do this by examining: (1) The Continuation of Truth (vv. 31-40); (2) The Contradiction of Truth (vv. 41-46); and (3) The Comprehension of Truth (vv. 47-59).

JOHN

I. THE CONTINUATION OF TRUTH vv. 31-40

Jesus said to the Jews which believed upon Him, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed*" (v. 31). The parable of the sower indicates that not all seeds take root. Some seem to take root but are soon withered. The continuing and the maturing in the faith is a strong indicator of true belief. Many have walked the aisles of our churches only to return to an unchanged lifestyle. True belief is marked by change, continuing, and fruit. The true believer will have real fruit that remains.

Notice the next powerful statement made by Jesus, "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (v. 32).

A declaration about truth (vv. 31-32). In verse 32, this statement is a classic statement. To be a literary classic, the word arrangement or word choice cannot be improved upon. When Jesus spoke this statement of truth, He said with just a few words so very much concerning the doctrine of truth. It is implied, strongly, that the lie is the "bondage maker." How many countless souls have voluntarily shackled themselves to the leg irons of a lie. They tell a lie with the false hopes of obtaining their freedom. Jesus refutes this mentality by saying that it is the truth that shall make you free.

For there to be "truth freedom" there must be the knowledge of what the truth is. Jesus said, "*Ye shall know the truth.*" How then might one know the truth, that he may also grasp the truth? Truth must have either recognizable features to reveal it as such, or there must be someone who is absolutely reliable to identify truth to you. Many will continue their stumbling ways, because they do not *know how* to know the truth. There always will be the blind guides who lead the blind. As mentioned earlier a good lie is a composite of truth. It does not take much "lie" to make the whole truth a whole lie. A lie is a lie regardless of the percentage of truth. I have been told that rat poison is only one percent poison and ninety-nine percent filler. Yet with such a small percentage of poison it will still kill the rat!

Jesus is not only the truth revealer but is also THE TRUTH

THE TRUTH VERSUS THE LIE

incarnate as John 14:6 tells us. His words are truth, and His God breathed Word is the Bible. Therefore, the Bible is the absolute criterion of truth. Any deviation from the Word of God constitutes a lie. All the religious counterfeits are bondage makers because they are comprised of truth mixed with error. To obtain true freedom and release from the shackles of a religious lie one must completely rely upon the Word of God. The Word of God is a key that releases from bondage.

One of the subtle traps laid by Satan to make the lie convenient is by convincing the liar that he is really telling the truth. With situation ethics being ingrained humanistically into our cultural existence, we tell ourselves that it is better to tell people what they want to hear than to tell them the truth. I recognized a person lying to his wife and rebuked him for it, only to be told that it was better to lie than hurt her feelings. This person was convinced that a lie is not really that bad. Yet the Scriptures give evidence that the lie may be the most blatant of all sins. For it was the sin of the lie that plummeted the whole human race into sin. Those to whom Jesus was speaking were living a lie, and were so convinced by their own false standard that they did not recognize their lying. Jesus properly labeled their lying as sin.

A departure from truth (vv. 33-40). *“We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man ...”* (v. 33). These who were confronted and rebuked by Truth Incarnate were so blinded that they could not recognize truth. In their lack of discernment they will also be indicted for not being able to hear truth. Those who have been enlightened by God’s spirit, will so clearly recognize truth and find it amazing that others do not see as they see.

Their departure was signified by their denying that they were in bondage to any man. That is one of the distinguishing, but also captivating aspects of the liar. He lies but does not always know that he is lying. Often the drunkard will tell you that he can quit anytime. He had been lied to by Satan in thinking this, because he never seems to quit apart from a miracle or from some designed program to help him get away from his intoxicating lifestyle.

JOHN

Jesus says in verse 34, *“Whosoever committed sin is the servant of sin.”* To be a servant of sin means that the Lord is not your master. In saying this, Jesus is preparing them, by identifying them for whom they really are. He is going to identify them in relationship to their father the Devil (John 8:44). The message of verse 34 is that there are only temporal qualities in association with becoming the servant of sin. The metaphor of a house is used. The son or believer is able to dwell in relationship to Jesus forever, the servant of sin does not have that privilege. His counterfeit privileges are only for a little while. For what the servant of sin thinks he is gaining by telling a lie is soon to be exposed as having no permanent value. The man who lied to his wife, was hoping to avoid conflict for the moment only to be robbed of trust. His lie will be discovered and her trust for him will be removed.

John 8:36, another powerful and great verse says, *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”* Satan will allow bondage to come. The Son can grant you your freedom. While rejecting the Son, these Jews were embracing Abraham. They were emphasizing the physical relationship to Abraham only with disregard to the spiritual relationship. They identified with His genealogy but not with his faith. There are many today who embrace intellectually and even emotionally the faith of their fathers but never embrace that faith spiritually. They have only a symbolism of the real but lack the truth.

A great mission field today is the temple, church, or synagogue. Many of these are filled with a large population of unbelievers. This is such a tragedy as indicated when Dr. John R. Rice preached decades ago, *“Religious but Lost.”*

Christ recognized their ties back to Abraham (v. 37) but rebuked them by telling them that His *“Word”* or truth had no place in them. Their opposition to Christ was so intense that they wanted to kill Him. They were permitted to do just that at the crucifixion. They were intent on killing Jesus because He simply told them the truth. Jesus told them that Abraham did not do this way (v. 40).

THE TRUTH VERSUS THE LIE

II. THE CONTRADICTION OF TRUTH vv. 41-46

Verse 44 is a culmination of the reason for the Jews doing as they do. Reflecting back in our study one cannot help but notice that every activity directed against Christ was satanically induced. In the healing of the impotent man the Jews responded with a rebuke, "*It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed*" (5:10). In verse 16 of the same chapter we are told that the Jews sought to slay Jesus because He had healed on the sabbath. In chapter 6, verse 41, the Jews murmured because He said, "*I am the bread which came down from heaven?*" They also rejected His deity wanting to make Him only a common son of Joseph (6:42).

The Jews questioned the depths of His theology by saying, "*How can this man give us his flesh to eat?*" (6:52). They accused Him of having a devil (6:20); they tried to arrest Him (6:32); and they tried to trap Him with their law (chapter 8).

Even as the Jews attempt to mount up evidence against Jesus, He is compiling His own. He has them in the snare and shows their total contradiction of truth.

They are inconsistent (vv. 41-42). One of the most glaring characteristics of the liar is his inconsistency. When one fabricates and tells one lie, he usually will tell at least two. In telling his lies, he says one thing and often contradicts something he has previously said or will say. He then is perceived as being inconsistent. We must always remind ourselves that truth never changes. Thus, the most consistent man that you will ever meet is the most truthful man as well. In verse 41, the Lord told the Jews, "*Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.*"

The answer of the Jews shows how very deceived and inconsistent they actually were. They were deceived in thinking that they were genealogically pure with only Abraham being their Father. They in their deception could not perceive that the seeds of Satan had birthed them into their unbelief. An inconsistent person is double minded and unstable in all his ways as James chapter one tells us.

Jesus gives the litmus test when He told them, "*If God*

JOHN

were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me" (v. 42). True love is a very strong word and especially so in its usage here. The same spiritual quality of love that is referred to here is in the same degree found in every believer. The true believer will have the powerful love bond that only God can provide, for "God is love" (I John 4:7,8), and "love is of God" (Romans 5:5).

They are incoherent (vv. 43-46). "Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word." A question by Jesus is followed by an answer. In using the rhetorical method a question is answered with a question. Here the question is asked and answered by the same person. The question is to provoke them to think more intently on what He asks them. Any questions Jesus may ask is to produce conviction, and though He asks, He in His omniscience carefully knows the answer. Yet the Jews are totally void of understanding their true lost state and depravity, because, they being dead, cannot hear.

Whereas the believer can be "dull of hearing" the unbeliever cannot even hear at all. The great sermons which are preached with conviction still require the Lord to open the heart of unbelief. Lydia gives testimony to this truth. With the ongoing apostasy that marks these last days, people will become more and more incoherent to truth. This state of oblivion has allowed more and more humanistic philosophies to be ushered into our thinking. We no longer have, as a nation, a "Christian mindset." Yet if we return back to the truth of God's Word and preach it with Holy Ghost power, it still will bring conviction to the soul.

In verse 44, Jesus tells them that their problem is in having the wrong Father. "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." In verse 46, the Lord asks them has anyone found Him to be convicted of having sinned. He went on to say, "And if I say the truth, why do ye

THE TRUTH VERSUS THE LIE

not believe me?"

III. THE COMPREHENSION OF TRUTH vv. 47-59

To hear requires a spiritual relationship (47-54). After the Lord told them of their real problem of having Satan as their father, He gave that as the reason for their not hearing. *"He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God"* (v. 47). With this still being the case, most religious systems must communicate a counterfeit God. Just recently I was in Seville, Spain, and visited a well-known Roman Catholic Cathedral. When I walked in I found the nearly one-thousand-year-old cathedral quite impressive. I also felt a very depressive spirit when I entered in thinking of the countless souls who sincerely practiced their worship, yet without the truth of God's Word. The worshipping of Mary, of the departed "saints," of the golden idols, all gave testimony to the way people must worship when they are void of truth. Yet this kind of worship is satanic. Remember, any departure from truth is a lie, and the lie is birthed of Satan; he is the father of it.

Accusingly, the Jews countered Jesus by saying He had a devil. The diabolical system, under the rule of Satan, will still attack truth and its believers with slander and in any vicious way that it can. A lesson that might be learned, is that the unbeliever perceives the believer as the vicious one. As the believer finds the things of Satan repugnant, the unbeliever finds truth the same.

Those who are living an immoral and wicked lifestyle will go to any means to justify their sinfulness. I just heard recently that there is a conservative or fundamental "gay" church. Even with word terminology the attempt to weaken sin takes place. The Scriptural description of a person lusting after another of the same sex is "sodomy." The street name is "queer" or "gay" and the social name is "homosexual." This so-called "gay" church is living the lie of acceptance.

Not to hear reveals a satanic relationship (vv. 55-59). The remainder of this section is a further indictment against their unbelief. The Lord even further angered them by telling

JOHN

them that Abraham had rejoiced to see the day of the Lord (“my day”) (v. 56) and he saw it and was glad. Their anger was so intense that they gathered up stones to cast at him, but *“Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by”* (v. 59).

Several years ago, I purchased a shirt in Venezuela that I thought to be a “Tommy Hilfiger” shirt. It was only after I returned to the States and compared it to the real thing that I knew that it was bogus. Dear reader, please lay what you think to be truth right beside the King James Bible, the Word of God, and if it is not different then it is the real thing. TRUTH NEVER CHANGES, NOR NEEDS TO BE CHANGED!

Chapter 23

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS?

Part I

John 9:1-12

Blindness is a condition that pictures the lost man or at least an aspect of his lost state. The lost man cannot discern or see those things which are spiritual no more than a blind man can see the natural. How do you show the blind person a beautiful and brilliant sunset? How do you show him the attraction of a red rose or the intensity of a blazing fire? You tell him instead. This reminds us that *“faith cometh by hearing.”*

This chapter introduces another sign miracle to satisfy the requirements of the Jews. The Jews require a sign. The Jews have a blindness that they are born into as members of their distinct ethnic group. The man blind from his birth pictures this group. The Jews are blind as to whom the true Messiah is. They are looking for the Messiah even as they bow at the Wailing Wall. They not only refuse to believe that Christ has come, they also hate the Christ of the Scriptures. In this darkened state they abhor the mention of Jesus in public prayers; they tear down the manger scenes, and are a force in removing prayer from the schools. The ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) is made up of these same Pharisaical Jews. Until their eyes are opened they will still refuse to believe.

The sign miracle may have as its main emphasis a lesson to the Jew. Yet the Book of Romans reminds us that we have *“all sinned and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Spiritual blindness is universal. No person apart from Jesus has been born without this condition. In considering this subject, may we note: (1) The Misunderstanding about his Blindness (vv. 1-5); (2) The Marveling after his Blindness (vv. 6-9); and (3) The Message about his Blindness (vv. 10-12).

JOHN

I. THE MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT HIS BLINDNESS

vv. 1-5

Never have I looked upon a blind person without a certain degree of pity and with a great heart of thanksgiving at my own ability to see. My father was blind. Though he was not born blind, he suffered blindness for almost the last thirty years of his life. He had two corneal transplants and eventually lost most of his sight to blood vessels that ruptured in his eyes. His condition seemed to be a genetic weakness that was on his mother's side. Nearly all of his aunts went blind years before their deaths. His brother also had this similar condition. Blindness may affect people in varying degrees, but any major loss of sight is a terrible loss.

With my father's blindness, I learned to be his eyes. As I would walk with him, I would warn him of uneven places in the pavement, help him find those things that he needed, and tell him to whom we were talking.

Verse one begins, "*And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.*" To the seeing, a blind person stands out, but the blind person sees no one. As an application of this truth a Christian notes recognizable features when he sees one who is spiritually blind. The lost person does not see on a spiritual plane. There are those who are hypocrites that can act the part for awhile, as Judas reminds us, but will eventually be exposed. Jesus and the disciples recognized this blind man. The most noticeable feature may have been the clothing that he wore. Today the blind man will often have a specially marked cane that identifies him as a blind man. The person may have a "seeing eye dog" as a mark. Blind Bartimaeus removed his coat when he received his sight. The coat may have marked him as a blind man. When he knew that Jesus was nearby, he exercised faith as though he were saying, "I will see, I will not need this coat any longer!"

The time of his blindness (v. 1). The Scriptures tell us that this man was blind from his birth. If we allow this blind man to picture the lost man, he does so in this way. Every person born into the human race is born blind or lost. Until

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

the Lord opens his eyes he will remain in this lost state. The only one that can perform the miracle of sight is the Lord Jesus Christ. No one is capable of opening his own eyes or the eyes of another. Salvation is of the Lord. Often in our “soul winning” enthusiasm we have attempted or even claimed to have opened the eyes of the spiritually blinded before the Lord did. This always reminds me of D. L. Moody. Someone came to him saying, “Moody, I saw some of your converts at the tavern.” Moody replied, “They must have been mine. They sure weren’t the Lord’s.” Dr. Bob Jones, Sr. used to say, “Don’t pick the apples too green” while referring to claiming converts before God actually converts them.

To be born blind, one will more naturally accept his condition than one who becomes blind. From birth the blind baby learns to adapt to the darkness of his world. As we are born into this world, spiritually blind, we adapt to or even get used to the dark. Many who are blinded spiritually do not even recognize their lost state until the piercing light of God’s Word illuminates them. Newton, the writer of *Amazing Grace* knew this truth, when he penned, “I was lost, but now I am found; I was blind, but now I see.”

The truth about his blindness (vv. 2-3a). The curiosity of the disciples at seeing this pathetic blind person, prompted them to ask, “*Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?*” The common thinking of that day was that sicknesses and sufferings were commonly held to be the consequences of one’s sin. That was not just a primitive idea of an uneducated, superstitious society causing them to think that way. There was obviously a sin-to-sickness correlation that was commonly recognizable during the time of Christ. Most of the sickness today is a by-product of sin and sinning. For an example, there are many vicious diseases that are contracted from committing sexual sins. Certain types of cancer, venereal diseases and AIDS occur because of sinful lifestyles to only mention a few.

The man who had lain for thirty-eight years at the pool called Bethesda was obviously there because of his sinning. When he was healed, the Lord told him to “*sin no more, lest a*

JOHN

worse thing come unto thee" (5:14). Perhaps, it was in the context of this miracle that the disciples asked "who did sin ...?"

But the Lord's answer clearly declared that his blindness was not due to anyone's particular sin, "*but that the works of God should be made manifest in him*" (v. 3). As indicated, much of the sickness today is in association with one's sinning, but not all sickness is caused by sinning.

The teaching about his blindness (vv. 3b-5). All of us would rather there be some invisible protective shield covering us that would stop some deadly virus from invading and collapsing our immune system. We would like to be protected from genetic deficiencies and biological breakdowns. Yet all of us are subject to, and often victim of some unplanned and unwanted sickness. Sometimes the sickness is within the providential framework of God's doings. He always knows what is going on and many times He permits it for His own purpose and glory. Job of the Old Testament teaches this to be true.

The answer that Jesus gave to the disciples was that He had a work to perform through this blind man's condition. Verse 4 reminds us that there was nothing taking place outside the realm of His purpose. Everything was taking place within His purpose. This man had been living as a blind man from his mother's womb. He never knew a day of seeing. He grew up as a child, and turned into an adult as a blind man. Yet God had him reserved to teach a valuable truth in His own time. When you give birth to that precious little child, who will never speak, or who will never walk, be encouraged in knowing that God may have a special purpose yet to be revealed. You may never know God's purpose in this life, but will receive eternal blessings for being a loving and devoted mother or father. Do not be robbed of a blessing by blaming God. In my experiences, some of the most fulfilled and gracious people that I have met are those who have yoked up to their adversity with no complaint. They choose to embrace the teachings of Romans 8:28, instead. "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the*

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

called according to his purpose.”

There are many natural, ongoing processes that take place because of the original sin. During the process of living one is always facing the prospects of death. All will die, and will do so in different ways. Even as the natural processes are ongoing, the supernatural is also at work. This means that God’s purposes are always operational even if it does not seem that way.

Perhaps I could illustrate what I am saying in this manner. It was expected that my mother, and then later my father were going to die. They were victims of old-age. Yet the presence of God was clearly recognizable during their sickness and even during their home going. The events that took place; the comfort that God provided; and the way that they each died clearly had the fingerprint of God and His signature attached. The same was true with my sister’s death. When I received the phone call around five a.m. on the day of my sister’s death, I was dreaming a comforting dream about her, even as the phone awoke me. It was not just coincidental, it was instead providential. God knew that I needed the comfort.

As the Lord works, though He is eternal, He can work only for a period of time in each of our lives. When Jesus was upon the earth, He only had a small period of time to do His Father’s will. He said, *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work”* v. 4.

May we be reminded that our day of opportunity will soon be over. May we do the work today.

II. THE MARVELING AFTER HIS BLINDNESS vv. 6-9

Jesus is going to do something that is incomprehensible to those who knew this man to be blind. His own neighbors had observed him on a regular basis, yet began questioning whether this seeing man was even the same person. They said, *“He is like him”* (v. 9). This introduces two thoughts, either the change was so great they did not recognize him, or in his blindness he was always there but they did not really even

JOHN

know him. We will consider these two possibilities and perhaps others as we continue our study. First, may we look at the work that Jesus did and then the wonder after Jesus did His work.

The work that Jesus did (v. 6). Is it not wonderful to see Jesus work? I still marvel at seeing the hand of God doing only those things which He can do. The ministry is a privilege. It is especially so when knowing that the ministry is involving the believer being yoked up with Christ. We have the privilege of working together. But the greater work is His work! The greater work is what He does. A work that is of God cannot be done apart from God. There is a work that can be referred to as a natural work; then there is that which is only supernatural. Some have said that if you can explain it, it is not of faith. If it is not of faith, it does not involve the supernatural.

Though God's part is supernatural, He often blends the natural with the supernatural. What greater illustration do we have of this truth than that given in our text. The blind man was just that, he was blind. In his blindness the Lord selected him by His own purpose and design. As Jesus spat on the ground there was the blending together of the human with the divine, and the supernatural with the natural. The spit that fell, fell from the lips of the perfect Son of God. It fell on the sin cursed earth. The clay and spittle met together and were placed upon the eyes of the blind man. Then the blind man in this rather foolish looking state was told to go to the pool of Siloam and wash. After he washed he received his sight. The Bible does not tell us what the man's thoughts were, or even those who might have seen him with the clay and spittle anointed on his eyes. It does not even tell us if there was extreme pain in association with the clay resting on his eyes. The important thing is that Jesus touched him and told him to go wash and he obeyed.

There is a natural tendency to ask, "Why does Jesus do it this way?" "What was His purpose?" There are numerous illustrations of Christ at work in the Gospels and they do not fit some neatly prescribed program. His ways are past finding out. His ways are not our ways. God saves individuals in

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

many different settings. His saving of the lost does not require that everyone have the same experience.

When our spit is released from our mouth, it is often in a repulsive way. In a fitting rage, a person at the height of his anger will sometimes spit at his victim. In this way, spit is in association with the curse. When Christ spat upon the ground it was not in anger but in pity. It is wonderful the difference Christ makes. The heavenly met with the earthly and properly applied by God's power a miracle takes place.

The wonder that Jesus did (vv. 7-9). When Jesus performs, it is wonderful! The Saviour has prepared the blind man, who pictures the sinner with the clay and spittle, which could picture the conviction. The scratchy clay mixture is to be removed by the water and by obedience. Typically, it is the obedience to the Word with the water picturing the Word. It is always wise to first determine the literal meaning of the Word, then the typical or spiritual, and by application, the practical. Never force the typical.

Augustine over-emphasized the allegorical means of interpretation as he looked for the hidden meanings of Scripture. This becomes very dangerous. So, the suggestions that I gave are only for consideration, realizing that the Jews require a sign. The main concern is that Jesus healed the blind man and demonstrated His awesome power in doing so.

The neighbors could hardly believe that this blind man was miraculously seeing. His sight was a testimony to the power of God. Likewise, each time a person is saved a miracle takes place. The blind man's healing caused men to marvel, and still when God saves, men still marvel. *"The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he"* (vv. 8-9) Those who witnessed the change that Jesus made in this person's life must have thought about the unorthodox methods that Jesus used. The Scriptures also tell us that Jesus used spit in the healing of a deaf man and also in another blind person. Among those who either witnessed or heard, many may have attributed supernatural powers to

JOHN

the applying of spit. That was not the purpose of Jesus.

Later at the judgment, before the High Priest, and after Jesus had been accused of blasphemy, they spit in His face. *“Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands”* (Matthew 26:67). A closer look at this verse will cause us to notice that they were mocking Jesus. To be hit with only the palm rather than the fist was only an insulting way of judging Christ. They who judged Him may have been thinking, “So He can heal the blind and the death with only His spit.” Then, “This is what we think of that,” and they spat in His face. There is no way to factor in every aspect that comprised the awful climate of wickedness, but certainly the evil and the wickedness that were there were awful.

III. THE MESSAGE ABOUT HIS BLINDNESS vv. 10-12

After the man who was blind admitted that he really was the person they thought he was, they began to question him.

They questioned him (v. 10). They asked him, *“How were thine eyes opened?”* (v. 10b) Their questions offered him an opportunity to give “his testimony.” What a privilege that must have been. It is so precious and wonderful when God saves a precious child who has never been involved in deep sin. It is much better to be saved young. The Bible teaches us this in Psalm 90. Sometimes, however, a person who has lived in great wickedness makes the greater impact as a witness after his conversion. Often a person like this is deemed hopeless. I have actually given up on certain people only later to witness their conversion. I am surely glad that God did not give up on them. It is wonderful to hear the testimony of people, such as this, who simply give the glory to the Lord. When they do this, they do not even want to recall their wicked past but simply say as Newton, “I once was lost, but now I am found; I was blind but now I see.”

He answered them (vv. 11-12). His answer, though simple and to the point, spoke volumes. First, he identified the one who healed him. That person was, “A man that is called Jesus ...” Every true conversion must begin with Jesus. For

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

this reason, the cults attack the deity of Christ. They attempt to make Him either no God at all or a lesser God. To them Jesus is just a man, a teacher, a good person, and some deem Him to be less than a swine. To the believer, He is Salvation.

Next, the man who was healed of his blindness told what Jesus did in the making of the clay for Him. As in this pattern, every conversion should identify first who Jesus is, and then what Jesus did. For our salvation Jesus came to the earth, was born of “clay” or of woman, and then went to the cross where He was crucified. After His death, He was buried, and then just like the blind man’s dead eyes when they came to life being able to see, Jesus Christ came forth ALIVE!

The third thing took place after the anointing when the blind man was instructed to go to the pool of Siloam, and wash. The Scriptures tell us that he went and washed. If the blind man did not go to the place or wash as told to do he would have never seen and believed upon the Lord. The Lord, at my conversion, told me to go to that place called Calvary. Some say go to the place of religion, or go to the place of higher learning, or go to the place of your choosing. But by faith, I went to Calvary. “Thanks to Calvary, I’m not the man that I used to be,” says the song truthfully.

I was a blind man sitting in darkness

By the way,

When visited by the Saviour who showed the

Brightness of my first day;

Now no more in darkness can you find me,

For by His marvelous grace I have now been set free!

Chapter 24

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS?

Part II

John 9:13-41

The blindness that the blind man had experienced was nothing to be compared to the blindness that the Pharisees and the neighbors were experiencing. Their blindness kept them from seeing the work of the Lord. Their blindness would not permit them to believe what they saw and heard. As learned as these Pharisees may have been, they could not comprehend what was going on. They were groping as the blind man in their own Spiritual darkness.

May we note three things as we consider the subject of Spiritual blindness. (1) The Problem of Unbelief (vv. 13-17); (2) The Pretending Because of Unbelief (vv. 18-23); (3) The Profession Because of Belief (vv. 24-41).

I. THE PROBLEM OF UNBELIEF vv. 13-17

The neighbors of the blind man, who were also victims of unbelief in their own refusal to believe the account of the healing, brought the man who was "aforetime blind" to the Pharisees. The Pharisees began to interrogate the man asking him how he received his sight. Their reluctance to believe could be partially attributed to this being the very first time they had witnessed some one being healed in this manner.

People are people, in the sense that each of us have different personalities, attributes, background (including economic, emotional, cultural, and racial differences). In our human diversity our responses will reflect these values and differences. Our questioning of truth is attributed to our having the nature of Adam. Our "Adam nature" causes us to be blinded to the operation of truth. Even after Christ operated on the blind man (the operation of truth), they accepted the fact that this was indeed the man born blind, but found it diffi-

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

cult to believe his testimony of how he received his sight. His story was disturbing to the Pharisees because of Whom was doing the healing, the way He healed, and when He healed. Their traditions had no place for Jesus, nor for His works. Nothing that Jesus had said or done previously had been believed by them. The healing of the man born blind served as a giant object lesson to clarify their problem. They were worse than the man born blind; they were still blinded by their unbelief.

Their unbelief brought about this disturbance (vv. 13-15). The peace of God that passes all understanding comes only to the believer. The world is a very disturbed world, though it pretends to be orderly and undisturbed. The structure or systems that mankind has put together is a very flimsy model of what it should be. Even the government with its failing laws is a reflection of the unrest and the disturbance that make up the “cosmos.” The bars on our windows, the locks on our doors, and the alarms on our buildings all express the turmoil that we are in. We are a disturbed people being disturbed in many different places and in many different ways because of our unbelief. It would have been much simpler had the Pharisees believed the blind man’s testimony of how he was healed. It would have been even better had they believed the Healer.

If you will imagine a bicycle with its spokes radiating out from its central hub, letting the hub represent unbelief, you could then picture the enormous effects of unbelief. The unbelief is the root of the problem or the cause, with the spokes representing each condition or the effect resulting from that unbelief. This illustrates the enormous effect that unbelief has on others. Stability comes from trust or believing. When there is trust in marriage, there will more likely be peace and stability. The frustration of not being able to explain how the prior blind man could be healed apart from Jesus caused a division as well as a disturbance.

Their unbelief brought about a division (vv. 16-17). Though verses 13 through 15 do not indicate the Pharisees being disturbed, the context does imply this as the events

JOHN

continue to unfold. From a very technical position the word *disturb* may not be the most precise word in describing these unbelieving Pharisees; however, any measure of unbelief will eventually bring about a state of being disturbed. Their disturbance was further revealed in their being divided. Their division came when they were confronted by those who seemingly were exercising at least a measure of belief. They, in their rationalization, asked, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles." The Jews in their unbelief do not even believe that the person was really blind as our text will later reveal.

The division was based on the accusation that Jesus could not be God because He kept not the Sabbath. The response was, if He were not God then how could such miracles be performed? *"Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles"* (v. 16).

Much of the division in our churches could be traced back to unbelief. God wants us to be *"perfectly joined together"* as I Corinthians 1:10 tells us, *"Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."* The Scriptures also remind us that two cannot walk together unless they be agreed. The inability for two to walk as one takes place when they cannot come together with the same mind and purpose. Those who believe and those who do not believe in Christ have no common ground in which to perform together. Also, in a church family, many believers are hindered and divided because they lack the cohesion of similar belief. There are those who are carnal and those who are spiritual working in the same church body, but divided as they work. These kinds of divisions are very common in our churches, even as it was when Paul wrote his letter to the church at Corinth.

The Ecumenical movement is an attempt to put together those who embrace different beliefs. Locally, we have the

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

ministerial associations that bring ministers together who each have different doctrinal systems. I cannot belong to such because I have no common ground with those who deny the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, the virgin birth, and worship Mary. For the same reason I have not involved myself with the “Promise Keepers.” The “Promise Keepers” may have within its programs good intentions; yet these good intentions are cancelled out by its ecumenicalism. I am very leery of any para-church organization. Admittedly, however, it is very sad when the church fails to address the needs that the “Promise Keepers” are addressing. We must get back to the basics!

II. THE PRETENDING BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF vv. 18-23

The Jews who refuse to believe what Jesus did, now go to the parents. The religious pressure that exists seems to be affecting everyone. The parents, for fear of the Jews, would not correctly answer. It would seem that after having witnessed such a great miracle, the parents would have been more than anxious to share their and their son’s blessing with every person with whom they came in contact. But they did not.

The parents were approached by the Jews (vv. 18-21). The unbelieving Jews were plagued by the effect of their unbelief. They could not accept a simple statement of truth. The one who received his sight could not even convince the Jews in their awful state of unbelief. After questioning the son who had received his sight they turned to the parents and began asking them questions.

Instead of believing and accepting the son which was the most reliable source for truth, they took a step away from truth and went to the parents and thus were incapable of getting the “whole truth.” Every religious organization has some degree of truth mixed with error. For example, much of what is practiced religiously by the Masonic lodge is truth mixed with error. Even the cult groups such as the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses have some truth. The Roman Catholic church is another example. In the case of the Catholic

JOHN

church, they allow their authority to be more than the Scriptures alone, accepting what is known as Papal Authority. Under the authority of the Pope, they can add to the body of truth their own dogma and beliefs. They further set up their councils, such as the Council of Trent, for introducing their own religious dogma. For this reason the Protestant Reformation had for its battle cry, “Sola Scriptura” which meant the Scriptures alone, or only the Bible as one’s authority.

Satan does not at all mind one embracing some truth but just do not embrace all truth. When the Jews left the blind man and went to the parents they began to interrogate the parents by asking, “*Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see?*” (v. 19). Obviously, they admitted that the son was theirs, but declined to say anymore and even denied telling truthfully what they did know.

The parents were afraid of the Jews (vv. 22-23). The Jewish element that was against Jesus, in spirit, still exists today. There are still Pharisee Jews who will either intimidate or silence those who try to take the Gospel of Jesus out of the churches into the public domain. Again, this is a reason for them taking down the manger scenes, of the removal of prayer from the schools, and praying not using Jesus’ name, etc. We do not need to be afraid of any system of unbelief. Never should fear cause our lips to be silenced and our testimonies diminished. Remember, God came not to give a “*spirit of fear*” (II Timothy 1:7).

III. THE PROFESSION BECAUSE OF UNBELIEF vv. 24-41

Any benefactor of God’s wonderful grace should be ready to testify the same. The man delivered from his blindness did so as he was confronted by the religious, but yet unbelieving Jew; he gave a strong profession as to what had taken place in his life. May we notice this about the healed blind man. 1. His change professed (vv. 24-25); 2. His courage professed (vv. 26-33); 3. His Christianity professed (vv. 34-41).

His change professed (vv. 24-25). The religious crowd was determined to indict Jesus, with the false claim that He was a sinner. The man that was blind would not give in to

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

their suggested accusation. *“Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him. Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner”* (vv. 23-24).

The man who had been blind did not have all the theology to clearly discern that Jesus was not a sinner, but he certainly knew that there had been a radical change in his own life. From our text, we will find that Christ at this point had not revealed Himself as the Saviour. Also keep in mind, that the blind man did not have the canon of Scriptures as we have it today. Yet he knew he was able to see. Perhaps a parallel could be made to the new convert. The new convert has a very elemental knowledge of Christ and also of theology proper, yet has a zeal that stirs him to go on to perfection. In the Old Testament, when the fat was first put on the altar, there was a great blaze. The fat would be totally consumed and then burn out. Similarly, God gives at conversion the “fat” to get us started, but soon one must turn to the meat. This may explain how one feels when he is first saved. Quite often there is a “let down” after a period of maybe several months. When this takes place, the new convert begins to ask, “What has gone wrong” or “something is missing.” This emptiness is what the beatitudes describe as those who are, “poor in Spirit” or those “thirsting after righteousness.”

The new convert tries to get back the “fat” but never can, because it has been consumed. God in His wisdom allows this to happen to create a hunger for the meat of God’s Word. The meat would burn more slowly. This speaks of the maturity of the new convert. He matures, not by eating the fat but by partaking of the meat.

His courage professed (vv. 26-33). The blind man who was wondrously healed said, *“If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.”* The religious crowd in confronting Him must have recognized the blind man’s courage. He used extremely good logic in attributing the opening of his eyes to being an act of God (v. 31). One of the greatest indications of a changed life is the evidence of that change. Throughout the ages lives have been changed with no way to explain that

JOHN

change but only admitting that it was of God that the change took place. When a person is a benefactor of God's marvelous grace, then that person should, as the blind man did, exhibit a courageous witness.

The presence and the workings of God should always produce a valid witness. Some of the most beloved stories in the Bible pertain to the miracles that strengthens the faith of the believer. When we recall how God was with the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace, of Daniel in the den of lions, of David defeating Goliath, and of Elijah being fed by the ravens, this should challenge us to be strong witnesses. The blind man was a witness but he was also a courageous witness.

His Christianity professed (vv. 34-41). The last notable truth pertaining to the blind man has to do with his trusting Christ. The witness of the blind man resulted in his being cast out (v. 34). His parents feared the Jews, and would not risk their being cast out of the synagogue. Verse 35 tells us that, "*Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*" When the blind man understood that the one to whom he was talking was the Son of God, he believed.

The belief of the blind man came as a result of Jesus healing him. His healing convinced him of the power of God. Though others may not have believed, he certainly did. Likewise, many spiritually blind have had the joy of seeing by simply trusting in the Saviour, Jesus. To God be the glory and the praise!

Chapter 25

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE GOOD SHEPHERD?

Part I

John 10:1-18

A dramatic shift takes place as Jesus continues to present truth in response to the religious who were lost. The “verily, verily” serves as a transition in connecting the previous discourse with this section. The “verily, verily” is characteristically used in John to introduce a shift in argument rather than introducing a new subject. In making this shift in argument, the Lord uses the shepherd-sheep arrangement to clarify the truth that He is presenting. This section should offer comfort to the true sheep but unrest to those not of “His fold.”

Throughout the Scriptures, both in the Old Testament and the New Testament, the imagery of the shepherd and his sheep are seen. Joseph H. Mayfield in his Study of John makes this observation concerning Ezekiel 34.

“In Ezekiel 34 the same figure of shepherd and flock appears. There the rulers are condemned as negligent, tyrannous, careless of their responsibilities (4). They abuse their office (3), and feed themselves rather than the sheep (2:3, 8). As a result the sheep are scattered (5), and have become a prey to every beast of the field (8). Consequently, God will judge the unworthy shepherds (10), and will Himself gather the scattered sheep (12) and will feed them (14) and give them rest (15). God will appoint one Shepherd, David (Messiah), and He shall feed the flock, and be their Shepherd (23). Then the flock will have peace, enjoy safety (25), and possess the full blessing of the well-watered earth (26). The flock is Israel (30) and belongs to the Lord (31).”

This and other passages were used, employing the shepherd-sheep relationship, because the Jews had historically been a pastoral people with a keen understanding of the shepherd and his sheep. The Lord continues to use simple

JOHN

but yet profound truths to break down the walls of unbelief and to expose the unbeliever to his blindness. In this instance He used a parable. The use of parables is either for the purpose of concealing truth or for the purpose of revealing truth.

In this first section, which has been commonly called “debate # 5 - The discourse on the Good Shepherd,” we would like to consider three thoughts: (1) A Good Shepherd has a relationship to his sheep (vv. 1-5); (2) A Good Shepherd has a reward for his sheep (vv. 6-10); (3) A good shepherd has a responsibility to his sheep (vv. 11-18).

I. A GOOD SHEPHERD HAS A RELATIONSHIP TO HIS SHEEP vv. 1-5

As the Lord introduces this parable, be mindful that He is emphasizing the relationship that the shepherd has to his sheep. Recently I was in southern Spain and witnessed several shepherds standing with their flocks. One could travel for miles and see no one nor anything and then raise his eyes and see a lowly shepherd tending his flock. One could only imagine how many hours the shepherd and his sheep would be together. One thing that impressed me especially, was that in the two or three instances that I saw the sheep with his shepherd, he was always standing. As the shepherd stood faithfully with his flock, I was reminded that my Good Shepherd also stands before me and with me. One of the great qualities of being in His fold, as one of His sheep, is to enjoy the tenderness of that close relationship. Regardless of where I am, and what I am doing, He is near. This is true because He is a Good Shepherd. May we notice some things about the Good Shepherd that qualifies Him in this relationship.

He is the Good Shepherd by right (vv. 1-3). Theologically, there are many aspects of the Good Shepherd that may be considered, but there are many practical considerations, as well. The porter or gatekeeper recognized and allowed the shepherd to come into the sheepfold, which was usually a walled enclosure that was open to the sky. If we could spiritu-

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

alize who the porter represents in relationship to Christ, the Good Shepherd, it would be the heavenly Father (John 8:16-18). *“And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”* Jesus was emphasizing His right to enter in not as a thief or a robber, as the religious crowd wanted to believe, but as the True Shepherd. The heavenly Father had not only sent His Son, but endorsed His ministry as well. This is clearly indicated at Christ’s baptism (Luke 3:21-22). *“Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.”* It was not that Christ had to be approved, for He was without fault, but as a public testimony approval was given. Likewise, the lowly shepherd of old had to be approved and given the right to enter the sheepfold as the shepherd. Just as the cobbler, meat cutter, or baker would learn as an apprentice the skills of his trade, so would the shepherd. The shepherd had to be the trusted one as he led his sheep, protected his sheep, and provided for his sheep. As it was with David, the shepherd often learned as a little lad the right to be the shepherd.

He is the Good Shepherd by recognition (vv. 4-5). The Lord is using this pastoral parable to further indict the unbelieving Jew by stating that the true sheep will recognize the true Shepherd. Though the sheep is a dumb animal, it is also a devoted animal. The shepherd’s voice is familiar to his sheep. They know his voice and will not follow another.

I am concerned with the inconsistency, and non-commitment that characterizes Christendom today. Reports indicate that many of the cult groups are made up of former Baptists. One of the reasons for this is that a clear presentation of truth concerning the True Shepherd is often lacking. Many are following false shepherds who are only wolves in sheep’s clothing (Matthew 7:15). *“Beware of false prophets,*

JOHN

which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

The biblical way for discerning who the True Shepherd is, is by judging him relative to truth. Certainly, the Chief Shepherd is Christ. In our churches we have pastors who are also referred to as under-shepherds. The transmitted voice of the True Shepherd should be heard and recognized, in the Pastor's or the under-shepherd's voice. A clear clarion voice should be heard in agreement with the Bible. Many are departing from truth by embracing untruth. For example, the translations that have made a pronounced departure from truth have as their origin, the corrupt manuscripts instead of the "Received Text" (Textus Receptus). Realizing the values of truth, I embrace, believe, study, and use only the King James Bible. The test for a True Prophet should begin with his position in relationship to having the "right" Bible.

Jesus was illustrating to the unbelieving Jews that they did and could not recognize Him as the True Shepherd because they were not His sheep. Even though He spake to them, they were void of understanding (v. 6).

II. A GOOD SHEPHERD HAS A REWARD FOR HIS SHEEP

vv. 6-10

The rewards enjoyed by the sheep are not based upon what, nor upon who the sheep is but on who the shepherd is. The good shepherd rewards the sheep according to his goodness and enjoyed responsibilities to the sheep, not according to the goodness of the sheep. This also pictures the grace operation that exists in our saved relationship to The Good Shepherd.

He rewards His sheep with a place (vv. 6-7). Entrance to that place is gloriously made available through the Good Shepherd, who is the "door of the sheep." The door allows access into whatever place it represents and is attached. A door is significant for entering and exiting a place. When the analogy of a door is presented in reference to the sheepfold, a visual and mental picture is created. When one visualizes Jesus first going through the door, think of His humanity. He

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

is identifying as the lowly Shepherd with His sheep. When you see Him as the Door, then see Him as divine and as directing. He draws attention to Himself as “the way.” Inside the sheepfold the sheep experienced all the benefits that were available from the shepherd. These benefits come to the sheep who are where they are supposed to be, being in their right place. Only the sheep who know, and are known by their shepherd are led to this place which has been provided for them.

He rewards His sheep with Protection (vv. 8-9). David destroyed the bear and the lion before he would let those beasts destroy his sheep. The greater David, Jesus, recognized and identified the enemy in this discourse. He called them thieves and robbers. The religious leaders were thieves and robbers in the sense that they would take and steal the hearts and minds of their followers by the use of false teaching. In the interest of offering protection, there was a warning that the thief had as his purpose, stealing, killing, and destroying. The Good Shepherd offers salvation and protection against this. The devil, who is the roaring lion, can only growl. He is toothless. Dr. Harold Sightler often referred to the devil as being on a leash, with the leash never being long enough to let the devil attack; he could only roar. Sadly, many with their lack of faith are frightened to the point of defeat by even the roar.

To withstand the enemy, the shepherd was equipped to protect his sheep by skillfully employing the sling, staff, or club. The good shepherd would protect his sheep from the enemy, from unexpected emergencies, and from the environment. The sheep has many natural enemies. In his helplessness, it was imperative that the sheep had someone to protect him. We, as His sheep, are also so very helpless. Therefore, we must be totally dependent upon His salvation. Verse nine expresses the blessings that are the sheep's. *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”* The sheep has the protection and the provision that he can continuously enjoy because of the care given by the good shepherd.

JOHN

He rewards His sheep with provisions (v. 10). The abundant life is available to all of the sheep who are in His fold. The twenty-third Psalm reminds us in verse five that the Lord provides a prepared table and a cup that runneth over. David knew the meaning of the all sufficient Shepherd, when he said, “*The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want*” (Psalm 23:1). God really wants us to enjoy His abundance. We are often satisfied with such a meager supply of God’s blessings when He desires that we should have His all.

One of the blessings of growing older in the faith, is the privilege of learning this truth. The Lord continues to graciously supply all of my needs and many of my wants. The Good Shepherd never wants His sheep to go without the provisions found in the abundant life. An important means of receiving His provisions is through prayer, simply asking and receiving. Many “have not” the promises of God for they “ask not.” If you are “not asking,” that could mean that you are “not having.”

Though it is important to ask, there are many times that the Good Shepherd recognizes the needs of His sheep and graciously provides that need according to His gracious watch-care even though the sheep may not be aware of his own need. My mother often bought me a pair of shoes or a shirt when I had no idea that I even needed those items. Like a Good Shepherd watching over His sheep, my mother was watching over her son.

III. A GOOD SHEPHERD HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO HIS SHEEP vv. 11-18

The total welfare of the sheep is dependent upon the watchful care of the shepherd. To have sheep that are well cared for, the shepherd must give himself in every way to keep and protect his sheep. The beloved parable in Luke 15 reminds us that the good shepherd will leave the ninety and nine to find the lost sheep. This is just one of the responsibilities that the shepherd had to his sheep.

Just what is it that makes the shepherd a responsible one? May we consider several reasons that makes the shep-

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

herd a responsible one.

He is responsible because He is a Good Shepherd (vv. 11-14). Inherent to the shepherd being responsible is that the shepherd be good. Verse 11 emphasizes the kind of shepherd Jesus is. *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* Notice He is not just a good shepherd; He is *the* Good Shepherd. One of the “I am” names of Jesus is indicated here, *“I am the good shepherd.”* The *“I am the door”* name is also used in this chapter. Notice, again, Jesus referring to Himself as both “the door” and “the shepherd.” Some have raised the question how Christ can be both the Door and the Shepherd. Again that does not present a problem, it instead clarifies the dual attributes of Christ. It shows forth His humanity, and His divinity. As the Good Shepherd He lays down His life for His sheep. This act had to be accomplished as a man. To be the Door, He must be God. But in all of this, He is good! Just think how good He really is. The ultimate testimony relative to His goodness is shown in His death on the cross. Think about it; on the cross the Saviour was dying as the Good Shepherd, but He also was dying as the Good Sheep. He was the sacrificial Lamb. He was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. His perfect goodness was at its zenith when He hung on Calvary’s tree. *“Alas and did my Saviour bleed and did my Sovereign die ...”* No wonder the songwriter was enthralled as he penned the words of this beloved song. It was God’s goodness that surely prompted the writer to express the love and goodness of God.

Our text indicates the hireling will not stay with nor show responsibility for the sheep. Verse 13 says, *“The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”* God’s care for us is predicated upon His goodness. May we also notice “the giving” of the Good Shepherd.

He is responsible because He is a Giving Shepherd (vv. 15-18). Love gives. *“For God so loved the world that he gave ...”* *“Christ loved the church and gave himself for it ...”* The love of God makes Him responsible. At least I can understand it in that context. A man who properly loves his family

JOHN

will express that love as he gives himself to his family. He will work long hours to put “food on the table” and “clothes on the back.” A person who does not properly love will not give.

The giving love of the Shepherd is available to more than one fold. He gave His love to both the Jew and the Gentile. In doing this the Good Shepherd incorporates into one fold the Jew and the Gentile. *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28). He does this in the economy of the church. Likewise, many diverse groups are made common to the fold because of the good shepherd. The rich and the poor, the unknown and the well known, and the doctor and the ditch digger can all become a part of one fold because the Good Shepherd gave Himself for all the sheep. Whosoever will let him come.

With all the efforts and the explanations used to explain to the Jews how Jesus was indeed the Christ, they still choose to refuse Him. But to all who will recognize Him as the Chief Shepherd who died for His sheep, and repent, they can enter into the fold.

Chapter 26

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE GOOD SHEPHERD?

Part II

John 10:19-42

Jesus has again made a statement that pertains to His deity. Though He has used a parable to make the truth of His ministry more understandable, the religious Jews continue to reject Him. They are unwilling to put aside their religious traditions to have the everlasting life that the Shepherd offered. Any statement of truth on the part of Jesus was perceived as a lie. Their blindness was intense. They refused to believe the Shepherd. The same is true today; there seems to be a padlock on the heart of the religious unbelievers that only the Holy Spirit can unlock. Certainly, as with Lydia, the Lord alone can open the hearts. Sadly, not all will respond to the clear presentation of truth, nor the convicting of the Holy Spirit.

The statement pertaining to deity, made by Jesus, was a declaration that He could lay down His life and take it up again: He could die and be resurrected from the grave. This statement brought intense reaction. May we consider, (1) The Reaction against the Shepherd (vv. 19-21); (2) The Repetition by the Shepherd (vv. 22-30); and (3) The Rejection of the Shepherd (vv. 31-42).

I. THE REACTION AGAINST THE SHEPHERD vv. 19-21

In this study we have been able to observe the ongoing activities of the Messiah. In each account we have seen the violent reaction on the part of the religious Jews. It seems now that this parable is polarizing at least two groups. The first group accused Him of having a devil and of being mad (v. 20). Others said, *“These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?”* (v. 21).

Of these two groups, the first response is one of raging anger, possibly a form of rebelling against the truth. The sec-

JOHN

ond response is a questioning or searching, maybe an ignorance to the truth. These two groups further illustrate people of unbelief today. There are those who display immediate and also continuous anger when confronted with any form of Biblical truth. Then there are those who seem to have a honest desire to know truth but they never come to the knowledge of the truth.

The miracles and parables of Jesus not only identified and categorized the unbelievers that He confronted, but the true nature of the unbelievers of all time.

The reaction created a division (v. 19). Even in the area of unbelief there is an ongoing contest among the unbelievers. Unbelief can be very subtle by some, and more flagrant by others. It can be very static or very charged. Often I am asked, "Why are there so many belief systems?" or "Why are there so many different religions?" Satan, who is the author of confusion, certainly has many who are confused. The only way to overcome this state is through the Overcomer. Jesus, who is the Overcomer, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6).

As the Way, Jesus is the answer to *many choices*. There are many today who seem to think and say, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe something." Then, as the Truth, Jesus is the answer to *much confusion*. Any departure from truth will yield confusion. This confusion is evident not only religiously but also practically. Homes are in disarray because there is no clear means for piloting the home ship. The rudder of truth has been removed and the ship left to drift. As the Life, Jesus is the answer to *miserable corruption*. Sin brings forth corruption. The corruption is a by-product of death, and death is a by-product of sin.

The reaction caused a discussion (vv. 20-21). The unbelief on the part of the Jews not only brought a diversion, but it caused a discussion. "And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind" (10:20-21)? It is not at all uncommon to hear those who frequent the bars, sitting on their bar stools in

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

their intoxicated state discussing theology. Some of the Jews were tending to be on the side of truth in their discussions. They seemed to have a certain degree of discernment as they surmised that a man capable of opening the eyes of the blind could not have a devil. Yet it is not enough to be on the side of truth, one must possess the Truth. Having a correct theology is not enough. He may know the theological terms, the Scriptural passages, and understand basic Bible doctrine but does he *know* the Shepherd?

As the discussions continued there is no evidence of belief here. Yet later in another place the Jews began to embrace Truth and their eyes were opened. The last verse tells us that “*many believed on him there.*” Jesus met the opposition with miracles, with parables, and with persecution and did see some come to Him in belief. No matter how antagonistic one might be to the presentation of truth, he needs to be encouraged by the example of the Good Shepherd to stay faithful.

After calling attention to “the reaction against the Shepherd” may we now consider:

II. THE REPETITION BY THE SHEPHERD vv. 22-30

The historical activities of Jesus are dated. The most used way of dating His activities are the different feast days. The feast of the dedication is the time instrument used to mark the present works of the Shepherd. Ryrie has a note pertaining to this particular feast. “This was instituted in 165 B.C. by Judas Maccabeus in commemoration of the cleansing and reopening of the Temple after its desecration by the Syrian ruler Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 B.C. (Daniel 11:31; I Macc. 4:52-59). It is also called the Feast of Lights, or Hanukkah. The date falls near the winter solstice, December 22.”

When Jesus fed the multitude, it was during the feast of the Jews and there was “much grass.” Now, it is wintertime and the Lord is still doing His work. He is truly the God of all time and the God of all seasons. He never ceases to do the Father’s will.

They ask him again (vv. 22-24). The question that the

JOHN

Jews asked was more in the form of an accusation. “*How long dost thou make us to doubt?*” (v. 24a). They were so totally deranged in their thinking that they thought that their doubt was created by Jesus. Remember Jesus is *not* the author of confusion. Satan had captured their minds making them totally oblivious to the presence of Deity in their midst. They wanted plain answers, yet the simple, plain, whole truth that they had been given was unrecognized. “*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ...*” (I Corinthians 2:14). The worldly wise are the same today. Their genius has never been excelled, yet they still lack a clear understanding of truth.

When the Jews began to move round about Him to ask their questions, it was as though they were putting Jesus on the witness stand. They were questioning Him not as the plaintiff, but as the defendant. The world still puts the believer on the witness stand. It continues to question how genuine one’s witness is. Much of this is attributed to the unbeliever’s despising of truth, and being despisers of those who are good.

He answers them again (vv. 25-30). The patience of Jesus is what really is being put on display. One cannot but sense the longsuffering of Christ demonstrated in these kinds of encounters. We often are so protective of our rights but we immediately attempt to vindicate any wrong done against us. We forget the admonition of Matthew 5:44, “*But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*” We should also be reminded of Romans 12:19, “*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*”

Most of the tension that exists today, because of the differences of people, could be eased or done away with if we only followed the Scriptural principles. We often violate Biblical principles because we want to answer back with a vindictive spirit. Jesus simply reminded them that they had been told and they believed not (v. 25). He further reminded the

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Jews that the works that He did in His Father's name, "*they bear witness of me.*" He calmly but firmly rebuked them for their unbelief. He did this by making again the analogy of the shepherd to his sheep. The reason for their unbelief was that they were not of His sheep. This reminder was followed by this great statement, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand* (vv. 27-28).

He further reminds them that He is the Chief Shepherd and that His sheep were given to Him by His Father. The next statement of truth ignited the Jews further when He calmly but truthfully declared His Deity (v. 30) by saying, "*I and my Father are one.*" This statement caused an intense rejection of the Shepherd.

III. THE REJECTION OF THE SHEPHERD vv. 31-42

Truth is a most powerful force, not to mention that truth never changes. The Shepherd-God was not confronting them as a weak, vacillating personality subject to change. He also was not changing His message to "fit in" or be accepted. One thing that plagues the religious world today is a lack of conviction, with an absence of character. We change the mood of the pulpit to accommodate the mood of the people.

The pulpit must be a station of truth without compromise, regardless of the consequences. Truth is the imperative. Diligently, the preacher must be more than just a puppeteer. He must be a preacher of the Word. If not, there will be no spiritual impact. Men abhor truth in their wicked state; but for those who abhor truth, there are those who crave for the truth.

In the presentation of truth the Jews took up stones to stone Jesus. *They wanted to stone Him* (vv. 31-33). They wanted to stamp out the TRUTH. Men, in their maliciousness, are still attempting to stamp out the truth. The infidel Robert Ingersoll thought with the writing of a book that he could destroy Christianity. His books can scarcely be found today, but Christianity thrives.

JOHN

The Jews' effort to stone Jesus was a result of Him showing them His good works, but they accused Him of blasphemy. *"Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."* (vv. 31-33).

The Jews wanted to put Jesus to death as though His doing good was a capital crime. The only "crime" on His part was in His recognizing the need of the world. If the need was great then, think how much greater it is today. Consider this, according to population estimates released by the United Nations, on October 12, 1999, six billion human beings are on the earth.

From the Flood to 1804, the world reached the one billion mark in population. It then took 123 years to reach two billion people in 1927; 33 years to attain three billion in 1960; 14 years to reach four billion in 1974; 13 years to attain five billion in 1987; and 12 years to reach six billion in 1999.

Currently, every second five people are born, and two people die, a net gain of three people. At this rate, the world population is doubling every 40 years and would be: 12 billion in 40 years; 24 billion in 80 years and 48 billion in 120 years.

Currently, two out of five people in the world live in either China (1 billion 256 million) or India (982 million). There are eight other countries with a population over 100 million: the United States of America, Indonesia, Brazil, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Japan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. By the year 2050 eight additional countries will have exceeded the 100 million mark: Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mexico, Philippines, Vietnam, Iran, Egypt, and Turkey. By then the ranking will be somewhat different; India will then be the most populated country (1 billion 529 million) followed by China (1 billion 478 million), the United States of America (349 million), and Pakistan (346 million). Source: United Na-

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

tions population division.

As the population increases, those who are antagonistic to truth increase. They wanted to stone Jesus; He only wanted to save them.

He wanted to save them (vv. 34-42). The way the God of the Heavens, who also is the Son of God, patiently ministered Truth to the Jews is a strong indication that He wanted to save them. He came to seek and to save those who are lost. He came to His own and they received Him not (John 1:11).

In these verses Jesus reasoned with them on the basis of their law (v. 34) by reminding them, *“Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?”* Tracing back to the Old Testament, this was a way of identifying those who were direct representatives of God. Perhaps the strong use of this title was to carry the weight of responsibility and honor to those whom the title was bestowed. His logic and argument said, if those Old Testament representatives could be given the title, then certainly the one whom the Lord had sanctified and sent into the world could more appropriately be allowed this title.

Jesus further strengthened His argument by saying, *“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not”* (v. 37). He continued His argument in verse 38 saying, *“But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”*

Again, with all the arguments of truth they would not accept Him but *“sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand ...”* (v. 39). After His escape He *“went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there”* (vv. 40-42).

Chapter 27

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT RESURRECTION POWER?

Part I

John 11:1-26

The deity of Jesus is being demonstrated each time a miracle takes place. Each miracle reveals more of God's power. The first miracle was a sign miracle that demonstrated the power that Jesus had over the elements. It was no "hocus-pocus" when He changed the water into wine. God in the flesh, who as the creator God, was able to transform the very chemical nature of H₂O (water) into something entirely different. This first miracle was not an easy miracle to be followed by those more difficult, though there seems to be a progression to the more difficult. Instead, with God there are no miracles of great difficulty in magnitude; for with God all things are of no challenge. We measure work by its requirements, by its demands, or its difficulty, but with God there is no difference. One of the attributes of omnipotence is that all challenges are the same, and the strength of the omnipotent One is not at all diminished while being challenged.

Yet God seems to allow the miracles to progress from the easy to the more difficult. In human development the baby learns to sit, then stand, and then walk. The first miracle may have been a "sitting" miracle; the next a "standing" miracle followed by a "walking" miracle. Even as Jesus further revealed Himself as God with each event taking place, He also does the same in the Scriptures. For this reason God's Word must be studied "line upon line" and "precept upon precept." As one studies this way there is a continuous and further revealing of truth.

This study presents the greatest miracle as of yet, from our perspective. The miracle is greater than the giving of sight to the blind; it is the giving of life back to a dead man.

RESURRECTION POWER

How difficult is this to Jesus who is God? It is no more or less difficult than the changing of the water into wine.

I believe that I understood this truth when I was a student in a state college. My professor knew that I was a Christian, and that I believed in the Genesis' account of creation. He made the statement in class that very few people believe the Genesis' account of creation. I raised my hand. "Yes, Max" as he recognized my hand. "Sir, I believe in the Genesis' account of creation." He then responded by saying, "Anyone who believes in the Genesis' account of creation reduces his mind down to the size of a pill box." I must admit that this very much angered me, but I did not answer back. Yet at the end of the class period and with it being Friday, the professor said, "God bless you and have a nice weekend." I again raised my hand and said, "If God can't create you, how can He bless you?" To me a miracle is a miracle. This same professor died of a heart attack in his classroom several years after making this statement.

This study on the resurrection will be in two parts. The first part will consider the "death of Lazarus" while the second part will consider the "deliverance of Lazarus." In this first study, may we notice that (1) The death of Lazarus was Preceded by his sickness (vv. 1-3); (2) The death of Lazarus was Predicted by the Saviour (vv. 4-15); (3) The death of Lazarus was Part of their sorrow (vv. 16-26).

I. THE DEATH OF LAZARUS WAS PRECEDED BY HIS SICKNESS vv. 1-3

This great chapter begins with the introduction of a very sick man. Lazarus is that "certain" man under consideration. The name Lazarus is a very fascinating name. I was taught years ago to research and discover the meaning of names. Names in the Bible usually carry great significance. The name Lazarus is no exception. When I first looked up the meaning of the name Lazarus, it was when I was preaching a message on "The Rich Man and Lazarus." The rich man seemingly had everything that life could afford, but he did not have the Lord. Lazarus had nothing, but really had everything, for he had the

JOHN

Lord. The name Lazarus means, "God, a help." Lazarus' mother knew her poverty and plight, but as a believer, she also knew that *"a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches."* Since she was unable to give her son great riches, she gave him a good name. She gave him the name Lazarus reminding him every time that his name was called that even if people do not help you, God will!

When Lazarus died he went into "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:22) while the rich man in hell lifted up his eyes in torments (Luke 16:23). Truly God was a help to Lazarus. In our study Lazarus is being introduced as a sick man and our text will show that he died and that the Lord Jesus comes to his rescue. The Lord is indeed help!

May we notice as we study the sickness of Lazarus, (1) The condition of Lazarus (vv. 1-2); (2) The concern for Lazarus (v. 3).

The condition of Lazarus (vv. 1-2). Lazarus is a sick man. Sickness is not uncommon. All will sometimes face sickness. Yet his sickness will be surrounded by very uncommon events. The sick man will die; the sick man will be raised from the dead. This is what makes this story so different. It is *this* difference that demonstrates the awesome power of God.

Any sickness is a cause for concern. This sickness was perhaps already in the terminal stages and surely the sisters of Lazarus recognized this. They exercised faith in the Lord by approaching Him. They showed human pathos by telling the Lord that the sick person was one whom He also loved. If we permit Lazarus to be a type of the very common sinner, then we allow the sisters to typify the concerned soul winners and the Lord to be the compassionate Saviour.

May we remind ourselves, that apart from God's saving grace, we are all in the terminal stages of sin. James 1:15 warns us, *"... sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."* I John 5:16, tells us that there is a sin unto death. The original curse allowed the seeds of decay to be deposited into the human soil. Since Adam all must die.

The continual reading of the text emphasizes how bad off Lazarus really was. There also is a Spiritual or theological

RESURRECTION POWER

term that we use to describe how bad off the sinner really is. That term is “depravity.” Isaiah 1:4-6 is a classical, Scriptural picture of the state of depravity. Notice the prophet of old as he paints that awful picture of the sick human soul. *“Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment”* (Isaiah 1:4-6). We can dress and robe ourselves in our human finery only to camouflage the real condition of the heart, but God knows well the condition of the patient. Likewise, the Lord in His omniscience knew the condition of Lazarus. Their concern was also His concern in regards to Lazarus.

The concern for Lazarus (v. 3). As we noted the condition of Lazarus, we also noted the concern. Let us emphasize more closely the concern that the sisters had for Lazarus. “Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick” (v. 3). Is it not wonderful that people care for people? Recently, we had a family that lost everything but their lives to fire. I saw the agony written on their faces as the English family saw everything destroyed. Yet, I also saw the hope and gratitude in knowing that no life was lost in this awful fire. As people became aware of this tragedy, they overwhelmingly began to respond. People from their church, sister churches, their acquaintances, the Red Cross, businesses, and people from different areas of the country all began to show their love for this family.

So touching has been this demonstration of love towards this family. This concern should also be given to the poor lost soul that is in route to an eternal everlasting hell fire. I am afraid that we can show more concern for the temporal while neglecting the eternal. May we have a greater passion for the lost.

II. THE DEATH OF LAZARUS WAS PREDICTED BY THE SAVIOUR vv. 4-15

This section of Scripture demonstrates the power that Jesus had over death, but importantly, it also shows that Jesus could see the future. Not only could He see the future, but also He could see the events in a distant location. This declares that God is not only omnipotent, omniscience, but also omnipresent. Jesus, while on the earth, voluntarily limited Himself for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of the Kinsman Redeemer. This is known theologically as the kenosis. Though, in His Human body, Jesus was unable to be where Lazarus was; He in His spirit was able to view all the events taking place as though He were there in body.

May we now observe that Lazarus' death was providential (vv. 4-6); and that Lazarus' death was with purpose (vv. 7-15).

Lazarus' death was providential (vv. 4-6). Verse 4 tells us that Lazarus' sickness was not unto death, and in verse 14 the Scriptures tell us, "*Lazarus is dead.*" Jesus is not contradicting Himself in these two verses. He is speaking in terms of distinction. Remember that the simplest definition of death is separation. When someone dies there is separation. Death may be expressed in three different ways. There is a physical death, defined as a separation of the soul and spirit from the body. There is a spiritual death, when man is separated from God. Then, there is an eternal death when man is cast into the lake of fire for all eternity. Jesus said, "*This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.*" He was not referring to death in its most ultimate sense, but in the sense of a temporary condition. The phrase "*is not unto death*" emphasizes the preposition "*unto*" when contrasted with the preposition "*for*" in reference to God's glory. Jesus was saying, "not unto death" contrasted to, "*but for the glory of God.*" He was saying that this was a temporary condition that would serve the purpose of glorifying God. Sometimes a sickness or death takes place to bring glory to God. When this happens we often focus on the seeming finality of death and forget the eter-

RESURRECTION POWER

nal purposes of God. Every condition of one's existence ought to serve the purpose of bringing glory to the Lord.

While the Lord was with His disciples, there was no display of anxiety on His part; He is always in control. The past or the future neither challenges the tense of the Lord. As the "I am" God, He is never early, nor is He late; He is always on time. This is the reason Dr. Sightler would ask in his preaching, "Has it ever occurred to you that nothing has ever occurred to God?"

The events and the circumstances that seem so insurmountable to us have always been in the mind of God. His providence involves special care during these times. Just as the Lord knew when "to go" to be a blessing to the woman at the well, He also knew when "to stay" as in this instance. This is true because Jesus is the God of providence.

Lazarus' death was with purpose (vv. 7-15). Ecclesiastes reminds us that there is, "a time to every purpose under the heaven" (Ecclesiastes 3:1). Solomon gives clear attention to this truth in this passage of Scripture. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8).

Verse 15 tells us that His purpose was that men might believe. The purpose of God is still that men will believe.

Two days after the message was delivered concerning Lazarus unto Jesus, He said, "Let us go into Judaea again." In response to what the disciples said unto Him in verse 8, "... Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?" The answer that Jesus gave in verses 9-10

JOHN

show us that Jesus could safely go back to Judaea, where an attempt had been made to stone Him, as long as He was walking in the light of His Father's will. This should be the attitude of anyone in the Lord's service. You are under His umbrella of safety until He is through with you. Anything that happens to you is within His providential watch care and with purpose. To acknowledge the Lord is to have Him directing your paths. He knows where the paths are and what is in the path.

Certainly it is a wonderful comfort to know that in every endeavor, that is Spirit led, that God has a purpose in mind. He does everything on purpose and with purpose. Look at the answer Jesus gives the disciples in verses 9-10. *"Jesus answered, Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him."*

Jesus told the disciples that He wanted to go and awake Lazarus out of his sleep. By Him referring to Lazarus' death as sleep, they thought all was well. They did not think Jesus was referring to Lazarus' death. *"Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead."* Jesus explains that this death was for the purpose of bringing about a state of belief on the part of the disciples (v. 15).

III. THE DEATH OF LAZARUS WAS PART OF THEIR SORROW vv. 16-26

Thomas led a challenge to the other disciples when he said unto his fellow disciples, *"Let us also go, that we may die with him"* (v. 16). Thomas and the other disciples felt that it was unwise to go back to Judaea, yet were loyal enough to Jesus to go anyway. Later, the Scriptures will tell us that, *"they all forsook Him."*

When they arrived, they discovered that Lazarus had *"lain in the grave four days already"* (v. 17). The time that Lazarus had been dead will further authenticate the miracle of being raised from the dead. By this time the body had already begun to decompose. The people were sorrowing over

RESURRECTION POWER

this loss.

This sorrowing was natural (vv. 16-22). Sorrow is a very natural and common aspect of death. I remember as a child going to my first funeral. The part of the funeral that I remember the most was the weeping of the people. I further remember the graveside, as the body was being lowered into the ground. As a child, I remember how difficult that was for me. I still recall the sadness that I felt then.

Since then I have learned that there is a sorrow for the believer that is different from that of the unbeliever. There is a sorrow that is with hope and a sorrow that is without hope. I have often remarked that believers die differently than those who are unbelievers. I may add that those who sorrow have a different sorrow when their believing loved ones die. Since I began this book on John, I had to face the sorrow of my father's death. Thank God that I can be comforted in knowing that he is in God's presence, as is my mother and sister.

To lose someone who is close to you will bring about a natural sorrow, but looking at the "big picture" it is not necessary.

This sorrow was unnecessary (vv. 23-26). Martha met Jesus and said unto Him, "*Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee*" (vv. 21-22). Martha is exhibiting her faith in Jesus, but it is not a mature faith at this time. For there was no precedent involving someone being raised from the dead, as of yet. She showed that she believed in a future general resurrection but did not expect to see her brother immediately restored to life.

Jesus used this opportunity to show that He is "*the resurrection, and the life.*" Notice in verses 25-26 what Jesus says about Him being the resurrection and the life. "*Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*"

The sorrow that they were experiencing was either unnecessary or at least necessary for only a short period of time.

JOHN

Jesus was soon to call Lazarus forth to live again. Likewise our sorrow, relatively speaking, is for a short time. There will be a resurrection, and we will forever be reunited with our loved ones. This is what Paul was teaching us in I Thessalonians 4:13-17. *“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.”*

Chapter 28

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT RESURRECTION POWER?

Part II

John 11:27-43

Martha very politely answers a question asked by Jesus after He had made perhaps the greatest statement of truth ever heard by mankind. He told her, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”* (vv. 25-26).

Paul had not yet been inspired to write the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians. This chapter tells us everything that is necessary for a full doctrinal understanding of the resurrection. Most that we now understand pertaining to the resurrection is because of Paul’s teachings. Prior to the clarification of this great truth, and while the Lord still walked upon the earth, He tells Martha of His power over death. Everything that follows makes up the continuation of this remarkable story.

I. THE DECLARATION ABOUT CHRIST vv. 27-31

The truth declared by Martha (v. 27). Truth is a very wonderful thing. Jesus is the Truth, and without failure always delivers the Truth. Martha makes a wonderful statement declaring her belief in the Messiah. She said, *“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world”* (v. 27). For centuries the prophets had declared that there would be born of woman, the Messiah. Now she is declaring her belief in the witnesses of the Old Testament prophets and the written Word of which she had been exposed.

Perhaps the strong testimony of John the Baptist had impacted her thinking. More than that however, is she had the privilege of personally observing God Incarnate. Just as

JOHN

John in his epistle declared, *“For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;”* (1 John 1:2). But our text also indicates that not all were believers who had the privilege of seeing the Messiah. Many refused Him then, and many still do today. There was much that Martha said in her declaration; she first addressed Him as “Lord.” She was using proper etiquette in addressing Him as such. Yet her continuing words indicated that she saw Him more than one to whom customary respect belongs. She saw Him as Lord in the sense of being “the Creator,” “the majestic One,” and the “Owner of all things.” In true belief, every believer will see Him as such. Anything less would be an imperfect faith. A distortion of truth takes place when God’s Word is attacked. The modern translations, derived from the corrupt manuscripts, blatantly remove and leave out cardinal truth. Satan is patient. He does not mind making a small miniscule change, to later make a greater change. Any departure from truth, remember, is a lie! Any departure from truth is a failure to reverence Him as Lord.

Martha also recognized Him as the Christ. Christ is the New Testament word for Messiah. The name, Messiah, is the name that relates to the Lord’s Priesthood. He, literally is “the Anointed Priest who keeps.” He, as our High Priest, makes a valid sacrifice (His blood) to satisfy the holy demands and requirements of the Heavenly Father. Martha’s statement of truth indicated that she saw Him as the Saviour by right of His Priesthood.

Martha understood what many never understand, that Jesus is God as well as He is the Son of God. She demonstrated that she knew something about His deity. She was also making a very courageous statement while saying this. The unbelieving Jews wanted to kill Jesus for declaring this truth. She could also have been put to death for publicly stating her belief. The Spirit of the New Testament martyr is seen here as she makes this statement.

Martha’s last statement, *“which should come into the world”* is her way of saying that she accepted Him to be the

RESURRECTION POWER

Messiah who had been long promised. Closely examining this statement, and the others, one may see that what she believed, should be shared by all believers.

The truth delivered by Martha (vv. 28-31). A good witness will not only know truth but also deliver that truth to someone else. Martha did just that. She declared her belief, and then delivered what she believed to her sister Mary. She called "*her sister secretly*" (v. 28). This does not label Mary as being timid in her witness. Instead, she is exercising wisdom. Sometimes it is more appropriate to quietly do the work of the Lord. At other times it may call for a very public outcry of truth. One should not try to stereotype every witnessing experience into one. There are methods of witnessing that have been used in similar and repeated situations. Yet one should be sensitive to that for which a particular situation calls. In times of religious persecution, it may be more expedient to quietly reveal the Gospel to a person. However, if called upon, irregardless of the danger one should avail himself to the giving out of truth.

Certainly, Martha was believable, as indicated by Mary's immediate response. Our text says about Mary, "*As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him* (v. 29).

In our earlier studies, we emphasized the worth of a credible witness. This shows how important it is to be believed. If one is not believed, it should not be because of one's lack of character.

As the pastor of my church, I regularly insist that we maintain a credible witness, as indicated by our lifestyle, our conduct, and our separation from the world and general testimony. Many of our good churches are caving in under the influence of the world. As we do so, our credibility is being diminished. Again, if the church does not remain strong, the impact of the church is not properly felt. May we as Mary did, declare the testimony of Jesus unto the world!

II. THE DOUBTING OF CHRIST vv. 32-37

Instead of the Lord issuing a rebuke, He began to weep. He wept as He saw Mary weeping. His heart was over-

JOHN

whelmed at the anguish He saw in her. The Lord sees the hurt of His special friends. Undoubtedly, they were close, and Jesus saw the wailing that was attributed to the grief surround Lazarus' death.

Mary's doubt (vv. 33-36). The Bible tells us in verse 33b; "*he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled.*" John Phillips makes these comments, "The word for "groaned" is a word that means to be deeply agitated. The word literally means to snort, as a horse does from fear or anger. It is used in the New Testament to indicate displeasure or indignation. It is used, for instance, to describe the indignation some person felt at what they considered the waste of a rare and costly ointment poured over Jesus' head in the house of Simon the leper at Bethany (Mark 14:4). The Lord felt indignation and outrage at what death had done." (Exploring the Gospels - John, page 215).

Jesus, in this great chapter, showed both His perfect deity and His perfect humanity. Here His humanity is expressed to the extent that He was "troubled." This word means that He literally shook with emotion. Surely the Hebrew Epistle is correct when it says that He is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. His troubled Spirit is not on the plain of a mere mortal. When we are troubled, our trouble is a result of only partially seeing all that would be attributed to our troubles. When we are troubled, we are in this state because of our inability to see everything that pertains to that trouble. That does not preclude that if we had omniscience that we would not be troubled; we may be troubled even more. When Jesus wept after being troubled (vv. 33-34) it was because of His tenderness towards those whom He loved. He cared! Praise God, He still cares. He cares for us in our troubles.

In our sufferings, we need to trust Him who cares even if we do not understand what is going on. Just knowing that He knows and cares for us should certainly bring comfort. For Mary and Martha and those suffering, it was only a matter of time when Lazarus was going to be raised from the dead. In our deepest sorrow, it may only be a moment of time before the Lord does something to bring us out of the sorrow. Our

RESURRECTION POWER

sorrow, like Mary's is often attributed to doubt. Remember, doubting is sin.

The men's doubt (v. 37). Others share Martha's doubt. There were also others who thought that the great miracle worker should have been able to keep Lazarus from dying (v. 37). After studying all the events leading up to this event, I am prone to believe that the question asked in verse 37 is a question laced with sarcasm. They were very likely attempting to place limits on the "miracle worker." Remember that one of the attributes of God is His omnipotence. How do you limit an all-powerful God? This "questioning encounter" on their part may have been an attempt to discredit the Lord. The groaning by the Lord may have been an emotional response because of their unbelief. Even worse that the sorrow over Lazarus' death was the unbelief that characterizes the people there. The Lord is going to demonstrate once again His power in the presence of unbelief.

III. THE DEMONSTRATION BY CHRIST vv. 38-44

Perhaps this next event is for the benefit of the liberal and the modernist. The Lord is going to show them all that Lazarus was really dead. Lazarus had already begun to decay. The liberal and the modernist would probably have said that he was only in a coma, had the decaying body not been exposed.

The dead man exposed (vv. 38-39). If we were to spiritualize this section, it would go something like this. Lazarus, who is a type of the sinner, is hopelessly dead apart from a resurrection miracle. Every sinner must also not only admit his deadness, but must be exposed to his lost condition. In this particular miracle, the Lord showed the dead man publicly to contrast life and death. What a contrast that is. Imagine all the ugliness of death being exposed, and then immediately contrasting death with "life." When a person is born again there is an immediate change. The greatest testimony to the new birth is the reality of that marvelous change.

In the Old Testament, Naaman the Leper pictures the miracle of change. Just as he was immediately healed upon

JOHN

obeying the man of God, so does the poor lost sinner upon believing on Christ Jesus. Naaman could not have dipped into the water only six times in partial obedience and expected to be cured. Yet when he did what Elisha told him, he was made whole with his flesh being like a little child (II Kings 5:14).

When Naaman came to the house of Elisha, he was not only exposed to being a leper, but he was also admitting to being a leper. The way he appeared before he went into the river Jordan and how he appeared when he came out was a clear indication of the contrasting change that took place.

The dead man arose (vv. 40-44). The place called Bethany is a village about two miles east of Jerusalem on the lower eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. It is located between Jericho and Jerusalem. It is referred to as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. This place where Jesus commonly lodged while in Jerusalem (Matthew 21:17; Mark 11:11) was where He received the anointing by Mary, which was symbolic of His death (Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). Today an Arab village with a population of about one thousand occupies the site, which is called El-Azarieh ("The place of Lazarus"). The tomb at Bethany associated with Lazarus had been so identified since the fourth century. This is the geographical and the historical place that Lazarus was when he arose.

Likewise for every believer there is a time and place when one is birthed into the family of God. The Scriptures identify Lazarus as being in a certain tomb. While in this tomb, he had no ability to remove himself. He was helpless and hopeless apart from the resurrection miracle. He had joined the family of the dead. Yet God was going to demonstrate His awesome power in a way never previously known. As Lazarus lay as a member of the "family of the dead," he was going to be personally called forth by the Lord Jesus Christ. For this great event to take place, the Lord had only to speak forth his name. Verse 43 says, "*And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.*" Then in verse 44 we see the results of the command, "*And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus*

RESURRECTION POWER

saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”

Simply put, the dead man arose. Just as the Lord called forth one man Lazarus, He is going to call forth the dead in Christ. *“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words”* (I Thessalonians 4:16-18).

As we study the resurrection of Lazarus, we should be further encouraged at the prospects of our own resurrection. Lazarus had to die again, but when the Lord raises us up, if we die before the Lord returns, we will be raised up to die no more, Praise God!

Chapter 29

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT RESURRECTION POWER?

Part III John 11:44-57

What will it take for man to believe the truth? Why do some believe and others do not? Certainly, as the Book of John unfolds, it becomes more and more obvious that some will not be affected by the miracles, regardless of how impressive they might be. The miracle that climaxes all other miracles is the resurrection of Lazarus. Notice, however, even this miracle has those who will not believe (v. 46).

In analyzing the post-resurrection events, may we consider: (1) The Council Meeting after the Resurrection of Lazarus (vv. 44-48); (2) The Crucifixion Mentioned after the Resurrection of Lazarus (vv. 49-53); (3) The Change Made after the Resurrection of Lazarus (vv. 54-57).

I. THE COUNCIL MEETING AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS vv. 44-48

They considered His power over the miracles (vv. 44-47). Just as there were those who witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus and did not embrace Christ as the Saviour does not mean that they were not impressed. The Jews were impressed; they were also troubled. Even today, men may witness the works of God and acknowledge it to be so, yet still refuse to believe in a saving manner. They may even tremble but not trust. As I pastor and preach to my congregation, I find that there is always a person there who does not profess Christ but keeps on attending church. It is as though they want to trust the Lord, but will not. It is as though the forces of Satan are pulling them from an opposite direction. There seems to be enough interest to attract them, but not enough interest to win them.

From our text the miracles of Jesus are acknowledged,

RESURRECTION POWER

but refused. The Jews fear what will be the result of these miracles. Verse 45 tells us *“Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him.”* In verse 46, it goes on to say, *“But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.”* Notice the following, *“some of them went their ways to the Pharisees”* and notice in particular, *“ways”* is plural. As they went their *“ways”* it reminds us that every person has his own way. You may hear the expression, *“Just let him have his own way.”* As we ponder this expression, we must acknowledge that every single person has a way. Yet there is only one credible way, and that way is Jesus. This truth is amplified in John 14:6 when Jesus refers to Himself as the singular *“way.”*

Any *“way”* other than the *“Jesus Way”* is a contrary way. It is not only a contrary way, but also a confusing way. It may be called a conflicting way, or even a casual way. Not so with the Lord, His way is a *“strait gate”* way (Matthew 7:13). His is the only way to life eternal.

As the council gathers, the purpose of the council is this, as indicated by our text, and may I paraphrase it in this manner, *“What in the world are we going to do? This man doeth many miracles.”* They were admitting that no one else could do as He did. Praise be unto the Lord, they were admitting right. Can you sense their dilemma? Truth and power were being authenticated at the performing of each miracle. Each miracle that Jesus did made a statement. Each statement was a declaration of His power. No miracle was performed just to impress.

As the water was turned into wine (John 2) God, the Son demonstrated His power over the elements. The turning of the water into wine was not only the first miracle, but was also the first creation miracle that He performed. Jesus showed His ability to heal the diseased, when He raised the impotent man (5:7). The feeding of the five thousand demonstrated that even against impossible numerical odds, He still could satisfy the hungry soul. Certainly, these miracles continually demonstrated God’s awesome power, while being performed here

upon the earth. Not only did the miracles, being climaxed with the raising of Lazarus, cause the Jews to go into council; it also caused them, while in council to wonder what effect it would have upon "all men."

They considered His power over men (v. 48). Two major concerns surfaced in their council concerning Jesus. Verse 48 says, "If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation." These Jews, who were anti-Christ, acknowledged that Jesus was gathering His disciples and that "all men will believe on him." This statement gives a strong indication of the impact that Jesus was making upon the people. No single person was, nor ever will impact the world, as has the Lord Jesus Christ. Some may have thought they were destined to do so. In recent history, the "Beatles," a musical group of the sixties, boasted that they were more popular than Jesus Christ was. It is true the "Beatles" influenced many with their music, but not nearly will they be recognized as having influenced humanity as has Jesus Christ. The Sanhedrin certainly acknowledged the influence of Jesus. The Jews felt that this one man Jesus would destroy their religious system. What a compliment to Christ!

The Jews felt that unless something was done, the spreading influence of Jesus would ultimately result in the Romans coming and removing the holy place, the Temple. They obviously preferred their religious symbols to the creator, God Himself. Man still remains to be incurable religious. He still continues to be religious but lost.

II. THE CRUCIFIXION MENTIONED AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS vv. 49-53

The words of the High Priest (vv. 49-50). Caiaphas speaks. Notice very carefully these words, "And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (vv. 49-50). Caiaphas, a respected Sadducee (Acts 5:17), must have had a position of control as a member of the Sanhedrin when he spoke as he

RESURRECTION POWER

did. What he said was intended for the purpose of eliminating Jesus Christ for religious and political expedience. Yet even his words were influenced by the Holy Spirit to pronounce a prophetic truth that agreed with the words of Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah 53:4-5 said, *“Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteemed him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”* Caiaphas, not knowing what he was saying, expressed the central doctrine of the Christian faith, the substitutionary atonement of Christ.

Caiaphas, though an enemy of Christ, demonstrated the power of the spoken word. Proverbs 18:4 tells us that, *“The words of a man’s mouth are as deep waters, and the well-spring of wisdom as a flowing brook.”* This verse indicates the potential of the spoken word. The quieting words of a loving mother can silence and comfort a crying baby. The stern words of a commanding officer can challenge his troops to march ahead. The slurred words of a drunkard can evoke both pity and anger. The careful, analytical and hammering words of an attorney can forge a decision in the courtroom. The fiery words of the preacher can turn the derelict from his debauchery. A man who can be a master of words can master someone else. The salesman knows this skill when he sells something unneeded to the person who did not care to buy.

Within the providence of God, God may have allowed the words of Caiaphas to be much weightier than he may himself be able to have ever imagined. There seemed to be a degree of wisdom spoken, that could not have been attributed to a mere mortal. May we consider the wisdom of the High Priest.

The wisdom of the High Priest (vv. 51-53). “And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (vv. 51-52). There is no evidence to support that Caiaphas alone was

JOHN

capable of giving such precise theological truth concern the role of Christ in His work of redemption. The Lord surely inspired His words, as already mentioned. Two great truths regarding redemption are given. The death of Jesus was for "that nation," the Jews; the death of Jesus was also for the children of God that were scattered abroad, the Gentile (Greek). There are only two ethnic divisions, under which all fall. There is the Jew, and if you are not Jew, you are Gentile. All the families, nations, and tribes can be ranked as one or the other. Romans 1:16, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*" clarifies this truth well.

The truth, "*that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad*" (v. 52), is given in Ephesians 2:11-22, "*Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God*"

RESURRECTION POWER

through the Spirit.”

III. THE CHANGE MADE AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF LAZARUS vv. 54-57

While Jesus was on earth, He was always on schedule. The moment had come for Jesus to make a transition from the more open ministry of teaching and performing miracles to a more particular and restricted role. The meaning of this statement is given in this manner, “*Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples*” (v. 54). It was after the Sanhedrins had taken counsel together to put Him to death (v. 53) that His schedule began to change.

The change was required (vv. 54-55). This change was not at all attributed to fear. Why should, and how could Jesus Christ be afraid of anything. Jesus was not going to let the zeal of the Caiaphas crowd consume Him before His time. There was no possibility of His arrest or His capture until He was ready. He knowing their evil intent very appropriately removed Himself on the strength of His omniscience. He did not have to call down 10,000 or even one angel to His aid. The change that He made allowed Him to continue with His disciples (v. 54).

With the Passover approaching, Jesus is said to be continuing with His disciples. Certainly this would have been quality time as the time of the crucifixion draws near. The twelfth chapter says that Jesus went to Bethany to be with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. That also must have been precious time spent in the fleeting moments that Jesus was upon the earth.

The change was recognized (vv. 56-57). The chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, “*that, if any man knew where he were, he should shew it, that they might take him*” (v. 57b). They “*sought for Jesus*” (v. 56) but could not find Him. They had a plan, but could not execute it because the object of their plan was unavailable. Surely the Jews’ frustration would mount with the passing of time. All of

JOHN

this would serve as a catalyst to fuse their hearts together. Everything was taking place on schedule and with purpose to ultimately bring about God's design.

Do you think the Jews believed that they could put Jesus to death and keep Him dead? Did they not at all realize that they were facing more than a charlatan or a magician? They were facing God!

Chapter 30

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT TRUE WORSHIP?

Part I

John 12:1-11

Have you ever tried to locate the definition of the word *worship* in the Scriptures? You would not, if you did. As important as worship is, one would think that there would be a neat, little, and quotable definition for us to describe such a meaningful word. Perhaps God chose not to give a concise definition because the very concept of worship is too large for that.

If one would look at the different verbs pertaining to worship, he would recognize that worship is not confined to praise; “broadly it may be regarded as the direct acknowledgment to God of His nature, attributes, ways, and claims, whether by the outgoing of the heart in praise and thanksgiving or by deed done in such acknowledgment.” (Vine’s Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)

The verb *latrenó* means: “to serve, to render religious service or homage,” is translated “to worship” in Philippians 3:3 “(who) worship (by the Spirit of God),” “(which) worship (God in the Spirit).” This verbal form of worship is the form that I would like to apply to our study of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

The resurrection of Lazarus has taken place and he is returned to his familiars. He quietly sits as Martha serves, and Mary sacrifices. Jesus is their guest. The three, besides Jesus, form a composite. Many emphasize the three distinct personalities, or at least emphasize the activities of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. It would be profitable to bring the three personalities into a study of one. By that, in a worshipping situation, how do they complement each other?

Using the verbal form *latrenó*, for worship, will require the characteristics of all three that we have mentioned. With that

JOHN

being the requirement may we notice three things, (1) The Expression of Worship (vv. 1-3); (2) The Enemy of Worship (vv. 4-8); (3) The Events after Worship (vv. 9-11).

I. THE EXPRESSION OF WORSHIP vv. 1-3

The twelfth chapter is a transitional chapter. During the last few days before His trial, He is found with those dear to Him. He begins this period with a visit to Bethany. It is there we see Jesus sharing His time with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. He will soon make His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem. Beginning there, He will signify by what death He should die (12:33). Then He will give instructions concerning the Holy Spirit (14:15-26); concerning peace (14:27-31); concerning fruitfulness (15:1-17); concerning the world (15:18-16:6); again concerning the Holy Spirit (16:7-15); and concerning His return (16:16-33).

The serving of Martha (vv. 1-2). The first person of the composite of worship is Martha. Martha is busy serving, "*There they made him a supper; and Martha served*" (v. 2a). Many expositors in their comparison of Mary and Martha, degrade Martha when comparing her to Mary simply because she is "only serving." Serving when properly administered is a major part of worship. Admittedly, people can be busy serving and in that service not worshipping. Serving is a work and that work involves time. Anything in the material realm is a by-product of time. Money when earned is a representative of a service rendered. Mary will be seen sacrificing the spikenard, a "very costly" ointment. Someone had to pay for it. To make the purchase someone had to invest time. That time was service. Service, however, alone does not constitute worship. Neither does sacrifice alone constitute the kind of worship in which Philippians 3:3 speaks.

The word *worship* that is generally or most frequently used means, "to make obeisance, do reverence to" (from *pros*, "towards," and *kuneó*, "to kiss"), is the most frequent word rendered "to worship."

Martha served the supper that "they made him". Martha could have told Mary and Lazarus that she would serve the

TRUE WORSHIP

supper while Mary brought out the spikenard. The serving was and still is a very important ingredient of worship. Yet it is certainly true that one can become so busy in his service and neglect greatly his worship. Many times I find myself getting started, before I “get cranked.” The cranking aspect should be the worship that precedes the service. I need to be “cranked up” by the Word of God and energized by the Spirit in an attitude of prayer. Every day should begin with a period of devotion to be better equipped for service. So much of what we do is of the flesh and carnal because the flesh rather than the Spirit energizes us. We fail to begin our activities with a preparation period of adoration and worship of the Lord. We should as Hebrews 10:19 admonishes us to come boldly into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

The sitting of Lazarus (v. 2). Martha is serving and Lazarus is sitting. A casual reading may not yield much, “*but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him*” (v. 2). What is so significant and worthy of consideration when considering a man just sitting? Lazarus is not just any man; he has just been raised from the dead. Considering the magnitude of the miracle of being raised from the dead, one would think that upon having been raised, Lazarus would have been positioned in a more prominent role than of one just sitting. Yet the posture of sitting does nothing to take away from the miracle. His life, alone, witnesses the fact of the resurrection.

Lazarus, while in his sitting position, very calmly displays the change that had taken place in his life. The change was so obviously great that it was not necessary to attach a sign announcing the fact of his resurrection. His “breath” was enough to announce the fact. Likewise, when one is birthed into the Kingdom of God, the Spirit, or “Breath of God” so marks the new convert.

The sacrificing of Mary (v. 3). The sacrifice made by Mary may not have been Mary’s alone. The sacrifice may have been spikenard that was to be used for some other purpose. It may have originally been set aside for embalming purposes. The Scriptures do not tell us. Yet Mary, as she began to anoint the feet of Jesus, did so “*against the day of my bury-*

JOHN

ing,” said Jesus (v. 7). She also was assuming the position of a slave. She was surrendering herself completely to the will and the purpose of Christ. The ingredients used in the anointing were a sacrifice. The value was nearly equivalent to the wages for one year of labor.

Sacrifice makes up the third ingredient in the composite of worship. The three as they are fused together more clearly identify the kind of worship that we have under consideration. Again, this kind of worship requires that there be a service (working), a sitting (witnessing), and sacrificing (worshipping). When these three are intact, certainly Satan will oppose it. That brings us to our next consideration.

II. THE ENEMY OF WORSHIP vv. 4-8

True worship has Satan as its enemy. He will not bother a counterfeit worship. The more sterling the worship, the more Satanic that attack. Judas is not only a tool of Satan, but he also is a type of Satan. A rage sweeps over Judas as he witnesses what he considers to be a great waste. Judas, like Satan, is very deceptive. There is no evidence from the Scriptures that indicates that any of the disciples ever suspected or questioned Judas' loyalty or fidelity; yet he was a devil. In his smooth subtleness he was able to conceal the rage that was in his very being. Everyone, that is, except for the Lord; He knew the heart of Judas.

The suggestion, on the surface, seems to be a reasonable request, but again the Lord knows the heart. May we consider more carefully the reaction of Judas to the sacrificing of the spikenard.

The reaction of Judas (vv. 4-5). Judas asked “*Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?*” The subtleness of Judas in asking this question, reminds us of his father, the devil (John 8:44). Satan does not have to pour out the dregs every time he performs a malicious act. He would gladly substitute the cloak of culture in preference to the shroud of vulgarity. Judas' reaction was a very cultivated reaction, yet exceedingly sinful.

Much of the wickedness of sinful man should not be at-

TRUE WORSHIP

tributed to Satan; instead the blame should rest on both the world and its influence, or the flesh so prone to sinning. Most of those who perch on their barstools and drape the counters with their elbows did not need Satan to get them there. They were quite capable of getting there on their own. We blame Satan for more than he is guilty of. It is not always as Flip Wilson, the comedian of the 1960's, would say, "The devil made me do it."

Satan would prefer a more sophisticated way of enticing or influencing the sinner. The reaction of Judas gives a classic example of the preferred way that Satan works. Yet Christ knew the reason for Judas responding as he did.

The reason of Judas (v. 6). Verse 6, like a piercing arrow goes straight to the target. "*This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.*" The arrow of truth gives the exact reason for Judas reacting as he did. He would have preferred exacting from Mary the expensive spikenard to use for his own purposes. He certainly did not want Jesus to be honored in such a way; he thought that to be a great waste. Such is the attitude of people today. They cannot comprehend any service or kindness being offered toward the things of God. As they generously offer their endowments to help a philanthropic cause, they pinch their pennies rather than help a Christian cause.

The rebuke of Judas (vv. 7-8). In the composite of worship, we notice the one serving, the one sitting (as a witness), and the one sacrificing. With these three operating, we observe the opposition to be in the person of Judas. He represents the enemy of worship. There is another character that identifies with the concept of worship. That person is Jesus Christ. He intercedes on our behalf.

In every worshipping experience there is an enemy, but there is also a defender. Christ Jesus defends and encourages our right to worship. In our study here, He strongly rebukes Judas, knowing his heart. Verses 7 and 8 gives the rebuke. "*Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have*

JOHN

with you; but me ye have not always."

Certainly it is wonderful knowing that we have a defender and an intercessor. Not only is Christ able to defend us against the forces of Satan, but He is interceding on our behalf as He does. If Satan accuses us as we attempt to worship, by declaring that our worship is either lacking or in vain, the Lord can say, as the defender, "Leave him alone." Then He will declare to the Father as the Intercessor, that all is well.

In our study, attention has been called to The Expression of Worship, The Enemy of Worship, and now we will consider, The Events after Worship.

III. THE EVENTS AFTER WORSHIP vv. 9-11

A natural curiosity of the people prevails as they press to see not only Jesus but Lazarus also, whom He had raised from the dead. The interest was so great that Lazarus was added to the list of who should be put to death. Now both Jesus and Lazarus are enemies of the pseudo-religious system. Verse 10 says, "*But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.*"

The curiosity of the people (v. 9). When something dynamic happens there is an equivalent reaction. A dead man made alive was the dynamic. It was this that caused the reaction on the part of the people. The group would not have gathered had Lazarus stayed in the tomb. Yet as it turns out there are those now who want to put him back to death. Anytime a person is made alive spiritually, there will be a natural curiosity to see if that person has really been changed (II Corinthians 5:17). There may be a period of amazement, often to be followed by anger.

When a person is converted to Christianity, he will find a curiosity on the part of his "old friends." With the passing of time, these friends begin to drop by the wayside. Some even turn against the one who has been converted. I recall after my parent's conversion that almost all of their friends forsook them, but God so graciously gave them many more in return. Evidence of this was seen at my parent's funeral, when the church was packed with those people whom they had gained

TRUE WORSHIP

as friends because of Jesus.

The consultation of the Priest (v. 10-11). “*But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death;*” so reads verse 10. Caiaphas again shows his animosity towards Jesus and that which Jesus does. The true worshippers of God will not only have their natural enemies in the world, but the religious system will be their enemy, as well. It was the religious crowd that had Paul and Silas jailed at Philippi; it was the religious crowd that had Jeremiah placed in the stocks. Organized religion has never been a friend of Jesus.

As we worship, in the spirit of worship as defined in Philippians 3:3, may we use this composite of worship involving Lazarus, Mary, and Martha to challenge us to worship as they did.

Chapter 31

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT TRUE WORSHIP?

Part II

John 12:12-26

The raising of Lazarus from the dead had a pronounced effect upon the people who had suffered under the strength of the Roman Government. They saw that one had come who fit the description of the Messiah. They were believing that this great miracle was only a prelude to the many great things which were to happen if Jesus were their King. They were so invigorated by the miracle that they wanted to declare Him King now. They cried, "Hosanna" which means; "Save now." They no longer wanted to delay that which they had prayed for and hoped for so long.

Those who were students of prophecy had gleaned from the prophecy given in the Psalms, Isaiah, the book of Daniel, as well as the prophetic writings of others. The prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, known as the seventy weeks of Daniel, is divided into three periods. First, may we look at this important passage of Scripture. *"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even the troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the*

TRUE WORSHIP

midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.” The first period begins in 445 BC when, in the twentieth year of his reign, Artaxerxes issues his decree permitting Nehemiah to return to Jerusalem and build it (Nehemiah 2:1-8). This represents seven weeks of Daniel.

The second period is a longer period than the first and leads up to the triumphant entry of Christ into Jerusalem. This represents 62 weeks of Daniel.

The third period has been postponed because of the refusal by the Jews to properly accept Jesus as the Messiah. The last seven weeks (in years) is to take place when the Lord comes to “catch up” the saints, and is marked by the seven years of tribulation. It is during the time between the 63rd week and the 64th week that the church age is placed. This is a definite time, known by God alone.

With these explanatory remarks, may we properly understand the climate that marks the triumphant entrance of Christ. Three things that we may observe, (1) The Triumphant Entry of Christ, vv. 12-19; (2) The Transition Expressed by Christ, vv. 20-21; and (3) The Truth Explained by Christ, vv. 24-26.

I. THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF CHRIST vv. 12-19

Notice the crowd (v. 12). Verse 12 describes the crowd with the expression, “much people.” The people began in earnest to address Jesus as the Messiah. They signaled their intent with the strewing of the palm trees along the way. Palm trees symbolized national Israel. It was the people’s way of saying, “You are our Salvation. You will deliver us from the tyranny of Rome; we will be strong again.” The crowd was not concerned as much with the spiritual significance of what was taking place as they were with the political significance. This is what energized the people and brought them together as a crowd. Selfishness undoubtedly marked these people. They wanted Christ to be King for their own purposes. Politics

JOHN

certainly has not made a great change since then. The politician knows this and plans his platform around the needs of the people, often making promises he is unable to keep.

We should not be overly critical of the motivation that brought the masses together. Most were probably living a life of physical bondage. A greater bondage than physical bondage is certainly spiritual bondage. But being in an intense state of physical bondage, with its entire ramification, will certainly cause one's judgment to be impaired. In addition, the pressures that he feels will shape one's general attitude. Under the pressures of this kind, the people now see this miracle-working person as being suitable in delivering them from their state of bondage.

Notice the cry (v. 13). Before giving attention to the cry "Hosanna," may we describe the three entries into Jerusalem. This chronology is established by comparing the Gospels. The first day He quietly, without speaking, rode into the city, came to the temple, looked around and then left. It was on the second day that He came and cleansed the temple. The third day had the rulers gathering about Him. John only considers the first entrance and with very little description. Matthew tells how not only the palm tree branches were "strewed" along the way, but also that they spread their garments as well.

During this time, on the first entrance they cried or sang sentences from the great Hallel. "*Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.*" "Hosanna" means, "Save now." With the depressed climate of people, this must have been a thrilling time to hear the jubilant cries of all of the assembled. There were some that wanted the cries to be silenced. Another Gospel tells us that there was a command by the rulers to silence the people, to which Jesus replied, "And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Luke 19:4).

As refreshing as the voices now were, could it be that some of the same voices would later cry, "Crucify Him"?

Notice the cause (vv. 14-19). In every instance and at

TRUE WORSHIP

each event, the Lord Jesus is seen accurately fulfilling the words of prophecy. *“And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold thy king cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt.”* (John 12:14-15). Within the predetermined plan of God, the Lord is performing that which He must, even though the disciples do not immediately understand (v. 16). They would remember that these things are written of Him when Jesus is glorified (v. 16). At this time, prior to the crucifixion and the resurrection, the raising of Lazarus rather than the Truth of prophecy is motivating the crowds. (v. 18).

With the cause of their worship being fueled by their either hearing of or witnessing the resurrection of Lazarus, they captured the attention of the Pharisees. *“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him”* (v. 19).

The Pharisees show their concern and bewilderment at their own inability to defuse the intense reaction of the crowds. They said, *“the world is gone after him.”*

II. THE TRANSITION EXPRESSED BY CHRIST vv. 20-23

This section covers the time just before our Lord’s final departure from the temple (Matthew 24:1; Mark 13:1) and it was probably on the Tuesday after the triumphal entry. Again a careful study of the synoptic gospels will help establish a proper chronology. Verse 20 is the verse that introduces the inquiring Greeks. Understanding that Christ came to the Jew first and then to the Greeks (Acts 1:8), one can see the obvious transition that is being signaled by the presence of the Greeks. In addition to that, one can see a clear transition by the responding answer of Christ upon hearing of the Greek’s presence, *“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified”* (v. 23). What a pronouncement on the part of Jesus!

The Greeks come with desire (vv. 20-21). When one sees these Greeks demonstrating their desire to see Jesus, he should be reminded of the very first chapter of John in verses 11-12, *“He came unto his own, and his own received*

JOHN

him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:" This shows that God's purpose and God's timing is right on schedule. God's schedule and activities are preset and will not be violated. The presence of the Greeks fits into the scheme of God's design. The Greeks are there not to contradict but to complement God's purposes. We learn that the veil of the temple will soon be rent in two and will allow even these Greeks access into the presence of God. *"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us;"* (Ephesians 2:11-14).

The Greeks come by design (vv. 22-23). The Greeks coming to see Jesus and His response, *"The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified,"* is just like a traffic light that has turned green signaling that it is time to go. This twenty-third verse is very pivotal. All the miracles, teachings, and events in the life of Jesus are compressed into this one statement of truth, *"The hour is come ..."* Every instance relating to Christ's incarnation was with design. Such is the case here. From this point on, the events will be closely traced to the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Chronologically, this section is commonly referred to as Passion Week. When Jesus said, *"the hour is come"* it was a literal statement of truth that signaled the beginning of that for which Jesus had come. All of this is being emphasized to properly draw attention to the Sovereign councils of God at work. Embedded in the pages of God's Word are the clear markers and road signs that have pointed to this moment of time being marked by the Lord Jesus saying, *"The hour is*

TRUE WORSHIP

come, that the Son of man should be glorified.”

It was, and still is God’s purpose and design that men come to Jesus. The method by which this design is to be implemented is to be explained in verses 24 through 26. May we notice, “The Truth Explained by Christ” (vv. 24-26).

III. THE TRUTH EXPLAINED BY CHRIST vv. 24-26

The glorification of the Lord Jesus means more than that Jesus is to be crucified and resurrected from the dead. It means that He is to be exalted to the throne of His Father. He is to be returned to that place of doxology, praise, adoration, and worship. This can only be accomplished by death on the cross. The explanation of this is illustrated from nature. By using the “corn of wheat,” the Lord paints a beautiful picture of what will soon be taking place.

He paints a picture (v. 24). The picture of that which is planted is what writers refers to as a “word picture.” With words one takes something that is commonly understood to shed light on that which is not easily understood. In our illustration, the corn or grain of wheat is normally planted into the ground to be separated or removed from its recognized existence. While in the ground it is forgotten and will never be seen again in its previous recognized form. Even as life was encased in the kernel, but not to be released until it was planted, so the Lord is not glorified until His resurrection. The Lord was indicating that there was going to be a death and then a burial (planting) and then a resurrection. One grain of wheat is planted for the purpose of producing many grains.

As part of the Lord’s kenosis (self-humbling), He chose to walk in humility until this designated period of time. The key features of the resurrection and glorification of the Lord will never allow Him to take on the role of a servant again. He will be forever reinstated to His place of glory and power. He will be highly exalted and given a name that is above every name.

Philippians 2:5-11 explains this, as we refresh our minds, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon*

JOHN

him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

He proves a point (vv. 25-26a). The Lord uses a very strong paradox to prove a very strong point. It is this: Even as Jesus demonstrated the principle that sacrifice yields glorification, likewise, when one determines to live for Jesus here, even if it means sacrifice, he can recover eternally what he may have forfeited here for just a little time. Yet if one lives selfishly in this world he will be the loser in eternity.

Selfishness takes on many different faces. As I write this, it is deer season. Deer hunters hunt with a passion. This is all right if it is not done selfishly. Yet sadly many wives are all but abandoned during this time as the husband makes their selfish plans without at all considering the needs of his wife. To do so is an awful inconsideration and display of selfishness.

Anything that is done to solely satisfy self is wrong. This spirit of selfishness is what the Lord is referring to when He says, "*He that loveth his life shall lose it ...*" (v. 25). That verse may be explained this way, he that liveth his life for himself alone shall ultimately lose all.

Jesus is actually proving and will prove by His example that which is being illustrated about the "corn of wheat." The corn of wheat, which is lost to the soil, is revealed in a different glory unlike and in contrast to the way it was privately and carefully tucked away. The seed requires the element of time. With that, the seed turns into a plant. The plant will pierce the darkness and resurrect into a world never seen before to continue its giving in a way that is compounded and more productive than in which it previously was capable. One seed becomes many. When one gives his little, God makes it

TRUE WORSHIP

much. "Little is much when God is in it," the song says.

He provides a promise (v. 26). *"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour"* (v. 26). The Lord has stated His purpose for coming to the earth. In humility He is placed upon the cross, taken down in death, and then buried. In triumph He is resurrected from the grave and seated in glory next to the Father. He leaves a challenge and a promise when He beckons man to follow Him. There is no greater challenge than being told that one may be honored by the Father by following the Son.

There are many such promises scattered throughout the Scriptures further indicating how gracious the Lord is to us all. As we worship and serve Him may we do so by looking at our great example. Do as Hebrews tells us, (1) Look unto Jesus; (2) Consider Him; (3) Look diligently. By doing this our worship will be more pleasing to the Lord and will be rewarded by the Father.

Chapter 32

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF HIS CRUCIFIXION? John 12:27-33

Too much cannot be said about the purposes of God. When we address this subject, one must have an understanding of theology proper. The student needs to know that God is Sovereign. In His sovereignty, it may be noted that God also is a God of providence. When God is addressed this way and understood this way, the student should appreciate better the way in which God works. With some of the false-teachings concerning the sovereignty of God, many students of the Scriptures shy away from the use of words pertaining to His sovereignty and never gain a proper understanding of God in regards to His foreknowledge and His electing grace.

There comes a time when the student will be confronted with hyper-Calvinistic teachings, soon finding that he needs to become more settled and balanced in this area doctrinally. The hyper-Calvinist takes an extreme position on the sovereignty of God relative to His way of electing people to salvation. One of their main points is their teaching concerning irresistible grace. This teaching says that man has no will or choice to refuse salvation once he has been met by conviction. Some explanatory notes would be in order at this point.

Though this study is not a study that can be given to emphasize fully this particular teaching, time should be given to briefly state the ongoing purposes of God. In II Thessalonians 2:13-14, Paul briefly states the way in which God works relative to man's need for salvation. *"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Notice *"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation."* The first thing that may be said about God is that He

THE PURPOSE OF HIS CRUCIFIXION

is eternal. He is the “Pre-existent One.” There has never been a time when He was not. This verse tells us that God, “*hath from the beginning.*” This definitely does not refer to *His* beginning, *for He has no beginning.* It also does not refer only to the beginning of creation, though in His foreknowledge He knew and He always knew His salvation plan as He created the Heavens and the earth. This beginning instead would refer back to the time Adam and Eve sinned and the time that God provided a salvation remedy. Genesis 3:15 marks the beginning of the salvation plan. “*And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.*” Notice the explanation of verse 15, “*between thy seed*” (the spiritual descendents of Satan; cf. John 8:44; Ephesians 2:2) “*and her seed*” (those who are in the family of God). “It” an individual from among the woman’s seed, namely, Christ, will deal a death blow to Satan’s *head* at the cross, while Satan (*thou*) will *bruise* Christ’s *heel* (cause Him to suffer). Ryrie Study Bible (page 9).

At this beginning God knew exactly what He would do, more than that, He *always* knew what He would do. God has three parts that make up His choosing. Part one of His plan is indicated in verse 14, “Whereunto He called you by our gospel” From the beginning God knew that He would call men to salvation by, “*The call of the Gospel.*” A person cannot be saved apart from the gospel call. For this reason God “*lighteth every man that cometh into the world*” (John 1:9). This means that God gives every man a God consciousness. In this state, man is born with an awareness of a higher power. Even the so-called heathen has this consciousness. God in His omniscience and providence knows the person who desires additional “*light.*” Psalm 19:1-3 says, “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.*” This passage gives a clear indication that there is a natural revelation that is used of God to strike the attention of the guilty sinner wherever He might

JOHN

be.

When one becomes sensitive of His need or either desires additional light, the Lord in His Providence can arrange the circumstances in such a way to provide that needy person with a gospel witness. Therefore, the first part of God's plan is the *call of the gospel*.

Then we are told there must be the *belief of the truth* (II Thessalonians 2:13). When a person is confronted with the truth, being a creature of will, he will either accept or reject that truth. A clear Biblical illustration of this truth is given to us in Matthew 22. In verses two and three Jesus said, "*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.*"

Notice, "*they would not come.*" This represents the attitude of those who are invited but refuse God. In no way does this make God less than God; it simply illustrates how capable the human heart is while in its depraved state to refuse the earnest plea of the Lord. As powerful as God is, He is still a gentleman. He will not use His omnipotence to capture the willfully depraved one who refuses His invitation. This pattern is indicated in Genesis 6:3, "*And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man*"

The third ingredient or part of God's plan involves the *sanctification of the Spirit* (II Thessalonians 2:13). This is when a person hearing the Gospel, believes the Gospel (truth) and is set apart or sanctified by the Spirit. These three parts must be intact for a person to be saved, and II Thessalonians 2:13-14 shows the scriptural pattern for being saved. Ephesians 1:13 shows this application of these three components that must accompany one's salvation. "*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,*" (Ephesians 1:13).

Notice the phrase, "*after that ye heard the word of truth.*" This refers to the *call of the gospel*. Notice *belief of the truth*. Then, the third part of the salvation plan states, "*ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.*" This relates to the

THE PURPOSE OF HIS CRUCIFIXION

sanctification of the Spirit. These three parts of the salvation plan must be intact when a verse or passage having to do with salvation is given.

Time has been taken to emphasize the way the Lord works, as the Sovereign One, as He exercises His providence, His foreknowledge, and His election. After having departed from our usual chapter format, may we now return to and consider, (1) The Request before His crucifixion (vv. 27-30); (2) The Reason for His crucifixion (v. 31); III. The Result of His crucifixion (vv. 32-33).

The hour has come for the crucifixion, or at least the portion leading up to and including the crucifixion. We may call this period the time of travail. In a very holy and righteous sense we will see how His humanity is wrestling with His deity. May we first notice “The Request Before His Crucifixion.”

I. THE REQUEST BEFORE HIS CRUCIFIXION vv. 27-30

It was a request that demonstrated His humanity (v. 27). “*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*” The God-Man is speaking when He says, “*Now is my soul troubled.*” God had to become man to fulfill the role of the Kinsman Redeemer. As man, with no compromise to Him also being God, He cries, “*Now is my soul troubled.*” This cry is similar to the cry that will yet be voiced in Gethsemane. His troubled soul is not as a result of the kind of troubles that come from one’s personal sins. His troubled soul is experiencing that which He is soon to encounter. He knows what this hour is for. He knows why He is here. The weight of the world’s sins rest upon Him. When the Lord Jesus says, “*Father, save me from this hour:*” there is no indication of weakness at all. Instead, I see a Godly comprehension of what the Lord sees lying before Him. He is expressing this in human terms.

Another way this verse could be interpreted is in the form of a question. Notice the wording, “*Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say?*” (as though the question continues) “*Father, save me from this hour:*” The meaning of His words,

JOHN

if they were in question form, would go something like this, "Shall I say, Father, save me from this hour?" He immediately answers His own question showing that it was for this purpose that He came, "*but for this cause came I unto this hour.*"

It was a request that demonstrated His deity (v. 27b). When He said, "*but for this cause came I unto this hour,*" the Lord was demonstrating His deity. The foreordained purpose of God was in effect. Everything was happening according to the intent of God. It was within God's plan for the Greeks to appear (v. 20) at the precise time that they did, to be followed by Him making the statement, "*The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.*"

Do not think for a moment that the Lord is not in control here, for He is. When He asked His question, from the "human side," it may have served the purpose of having those that were hearing to consider the weight of such a requirement. His answer from the "God side" showed that He was in control, and would perform what was exactly required of Him.

May we notice again, while further strengthening our position, "*Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.*" Remember, prior to the *kenosis* the Lord was seated at the Father's right hand, co-equal and co-existing in Spirit form. When He came to be born of woman, He did not abandon His relationship, or His position relative to the Father. The taking on of a body did nothing to diminish His deity.

It was a request that demonstrated His authority (v. 28-30). Jesus appealed to His Father, "*Father glorify thy name.*" When Jesus made this appeal, He did it with perfect knowledge, and indicates the answer was not for His sake, "*but for your sakes*" (v. 30). As it is true, often the Lord asks for something not for *information* but for *inspiration*. The Father's answer came as a voice from Heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again" (v. 28). There are three glorifications that come to mind concerning the Lord Jesus. There is the glorification concerning His *adoration* (Luke 2:9-14). Then there is the glorification concerning His

THE PURPOSE OF HIS CRUCIFIXION

crucifixion (John 12:32). The third glorification concerns the *coronation* (Philippians 2:5-11).

Throughout the Old Testament, and often in the New Testament, the Lord not only is glorified by others, but He glorifies Himself, in the sense that He declares His majesty, His wealth, and His power. "Primarily in the Old Testament alone Yahweh glorifies Himself, that is, secures the recognition of His honor and majesty, by His direction of the course of history, or by His interposition in history, either the history of His own people or the world at large." (Leviticus 10:3; Isaiah 26:15, Ezekiel 28:22; Haggai 1:8). (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, page 528)

II. THE REASON FOR HIS CRUCIFIXION v. 31

The judgment of sin (v. 31). Verses 31 and 32 queries evidence to the worth and importance of the purpose of Christ's coming to the world. The "judgment of this world" was nigh. All the prophecy and the preaching that had been rendered to declare this approaching event was soon to come to past. The Saviour was to use an unexpected and an unnatural way in which to bring His plan. It was unexpected in that none would believe that such a victory would come as a result of a crucifixion. The crucifixion death was one of the most horrible and shameful ways for a convicted felon to die. Yet God was showing, "not only was life to come out of death, but victory out of apparent defeat. The Saviour crucified is, in fact, the Saviour glorified!" (Pink)

The unnatural aspect of the crucifixion was that there was no historical precedent that showed anyone becoming a conqueror through his own crucifixion. It is true that men have given themselves as a martyr and by doing so have caused people to expose themselves to the dead man's cause. But never would any strategist's plan suggest such a way to conquer as did God's plan.

While Jesus walked upon the earth, He walked as a witness. He witnessed and observed first-hand the wickedness of the sinful human race. He also served as a witness. He was put on display to show forth His sinless nature. He was

JOHN

the perfect standard, in His agreement to the law, to relate for judgment purposes. Paul later said, recognizing this aspect of Jesus, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*” (Romans 3:23). The world was “judged”: its time had come: its probation was over: the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ sealed its doom.

The judgment of Satan (v. 31b). Satan (adversary), Devil (slanderer), Lucifer (son of the morning), Beelzebub (Matthew 12:24), and Belial are some of the names describing the wicked one. This portion of Scripture describes what is going to happen to Satan. A listing of Satan’s judgments would be given in this fashion. He was cast out of his original position in Heaven (Ezekiel 28:16); his judgment was pronounced in Eden (Genesis 3:14-15); he was judged at the cross (John 12:31); he will be cast out in the midst of the tribulation period (Revelation 12:13); he will be confined in the abyss at the beginning of the Millennium (Revelation 20:2); and praise God, he will be cast into the lake of fire at the end of the Millennium (Revelation 20:10).

Dr. Harold Sightler used to encourage his people by reminding them that Satan was a defeated foe. He said that Satan is a toothless lion on a leash. Many times I have reminded myself of what he said and have also been encouraged.

III. THE RESULTS OF HIS CRUCIFIXION vv. 32-33

To bring about His death (v. 32). The Lord came to the earth to die. Crucifixion was the means of that death. The doctrine of salvation requires the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ. According to Acts 4:12, the salvation is of Jesus Christ alone. When Christ died, He died in the place of others as a qualified substitute. Jesus’ death was “in the place of” and “for the benefit of” (II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 3:18). We call this the substitutionary death of Christ.

The death is also the means for providing redemption. This redemption from sin is described and built on three words in the Greek New Testament. The first meaning is, “to purchase in the slave market of sin.” The second meaning is

THE PURPOSE OF HIS CRUCIFIXION

to “take out of the slave market of sin” and the third meaning is “to loose, never going back to the slave market of sin.”

His death provides propitiation. This propitiation is necessary because God is angry with mankind because of their sin. In the Old Testament the idea of putting off the wrath of God was demonstrated in part by sprinkling the mercy seat with blood. In the New Testament, the shed blood of Jesus is the only remedy for putting off God’s wrath.

Another purpose of His death is justification. Jesus satisfied all the demands that God required because of sin; this means that when a person places his trust in the resurrected Saviour, God has no further demands. Jesus is all one needs.

To bring about sinner’s deliverance (vv. 32-33). “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die.” Verse 32 should remind us of John 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:” The next verse says, “That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Verse 32 is a fulfillment of what Jesus spoke of in comparing the brazen serpent to Himself. The brazen serpent was raised and by doing so it gave every person bitten by the fiery serpents an opportunity to be healed and delivered. They only had to “look and live.”

Verse 33 clearly reveals to those in Christ’s presence the method of His death. His saving grace will be available to *all* (v. 32). The word “all” means of all mankind, whether it be the Jew or the Gentile. Because of His salvation plan truly, *“whosoever will may come.”*

Chapter 33

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS AS LIGHT? John 12:34-50

Light is a very wonderful thing yet cannot be completely understood. To the seeing person light may very easily be taken for granted. Light has the potential of revealing and can be called on to do a work of concealing. In darkness, color has no meaning. When the light is turned on it reveals an object's characteristics and its color. In this instance light serves a purpose of revealing.

Yet light can also be called upon to conceal. Have you ever watched a film when the criminal is being interrogated with a strong light beaming in his face? There is so much light intensity that the bright light blinds a person. The same happens when one rides down the road and faces a rude or careless driver who fails to dim his lights. Momentarily the driver approached is blinded.

The lake of fire is described as a place of "outer darkness." Please allow these next thoughts to be "food for thought." An ark-welding machine emits such a brilliant light; if one keeps his eyes fixed upon it, his eyes would soon be burnt out. Then that which was so bright would become so dark. Could it be that the fires of hell are so intense and bright that just as you would glue your eyes on the sun, your eyes would immediately go out never to see again. Think of it this way, those who will be in the lake of fire are underneath the curse and cannot look upon the light being emitted from the flames without their eyes being destroyed and being hurled into everlasting darkness. The same brilliant light that will be a blessing to those in Heaven, with the curse removed, will be only a curse to those who are in the lake of fire. They will be in everlasting darkness.

The word "glory" carries the idea of brightness. It means to possess and to be full of perfect light; to dwell in perfect light, brilliance, splendor, brightness, luster, and magnificence

JESUS AS LIGHT

with God (Practical Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume I). Moses, in Exodus 33:18, wanted to see God's glory or brightness only to be told that no man could look upon His face and live. Moses was permitted to look upon the Lord's "back parts" (vv. 19-23). When Moses later came down from the mountain, he knew not that the "skin of his face shone" (34:29).

Instead of the flames of hell being dark as some suppose, could it be that the purging, purifying Glory of God will ignite and keep the flames burning, thus the very light hated by man, will be the burning light that puts them into eternal darkness. In contrast, the eternal lit flames will be brightly burning forever but men who love darkness rather than light will not see it at all. They, by their own choice, are where they are. David may have hinted at this truth in Psalm 139:7-8, "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there." (Hebrews 12:29)

With this in mind, may we consider, (1) There is a Time to Receive the Light (vv. 34-36); (2) There are Those who Reject the Light (vv. 37-42); (3) There are Those who Received the Light (vv. 43-50).

I. THERE IS A TIME TO RECEIVE THE LIGHT vv. 34-36

The time is for a period (vv. 34-35). This discourse on Jesus being the Light, was in response to the people's question (v. 34). "*The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?*" These people give evidence to how darkened their minds are. The truth surrounding the crucifixion and the resurrection was concealed from them. Their foolish hearts were darkened. Thus the Lord refers to Himself as being the Light. He was going to put a "little light on the subject," and also show them that He was the Light, "*the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.*"

With penetrating words, the Lord spoke. He told them to

JOHN

recognize their state of darkness and to come to the light in belief (v. 36). This is a reminder of the great warning given earlier in chapter one and especially in chapter three. John 3:19-21 reminds us of what He said, relative to what He is now saying, *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”*

The phrase, *“Yet a little while is the light with you”* (v. 35) is a solemn warning for one not to put off receiving the Light.

The time is precious (v. 36). Just as a bright day becomes a dark night, the light of opportunity will soon be past. To fully appreciate this may we observe some things about Light. 1. God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. (I John 1:5); 2. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, the very embodiment of the heavenly light. (John 8:12; 9:5); 3. The light of the knowledge of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. (II Corinthians 4:6); 4. Jesus Christ “lights every man” who comes into the world. (John 1:9); 5. Believers are said to become “children of Light” through belief in the Light, Jesus Christ Himself. (John 12:36); 6. Believers have been transferred from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of Christ, the inheritance of light. (Colossians 1:13); 7. Before they came to Christ, believers are not only in darkness, but are an embodiment of darkness. But when they come to Christ, believers are placed in the light and become an embodiment of the light itself (Ephesians 5:8); 8. Believers are the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16); 9. Believers are to set their light on a lamp stand to make their light conspicuous (Matthew 5:15). 10. Evil doers shun the light (John 3:20); 11. The creation of light is a picture of the expulsion of spiritual darkness (Genesis 1:2) (Practical Word Studies in the New Testament, Volume II)

The Greek word used here for light is *photos* from which we get our word photograph. A photograph taken of some-

JESUS AS LIGHT

thing special becomes more precious with the passing of time. The photograph records what it saw for a precious moment of time. The Lord indicated that He, as the Light, was reflecting the Light of the Father and was to be available for a short time (vv. 35; 45). He was the *photos* or the photograph of the Father.

II. THERE ARE THOSE WHO REJECT THE LIGHT vv. 37-43

As it was *prophesied* (vv. 37-41). Clearly, Isaiah the Prophet spoke the oracles of God as he prophesied that which would take place concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that which Isaiah predicted is taking place. Isaiah in asking the question, “*Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?*” (v. 38) has demonstrated his bewilderment at seeing so many refusing the Messiah.

Isaiah went on to say, “*Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them*” (vv. 39-40). The Jews had an opportunity to walk in the light and follow after the light, but did not. What they were doing was very similar to what Paul was speaking in Romans 1:28 when he said, “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;*” To refuse the Lord’s light or “the Light” who is the Lord, is to make yourself subject to having your eyes blinded and your heart hardened. It is a dangerous thing to put off the Lord when He is calling.

When the soul of man is cast into the lake of fire and torment, a place of “outer darkness,” he will be blinded for all eternity. This blindness will be a tormenting reminder that he loved darkness more than light.

Because of other people (v. 42). Verse 42 shows how one may “*believe on him*” but not confess Him. “*Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they*

JOHN

should be put out of the synagogue:” James 2:17-19 gives us a parallel rendering of this concept, when it tells us that the *“devils also believe.”* This passage reminds us that faith without works is dead. Among the chief rulers many believed on Him; *“but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue”*; many refuse to come to Christ because of the negative influence of other people. Peer pressure is a very real pressure. Our peers govern many things that we do and say. Satan gives the delusion, *“if everybody’s doing it, it must be all right.”*

Certainly it would be sad standing before God one day at the great white throne judgment for having rejected Him because of someone else. There is the wicked expression that says, *“misery loves company.”* When one is involved in wickedness, he prefers not to do it alone. That person will entice someone else to do it with him.

There often is the desire for one to take a stand for that which is right only to be hindered by what others may think. Hell will be populated with people who are there because of the fear of what others thought.

Because of their pride (v. 43). These negative influences have their effect most often because of pride. This kind of pride genders fear. There is one kind of pride that looks down on others. There is another pride that cause one to strive to be equal to or superior to others. It is this kind of pride expressed in our text, *“For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”*

The world knows how to praise its own. The lights of this world shine as a counterfeit to the real light. The spotlight draws attention to that person in the spotlight. Famous movie stars often exclaim that they live for the praise, adoration, and the recognition of their fans. They thrive and feed off the *“praise of men.”* Yet cunningly, Satan will use that same form of pride to lure countless souls into the pit. The bright lights of Las Vegas are only a counterfeit rendering of the true light. They burn and glow with each flicker of light being a testimony to those who have rejected the true Light.

JESUS AS LIGHT

III. THERE ARE THOSE WHO RECEIVED THE LIGHT

vv. 44-50

They partake of His deity (vv. 44-45) (cf. 49). This section of Scripture shows Christ to be not only the Light to *reveal*, but the Word to *relate*. Jesus relates back to the Father, giving the glory back to Him in respect to the authority that the Father has over the Son. This truth is expressed in verse 44. “*Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me.*” Then in verse 45, “*And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.*” Verse 49 is very important concerning the work of Christ who is the Word, “*For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.*”

In John 1:1, Jesus is introduced as the Word. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” In John 1:1, we see the Word in His *presentation*; in this chapter we see the Word in His *purpose*. He came to reveal the Father. John having been inspired by the Holy Spirit, used the word, “Word” to communicate to both the Gentile and the Jew. The Jew saw a word as more than just a sound of intelligence. It was powerfully able, if properly exercised, to express something, to do something. Even in the Old Testament, the Word of God meant something. It was used in association with God’s creation power or His sustaining power. The Greeks had a different mindset; they saw the Word more philosophically. Just as the word is a vehicle to transmit an expressed thought, the word also is seen as the power that enabled men to think and reason.

Now in this section, after having been introduced as the Word, Jesus tells the people, “*I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me ...*” (v. 49). The mind of God has spoken through the Son of God. Verse 44 is not an argument, which says that one is not in reality believing on Jesus. He is simply emphasizing, as one sent from God, that He came to speak and do what He was commissioned to do. His argument reasoned that to reject Him was more importantly a rejection of God the Father. This section again is a reminder to

JOHN

the fact that Jesus is God. His Deity is declared. John's Gospel focuses on who Jesus is; the synoptic Gospels focus on what Jesus did.

They forsake the darkness (vv. 46-50). It would be good to remind ourselves how each of the Gospels emphasize a different origin of Jesus relative to His work. In Matthew, Jesus came from Abraham through David, and is the Messiah. In Mark, Jesus comes from Nazareth, and is a Servant. In Luke, Jesus comes from Achan, and is shown to be the Perfect Man, and in John, Jesus is the Man from Heaven, and is God. The whole purpose of the Gospel of John being written is shown in John 20:31, *"But these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life in His name."*

Someone said that the book of John is "a pool, in which a child may wade and an elephant may swim." This is what commentator Charles Erdman meant when he said, "Its stories are so simple that even a child will love them, but its statements are so profound that no philosopher can fathom them." (Blue Letter Bible)

The believer receives the Word as well as the Light as indicated by verses 46-47. *"I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."* When contrasting light and darkness, one must be aware that one is an extreme to the other. They are opposites. Light can dispel darkness, but darkness cannot dispel light. A light can be brought into a dark room, and the room is no longer dark. But you cannot bring darkness into a lighted room and it become dark. For the room to become dark, one must remove the light. If Jesus, the Light, removes Himself then all becomes dark, but the believer may enjoy the Light for all eternity. Thank God for the Light!

As believers, we should let our lights so shine that by our witness and testimony we may help dispel darkness. We need to be bright lights shining in dark places. The Bible is replete with those who were bright lights in dark places. Noah

JESUS AS LIGHT

was a bright light as he built the ark in a morally and spiritually darkened world. Joseph was a bright light in a morally and spiritually darkened home, Potipher's house. Daniel was a bright light shining in a dark empire. Jesus was a bright light while shining on the "Old Rugged Cross."

With these being our examples and Jesus being our primary example, may we shine for Him!

Chapter 34

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT LOVE'S POSTURE? John 13:1-20

Love is not that quality that is connected to a spigot to be turned on and off when used. It has an enduring quality. One writer used as his thesis, when writing his book; "Love must be tough." Tough love does not evaporate when the heat is turned on, nor does it freeze when there is no fire burning. The kind of love that we are examining can only be known through God, who is love.

Verse one introduces this truth, when Jesus not only "loved them," but "*he loved them unto the end.*" The writer made this observation even after all the disciples, including the writer, forsook Him. Notice carefully this verse, "*Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*"

In this study, may we notice three things about love's posture. We may do this by examining, "The Explanation of Love" (vv. 1-13); "The Expression of Love" (v. 14); and "The Example of Love" (vv. 15-20).

I. THE EXPLANATION OF LOVE vv. 1-13

Love has its extremes (v. 1). Love is a word that is so common, yet can also be so complicated. The word *love* may be expressed and explained in many different ways. To further develop this study, it is necessary to explain the different ways that the word *love* is used in its original Greek setting. This is necessary because the majority of the New Testament was written in the Greek. The Greeks interpreted love in four different ways. Each usage was expressed with a different Greek word. Careful word studies help bring out the exact and intended meaning of the word *love*.

The Greek language is a very expressive and exact lan-

LOVE'S POSTURE

guage. For example, this may be noted by studying the larger number of tenses used as compared to the English language. In the English, often the word used must be defined according to the way it is used within a particular context. This is not as much so in the Greek. We will examine the four words used by the Greeks to define love.

There is "eros" love. This word used by the Greeks does not appear in the New Testament. It is a word that describes the passion a man has for a woman. The word erotic has eros as its root. There is also "storge" love. This love is a love that describes the affection that is found in a family, the natural affection that a parent has for the children, and the children for the parents. Then there is the word "phileo." This word for love is perhaps the word that describes with tenderness the love that one has for someone very special. It has been used to describe brotherly love. The love of Christ is "agape" love. This is a sacrificial love that has no boundaries; it has no requirements. It is a love that works for another person's good. It is a giving, considerate, caring love regardless of the circumstances. This is the kind of love that says, "*But I say unto you. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*" (Matthew 5:44). Simply put, agape love is the supreme love, the love of God. It is the love of the mind, of the reason, of the will.

This is the kind of love that Jesus had as described in this first verse. It is an extreme love, or it will love to the maximum extreme.

Love has its enemies (v. 2). There are many enemies to this concept of love with none greater than the devil. Satan has invaded Judas. The devil has put in the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray the Lord Jesus Christ. It is certain that Judas will not exercise a heart of unselfish agape love, as the Greeks would define it. Instead everything that Judas does from here on is in the spirit of selfishness. Agape love is anything but a selfish love. As mentioned, agape love is the love of the mind, of the reason, of the will. To have this kind of love, one must receive it as a gift from God. "*But the fruit of*

JOHN

the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith," (Galatians 5:22).

Satan knew by attacking the mind of Judas that he could thereby control him. Just as the Lord works in the soul of man for good, Satan can work in the soul for evil. The soul, remember, is composed of will, intellect, and emotions. When Satan put into the heart of Judas Iscariot to betray the Lord, he was doing so by gaining possession of Judas' soul. In this sense, one really can sell his soul to the devil.

The influence of Satan is realized when people begin to watch programs that are contrary to the Scriptures. The same happens when music is listened to that sends the wrong message to its listener. Satan has also gained control of the polluted printing press knowing that in doing so he has gained another means of destroying one's mind. There are so many avenues that Satan can use to gain access into one's mind. One of the subtlest ways that Satan works to gain control of one's thinking is to move very slowly. In this gradual approach, Satan very patiently works to get his subject where he wants him. Satan has all the time needed to achieve his dastardly planned goals. Many are victims of Satan's tactics, never thinking that they would be. Perhaps it began when they sat down to watch what they thought would be an innocent television program. After the program was over, Satan had injected into their mind wicked information that they never planned to receive. After adding hundreds of such programs, along with the wrong music and reading materials, their mind is now saturated with Satan's instructions.

He now is able to manipulate his subjects in whatever way he pleases. In this state of mind their attitude toward God has drastically changed. They are no longer sensitive to the ways of God, and have no desire to be so. In addition to that, their love for God has diminished greatly.

Love has its expectation (vv. 3-13). Not only will the person who has agape love go to any extreme to do its sacrificial work, and not only does the person that has this kind of love have its enemies, this kind of love has its expectations. To show the posture of this kind of love, the Lord did a very hum-

LOVE'S POSTURE

ble thing; He washed the disciples' feet. He exercised the position of humility when He washed their feet. The Scriptures tell us that *"He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded"* (vv. 4-5). The Lord was doing this to demonstrate pictorially the posture of love. It is the kind of love that positions itself in servitude to someone else.

Jesus who is the creator is now serving His creation. Simon Peter upon seeing this lesson in humility and a vivid portrayal of Christ's self-humiliation does not fully understand what Christ is doing. He sees the inequity of Christ washing his feet. He does not understand the true posture of Christ's love. He forgets that Christ humbled Himself, beginning at His birth. There was no royalty in a stable, in the sense that King Jesus made His appearance not in a palace but in a stable. He came to us in a cradle; he was crucified for us on the cross, but He's coming for us with His crowns.

Jesus corrected Simon Peter, (vv. 7-12) and then Jesus sat down again and explained what His purpose was. He told Peter and the rest of the disciples, *"Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet"* (vv. 13-14). Therefore love has its expectations. Jesus Christ, the giver of love is showing a living parable of the posture of love, or the way love performs.

II. THE EXPRESSION OF LOVE v. 14

Love expressed in one's will (v. 14). Notice these words, *"If I then" - "Ye also ought to."* Agape love is not to be confused with any other kind of love. It is certainly a gift, but it must be exercised, it involves the will. *"For God so loved ... that he gave"; "Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it";* (John 3:16; Ephesians 5:25). When Jesus demonstrated this love that we speak of, He showed it to be a condescending love. It is the kind that loves from the position of greater to a position of lesser. It is able to love the unlovely.

JOHN

Rather than this love being like *eros*, a love of the passions, it is a love of the will. This kind of love chooses to love and then acts upon that operation of the will. This kind of love is marked by commitment. Sadly lacking in many of our marriages is the quality of commitment. Husbands are commanded to love their wives, “*even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*” (Ephesians 5:25). Two necessary ingredients may be observed in this kind of love. There is the ingredient involving the will and the ingredient involving sacrifice. Using the analogy of marriage in the secular world, we are programming our marriages to operate as two separate beings remaining independent and separate. In assuming this position in marriage one is violating the plain Biblical teachings that says, “*and they shall be one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24). Selfishly, this unbiblical form of marriage has enormous problems. How can two walk together unless they be agreed? There needs to be a caring by both mates that exhibits a strong sacrificial love toward each other. When one is selfish, he does hurt to the other. If both are this way this problem is only compounded.

If love is expressed as an act of the will, the will must be properly directed. In a Christian marriage there should be a desire to serve one’s own mate even as Christ served His bride, the Church.

The correct way for directing the will is by being totally dependent upon the Word of God. God’s Word instructs us to walk as Jesus walks. In our “love” relationships, we certainly should ask, “What would Jesus do?”

Love expressed in one’s walk (v. 14). The example of Jesus to be considered more in verse 15 than here should serve as a pattern on how to exercise one’s will. Then there is the operation or the action of love that must be considered. Agape love does not sit by passively; it performs; it does something. It is more than saying I love you, it is acting out one’s responsibility in the love process.

One might ask, was Jesus demonstrating love just by washing the disciples’ feet? Yes! Let me illustrate. There was an ongoing power struggle among the disciples. In

LOVE'S POSTURE

Mark's Gospel the request was made by James and John in Mark 10:37, *"They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory."* Jesus answered their request in detail, showing them that their request was not *"mine to give"* (v. 40). He went on to instruct them in this way, *"But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (vv. 43-45). Jesus was showing with the exercising of agape love that there should be no power struggle, but a heart for ministering. The Good Samaritan humbled himself in such manner, and it was this parable that the Lord used to illustrate the way men ought to love God and others. Luke 10:26-27 shows the answer that Jesus gave the lawyer before giving the parable. *"He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself."*

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, both the priest and the Levite passed the needy man who had been robbed, beaten, and left for dead. *"But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,"* (v. 33). In verses 34-35 the Scriptures show love in action. *"And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."*

The Good Samaritan showed his humility as he came down off his beast to where the dying man was. The Good Samaritan may be interpreted as being a type of Jesus coming down from Heaven to where the dying sinner was. In addition to this act of humility, there is an act of sacrificial giving

JOHN

shown in verse 35, *“Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.”*

III. THE EXAMPLE OF LOVE vv. 15-20

Taught with humility (vv. 15-16). Though Christ Jesus is much more than just a Master Teacher, He certainly is teaching the disciples and all who would be His disciples a great lesson. He said, *“ye should do as I have done to you.”* Some elevate this teaching concerning foot washing to that of a church ordinance. This example by the Lord is certainly a wonderful means for teaching humility, and it would not be out of order to use it as an object lesson for teaching the same. Yet it should not be incorporated into our church polity as a church ordinance.

Paul when addressing the churches, in his church epistles, never addressed foot washing. The ordinance of Baptism and the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper were so addressed and are to be practiced as church ordinances. Another distinguishing characteristic of the Lord’s Supper and Baptism is that they both picture the death, the burial, and the resurrection. Baptism pictures all three and foot washing pictures neither.

Love, forgiveness, and humility are all to be taught in our churches, but there is a different emphasis to be given to our ordinances. Realizing this, there is another practical teaching or lesson gained from foot washing. As mentioned, forgiveness needs to be taught in our churches. It would be difficult to humble one’s self to wash one’s feet if forgiveness is needed. A close relationship is impossible when a brother or sister has ought against another. Real joy and happiness cannot be found in relationships that are hurting. This is also what Jesus is teaching.

Wrought with happiness (v. 17). This verse says, *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”* In the Lord’s work happiness comes in doing. As the pastor of a church, one would be wise to keep his congregation busy doing the Lord’s work. Stagnation is a blight and curse to any church. Life’s joy comes from being productive. Even more so is this

LOVE'S POSTURE

true in the church. We do not need a rocking chair Christianity.

I remember my father working well into his eighties. He always said that he did not want to just sit in a rocking chair. He wanted to be busy. He died of a heart attack when he was nearly ninety, but he died busy, and happy. The Lord said, "*happy are ye if ye do them.*" Literally, He is saying, you are happy in doing.

Beset with hurt (vv. 18-20). As mentioned earlier Satan had put into Judas' heart to betray the Lord. The Lord loved them "all" to the end (v. 1). The Lord loved Judas as well. Yet Judas turned against Him. Sadly, so many are hurting today as they love someone special only to not have that love returned. Judas ate bread with the Lord but "lifted up his heel against me," Jesus said. Certainly that had to be grievous unto the Lord.

Though foot washing is not to be practiced as a church ordinance, there are still many practical lessons on love and forgiveness to be learned. May we as Christians learn to love as Jesus loved! May we covet the greatest gift, and that gift being love. May we humble ourselves, trusting God to exalt us as He pleases. May we also "love unto the end!"

Chapter 35

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT DEMON POSSESSION? John 13:21-38

During the 1970's a number of books came out dealing with the subject of demonology. This could have been a period of time when the theologians let this subject over occupy their thinking. There is a danger in this. During this time it was suggested that demons possess the lost and influence the saved. Surely much debate will continue as we attempt to define our terminology.

I personally have wrestled with the concept of possession versus influence. The next statement that I make may seem heretical, but allow me to qualify and explain my position, keeping in mind that I may be wrong in the way I address this complicated subject. This is the reason that I said that I wrestle with the concept of possession versus influence. I believe that Satan may possess both the believer and the unbeliever. Please carefully follow my explanation.

The first thing that must be said, if a saved person can be possessed by Satan, he certainly does NOT lose his salvation. I take the position that I do showing the severity of allowing anything satanic to enter into one's mind. We must remember that when God saved you that He did nothing for your flesh. The flesh is not your skin; it is your natural drive that came as a result of Adam and Eve's fall in the garden. Though that part of you is not now saved, it will be one day. For that reason, though I am saved, I still am capable of thinking awful things. I am able to imagine awful things; but, one day "praise God" I will not.

To explain what I have suggested, think of man as being a three-part being. Man has a soul, body, and a spirit. Remember a tree only has a body, a recognizable form. An animal has a soul and body (a recognizable form and also the animal has will, intellect, and emotions). A human being is a body, a soul (comprises will, intellect, and emotions), and a

DEMON POSSESSION

spirit. The spirit gives man a God-consciousness.

Before I say more, Satan cannot possess the spirit of a saved man. He is protected and saved by the Holy Spirit of God. You then may ask how can Satan possess the believer? He does this by entering the soul or the mind of man. When a saved person, for example, begins to view internet pornography he is no different than the lost person in the sense that the wicked pornography gets into the mind just as it would the lost person. Satan uses such to enter into the mind (soul) of a saved person, though he cannot access the *saved spirit* of man. Realizing God has done nothing yet to our flesh, we must be on guard lest we let Satan “possess” our thoughts. The fiery darts of the wicked (Ephesians 6) can enter immediately into our minds lest we put on the shield of faith. We commonly say that we are under the “influence” of Satan. When we allow such to happen; it is much more serious than that. A saved person who throws his shield away and becomes negligent in his Bible study and prayer becomes vulnerable to the attacks of Satan. Those attacks can be in the form of demon possession (see I Corinthians 5). Think about the man who had “his father’s wife” (I Corinthians 5:1). In this study, we are told that the church at Corinth was instructed “*To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*” (I Corinthians 5:5). Have you ever thought how much more vulnerable you would be to Satan if God chose to remove the hedge and turn Satan loose on you? Remember, when Satan tested Job he had to do it with permission. A person would be no match for Satan if God did not offer divine protection.

When a person drifts away from the Lord in complacency, and begins entertaining his flesh with worldly and satanic devises, he is subjecting himself to many dangers.

If you find difficulty with the influence verses possession concept, please just consider it as food for thought as we consider the subject of demon possession. May we consider how, (1) Satan caused a Disturbance (vv. 21-26); (2) Satan caused a Departure (vv. 27-30); (3) Satan caused a Denial

JOHN

(vv. 31-38).

I. SATAN CAUSED A DISTURBANCE vv. 21-26

Jesus predicted that one would betray Him (v. 21). Satan is the author of confusion, the deceiver, the murderer, and the liar, etc. Satan's effect on Judas caused Jesus to be troubled in Spirit. Some would have you to believe that Jesus is either uncaring or has no feelings if He is truly God. Could it be rather that His feelings are much more pronounced because HE IS GOD? Surely this is so. He above all others is touched by the feelings of our infirmities. He is very hurt at knowing what Judas' intentions are. Though God knew Judas' actions, He still is giving every benefit to Judas for the purpose of him repenting. On the Day of Judgment, Judas will have to account for any effort on the part of Jesus to get him to turn. Likewise, every person is accountable in the way that they respond to the compassion of Jesus.

Once again the God of omniscience makes a statement concerning what will happen. It would happen just as surely as He predicted the destruction of the temple by Emperor Titus in 70 A.D. There are those who say that the writers of the Gospels wrote after the destruction of Jerusalem, thus discounting the predictions of Jesus. The liberals and modernists will always be around, or at least they will be until the Lord returns for His own, to discredit the authenticity of the Scriptures.

The disciples did not at all question the validity or the truthfulness of what Jesus spoke; they only wondered of whom He was speaking. Verse 22 says, "Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake."

Jesus pointed out who would betray Him (vv. 23-26). The tension certainly was mounting as the disciples were wondering who would betray the Lord. This gives indication to just how clever and cunning Judas was in his hypocrisy. Judas was not even suspected. Wonder how many people populate our churches, who like Judas had his fellow disciples fooled. Even if Judas had his fellow disciples fooled he did not have the Lord fooled. Even if he himself was fooled, the Lord abso-

DEMON POSSESSION

lutely was not.

Judas may have convinced himself by being associated with the disciples and the Lord that he was one of the believers. After all, he was the treasurer of the group of disciples. If there was any possibility of Judas being convinced that he was a believer, the Word of the Lord should have brought immediate conviction telling him otherwise. The Lord also did not publicly embarrass him. The Lord was giving him an opportunity to repent.

During this time when Jesus had issued the warning that one would betray Him, until Jesus actually identified Judas by giving him the sop, he has opportunity to repent. Notice verse 26, *“Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the Son of Simon.”*

The sop that was given to Judas was “the morsel.” At Eastern meals it was customary for the host to offer one of the guests a morsel of bread as a gesture of special friendship. By this Jesus was showing His love for Judas, the betrayer (Ryrie).

II. SATAN CAUSED A DEPARTURE vv. 27-30

Judas was exposed (vv. 27-29). “And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly” (v. 27). This was a very sobering and serious statement made by Jesus. Judas has now willfully sealed his own fate. God has abandoned him and Satan enters into him for the purpose of carrying out his diabolical scheme. It is also the time that the prophets had predicted, as Isaiah did in Isaiah 53:7, *“... he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.”*

When the Lord Jesus said, *“That thou doest, do quickly” (v. 27)*, He was submitting to the purposes for which He came. He is turning Himself over to become a victim of Satan’s diabolical scheme to fulfill the higher purposes of God. How loudly Jesus spoke this, we are not sure; He may have whispered. Either way, whether He spoke loud or soft,

JOHN

the disciples at the table knew not for what intent He spake unto Judas. *“For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of against the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor”* (v. 29).

Judas did exit (v. 30). From time to time I have had different ones to ask me why Judas was allowed to continue for over three years, as one of Jesus' disciples. Perhaps one way of answering this would be to say that the Lord permitted Judas to serve for the purpose of delivering Jesus up for His crucifixion and also allowing Judas and the rest of the disciples to be a prototype of the New Testament church that will be composed of both wheat and tares. This means that there will be those who are saved as well as lost in our churches. This should certainly warn us to make our call and election sure.

Judas is now completely under the control of Satan. Perhaps, before going further, we should remind ourselves who Satan is. Revelation 12:9 uses the name Satan in this manner, *“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.”* Satan's purpose has always been to take as much power and worship of the universe as possible (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-17). He attempts this in three ways: (1) He opposes and disturbs God's work in the world (Isaiah 14:12-17; Ezekiel 28:11-17; Job 1:6; Matthew 4:10; Mark 1:13; Luke 4:8; Revelation 12:7-9). (2) He discourages believers through various strategies (Luke 22:31; Ephesians 10:12). (3) He arouses God's justice against people by leading people to sin and to deny and rebel against God. And when they do, God's justice has to act and judge people to the fate of their choice: that of living with Satan eternally (Matthew 12:25-26; John 13:31-32). (Practical Word Studies in the New Testament)

Satan has done the work against God, causing Jesus Christ to recognize and remove Judas to do what his heart has purposed.

DEMON POSSESSION

III. SATAN CAUSED A DENIAL vv. 31-38

Peter intended to do right (vv. 31-37). This chapter's theme could very well be entitled "Loves' Posture." As mentioned this chapter began by the writer telling us that Jesus "*loved them unto the end.*" He is seen washing the disciples' feet showing the true posture of love. He gives this as an example for the disciples to follow (v. 15) and now the Lord is giving the disciples a new commandment. It was new in the sense that the Lord now, after having given the disciples an object lesson concerning the posture of love, is going to command them to begin practicing the love of God as He did. "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*" (vv. 34-35).

Peter is still thinking about the Lord Jesus announcing His departure. He thinks in his heart that he can go with the Lord. His intentions are excellent but his strength is small. Peter has not matured to the stage that he is able to do what he thinks and what he boasts that he can do. Are we not also like that? We are either guilty of overrating our abilities or either underrating our abilities. Peter's desire to do right was so strong that he thought that he would even die if necessary for Jesus. Yet he proved as he attempted to cut off Malchus' ear and Jesus put the ear back on, that he was not strong enough to face each developing event. He would handle what he premeditated to do, but was unable to accept Jesus' rebuke. He still was having difficulty dealing with the pride issue that was in his life. When studying the different Gospels we find that Peter began to follow afar off, warm himself by the enemies' fire, and deny his association with Jesus.

Peter influenced to do wrong (v. 38). Whether or not Peter was influenced or possessed may be debated, but it was certainly obvious that Satan desired to have him for the purpose of controlling him. As intense as this drama was during this time of Peter's denial, the Lord still predicted his recovery, and told Peter that once he was converted he was to "strengthen the brethren."

JOHN

May we realize that when we face temptations and succumb to them that we should be challenged to overcome our failures and go forward for Christ!

Chapter 36

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS?

Part I John 14:1-4

The medical profession commonly reports that a majority of the sickness that's treated is emotional. The Bible has the prescriptions for good health as it tells us, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones*" (Proverbs 17:22). There are many troubled hearts, hearts that are griped by fear. Man is of "*few days and many troubles.*" The Bible reminds us that "*Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7). There is no escaping trouble. Often I tell my congregation that they are either in trouble, just getting out of trouble, or about to get back into trouble.

The disciples are troubled after having three bombshells drop on them. The first bombshell that exploded in their midst was the news that one of them would betray the Lord (13:21); the next thing that troubled them was the announcement that Jesus would be leaving them (13:36). The third bombshell was the news that one of their own would deny the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus immediately saw them in their troubled state and begins to offer what we may call arguments against a troubled heart or God's solution for troubled hearts.

I. THERE IS A PERSON FOR YOU v. 1

He desires your comfort (v. 1). One indication of having God's love working in your heart is by you having a compassion for others who are hurting. The Lord Jesus certainly had a desire to see His disciples comforted in the midst of their trials. He desired their comfort as shown in the words, "*Let not your heart be troubled.*" As we compare for proper interpretation, chapter 13 with chapter 14, we will observe that in the immediate context the Lord, at this point, is talking to all

JOHN

the disciples. He is responding to Peter's last statement concerning his desire to follow the Lord even if it meant his life. However, the application of this truth, pertaining to Peter, also applies as understood in regards to Thomas' question and how Jesus answered him. We may state that this truth may be further explained to include any of the Lord's troubled children. While the Lord is primarily ministering to Peter, Thomas and the other disciples, He is also ministering to all of His own. The Word of God is profitable for interpretation as well as application. May we be reminded of II Timothy 3:16-17, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."* The word *profitable* as used in verse 16 means the positive benefit that is derived from the Word of God being properly interpreted and applied.

This particular text when properly interpreted and applied, has an enormous benefit to all who would be blessed. Some additional comments on how the Word is profitable would be beneficial to this study. Our text in II Timothy 3:16 tells us that the Bible is profitable for doctrine. A clear doctrinal understanding is necessary for continual stability in one's spiritual life. In the realm of theology one needs to learn properly who God is. In the study of anthropology one needs to know who man is. In pneumatology one needs to understand the correct work and person of the Spirit. In Christology one needs to learn the doctrine of Christ. In soteriology one needs to understand the truth of salvation. In hamartiology one needs to know the teachings of sin. In ecclesiology one should know the doctrine of the church. In eschatology one needs to properly understand the teachings of the end times. In angelology one needs to know the proper teachings relating to angels and in demonology one studies the teaching pertaining to demons or Satan.

The Bible is also profitable for reproof. God's Word should cause the believer to be sensitive to the Word of God and be convicted by it and rebuked when he is disobedient to the will of God. The Word of God reveals to us the conse-

GOD' SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

quences of disobedience to His will (John 16:7-8, 13; Hebrews 4:12; Jeremiah 5:14, 23:29).

Another purpose that makes the Bible profitable is that it is instrumental in bringing about correction. Without change taking place, in the form of correction, the Bible has not really served its intended purpose. It is God's will that we be doers of the Word and not hearers only. For there to be a correction there must be a correct way, that Way is the Bible.

To be corrected, with the Bible being the correct Way, one must also be instructed by it. The Bible is THE instruction manual. The Bible instructs its readers in every discipline of life. It instructs us in our marriage preparation, our social relationships, our vocational training, in child raising, in church polity, and in many innumerable ways. Even secular instruction finds its roots in the Word of God. Recently, I heard a series on "How to have financial success" given by a secular financial group. Upon closely listening I detected that much of the material was of Bible origin perhaps unbeknown to the producers. Solomon, who was the wisest man who has lived, has given to us, in his writings just about every piece of information that you will find in these secular programs.

It was felt necessary to show once again the practical significance of the Word of God as it is applied in our daily living. Therefore, if comfort was available then to Peter and the other disciples, it also is available to us now.

He delivers a comparison (v. 1). The Lord said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." The Lord compares Himself to the Father in the sense that He is God, and worthy of the same consideration as the Father. The Son's authority originates in the throne room. Hebrews 1:1-3 indicates this truth. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;"

JOHN

God the Son encourages His own by His own sterling example, having been commissioned by the Father, and having the power of the Godhead as well. Though the disciples had many troubles, they did not need to be troubled. He was there for them and will also leave One after His departure that is the same as He to minister to them.

It is an indescribable thrill knowing that in my difficulty there is a Person for me, and the Person is Jesus Christ. There have been occasions where just knowing that He is there for me made all the difference. I experienced His presence in such a marvelous way at my mother's death. I felt so helpless, knowing that I would soon be preaching her funeral. In that moment of despair, I remembered that the Lord would never leave me nor forsake me. At that recognition, what joy and peace flooded my soul!

II. THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU v. 2

The place has been described as a city (v. 2). There are several Biblical references to Heaven being a city. In Revelation 20:9, Heaven is referred to as being the beloved city. The older I am and the closer I grow to the Lord, and the more loved ones that I have in Heaven, the more beloved Heaven becomes. As the song reminds us, "Heaven's Sounding Sweeter All The Time." For the true believer, this world pales in comparison as Heaven grows brighter and brighter. Another song puts it like this, "This world is not my home, I'm just passing through; I have a home somewhere beyond the blue."

Another verse in Revelation 21:2 tells us that Heaven is a holy city, "*prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*" Our Holy God would have nothing less than a holy city for His holy saints. The holy city will be unlike any city that this world knows about. In theory, we design our utopias thinking that we have a panacea for all the worlds' ills. We soon discover that we are never able to advance beyond the theoretical.

Heaven is also described as a great city (Revelation 21:10). In its greatness, it is described as the city of pure gold, "*like unto clear glass.*" The street was also pure gold,

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

“as it were transparent glass” (Revelation 21:21). In describing the city’s greatness, it has no need for the sun, neither of the moon, *“for the glory of God did lighten it”* (Revelation 21:23).

The place has been described as a country (v. 2-3). Hebrews 11:16 said that the martyrs in the faith looked for *“a better country, that is, an heavenly.”* Certainly this describes Heaven. It will be not only better, but also so much better than where we are now. As messages are preached on Heaven, it should leave the hearers looking for that Heavenly country. One of the practical aspects of having a funeral is to comfort the hurting, but to also equip the saints with a strong desire to go to Heaven.

The word *city* may describe the way Heaven is organized, while *country* may describe the vast size of Heaven. Heaven will not be cramped; there will be plenty of “elbow room.” I remember nearly thirty years ago when my wife and I were making preparations to travel to London, England. As we anticipated our journey, we made great plans for our trip. We checked out books from the library to learn more about the place that we were going. We wanted to know what we needed to wear for such a journey. As I reflect back the preparation was almost as exciting as the journey.

Likewise, one needs to be prepared for his Heavenly journey; he should wisely prepare for the actual journey. Why not learn all that you can about the wonderful place that you are going.

The place has been described for its comfort (v. 2). There will be absolutely no need for adjusting the thermostat of Heaven. The thermostat is set. The environment is never compromised. You never need to worry about the ecosystem. The ecology will always be balanced. There will be no decay, neither pain of any kind. The removed curse will never plague the Heavenly country again.

The population of Heaven will be perfectly content. Not one complaint will ever be voiced. This is very difficult to fathom. With our human mentality we can only grope as in darkness at what is being described. It truly is beyond com-

JOHN

prehension. Even in our limited way of describing what Heaven is like, it still brings comfort as we both compare and contrast earth to Heaven. The truth being known, there is no comparison to the two.

As the saints grow older, they become more afflicted by the pains of their dying bodies. They began to long for the place of comfort. Many in our nursing homes and hospitals know nothing of a day of comfort. We like living here on earth *when we like living here*. When we become more frustrated in our inability to be comforted, we become more focused on the hope of soon being in Heaven. Thank God for the comfort of the place called Heaven.

III. THERE IS A PROMISE FOR YOU vv. 3-4

The promise involves His caring (v. 3). His promise is stated in this manner, “*And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself.*” The word “if” is used here as we would use the word “since.” It is not if, like “maybe” it is the “if” of certainty. He is preparing a place for us; He will come again. We will learn that there is one way only to Jesus, but two means. You will, as some jest, “either go by undertaker or uppertaker.” More accurately, it is all via uppertaker. Even if you die, under His authority and His power, you are taken into the immediate presence of God. To “*be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*” (II Corinthians 5:8).

The Lord was not promising these disciples that they would not die; He was promising that He would not forget them. He would get them. Practically, they all had to die to get to Him. Prophetically, He will return again to receive us. There is a great possibility that I will not die but be caught up to be with Him. That is His promise. Please believe it, He will come for you because He cares for you.

The promise involves His coming (v. 3). The prophecy in the Old Testament that pertained to His first coming was fulfilled just as it was predicted. The prophets declared it and it was so. One who is greater than the prophets now declares it. Jesus said I will come again. In Matthew 24:44, Jesus said,

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.” In this verse notice *the command*; *“Therefore be ye also ready.”* Every believer should be ready for the return of the Lord. Secondly, notice *the consideration*, *“for in such an hour as ye think not.”* The key word in this part of the verse is the word *think*. Some are *confused* in their thinking concerning the return of the Lord. Others are *careless* in their thinking, meaning they could “care less” if Jesus is to return. Then, there are those who are *corrupted* in their thinking, concerning the return of the Lord. Praise God, there still are many countless souls who are *correct* in their thinking about His return.

Thirdly, notice *the coming* in this verse in Matthew. Jesus said, *“the Son of man cometh.”* There is strong Biblical evidence that shows that His coming will be a *surprise* to some. It will be *sudden* and it may be *soon*. Even so come quickly.

The promise involves His character (vv. 3-4). A promise is only as valuable as the one who makes the promise. The Lord Jesus Christ has never lied; He cannot lie. His promise is true. Christians should live with the blessed assurance that the Lord is coming again. This knowledge should have a purifying effect upon us (II Peter 3). We should be looking for His return, and should be prepared as well.

We should be watching for His return, and we should be working. We should not only watch and not work; nor should we work and not watch.

The reason that Christians may be comforted is that the character of God insures it. He is perfect and unchanging in His character; again, even so come quickly!

Chapter 37

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS?

Part II John 14:5-31

Just as God did not desire His disciples to have troubled hearts, neither does He want His children to be troubled in their hearts. So many pressures that we face in life are there to trouble us – if we let them. Remember that there are troubles having to do with the family. There are troubles that come from our foes, our friends and from our flesh. But the Lord said even with our troubles that we are not to let our hearts be troubled. As we continue this study, may we find more solutions to avoiding troubled hearts. There is a Plan for you (vv. 5-6); There is a Paraclete for you (vv. 7-26); and There is a Peace for you (vv. 27-31).

I. THERE IS A PLAN FOR YOU vv. 5-6

Have you ever thought how awful it would be if God had not provided a plan for our redemption? We would be sentenced to a life of groping aimlessly in the dark. There would be absolutely no hope; we would be men most miserable. Yet God certainly does have a redemption plan. He always has had a plan. He came to the world to reveal not only Himself, but also the plan. More than that, Jesus came to carry out the plan. Oh, grace divine!

May we notice three things about this plan. (1) *"I am the Way"* – God's answer to many choices; (2) *"I am the Truth"* – God's answer to much confusion; (3) *"I am the Life"* – God's answer to miserable corruption.

"I am the Way" – God's answer to many choices (vv. 5-6a). To John, the Lord gave such a positive, direct statement concerning the Way. The way of the philosopher can only offer a discussion of what is truth; the way of the educator is his attempt to learn truth. The way of the politician is to sell

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

truth or convince people of what their definition is of the most correct way. The religious person attempts to obtain the correct way to truth. But singular and separate from all other attempts to arrive at the proper way, the Lord Jesus declares that He is the Way. This is God's answer to many choices.

There are those today who say, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as you believe in something." One has heard the expression, "All roads lead to Rome." In the religious world they have coined a similar expression: "All roads lead to Heaven." This mentality certainly fuels the flames that are burning in ecumenicalism. If there are no barriers or walls of belief established, why should they not all come together, they reason.

Truth bearers must guard and clearly define the only way to God. To stand and proclaim Jesus as the only Saviour in our compromised religious environment, is to invite the wrath of the enemies of Christ and His Cross. The name of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ is a hated name to many religious groups. All of the cults in some way attack Jesus according to His deity. They strongly deny Him as being God or make Him a lesser God. They use two avenues in attacking His deity other than a direct denial. They teach that Jesus became God by first being a man. The other extreme teaches that Jesus is, or became ONLY a man; not the God-man.

Denials of this kind are nothing new. During the early church period, the Gnostics leveled attacks against the deity of Christ. Paul seemed to be addressing this problem when he wrote his letter to the church at Colosse. He also dealt with their practicing Oriental mysticism. Some of the false teachings of Colosse could be described as being syncretistic, fusing Jewish legalism, Greek philosophic speculation, as well as Oriental mysticism.

There is no Biblical truth or precedent that will honor the concept, "It does not matter what you believe, as long as you believe something." There is only one way to God and Heaven, and that is through Jesus, The Way.

"I am the Truth" – God's answer to much confusion (v. 6b). In a previous study, this statement was made, "Truth

JOHN

never changes.” The immutability of God guarantees this to be so in regards to Jesus, The Truth. Truth is its own standard. With Jesus being The Truth, He is also the standard with which we compare. Jesus lived this standard, while upon the earth, as He kept the law. Not once did He break the Law. Not once did He defile the perfect sinless nature of God in His kenosis (self-limiting and humiliation in becoming man). His coming to the earth was not a compromised venture. He was not tempted to sin, as Hollywood has tried to portray. He perfectly kept the law and did not lie.

Many of the religions today boast that theirs alone is the Truth. This confuses the searcher who is bombarded with so many lies. Satan, the counterfeiter, takes great pleasure in convincing people that anyway other than the Jesus Way is the correct way. How can one be assured that Jesus is the Way? John, in his epistles must have countered this problem, for he deals with this extensively in his epistles. He describes Jesus from the position of being an eyewitness as seen in I John 1:1-3. *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”* For those of us today, we have the Bible, which is God’s record.

It is extremely important in the realm of faith that one believes the Record. God’s Word is the Record. Admittedly, a person who does not believe the Bible will have trouble believing that Jesus is God. The element of faith or trust must be involved in receiving Jesus as the only Saviour. Remember, *“faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Romans 10:17).

In addition to the Word of God, God provides His Spirit to bear witness, “because the Spirit is truth” (I John 5:6). The Spirit operates in conjunction with the Word of God; they are

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

never contrary or different to each other.

Perhaps this next statement of truth is not adequate to the skeptic, but it certainly comforts the believer. Notice how clearly John addresses the way the believer is comforted. *“And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life”* (I John 5:20). From this verse, we discover that God, by His Spirit has given us an understanding that we may *know* Him that is true.

A person will not be convinced by reasoning and intellect as to which is the right way. God must convince him. For this reason, it serves no real purpose to debate truth. Instead, may we be careful to preach truth that men might be converted so they may have eternal life.

“I am the Life” – God’s answer to miserable corruption (v. 6c). Jesus demonstrated earlier that He was the Life-giver, when He raised Lazarus from the grave. There is nothing more meaningful to mortal man than having the knowledge of eternal life. At least to a Christian, this should be true. Since beginning this writing project, I have passed the half-century mark. I have always wondered how I would accept aging and the approaching of old age. From the Christian’s perspective, I can truly say that there has been no greater period of life than now. So much having to do with the way I feel is knowing that I will be alive forever. Many of the questions I had pertaining to my youth have now been answered. There is also a sense of satisfaction in knowing that God’s plan absolutely works. Every promise that He makes, He keeps. He has been faithful, and will be faithful until the end. I have also learned that God makes no mistakes; we do.

Apart from the Lord, I could not at all feel the way that I do. He is the Life and He is my Life. Not having Him as the Life-giver one can only anticipate miserable corruption. For the unbeliever, his whole existence is spiraling downward. The sudden crash will bring him to the pit. He then will be made acutely aware that he is in a state of eternal death. He finds himself this way because he rejected the opportunity of

JOHN

having everlasting life. Remember what Jesus told Martha in John 11:25-26: *“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”*

II. THERE IS A PARACLETE FOR YOU vv. 7-26

The Greek word for *comforter* is Paraclete. We find that many of our English words come from the Greek, just like a lot of our English words are Latin-based. It is profitable to study the etymology of words, realizing that for a proper interpretation of our blessed King James Bible we need to be careful to employ the grammatical – historical basis of interpretation. This hermeneutical principle requires that each word be properly understood in regards to its grammar and its historical setting. Not giving attention to the words in this manner can certainly open up the possibility of misinterpretation. There are those who are so fearful of showing disrespect to the King James that they will not at all study the root meaning of words. In being overly careful not to study the etymology and meaning of the words, they may fail to achieve a proper interpretation.

Certainly, those who embrace the King James Bible as the Word of God should realize the value of proper interpretation. To have the King James Bible and fail to interpret it correctly is not much better than having a perverted translation. It is close kin to saying that you are King James only ... but never read it.

Those of us who reject the concept of dynamic equivalency should certainly realize the value of properly interpreting words.

The word *Paraclete* is similar in root meaning to our English word *parallel*. When you think of two lines being parallel you recognize that they run along side each other, never spreading apart and never touching. *Paraclete* has a Greek meaning that may be described in a courtroom setting. The defendant is seated on the stand having said all that he knew to say in hopes of declaring his innocence. Yet after saying

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

all, he finds that there still is not enough evidence to prove him innocence. In his dilemma, his mouth is stopped. His condition seems hopeless. But wait! Someone seated in the courtroom has information or evidence that has not been presented. He recognizes the plight of the defendant and realizes that judgment may not be served unless he volunteers what information he has to the courtroom. He raises his hand, "Your Honor, I have evidence that I wish to present to the courtroom that will declare the innocence of the plaintiff and allow justice to be served." The judge acknowledges and recognizes the person, inviting him to come and stand beside the plaintiff. He now assumes the position of an advocate or comforter.

The word *comforter* is Latin based. *Com* means along side of; *fortus* - strong hold, as in the word *fortify*, *fortitude*, or *fortress*.

The root of the word *Paraclete* carries the idea of advising, exhorting, comforting, strengthening, interceding, and encouraging. The same word used in our text occurs in I John 2:1 and is translated "advocate." From this point on we will refer to the Paraclete as the Comforter.

The Comforter given by the Father (vv. 7-17). In these verses, the Lord Jesus is describing the transition that will soon take place as He leaves to go back to Heaven to be with the Father. In doing so, the Comforter will be given to take His place. In this passage we see additional support pertaining to Christ's deity. Also, we see the way the Holy Spirit serves as a Person of the Trinity. In verse 10, "*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.*" Theologically, there is much to be learned from this verse. It shows that one cannot dissect and sever the parts of the Godhead. The three are one and in one. They may manifest themselves separately, but spiritually they are absolutely together.

Jesus says in verse 16, "*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;*"

JOHN

The Lord Jesus explains the way that He would provide the comfort needed to fill the void when He leaves. He said that He would not only comfort them with the Comforter, but by the Spirit, which would actually be their Comforter. This again shows that the Godhead is inseparable. Much that we understand about the Godhead and the Trinity in particular, we learn from this section of Scripture.

Through an ongoing study of this section, we will learn more about the specific work of the Spirit. John not only gives us insights in his Gospel, but additional insight in his epistle regarding the word of the Holy Spirit. It is here that we learn that the Heavenly Father sends the Holy Spirit. It is also here that we find that the Son guarantees the Holy Spirit.

The Comforter is guaranteed by the Son (vv. 18-26). In verse 18, *"I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you."* What a precious and comforting promise, direct from the lips of God. God Incarnate spoke this on the verge of being crucified. He used, in verse 16, the word *another*. This word *another* carries the idea of being another, but of the same essence or quality. It is not another that is different, it is another that is the same.

When He said that He would not leave us comfortless, He was using the word *comfortless* in the way that a father would be comforting His children when preparing to leave for an extended time. He would be saying, "I will not leave you as orphans" or "I will not leave you to be children without a father."

He was guaranteeing this by His Word. Jesus also tells them that the Comforter will be left to teach *"all things,"* and *"bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."* By His word, He further indicates that His comfort will bring peace.

III. THERE IS A PEACE FOR YOU vv. 27-31

The peace of God is a very wonderful thing and "may be better felt than told." I certainly do not desire to over-layer my theology on my feelings, yet I must say that the peace of God feels good. This is true because, as mentioned in our previous studies, God made us as emotional creatures. As a spiri-

GOD'S SOLUTION FOR TROUBLED HEARTS

tual man, one can intellectually understand the peace of God. He may with his volition, desire the peace of God, while in his emotions he may experience the peace of God. May we briefly study (1) The Source of Peace, (2) The Strength of Peace (vv. 27-31).

The source of peace (vv. 27a). “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you...” A person cannot experience the peace of God apart from receiving it from the Lord. He is the Life giver; He is the Peace giver. The world may ask in despair, “Who am I?” “Where did I come from?” “Where am I going?” and “Is there more to life than this?” Philosophers have attempted in vain to answer questions like this. A satisfiable answer will never be given. An unbeliever can never know the peace of God unless he knows God through the Lord Jesus Christ. So, if the same philosophers tell you to embrace Christ intellectually, as one of the available gods, you will still find yourself void of the true peace of God. The source of this peace is *only* found in Christ Jesus.

The strength of peace (vv. 27b-31). The Lord once again comforts His disciples and tells them that He would not talk much more with them (v. 30). He told them that He had the responsibility of doing His Father’s will. The disciples will, like Peter, forsake the Lord, but then will come back with the peace of God and perform the commission that Jesus had given them. With the exception of Judas they will all be faithful until the end.

Chapter 38

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE TRUE VINE? John 15:1-17

It would be most difficult to understand what Jesus says here without first understanding what He had to say in chapters 13 and 14. For proper interpretation the contextual principle should be employed throughout the Scriptures. Remember, when studying this passage, study it in view of its context. This brings to mind that the most careful interpretation of Scripture not only requires comparing Scripture with Scripture but also requires studying, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little.

A great truth is unfolding pertaining to man's relationship to Christ and also his continuing responsibility after Christ's departure. The Lord uses the analogy of the vine and its branches. Emphasis should be given to the Old Testament passages pertaining to the vine being Israel (Psalm 80:8-9; Isaiah 5:1-2, 7; Jeremiah 2:21; Hosea 10:1). With Israel being a type of the true vine, it can only exhibit failure and degeneracy. When Christ says, "*I am the true vine*" He says it as the antitype and fulfils all the expectations of the Heavenly Husbandman. The emphasis back to Israel will only be for comparison, with our primary emphasis being on the True Vine, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the seventh and final "I am" saying.

A word of significance in our study will be the word *abide*. As we examine this word, we will do it as we study the vine and its branches. There are two major thoughts that we will enlarge upon. We will look at (1) The Law of Abiding (vv. 1-9); (2) The Law of Abounding (vv. 10-17). Also, we will show how important chapters 13 and 14 are to a clear understanding of this chapter.

I. THE LAW OF ABIDING vv. 1-9

While studying John – the belief book, one will be con-

THE TRUE VINE

stantly reminded that Satan has his many counterfeits. These counterfeits, as a true counterfeit would do, attempts to closely mimic the actual. The Lord has already identified Himself as the true One in our John study. He first referred to Himself as the True Light in chapter 1, verse 4. Then later in chapter 6, He refers to Himself as the True Bread (v. 32). Now, here He calls Himself the True Vine with His Father being the Husbandman (v. 1). "In the Old Testament the Father is represented as the Proprietor of the vine, but here He is called the Husbandman, that is the Cultivator, the One who cares for it. The figure speaks of His love for Christ and His people: Christ as the One who was made in the form of a servant and took the place of dependency. How jealously did He watch over Him who grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground (Isaiah 53:2)! Before His birth, the Father prevented Joseph from putting away his wife (Matthew 1:18-20). Soon after His birth the Father bade Joseph to flee into Egypt for Herod would seek the young Child to destroy Him (Matthew 2:13). What proofs were these of the Husbandman's care for the true Vine!" (A. W. Pink).

Abiding involves a connection that is enjoined (vv. 1-5). One cannot understand the quality of abiding, without also knowing something about his position in Christ. The study of this concept has been referred to as the study of "positional truth." From that comes the expression, "deeper life." When these expressions are not properly understood they may be criticized in their usage. Having a *deeper life* in Christ Jesus should be coveted not criticized. This passage shows how totally dependent the branch is on the vine for its sustenance.

The Lord is speaking to the 11 disciples; Judas has removed himself and exposed himself as an unbeliever. To maintain proper interpretation, keep in mind that this entire section deals with believers only. To examine otherwise would create irreconcilable problems with interpretation.

Only the believer may enjoy a deeper life experience or an abiding experience. As such, there are requirements. The Lord was introducing the work of the Holy Spirit when He was introducing the Comforter. The Same Holy Spirit is necessary

JOHN

for abiding. Yet whereas the previous emphasis was on the doctrinal aspect of a Spirit filled life, the emphasis here is on the practical significance of a Spirit filled life.

Verse four says, *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”* This verse speaks of a co-dependence, with the higher value of that relationship belonging to the main Vine. Unless the believer is connected in a vital union to the Lord, his work will not prosper. His work will only be carnal in nature. So important it is that we understand this truth. The Epistle of I John uses the same Greek word in I John 3:24. The English word here is dwelleth. *“And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.”*

Notice from this verse that the key to abiding is by keeping the commandments or as we commonly say, obedience. When one disobeys, he forfeits the blessings that come with abiding. In effect, he is disconnected from the strength that comes only from the vine. Most Christians naturally recognize the need for the Lord when it comes to the big issues, but are deceived in thinking that the Lord is not needed with the small things. One’s attitude should be, “I need Him every step of the way.”

Much of what we do can be performed in the energy of the flesh. Yet such does not and cannot yield fruit. Fruit bearing and abiding are synonymous one to the other. This is certainly what is meant by verse 5, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”*

Abiding involves a casting away that is avoided (v. 6). This verse reads, *“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”* This verse as a result of improper interpretation has been difficult to understand at times. Keep in mind that *“every branch IN ME”* (caps mine) the words *in me* show the branches, being believers, are in Christ. The casting away *“as a branch”* shows God’s

THE TRUE VINE

attitude toward the believer's works being done apart from Him. When one does any work in the flesh it does not please God, and cannot please Him. I Corinthians 3:15 tells us, "*If any man's work shall be burned, (the very word used in John 15:6) he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.*"

Certainly our work for the Lord will take on more gravity, if we more often considered the seriousness of operating in the energy of the flesh. The judgment seat of Christ will have a burning effect on the wood, hay, and stubble that clutters our lives.

How clearly indicated is the Lord's attitude towards useless, fleshy, carnal works. So much is this kind of work despised, that He picks up our works as withered dry branches and casts them into the blazing inferno. That tells me that He wants to totally destroy any resemblance or semblance of works done in the energy of the flesh. How despicable are our "Cain-like" offerings. God help us to cling totally to Him, to abide in Him.

Some interpret the passage to mean that Jesus is referring to unbelievers who are cast into Hell or the lake of fire. This is not the teaching here. Instead, the Lord is showing very graphically how awful it is to not abide in Him and to be totally without fruit. To abide in Him means to continue in Him.

Abiding involves a continuing that is enjoyed (vv. 7-9). Verse seven says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Abiding, as indicated earlier, involves obeying the Word of God. When this is taking place the Father is glorified as verse 8 tells us, "*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*"

Jesus is telling the disciples that their abiding is a very special thing. It is like being held real close in the arms of Jesus, where the tender words spoken are most clearly understood. There is whispering instead of shouting. Jesus does not have to yell His word from across the street. Nor does one need to yell back. In a close encounter the lover is able

JOHN

to softly word his request. "Dear Jesus, I need to teach my Sunday School class Sunday. You know that those little boys that I am teaching are small bundles of potential waiting to explode either for God or Satan. Help me to have the godly power of influence that I may guide them in the right way. I need you, Lord." Just as the vine is connected to the branches, so should we be connected to Him. Stay close – not far.

Love is the basis for abiding. When abiding or dwelling with someone it certainly helps to love that someone. True abiding cannot be accomplished without love. For this reason the Lord gives instructions in this manner, "*As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love*" (v. 9).

II. THE LAW OF ABOUNDING vv. 10-17

John 5:5 yields this formula. One cannot abound without first abiding, and one cannot abide without abounding. Christ guarantees this to be so in this fifth verse, "*He that abideth in me, and I in him, (notice) the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*" Another word picture that describes in a most tender way the word *abide* is "to nest." Just think how totally dependent the egg is to the mother hen. The egg just lies there until the hen just lays there. When both are closely lying together, something happens. The little chick begins to peck its way out. The fruit of this kind of abiding is the baby chick. The nest is a place of necessity. But it is also a place of security. How could the baby chick feel more secure than when covered by the mother hen. How can the believer feel more secure than when covered by the Father's grace!

May we focus now on the word *abound*. This word is a word, as the old writers would say, pregnant with meaning. It means to increase; to overflow; to multiply; to abound; to be rampant. The word "abound" (*perissensai*) means to excel and overflow. I Thessalonians 3:12 uses this word, "*And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you.*"

Though this word does not appear in our text, the idea

THE TRUE VINE

does. May we consider it from these three perspectives. (1) To abound grants one a gracious portion (vv. 10-11); (2) To abound grants one a great privilege (vv. 12-15); (3) To abound grants one a guaranteed promise (vv. 12-17).

To abound grants one a gracious portion (vv. 10-11). There is no greater portion to be enjoyed by the believer than *full joy*. Joy, the joy of the Lord, is an inner gladness; a deep-seated pleasure. It is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful and rejoicing heart. It is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful and rejoicing behavior. Notice these thoughts that render the practical benefits of joy, from PRACTICAL WORD STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT, “The joy of the Lord is not the same as the joy of the world. The joy of the world is more of a temporary pleasure than joy. The world’s joy is always nagged by some incompleteness, some lack, some unfulfilling thing, some missing ingredient, some need still existing. There is not a completeness – not a complete sense of assurance, confidence, and satisfaction. There is the knowledge, the haunting awareness, that something can arise to disturb the joy (sickness, death, financial loss, and war). The haunting awareness always keeps the world’s joy from being full and complete, assuring and satisfying.”

Several things need to be said about the believer’s joy.

1. Joy is divine. It is possessed and given only by God. Its roots are not in earthly or material things or cheap triumphs. It is the joy of the Holy Spirit, a joy based in the Lord. It is His very own joy (John 15:11; Acts 13:52; Romans 14:17; Galatians 5:22; I Thessalonians 1:6).
2. Joy does not depend on circumstances or happiness. Happiness depends upon happenings, but the joy that God implants in the believer’s heart overrides all, even the matters of life and death (Psalm 5:11; II Corinthians 6:10; II Corinthians 7:4).
3. Joy springs from faith (Romans 15:13; Philippians 1:25; II Timothy 1:4; cp. Matthew 2:10).
4. Joy of future reward makes and keeps the believer faithful (Matthew 25:21, 23; Acts 20:24; Hebrews 12:2).

Verse 11 describes joy from both God’s and man’s position.

JOHN

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.” Notice the relationship of one to the other: “my joy might remain in you” equals “your joy might be full” or “my joy” equals “your joy.” For our joy to be full, His overflowing joy must first find entrance and then remain. When it remains, His joy becomes our joy and He, quite capably, can fill us up to the brim. His portion given to us is always a gracious portion. The depth of His abiding riches is in proportion to our desire. James 4:2b says, “... ye have not, because ye ask not” or *want not*.

To abound grants one a great privilege (vv. 12-15). Proverbs 18:24 tells us that *“there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”* The words *“sticketh closer than a brother,”* and especially *“sticketh closer”* remind me of the word *abide*. Just as logs burn with greater intensity when they burn together, there is a greater intensity of devotion when abiding takes place. You may measure the degree of friendship by the closeness of the friends. *“A friend that sticketh closer than a brother”* could very easily be describing the Lord Jesus, who tells us that He will never leave nor forsake us.

The Lord is showing how great His love by giving the greatest test for true friendship. Notice verse 13, *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* He, in using the word *friend*, is elevating the disciples from just a position of servitude to that of friendship. He told them, *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you”* (v. 14). Because they are abiding with Him in obedience He goes on further telling them, *“Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you”* (v. 15). In this verse the intimacy of friendship is shown. To be intimate with the Lord requires that you abide with Him. When I embrace my wife, in that close relationship I may whisper things to her and she to me that of which no one else is privy. The same way the Lord will share with those closest to Him of His heart. If you desire the privilege of knowing Him more intimately, then you must become His friend. To be His friend you must abide

THE TRUE VINE

with Him.

It also may be said that a true friend does not want to hurt his true friend. The love that makes this kind of friendship is tender and sensitive.

There is certainly no greater honor than to be a friend of Jesus. In the Old Testament, Abraham was called the friend of God (Isaiah 41:8). This was such a great honor bestowed upon Abraham, but it is the desire of Jesus that we all be His friends.

A friend needs a friend. I believe that it would be appropriate to say that we need the Lord, and the Lord needs us. Let me illustrate again, using the egg and hen. If the egg lies alone and the mother hen lies alone there is no fruit (baby chick). Yet when the egg abides (lies under the hen) with the hen there is the potential for hatching, likewise we need Christ as our Comforter. He comes to us in the time of our need. In the state of abiding He needs us to come to Him. We are *protected* when He comes to us as our Comforter. He is *pleased* when we go to Him as to abide. So much so that He calls us His friend. "What a friend we have in Jesus," how true is that lovely hymn!

To abound grants one a guaranteed promise (vv. 16-17). When all of the above is operational, then one has the promise of answered prayer. *Answered prayer* results from *asked prayer*. When there is closeness on the part of the one asking and closeness on the part of the one being asked there is also carefulness. Once again, alluding to my marriage relationship, there are things, which I know about my wife that would prohibit me from disclosing about her, or things that I would not discuss with her. I am not talking about sordid things, but maybe sensitive things. Likewise, by having a close relationship to the Lord I will know how to pray and ask without asking amiss. For this reason, the Lord can correctly say, "... *whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you*" (John 15:16).

Verse 17 says, "*These things I command you, that ye love one another.*" This verse could very well summarize the full intent of giving the discourse on "the vine and the

JOHN

branches.” The Lord knowing that He would soon be leaving felt it necessary to instruct the disciples to continue loving others as He has loved them. He knew if His disciples and all that are His stayed close to Him that He could whisper the instructions that He had for them. “Go love that person in the nursing home” or “Go help that poor widow with her chores” or “Minister to that couple who just lost their little girl.” To the preacher, He may instruct, “Tell the lost why I really died on the cross.”

As He loves us, we may love them. Really, He loves us all.

Chapter 39

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE WORLD'S HATRED OF THE CHRISTIAN? John 15:18-16:6

I hate the word *hate*. Yet this word powerfully conveys meaning, and with that meaning it also conveys intense emotions. Even when in anger a person says, "I hate you," and may not really mean it, great hurt still occurs. Hate is not a word that is a fence-straddling word. It is a strong word. It is the opposite of love. A person can actually *love to hate* but not very easily can one *hate to love*. Said another way, a person may more easily say, "I love hating you!" but it is more difficult to imagine someone saying, "I hate loving you." This indicates that as strong as the word *hate* is, the word *love* is even stronger.

A good way to express this truth, if the world hates you (that is very strong), the Lord loves you more (a stronger expression). The disciples will begin to learn what it means to be hated by the world. Until now the world's hatred was directed only towards the Lord. With the departure of the Lord Jesus Christ, the believer will begin to keenly feel the animosity and hatred that previously was directed against Christ. May we examine the world's attitude towards the Christian as we consider the world's hatred of the Christian (John 15:18-16:6). We will consider (1) The Reason for the Hatred (vv. 18-21); (2) The Reaction to the Hatred (vv. 22-16:1); (3) The Results of the Hatred (vv. 2-6).

I. THE REASON FOR THE HATRED vv. 18-21

Again the word *hate* is a strong word. It is not accidental that the Lord chooses this word. The word *hate* is a more aggressive form of *love not* (I John 2:15). In I John, the Christian is told to love not the world. This is a very strong but not a violent command. The command is militant but not violent. Whereas in contrast, the world will have a violent hatred of the Christian. So much so that after the Crucifixion of Jesus

JOHN

there would be many who would die the martyr's death. Especially beginning with the apostolic age, hatred would mark the world's attitude towards the believer. To read Foxe's Book of Martyrs would give much credence to this statement. As we analyze the reason for the hatred, may we consider these three thoughts. (1) There is a precedent for the hatred (v. 18); (2) There is a persecution because of the hatred (vv. 19-20); (3) There is a pattern concerning the hatred (v. 21).

There is a precedent for the hatred (v. 18). "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you." When Jesus warns the disciples of the way that they will be received, I am reminded that Peter later wrote his letter in the same spirit. Listen to what the learned Peter had to say, *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy"* (I Peter 4:12-13). What Peter spoke was a direct result of having been previously spoken to by the Lord. At first Peter did not expect nor comprehend the hatred that the world would have towards the believer. Peter, while standing by the fire warming himself, heard the question, *"Art not thou also one of his disciples?"* At this time in a prideful state of anger Peter knew that he, by association, was going to be partaker of Christ's sufferings (John 18:24-27). Here he shamefully denied Christ, but later learned to serve the Lord with great character and great courage.

The Lord wanted His disciples to understand that the bias or hatred towards them had its beginnings in the hatred that the world had toward Christ. Christ did nothing at all evil to gender the animosity and hatred that was directed towards Him. Peter, when he said, *"Think it not strange..."* could relate to the sinless, perfect Saviour who was hated without cause. If Jesus was hated, then think it not strange if you are also hated or tried by Satan and his forces.

There is a persecution because of the hatred (vv. 19-20). The persecution comes to all who are not of the world (in the world, yes, but not of the world). We are living in the world but

THE WORLD'S HATRED OF THE CHRISTIAN

should not be alive to the worldly system. If you do not have your affections on the world, the world will hate you. John's epistle tells us, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"* (I John 2:15-17). Jesus tells His disciples, *"If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you"* (v. 19). While telling them this, He gives the reason for their being hated. With this hatred, He goes on to say, comes persecution. He tells them that as servants they will not enjoy a greater privilege than the Master will. They too will have to suffer. He said, *"Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also"* (v. 20). Then Paul later makes the similar statement when writing to young Timothy as found in II Timothy 3:10-13. *"But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."*

The doctrine or teaching pertaining to persecution is worthy of much consideration. If, indeed, the Christian is not only subject to but will inevitably face persecution, he needs to know about it. He also needs the correct attitude towards it. The persecution, though having its origin in Satan, can be an opportunity for the Christian to be a witness. II Corinthians 4:9 tells us that the believer will be persecuted but not forsaken. The Lord told Paul, in his time of trial, after having received a thorn in the flesh, *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly there-*

JOHN

fore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (I Corinthians 12:9-10). Paul learned that even though he was to suffer persecution, that was not the end! He knew that anything from Satan's arsenal, no matter how aggressively sent, will only be as a popgun compared to God's cannon. Paul was confidently able to endure but also enjoy the persecutions. The persecutions when compared to God's grace seemed rather small.

There is a pattern concerning the hatred (v. 21). Just one day ago I sat for nearly an hour witnessing to a Jew. One thing that deeply troubled him was why do Christians need to pray in the name of Jesus? He asked me, "Could we not just pray in the name of God?" I answered him; "Jesus is God." The name Jesus is a hated name just as is the name Christ. We who are saved are Jesus people or as we commonly refer to ourselves, Christians. And as Christians we will be hated for His name's sake. Jesus says, "*But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me*" (v. 21).

A person may not realize just how hated the name Jesus is until he employs it. The closer one gets to Jesus, the more that person will be hated by the world. When a person uses profanity does he say, "Oh, Satan"? No, he will say, "Jesus Christ" or connect the name God with a slang word. The name Jesus is more hated than the name Satan by the unbelieving world. It is almost like a subtle spirit prevails in the heart of the unbeliever whispering, "Satan is your ticket."

There certainly is a pattern of hatred to be recognized. This patter of hatred is on display when Hollywood produces a movie about Jesus. For example, the movie, "The Last Temptation" portrayed Jesus as a sinner. The filmmakers wanted to make Him just as carnal as they were. Novels, written by the supposedly intelligent, do the same. There is an anti-Christ bias that so often comes forth following the pattern of hatred. This pattern exists for one reason as Jesus said,

THE WORLD'S HATRED OF THE CHRISTIAN

“because they know not him that sent me.”

II. THE REACTION TO THE HATRED vv. 22-16:1

To properly react or perhaps more accurately to properly act towards the hatred of the world, one needs to understand the cause of their hatred.

Be understanding of the cause (vv. 22-25). Had the Lord Jesus only come and dwelt among the people, He would have been largely ignored. But, He came as a witness with these two qualifications. He came with *words* and *works*. What greater prerequisite for being a strong witness than these two qualities. These are the qualities that are needed as we witness today. People still need to be confronted with the truth and be able to witness the truth. We should all be faithfully committed to telling the gospel truth. There was a time in D. L. Moody's life that he purposed to witness to at least one soul everyday of his life. This became a practice that he kept until the end of his life. One day he asked someone if they were saved. The person looked at him and said, “Sir, that is none of your business.” Moody looked at him and said very kindly, “Sir, that is my main business.”

It is so very important that we give the words of truth. There was a Mercedes Benz TV commercial, showing a car colliding into a cement wall during a safety test. Someone then asked the company spokesman why they did not enforce their patent on the Mercedes Benz energy – absorbing car body, a design evidently copied by other companies because of its success. He replies matter-of-factly, “Because some things in life are too important not to share.” We certainly should not be a silent spokesman (an oxymoron) but should tell what we know.

Just as much as there should be words, there needs to be works – Jesus came to do the works of Him that sent Him. We should do the work of Christ and understand that we will face persecution. Think it not strange when the persecution comes in the form of ridicule, slander, mocking, gossip, or may be even personal violence. It will come.

In verse 25, Jesus says, *“But this cometh to pass, that*

JOHN

the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law. They hated me without a cause.” The prophets predicted this moment when Christ Jesus, and later His followers, would be hated without a cause. How do you handle, as a believer, the persecution that you will face? May we let the Scriptures address it as we consider the additional work of the Comforter.

Be under-girded by the Comforter (vv. 26-27). Having grown up in a carpenter’s home and having been a bridge builder when in college, I understand the concept of under girding or putting in a foundation. Just as the bridge remains strong when the pilings are driven deep, and the building remains strong when the foundation is adequate, there needs to be something spiritual upon which we lean. We need to never lean on the arm of the flesh. The flesh will fail us; we need to be totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit testifies of the Father, and also gives authority and credence to what you do. As you minister, be mindful that the comforting Holy Spirit will verify in your heart the truth of God’s Word, and grant you the courage to both speak and do what the Heavenly Father wills. You may do it with courage.

Be uplifted with courage (16:1). “These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.” This verse is given to encourage the witnesses not to fall away, not to “throw in the towel” or quit. There would not be a more appropriate time to give Paul’s challenge to young Timothy than at this point. Notice II Timothy 1:8-12 says, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel: Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am per-

THE WORLD'S HATRED OF THE CHRISTIAN

sueded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.”

Our church school ball team just won the state championship. In doing so the team demonstrated great courage when they were trailing 20 to 10 in the first period. Our team only had one senior player and hardly any bench (depth) at all. The starting squad had to stay in the game for the entire four periods. As the opponent took what seemed to be an easy lead, our spirits began to sink. Discouragement was beginning to sweep over the fans, yet the coach and the players would not quit. With our backs against the wall, Anthony took the ball and went right to the bucket with a hefty, defiant slam dunk as though to say, “We are not through - the game is not over - we have come to play!”

It seemed that the adrenalin began to rush back into the players; the fans picked themselves up once again to cheer their team on, and the scoreboard told the rest of the story. The team would not quit. How do you really stop anyone who will not quit?

III. THE RESULTS OF THE HATRED 6:2-6

This portion of Scripture is a prophetic prediction of what will happen to the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. I must emphasize the name *Lord Jesus Christ* instead of using the generic name God. The name God can mean so many different things to so many different people. For example, the AA (Alcoholic Anonymous) says, “Worship the God of your choosing.” The same phraseology is used by many of the secret organizations. So many religious groups are comfortable in using the name God, but shy away from, and many will refuse to acknowledge the name Christ or Jesus. I must make an issue of this because Jesus Christ did (5:21).

Another concern, that demonstrates the subtleness of Satan, in this area, was observed as I was watching the video, “Left Behind.” There were several aspects of the movie that concerned me, but none more than the way that those left behind who desired salvation prayed to be saved. Their prayer was something like this, “God forgive me.” Unless I

JOHN

completely overlooked it, there was no reference to the Lord Jesus Christ. For a person to be saved it requires more than “a generic God of your choosing.” One must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. The very essence of the Gospel is the death, the burial, and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 15).

As we consider the results of the hatred, may we observe and consider these two thoughts: (1) The believers will be attacked by the religious (vv. 2-3); (2) The believers will be attacked and then remember (vv. 4-6).

The believers will be attacked by the religious (vv. 2-3). Having pastored for nearly thirty years, I have learned that no matter what the sin is, there is a natural tendency for a person to justify their sin. Satan, as the deceiver, has convinced the enemy of both Christ and the Christian that when he persecutes or even kills the Christian that he is doing God a service (v. 2). When Satan works, he works most effectively when he leaves the bar rooms, the dance floors, and the nightclubs and goes into the different religious institutions and spews out his deception. The bar rooms and such can operate quite efficiently on their own. There is enough of the world and the flesh there to not need the devil. But, Satan enjoys nothing more than the orchestrating of his own religious system. I do not believe that he is more pleased with the more blatant Satan - worship - churches. Instead, he finds it more cunning to counterfeit the truth causing people to blindly convince themselves that they are worshipping God rather than Satan.

When Satan builds his own religious system, he programs into that system an acute hatred of Christ and the Christians. It was for the same reason that Jeremiah faced so much persecution from the religious crowd. In Jeremiah 20, Pashur the son of Immer the priest smote Jeremiah the prophet and put him in the stocks. During this time Jeremiah had to encourage himself in the Lord. He was ready to quit; he said, “*I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me*” (v. 7). In verse nine, we can almost feel his pathos, “*Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his*

THE WORLD'S HATRED OF THE CHRISTIAN

name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.” In verse 10 the pressure is even more intensely recognized, *“For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.”* Jeremiah encourages himself with these words, *“But the Lord is with me as a mighty terrible one ...”* (v. 11).

In the New Testament, Paul and Silas were imprisoned at Philippi by the religious crowd (Acts 16). They were his strongest antagonists.

The believers will be attacked and then remember (vv. 4-6). It is the sayings of Christ that will be remembered. The Lord is preparing His disciples for the eventual persecution that will be theirs. In a larger contest, just as David knew the wisdom of hiding the Word in his heart, we need to hide the Word in our hearts to be remembered and called upon as needed.

Peter, under the divine inspiration of the Holy Spirit, reminded the scattered saints who will be persecuted of some things that they should remember. You may observe Peter instructing those to whom he was writing to “remember” in II Peter.

As an application, we as believers should learn the Word of God and remember what we have learned to protect us against the hatred of the world.

Chapter 40

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?

John 16:7-15

Men are so prone to doubt; even when it means doubting Christ. This section begins this way, with Christ speaking, *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”* (v. 7). Did you notice the Lord is reminding His disciples that He is telling them the truth? He did this in John 14:1 when He said, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”* Believe God – Believe me...

Certainly, Christ Jesus upon noticing the sorrow that fills the hearts of the disciples knows they need reassuring. They cannot comprehend why Jesus would submit to the crucifixion and voluntarily leave them behind. “Is not He more valuable staying with us?” they must have questioned. The old Scottish Presbyterian minister and biblical scholar Thomas Whitelaw had some excellent observations concerning Christ’s departure. Whitelaw in his “Commentary on John” had this to say concerning verse 7:

“The Expediency of Christ’s Departure.”

HIS PRESENCE NEARER - Had Christ continued on the earth and in the flesh, His presence would have been confined to one particular locality at a time: having gone to the skies, He is removed beyond the boundaries of time and sense, so that at one and the same moment He can fill all things with His fullness (Ephesians 1:23; iv. 10).

HIS GODHEAD CLEARER - When Christ tabernacled here below, men found it difficult to believe that He was ‘God manifest in the flesh.’ Had He remained on earth as before, after rising from the dead; it is doubtful if men would not sooner or later have relapsed into the old condition of skepticism as the ages rolled on questioning whether Christ had ever died at all and risen as He said, and in any case finding it had to credit

THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

that one in human likeness was indeed, 'The Son of God.' But as the truth of Christ's divinity was for Christ's contemporaries established beyond controversy by the firmly established fact of His resurrection (Rom. I. 4), so for all subsequent generations was it placed in the clearest light by His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high (viii. 28; Phil. ii9; I Pet. I. 21).

HIS SALVATION SURE - Had Christ remained upon the earth after having finished the work His Father had given Him to do, there would always have lingered about man's minds a suspicion either that the work was in some respects incomplete, or that Christ, the worker, had not been accepted by the Father; and that, as a consequence, the grounds on which the hopes of their salvation rested were insecure. But Christ, having passed through the heavens, there to appear in the presence of God for us, the evidence is perfect that His redemption is complete and His salvation sure (Heb. X. 12-14).

HIS CHURCH RICHER - Had Christ not departed from the world, His church would still have been rich in the possession of Him as 'The Father's image,' as was as the Way, the Truth, and the Life; but His departure, while not robbing the church of His real presence (see above), has enriched her, in addition, with the presence and indwelling of the Spirit, who is the Father's and the Son's highest gift to believing men (xx. 22; Acts ii. 38, I Cor. lii. 16).

HIS HEAVEN DEARER - Had Christ lingered among men after rising from the dead, the Father's house might have none the less been a certainty; but it would have wanted its chief attraction. "There is nothing but perfect garden-flowers in heaven, and the best plenshing that is there is Christ." ... "He graceth heaven and all His Father's house with His presence. He is a rose that beautifieth all the upper garden of God" (Rutherford's Letters, p. 106). "I would be in heaven, suppose I had not errard but to see that dainty golden ark, and God inhabiting a body such as we sinners have, that I might adore Him for evermore." (Void. p. 320). (Commentary on John, p, 344).

There is so much that Thomas Whitelaw said to explain

JOHN

verse seven when explaining the purpose of Jesus leaving and then sending the Comforter to come in His stead. May we enlarge on what has already been given as we consider, (1) Why the Comforter Comes (v. 7); (2) What the Comforter Does (vv. 8-12); (3) When the Comforter Came (vv. 13-15).

I. WHY THE COMFORTER COMES v. 7

Because of the Concern of Christ (v. 7a). The concern of Christ being a reason may come across as theologically too simplistic; but in human terms that is a major reason: Christ cares. I am so glad that He does care. The highest of human relationships comes when man is able to enjoy the intimacy of having Christ as a friend. "What a friend we have in Jesus" the song exclaims. Our Friend Jesus certainly does care. Another song says, "No one ever cared for me like Jesus." He, being touched by the feelings of our infirmities, tells us that He will never leave nor forsake us.

When Jesus in verse seven said, "*Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you,*" He was showing the disciples that He not only cared but that it would be expedient for Him to leave the Comforter in His stead. When He used the word *expedient*, He meant that it would turn out to the disciples' advantage if He were to go away as Thomas Whitelaw so ably illustrated.

Because of the Commission of Christ (v. 7b). The Comforter was sent or commissioned by Christ to come to the earth. He is working under the authority of Christ and like Christ is very God. The Triune Godhead operates from the position of authority without compromising Deity. I Corinthians 11:3 indicates the way this truth is operational. "*But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*"

Everything that God does is done with purpose and with design. He makes no mistakes. The purposes of God cannot be improved upon; His ways are not our ways; His ways are

THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

perfect. His ways also are the most efficient. Following the Holy chain of command from the Father, to the Son, and then to the Holy Spirit came the Comforter. God expressed His will in body form through Jesus. He expressed His will in Spirit form through the Comforter. Thus, in a more expedient manner the Comforter was given. Now, may we examine what the Comforter does (vv. 8-12).

II. WHAT THE COMFORTER DOES vv. 8-12

This section gives us a great understanding relative to the work of the Holy Spirit. We will observe three aspects of the way He works. First, “He does a work because of sin” (vv. 8-9); second, “He does a work because of salvation” (v. 10); third, “He does a work because of Satan” (vv. 11-12).

He does a work because of sin (vv. 8-9). In my studies, I found that Matthew Henry addressed the work of the Holy Spirit pertaining to sin as well as anyone. He stated that the Holy Spirit came to reprove the world of sin. The word *reprove* carries the idea of gathering evidence to clear one or either support one’s legal argument. In the case of Holy Ghost conviction (or convincing) the sinner is clearly convicted of, as Matthew Henry words it, *The Fact of Sin*. When the Word of God is preached for the purpose of convincing the sinner of his sin, the Holy Spirit does a work in the heart to cause one to be receptive to the fact that he is a sinner. The Holy Spirit also convinces the sinner of the *fault* of sin. The Holy Spirit not only helps label the sin, He also defines the sinfulness of that sin. The third thing done by the Holy Spirit according to Matthew, is to convince one of the *folly* of sin (that we have acted against right reason and our true intent). Remember, sin will take you farther than you want to go, cost you more than you want to pay, and keep you longer than you wanted to stay.

The fourth thing that the Holy Spirit does is to convince one of the *filth* of sin. Apart from Holy Ghost conviction sin may seem rather sophisticated instead of filthy. Some of the passionate “sin games” that people play are not only wicked and vulgar, but also absolutely filthy. Sin games, pertaining to

JOHN

sex for an example, are built on the premise that the more grotesque, the more unnatural then, the more satisfying. This is a lie of Satan that the Holy Spirit can destroy by convincing one of the filthiness of sin. The fifth thing that the Holy Spirit does is to convince one of the *fountain* of sin. The Holy Spirit tells us that it is our corrupt nature that we owe to our sinning. Then Matthew Henry shows that the Holy Spirit convinces of the *fruit* of sin. Ultimately the final fruit of sin is death. Romans 6:23 tells us that, "*the wages of sin is death.*"

He does a work because of salvation (v. 10). One of the supreme purposes of Christ coming to the earth was to provide for man's salvation. Man because of sin is under the legal weight of condemnation. Not only did God's holy and righteous requirements need to be met by His Son, the righteousness of God had to be declared by the Word, and to be revealed by the Holy Spirit. The Son while on the earth was able to reveal to the world His own righteousness, but once He left He needed someone else to do that job. As the gospel witness declares the Truth, the Holy Spirit reveals the Truth.

When the sinner, under conviction, repents of his sin and he turns to the Lord Jesus Christ as His Saviour, the Holy Spirit sanctifies or sets apart that one unto salvation. The Holy Spirit births or quickens the sinner, at the same time removing the condemnation that weighed so heavily upon him. It is always a thrill to see the sinner come to Christ, and to see the change that takes place when he does. Songs have been sung, poems have been written, pictures have been painted, and sermons have been preached attempting to express the wonder of the change.

He does a work because of Satan (vv. 11-12). Perhaps this verse (v. 11) explains how the Holy Spirit or Comforter impresses upon the unbelieving sinner's mind that if God has and will judge Satan, He also will judge the sinner. Regardless of one's system of belief, most recognize that there is a satanic force that is operational. There is an evil force to be dealt with, a force that is recognizable. The oppressiveness of Satan is very easily recognized; and it is comforting knowing that he was judged at Calvary and will one day be sentenced

THE OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

to perdition. Revelation 20:10 says, “*And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*”

The Comforter settles us while we acknowledge that Satan is now at work; yet the Comforter reminds us that God’s Word is true and that Satan’s doom is sealed. He can only bother us for a little while.

III. WHEN THE COMFORTER CAME **vv. 13-15**

We look back to the events being described in chapter 16. Yet when the Lord was speaking, He was telling the troubled disciples not to be troubled. The One who was soon going to face death by crucifixion is not trying to be comforted, but is comforting! What an unselfish Saviour! Even as I have been meditating on this passage and have been writing about it, I have been captivated mostly by the troubled disciples, having little thought concerning Jesus. I was thinking of how He was more concerned in comforting others than comforting Himself. Yet this is exactly as the text reads. Everything is centered on comforting the disciples. For that reason, we are reminded that the Comforter was sent.

He came to reveal truth for practical help (v. 13a). In the world that we live, we as believers are needful of His constant help. The Comforter is *our* supreme Helper. He so constantly guides us. Notice verse 13, “*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.*”

We should remind ourselves that we do not catalogue our activities as being either *secular* or *sacred*. For the believer everything is sacred. To be Truth bearers we should also be Truth lovers. We should live the Truth. The Holy Spirit is capable of helping us this way. In our practical, spiritual existence God wants us to be permeated with the Word that we may act upon it, and live it!

To illustrate how one might live the Truth, consider Proverbs 24:10, “*If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength*

JOHN

is small.” Evangelist Reuben Ewert does an interesting study on this verse. I do not have his outline in its entirety, but thought what I do have is worth sharing.

He begins by asking, “Why does God allow adversity? (1) He discloses what is in us; (2) He develops what is missing in us; (3) He displays us for His glory. Then, using the verse and the word “if,” he tells us that the word “if” means that you do not have to faint. You can, but do not have to. But if you do your strength is small. The Holy Spirit may take this verse and remind you that you can plan *on* adversity, but you can also plan *for* adversity. You can prepare yourself for adversity by learning the Truth that is God’s Word, while the Holy Spirit will help you to live the Truth that is God’s work.

He came to reveal truth for prophetic help (vv. 13b-14). “*He will shew you things to come.*” Perhaps more than Jesus relating to that which we would call eschatological or pertaining to the very end times, He was likely referring to the work of the Holy Spirit at that time and immediately after Pentecost.

We do know that the Holy Ghost brought about the sign gifts for the benefit of the unbelieving Jew and to authenticate the Gospel. This must have been comforting to those waiting for the “baptism with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 1:5).

He came to reveal truth for positional help (v. 14). There is a definite work of the Godhead. God the Father is seated on the throne; the Lord Jesus is seated at the Father’s right hand, and the Holy Spirit is glorifying the Son as He comforts the believer.

Chapter 41

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT HIS RETURN? John 16:16-33

David was a classmate of mine. I saw him just a few hours before he left for Vietnam. I recall telling him to hurry back and when he returned, we would celebrate. I looked for his return. The next time I saw him, I only saw his body at the Smith-Tillman Funeral Home; he had stepped on a land mine. Many loved ones have left in a similar fashion never to return again. Jesus is about to leave, but promises He will return and He will.

Jesus is telling His disciples that He would be leaving for a *little while*, then later for a longer while. May we consider (1) He returns after a little while (vv. 16-24); (2) He returns after a longer while (vv. 25-33).

I. HE RETURNS AFTER A LITTLE WHILE vv. 16-24

His explanation of what is to happen (vv. 16-19). “A little while” can be a relative term. It was said that Einstein gave this practical definition of relativity. He said, “If a young man is sitting on a sofa with his sweetheart, three hours may seem like three minutes, but if a person is sitting on the stove for three minutes, it may seem like three hours.”

Jesus is letting the disciples know that it is nearly time for His crucifixion. His earthly ministry is nearly concluded. Just a few short years ago Jesus began His earthly ministry by performing a miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee. The three plus years have been very turbulent but profitable.

Reflecting back, it was John the Baptist who said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” John was describing, He, whom the prophets had spoken of, and for whom the people had waited. It was then that he was introducing Him. When John introduced Christ, he knew that providentially the stage was set, the curtain was raised as the great drama of the ages began to unfold. John, when introducing Christ, the Principal

JOHN

player, had already aroused the audience to behold the one who was to be thrust upon the center stage as he cried, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

After this introduction, it is then that the disciples were called. This call was a call to salvation, and then a call to service. Soon, we found Jesus performing the very first miracle, which was the first sign miracle. We came to understand that everything that Jesus did had significance. Theologians recognized this miracle as being the first of the sign miracles. The signs have been seen as reflecting Jesus' lordship over quality (water into wine), space (the healing of the nobleman's son at a distance), time (the healing of a man who had been lame for 38 years), quantity (the feeding of the five thousand), nature (walking on the sea), misfortune (the healing of the man born blind), and death (the raising of Lazarus). We remember that the purpose of the sign miracles was to manifest the glory of Christ and to motivate the disciples to believe in Him (2:11).

It seemed that each miracle spurned the wrath of the religious Jew. They were constantly resisting His doing good. Yet He continued to do the Father's will and now He explains that in just "a little while" that He would be leaving them, but He let them know that they would see Him again "in a little while." The first "little while" refers to the approaching crucifixion. The second "little while" refers to the time that His body lay in the grave. After the resurrection Jesus will be with them for the forty days before His ascension.

Their emotions from what is to happen (vv. 20-22a). God made us as creatures of emotion. The disciples are certainly on an emotional roller coaster as the crucifixion hour approaches. It is the Lord, the one who is to be crucified, that is comforting the disciples. We cannot make too much of this. He is the great God of consolation (II Corinthians 1). He likens their sorrow to that of an expectant mother about to give birth to her long awaited child. "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (John 16:21).

HIS RETURN

Christ Jesus is telling them that everything that will soon be taking place is taking place for a wonderful purpose. Just as the parents plan for and wait for the delivery of their child, they do it knowing that there will be a time of sorrow and travail for the mother. Yet they have the hope of the safe delivery of the newborn that will so complement and bless their lives. Jesus is telling them to make a comparison to the birth of a child.

When considering the similarities, the cross was going to be a place of intense suffering, and then to be followed by the death and the burial. Then just as the baby is tucked away in the mother's womb, so will Christ be tucked away in the womb of the earth for a period of time only to be triumphantly released, for no grave could hold Him! Praise God!

Their expectation of what is to happen (vv. 22b-24). The triumphant Saviour upon being raised from the dead will quicken their joy, making their joy come alive promising them that no man can take it away. *"And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you"* (v. 22). The Lord promises them that a resurrected Saviour will be the guarantee of lasting joy, and answered prayer. Notice verse 23, *"And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you."*

Neither joy, nor answered prayer could be hoped for if the Saviour lay dead. The resurrection is the key to all spiritual blessings. An empty grave is the reason that Christianity is different from all other religions, and the resurrection of any other, for there is only one Christ who lives and abides forever.

It is still proper and right for churches to preach the resurrected Saviour. The very key to our spiritual life is His *life*. When a church honors the resurrected Saviour, the service is made more alive. Easter should not be the only time that we emphasize a risen Saviour; each service should be a resurrection service.

In verse 24, Jesus tells them to ask, *"Hitherto have ye*

JOHN

asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." This verse indicates that full joy comes from receiving. Receiving comes from asking, or said another way; *"ye have not because ye ask not."* Prayer is asking. The same power that is available to bring about answered prayer was available at the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

While writing this, I am sitting in the corner of a little coffee shop, "The Daily Grind." In the background a Christian CD is playing. It is a lovely instrumental. A gentleman that I have known all my life just stopped by. He had a light heart attack and seemed to be recovering well. He just told me, "I attribute my doing so well to answered prayer." He said, "Preacher, my church and several other churches have been praying for me; I can sure tell it." I then asked him if I could bow my head and pray for him, and also thank God for healing him. He said, "Certainly." After I prayed, I began to think if Christ had not risen from the grave I would not be listening to a Christian CD and would not be praying a prayer of thanksgiving for a man who had been made well. Everything hinges on our resurrected Saviour.

II. HE RETURNS AFTER A LONGER WHILE wv. 25-33

There is the wonderful promise, if He goes away He will come again. Acts 1:8-11 also gives us this great truth, *"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."* John the Revelator also tells us in Revelation 1:7, *"Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so,*

HIS RETURN

Amen.”

There is a clarification regarding His return (vv. 25-28). What had been spoken in obscure sayings and in parables or proverbs is now being clearly spoken. The disciples have been going through both a preparatory and a developmental stage of their discipleship. Their maturity brought them additional information pertaining to the master plan of God. This plan involved the Lord Jesus leaving and He would be gone for a longer while, but relatively speaking, it was just for a short period of time. As I have been meditating on this portion of Scripture, I have become more acutely aware that everything that we do upon this earth is for a *little while*. “Our life is just a vapor that appeareth for a little while.” The time of witnessing and sowing the seed of the Gospel will “soon be past.” A person will enjoy childhood for just a little while. A person if he is married will be married for just a little while. One’s education, as long as it may seem, will just be for a little while. The life of a president, a preacher, or a policeman is just for a little while. On an on we could go, everything that we do on earth is for just a little while.

But think upon this. When one’s life is over on earth, that person will immediately be thrust into eternity for not a little while, but forever! Think of the enormity of this statement. Eternity is forever.

The Lord has been gone for a longer period than the little while leading up to His crucifixion, and the little while that was spent in the garden tomb, and the little while of forty days before His ascension. Though this period that He has been away is a longer period of time, it still is a little time compared to eternity, especially for the inhabitants of hell.

There is a confidence regarding His return (vv. 29-31). The confidence lies in the fact that the disciples acknowledge that Jesus came forth from God. For them to acknowledge Christ in this matter they had to believe what Christ told them in John 14:1. It was at this point that the Lord began in a very intensive way to encourage them. He was leading them to take their eyes off of the circumstances and their *troubles* and look to Him. Hebrews 12:1-2 are classic verses that illus-

JOHN

trate and teach this truth. The entire twelfth chapter develops the theme “Looking unto Jesus.” Remember, when one takes his eyes off of Jesus his journey is affected (Hebrews 12:15a). Also, his joy is affected (Hebrews 12:16-17).

Though there seems to be an increased level of confidence on the part of the disciples, Jesus asks a question that could indicate that even though they say that they believe “now,” they might not believe later. Later, we will find that they all forsook Him.

There is a challenge regarding His return (vv. 32-33). “Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The disciples have just stated that they were sure and that they believe, but the Lord asks the question, “*Do ye now believe?*” After asking this question, He told them that they would scatter and leave Him to Himself. Jesus told them that they would leave Him alone but He said, “*yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.*” Perhaps, Jesus was preparing them for their failures. He did not want them to be plagued by their failure.

So many which have stumbled never completely get back up because of their own sense of guilt and failure. It is not God’s will that we succumb to failure. God wants us to have *peace* and be of *good cheer* in this world of tribulation. He wants us to overcome our weakness! Just a few moments ago as the pastor of my church, I was talking to a member who had such a difficult time in overcoming his own failures; hence, he lives a defeated life. This is not God’s will.

Chapter 42

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER?

John 17:1-26

The disciples earlier asked the Lord to teach them to pray. The Lord very kindly gave them a great example on prayer; many refer to this as the Lord's prayer. Donald Grey Barnhouse said that it should, more appropriately, be called the disciple's prayer. Yet in this seventeenth chapter we truly have the Lord's prayer. Barnhouse also referred to this prayer as being "a conversation inside the Trinity," as was Psalm 110:1; *"The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."* Ryrie describes this verse this way, "David hears a conversation between the Lord (Yahweh, God the Father) and David's Lord (Adonai, the Messiah) saying that Christ would sit at the Father's right hand, the place of honor, until His second coming, at which time His enemies would be subjugated to Him." (Ryrie Study Bible, page 912)

The "conversation inside the Trinity" as Barnhouse describes it, is further indicated in Hebrews 10:5-7, *"Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body has thou prepared for me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God."* In such verses as Genesis 1:26; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8, all indicate conversing with God, or God the Son conversing with God the Father.

In this High Priestly Prayer the Lord is praying on behalf of Himself, and on behalf of the family of God. May we observe these three thoughts, (1) He prays for glorification (vv. 1-10); (2) He prays for protection (vv. 11-16); (3) He prays for sanctification (vv. 17-26).

I. HE PRAYS FOR GLORIFICATION vv. 1-10

This prayer very importantly shows a major transition tak-

JOHN

ing place. The Lord exercised His kenosis when He came to the earth. He put aside His glory; He did not put aside His deity. He voluntarily humbled Himself, and limited Himself to suffer the reproach of man (whom He created), and to suffer death by the cross. Philippians 2:8 describes this event, *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* Verse nine says, *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:”* This, I believe, is an answer to the prayer that Jesus made in this seventeenth chapter of John when He prayed, *“Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”* There was a need on the part of the Son to be reinstated back to His position of glory.

May we observe first:

The responsibilities that require the glorification (vv. 1-2). Please, may we draw strict attention to the way the high priestly prayer begins, *“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him”* (vv. 1-2). In the first three verses, every word spoken to the Father is spoken in the third person. Yet in verse four a shift is made back to the first person. There must be a reason for this. In the previous chapter there is the indication that the disciples recognized Jesus as being sent forth from God. Recalling from verse thirty, it reads, *“Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.”* Notice the words *“thou camest forth from God.”*

Nicodemus also recognized back in chapter three that Jesus came forth from God. Remember, *“The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him”* (John 3:2). It was in response to this that Jesus said to Nicodemus, *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot*

THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

see *the kingdom of God*" (John 3:3).

In both of these examples the people seemed to recognize that "Jesus came forth from God," but Jesus is speaking in the third person to impress upon His disciples that He is the Son of God, not *just one sent forth from God*. The Biblical apostles were sent forth or commissioned of God, but Christ Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. He is requesting the glorification primarily that He might glorify the Father. The glorification spoken of here is focusing in on the death, the burial and the resurrection of the Saviour, to be followed by, "*the glory which I had with thee before the world was*" (v. 5). It was at this point that the Lord Jesus is praying to be removed from the kenosis. To be glorified will practically do three major things. (1) It will establish His deity; (2) Let Him perform His duty (vv. 2b-11) (7 things); (3) Let Him insure His delight (v. 24). It was in these interests that Jesus began praying in the third person.

When Jesus used the third person as He prayed, He was defining exactly the identity of that person. When in verse four, He shifted back to the first person, using "I" and "me" it was clearly revealed that He was "*Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*" He was that Person. Now, He is giving two primary doctrinal reasons for the glorifications. The first is that He may continue to glorify the Father, and that, "he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." A glorified Saviour is absolutely necessary for making the Word of God credible. If there were no resurrection then the Word of God is not true.

The revelation that requires the glorification (vv. 3-8). It is a *giving* revelation. Jesus is saying in His prayer how He took what He received, "*the men which thou gavest me out of the world,*" from the father, and manifested the name of the Father to them (v. 6). Jesus also has given the words which the Father gave Him back to His own. Again, the credibility of the words spoken was dependent upon a glorified Saviour (v.8).

Jesus, in His prayer, tells the Father that He has manifested the Father's name unto men. This means that He has

JOHN

revealed the true nature of the Father. Hebrews 1:1-4 expresses this trait in greater detail by telling us that we were spoken to by the prophets in “time past.” Verse two tells us that in these last days He is speaking to us by His Son. His Son is described as, “*the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power...*” (v. 3).

Colossians 1:15 tells us that Jesus is, “*the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.*” This is certainly a major reason for Jesus, the Word, coming so that He could reveal the Father. Jesus knows that for Himself to be further accepted, He must be glorified so that the divine attributes of God will be instilled in the hearts of men to be revealed from faith to faith (Romans 1:16, 17). The powerful Gospel is powerful because of all that is associated with the glorification.

Had Jesus not been revealed as the Son of God, then we could not be revealed as sons of God. For the glory of Him to be seen in us, His glory must be in us (cf. v. 10). The more Jesus is seen in our lives, the more effective our witness. Just as Jesus desired to have the glory of the Father, we should desire the glory of the Son. We should covet to have the fullness of God, and the filling of the Spirit. So much emptiness and lack of power is the result of not having His glory operating in our soul.

The relationship that requires the glorification (vv. 9-10). “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” These verses differentiates those who are of the Cosmos system and those who have been saved out of the world. We who are of Christ have the common bond of Christ, as we meet for the first time. It has been my privilege to travel to a number of foreign countries. In my travels, I meet Christians from many different cultural and ethnic groups. No matter how diverse our backgrounds may be, we still have Christ in common. It seems that the cultural and ethnic barriers are really of no significance when compared to the common bond that exists by the Spirit of Christ.

THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

This relationship would be of no value, had Christ not been glorified. The writer of Hebrews certainly expressed this truth in chapter two, verses nine and ten. *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”*

Notice the phrase, *“in bringing many sons unto glory.”* It is this that Christ was praying for when He said, *“And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them”* (John 17:10). Each believer has the joy of the glorified Christ. In Colossians 1:27 this truth is again expressed, *“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”*

Paul very adequately gives more insight to the glory that is of the Lord in Ephesians 3:14-21. *“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* It is the will and the purposes of God that we manifest the Glory of God in our churches. We who make up His bride should radiate the glory of the Groom wherever we are.

II. HE PRAYS FOR PROTECTION vv. 11-16

Protection comes from keeping them through His name

JOHN

(vv. 11-14). The prayer that Jesus made for His own is powerfully backed by the Name of the Father. Listen as He continues His prayer, *“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”* There is nothing mystical about the name of the Father that keeps them; it is the strength of His Name. Even as an earthly king sends a message in his own name, the strength of that message is in proportion to the strength of the king. If the king is weak and vacillating then there is not much confidence in the message.

There is no greater name than the name of God. Demonstrating this, Jesus in His glorification is King of Kings and is Lord of Lords. Select from history the greatest king and then he and all others will be ranked under the King of Kings. There is none greater than King Jesus, and yet He is under the authority of God the Father. Jesus ministered and served upon the earth in the name of the Father.

We are protected by the same power *that* makes that name so great. The prayer of Jesus was asking that ongoing protection will be available in the Father’s name to those who are His.

Jesus said that while He was in the world, that He kept them through the name of the Father (v. 12). Those whom He kept were not lost; they were kept. The only one of the disciples that was lost was Judas. This was because he was lost all the time. He was the son of perdition according to the Scriptures. The believers need to experience the joy of knowing that they are being kept (v. 13).

Even as I am writing this chapter, I am doing so on the Island of Anguilla. I am currently surrounded by many strangers, yet I sense the protective presence of the Lord. There is no place that a Christian can go that will allow him to escape the divine presence of the Lord. Daniel knew the presence of the Lord in the den of lions even as the three Hebrew children found Him in the fiery furnace. David took the Lord with him as he confronted Goliath.

Habakkuk knew even in the Old Testament how to rejoice

THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

in the Lord. Listen to the prophet as he speaks, “*Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation*” (Habakkuk 3:17-18). The prophets of old even knew the joy of God's presence.

Here in the Lord's prayer, Christ is specifically asking for the protection to be on His own by the strength of the Father's name. Now, may we consider another aspect of God's protection.

Protection comes from keeping them from evil (vv. 15-16). Just as the Hebrew children were required to be cast into the furnace, they were not without God's presence; He was there all the time. The nature of Christ's prayer is that it is prayed in the same spirit. He prayed in this manner, “*I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil*” (v. 15). There are no promises that the Christian is going to be covered with a “teflon coating,” but better than that, God will be their protection.

We boast in ourselves being unaware of just how important it is to have God protecting us from evil. Wonder just how many times we would be slipping into some evil activity or succumbing to some lustful passion if it were not for the Lord protecting us? As a pastor, I have witnessed on a few occasions those who have blatantly disobeyed the Biblical principles that offers their protection, only to lose that protection that comes from God. It was just as if the Lord were removing the hedge of protection out of their lives. When the Lord does this, there is no strength that can cause one to be protected. Without the Lord we have no strength at all.

III. HE PRAYS FOR SANCTIFICATION vv. 17-26

Sanctification means “to set apart for God and His holy purposes.” It is the Word of God that is the means of sanctification (v. 19).

The devil is certainly aware that the Word of God is abso-

JOHN

lutely necessary for sanctification. It is for this reason that so many have become enemies to the Word of God. The King James Bible is constantly under attack. The more corrupt and compromised the Bible becomes, the less set apart man becomes to God.

May we note two aspects of sanctification. (1) The *purpose* of the sanctification (vv. 17-23); (2) The *privilege* of the sanctification (vv. 24-26).

The purpose of the sanctification (vv.17-23). To understand the purpose of the sanctification, one should first know the meaning of sanctification. There are three stages of sanctification. There is the first stage, which has been called *initial* or *positional sanctification*. This is the immediate act of the Holy Spirit that takes place at the time of salvation. The believer is set apart for God permanently, once-for-all (II Thessalonians 2:13-14; Hebrews 3:1; 10:10). There is the second stage, called *progressive sanctification*. This is the maturing aspect that comes by faithfully obeying the Word. The Spirit of God takes him and conforms him to the image of Christ (Romans 12:1-2; Romans 8:28-30). The third stage of sanctification has been called *eternal sanctification*. This takes place when man is taken out of this sinful world, having been eternally redeemed (Ephesians 5:27; I John 3:2).

Jesus in His prayer says, “*And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth*” (v. 19). Jesus was set apart for the primary reason of ministering to us. Had the Lord not set Himself apart in this most holy manner, we would have been without hope. It was His purpose that we be set apart, becoming one (vv. 21-23). In this state, our lives have credibility to be recognized by the lost and dying world.

The privilege of the sanctification (vv. 24-26). To be with Him, what a privilege! That is the privilege of the sanctified, to behold His glory. Can you but imagine what it will be like to be in the presence of the Lamb-Lion for all eternity? He wants us to be in His presence that He may continuously reveal His glory. Read verse 24, “*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold*

THE HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER

my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”

It is the loving will of the Father that we be honored with the privilege of His presence, not for only a little while but for all eternity. The time that He is describing will be eternal; there will be no more “little whiles.”

But I just imagine that the entire scope of eternity will seem like “just a little while,” when spent with our Saviour!

Chapter 43

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE ARREST OF JESUS? John 18:1-12

I recall that Wednesday, November the 29th, over thirty years ago, when I was scheduled to leave for Fort Leonardwood, Missouri. For weeks I had planned for that day, with all the unknown attached to it. "What is the reception station; what does it mean to march in cadence?" I wondered. "Why is he called a drill sergeant; oh yes, and what kind of mess do you find in the mess hall"? Everything about this first day of basic training was a mystery to me. As the time of my departure approached, there was a feeling of expectancy, but also of apprehension. "What would it really be like"? Now, Jesus is soon to be arrested. I do not see any of these emotions recorded in the arrest of Jesus. The perfectly calculated time has arrived, and the One who knows He is to be arrested shows no fear. He knows that He is soon to be arrested, and then tried, to be followed by a bloody, horrible crucifixion. May we analyze the events leading up to, and involving the arrest of Jesus: (1) The Saviour Finally Betrayed (vv. 1-4); (2) The Soldiers Fall Backwards (vv. 5-9); (3) The Saviour Fatefully Bound (vv. 10-12). John does not record all the events pertaining to the arrest and crucifixion. John Phillips summarized those events that John chose not to write about; "John is silent about the Lord's agony in the garden. He is silent about a great deal. He does not tell of the Lord's claim to have power to summon heaven's host to his aid. He is silent about the traitor's kiss, about the Lord's desertion by all the disciples, about the false witnesses, the adjuration, the great confession, about the examination before Herod, about Pilate's wife's message, about Pilate's hand washing, about the self-imposed curse of the Jews, about the impressment of Simon to carry the cross, about the mockery at Calvary, about the darkness, about the terrible orphan cry, about the earthquake, the rending of the veil, the confession of the centurion,

ARREST OF JESUS

about the repentance of one of the thieves." EXPLORING THE GOSPELS: JOHN; (p. 339).

I. THE SAVIOUR FINALLY BETRAYED v.1-4

Verse one gives a clear picture with but a few words of how in control Jesus is. Notice verse one, "*When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.*" This was a familiar place not only to Jesus and His disciples but also to Judas. It was a place that they often went. It was not a place for Jesus to hide; He was not trying to. He had nothing to escape from or hide from. His time had come. He had just moments before prayed; now He is moving over the brook, and gently slipping into the garden. These two places do not communicate turmoil and fear. Instead the peace of God is being shown in a walking parable. It began with prayer; it continues with peace. Each step that Jesus takes is marked by providence. Could He be bringing His disciples to this place to insure that they will be safely monitored even as He is waiting for His arrest? May we notice more closely the place of His betrayal.

The place of His betrayal (v. 1-2). "*And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples* (v. 2). It was the place that Judas knew about. It was the place where Jesus had kindly ministered to, on many occasions, the one who was going to sell Him cheap. It was the place that the murderous hypocrite seemed to fit in and also enjoy the refreshing times spent there. It may have been the place that Jesus had often taught His "learners." If the disciples did not know that it was Judas who was going to betray Christ at the last supper, they certainly did not suspect him when they would come to this place. Satan makes his most effective hypocrite with all the makeup that's needed to sell his evil purposes. This place is the place that Judas wishes to commit his act of betrayal.

Places are of great significance, when things of great significance happen there. I recall standing on the mound at Waterloo where Napoleon met his defeat. The mound that I

JOHN

stood on was made from the implements of war. The mound was very high and covered with dirt. Grass covered the dirt completely and steps ascended straight to the top. A person had to be in reasonably good condition to walk to the top. I will never forget that place that spelled defeat for one and victory for another.

The place that seemed to spell defeat for Christ was really the beginning place for His victory march. Judas-Satan (John 6:70-71) marched to this place with his band of men confident of ridding themselves of what they thought was the problem. Instead, they were, while carrying out the master plan of Satan, actually contributing to the master plan of God.

The person of His betrayal (v. 3). Judas is the betrayer. I would not name my dog Judas, but apart from the grace of God I could have done even worse. In a judicial sense, I am just as guilty. When painting the picture of Judas, we must recognize that he is a real person. He is also a person in type. He represents us all. He further represents the sinner who finally and fatally rejects the Lord and will be cast into the pit, the lake of fire forever.

Judas—look at the brush that paints him. It is a black scene. It is such a despicable scene. Judas comes to the familiar spot with a touch of arrogance, perhaps. Maybe it is with total defiance. In this setting, the mask comes off. The despicable creature is now exposed. The façade is forever removed. No more will he reach out for the sop; no more will he huddle next to the One he betrays. No more will he sing the chorus, or hug the necks, or hold the hands of his counterfeit friends. The brush paints him true. You now see the real Judas for who he is. I understand why we may name our dogs, but not our sons after him. He was a dog (Psalms 41:9, 55:12-15).

Judas comes not alone but with “*a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons*” (v. 3). A band of men is from three hundred to six hundred soldiers. One source supported the number to be closer to one thousand. Realizing that the Roman soldiers would be the most aggressive in bat-

ARREST OF JESUS

tle with superior training to any soldier on the battlefield, why such a show of force against just one unarmed man? Maybe Judas told them that there was the potential of a very potent uprising and that a show of force would be necessary to quell any such happening. Or perhaps it was just the Roman way. John's Gospel does not mention as does the other three Gospels the method of the betrayal. It was a kiss. The kiss was the customary greeting of a friend. In one of the Gospels Judas refers to Christ as "Master" and Jesus calls him "Friend." This further indicates that Jesus truly is a friend of sinners! He accepted the kiss of death even as a lamb that is led to his slaughter. The brook was Cedron where this happened. The Garden was Gethsemane although John does not deal with it. Several years ago, I stood in the garden of Gethsemane. As a result of this study, the garden has taken on a greater meaning now than it did then. So much happened, so quickly in the garden that night. I understand more clearly now. Oh, what a Saviour!

The providence of His betrayal (v. 4). Jesus asks a question again. May we remember that Jesus does not ask a question for information, He does it for inspiration. "Whom seek ye?" (v. 4) He asks. This same verse tells us that He knew what was going on. Again, nothing happens with Jesus outside of His purpose and outside of His knowledge. The name of Jesus that characterizes His attribute of omniscience is seen in the next verse when He said, "*I am he.*" His name "I am" is compounded with other words to reveal more of His attributes. We learned seven of His names in this study of John. The name "I am" is always in the present tense. His name is not "I was," though He was; it is not "I shall be," though He shall. More appropriately, for every situation in every time period, He is ever present. He said, "I will never leave you." The longer that I walk with Him the more this truth abides with me. He has proven Himself to be the great "I am" so many times in my life. As mentioned earlier in this writing, I am in Anguilla preaching in a crusade. Just before I was to preach one night, I was troubled because I was lacking or at least did not sense "the unction of God". I know what it is to

JOHN

have it, and also know what it is to not have it. I wanted the anointing of God. Right up to the time of service I was asking God for what I knew I needed. I stayed outside until the very last minute leaning on a fence praying and begging God for His filling. I then went inside and sat down. After a few minutes, while the singing was going on, I was still praying and also reading the Scriptures. As I did so, the sweet presence of God swept over me, and I knew that I was ready. I turned around and told one of the preachers that knew I was troubled that I had the anointing. God certainly blessed as I preached and we were able to see three precious souls come to Christ. What I am describing is not some mystical or just some emotional happening. It is the "I am" God that still is available, never leaving us. As a twenty-three-year-old pastor just starting out, God was there with me. Now as a fifty-year old, God is still with me. He has been there all the time!

II. THE SOLDIERS FALL BACKWARDS vv. 5-9

Jesus is soon to be arrested. He allowed it to be so. Please remember that the One who is being betrayed is the same One who created the very earth they were walking upon. He created the human family, with father Adam's descendants gathered in mobs to arrest Him. They could not comprehend nor imagine fully what they were doing. There may have been some awareness that Jesus Christ would miraculously withstand them. The Sanhedrin certainly was aware of Jesus' power to perform miracles. It was after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead that the Sanhedrin conspired together to take Jesus. Recalling this event from John 11:47-53, may we read, *"Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year,*

ARREST OF JESUS

he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad. Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death."

The Sanhedrin met again two days before the Passover as recorded by Matthew. This meeting takes place at the courtyard of Caiaphas' house. This illegal meeting was for the purpose of formulating the arrest and the crucifixion of Jesus. This is the way Matthew describes this meeting, *"Then assembled together the chief priest, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people"* (Matthew 26:3-5). The calculated scheme of the Sanhedrin was about to take place with the asking of two questions.

The same question asked twice (v. 9). In Bible hermeneutics, we remind ourselves that two is the number for witness. Every word had to be established by two men. In John 8:16, Jesus said as he made a witness that He was not alone. The Father was with Him. Then in verse 17, *"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true."* Verses 4-8 are interesting and very intriguing. First, Jesus *"knowing all things that should come upon him"* asked, *"Whom seek ye?"* The ones arresting Him (from 600-1000) answered, *"Jesus of Nazareth."* Jesus told them, *"I am he."* The Scriptures tell us that as soon as he had said unto them, *"I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground"* (v. 6). I have been meditating on this portion of our study and feel that God has given me a clue as to why the men fell as they did. The first time that He uses the "I am" name for Himself, He uses it to prove that He is God. He was the same "I am" that Moses faced. It was a clear signal that the armies of the earth could not arrest Him unless He permitted it. The second time He asked them whom did they seek, they answered "Jesus of Nazareth." In verse eight, *"Jesus answered, I have told you that I am he: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way."* The men did

JOHN

not fall back this time. It was as though the Lord was witnessing that He is God, but He is also man and had come to the earth to die as man. He was being "*led as a Lamb to the slaughter.*"

The two questions answered (cf. 5-9). The questions answered proved that they were coming as an army to arrest none other than Jesus of Nazareth. All the details of the Scriptures are to be given careful attention. There are no parts of God's Word left out. For this reason, I continue to defend, preach, and study the King James Bible only, not willing to accept any translation that has been rid of truth. The Word of God is completely intact. A careful analysis of the Scriptures, and the proper interpretation followed by a proper application thereof, insures doctrinal correctness. My major in school was in the area of science. I soon learned the value of having a correct standard or criterion for analysis. The strength of a proper analysis lay in having a proper standard with which to compare. Two major elements of analysis involve the quantitative and the qualitative. The sum total of every letter that makes up all the words in the Bible is quantitative. Those letters and words being exactly in the right combination are qualitative. The King James Bible is a perfect standard with "no excess baggage, nor anything left out." It is more important that the Word of God be a perfect package than it is for water to have two molecules of hydrogen and one of oxygen. The Word of God is the living water.

III. THE SAVIOUR FATEFULLY BOUND **vv. 10-12**

The chronology of what is happening may be determined by comparing John with the Synoptics. In Luke 22:49, the disciples ask, "*Lord, shall we smite with the sword?*" Presumptuous, rambunctious Peter did not wait for an answer. In the flesh he resisted the arrest of Christ.

Peter resisted at the arrest of Jesus (v. 10). The flesh is our foe. Think of the enormous influence that the flesh has over both our long-term and our short-term decisions. Peter's compound name, the one that his mother gave him and the name that his Lord gave him is recorded here. Simon was his

ARREST OF JESUS

earthly or fleshly name. Peter was his spiritual name. When the Scriptures record both names, it is doing it to show both the spiritual and the natural characteristics of the Christian. As we walk on the earth both the spirit and the flesh are in a contest with each other. This is expressed in Galatians 5:15-16. *“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.”* Though the sinful nature is received at birth and is never eradicated in this life, it can be led by the Spirit. Peter, certainly was not being led by the new man. Simon, the old man, was in control. Peter, I am sure meant well and such is the case with many believers! Most of the time we do not plan to do wrong. The flesh will however, make it convenient to do wrong. There are two swords at the believers' disposal. May we name the one, the sword of the flesh? May we name the other, the sword of the spirit? When we pick up the sword of the flesh, it does not make a perfect cut. It misses the mark always. In our illustration here, when Peter picked up the sword of the flesh he could only cut off the ear of Malchus. Peter, who was a fisherman was not likely to be skilled as a swordsman, but that is not the point. He was doing in the flesh what can only be seen as an act of rebellion. When Peter was resisting the arrest of Jesus he was actually in rebellion to the will of Jesus and the will of the Father. For this reason Jesus rebuked Peter.

Peter rebuked at the arrest of Jesus (vv. 11-12). “Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” Jesus could have defended Himself without any help at all, or He could have called 12 legions (72,000) of angels. It was as though Jesus were saying that the ones arresting Him did not have a chance at all unless He permitted it.

It was the plan of Jesus, who is the creator to be bound by the creatures that the ultimate purposes of God might be completed. Remember, He maketh no mistakes.

Chapter 44

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT PETER'S DENIAL? John 18:10-27

Simon Peter may be one of my favorite persons. I am so much like him. I relate to him as he was at his beginnings, but I want to do better. Simon did better once he was converted. It is in the life of Peter that you can see the struggle that leads to maturity. The name Simon identifies him as the natural man. This is the name that his fleshly mother gave him. The name Peter identifies his spiritual nature. Peter is the name that Jesus gave him.

The name Simon Peter is paradoxical. There is his fleshly weakness that is somewhat shielded by his strong ego. Egotistically, the Simon part of him seemed strong enough to stand with Christ until the end. Yet the same Simon part of him, under a different set of circumstances, had no courage but to deny Christ. Weak and vacillating is the true strength and the true nature of the flesh. We are all the same.

The same man, Simon Peter, at a later time after he had learned his true nature apart from the strengthening grace of the Lord, was able to walk courageously in the Spirit. In this state, he was both strong in the Lord and able to "strengthen the brethren" (Luke 22:31-32). May we examine, (1) The Time of Peter's Denial (vv. 10-24); (2) The Tragedy of Peter's Denial (vv. 25-27).

I. THE TIME OF PETER'S DENIAL vv.10-24

Everything that the Lord had predicted is now coming to past. The rapidness of the moving events may contribute to Peter's demise. Certainly, Peter thought that he would do better. He even wanted to do better. How true this is of so many that stumble and fall. They do not plan or put it into their schedules. But, it also does not *just* happen. After hearing of someone falling into adultery, I sadly recall a person stating that it would never happen to him. It was not long afterwards

PETER'S DENIAL

that he fell victim to the same sin.

The chronology of when the denials take place (vv. 10-18). In verse 10 the word “then” introduces the events leading up to the denial. Peter drew his sword swinging it at Malchus. At this moment, it was his intentions to do everything that he boasted. He was going to be “a defender of the faith.” There were several problems with this scenario. The first being, he was operating as Simon in the flesh. Secondly, it was not the will of Christ. No one at all can question the sincerity of Peter, any more than we would question the sincerity of Cain when he made his offering. Again, as was in the case of Peter, it was not the will of the Lord for Cain to offer an offering of his own design. It is the Lord who designs and orders our steps by His own will and purpose.

It is so very important that we not only understand the will of the Lord, but that we also do the will of the Lord. The will of the Lord is not a mystery to the believer. It is directly connected to and understood by having a relationship to His word. For this reason, I must insist that we continue to have confidence in the Word of God and also protect ourselves from any departure from the true Word of God. We must not alter the Word of God at all, “Not one syllable” (Tyndale).

A great fear that I have regarding translations has to do with the term dynamic equivalency. David Cloud in his “Way of Life Encyclopedia of the Bible and Christianity” thoroughly investigates this danger. He says, “dynamic equivalency is a method of Bible translation that adapts the Scriptures to the culture and educational level of the people. Five centuries ago the faithful William Tyndale, later martyred for his translation of the Bible, said, ‘I call God to record against the day we shall appear before our Lord Jesus, to give a reckoning of our doings, that I never altered one syllable of God’s Word against my conscience, nor would [I so alter it] this day, if all that is in the earth, whether it be pleasure, honour, or riches, might be given me.’ This attitude of fear and trembling toward God’s Holy Word does not exist among many of the present day Bible translators. They are not afraid of adding to, subtracting from and changing the eternal Word of God (Cloud).”

JOHN

Setting the chronology of Peter's denial requires studying the key events that surround the denial. The first notable event shows Jesus being taken to Annas. The Scriptures tell us that Annas was the father-in-law to Caiaphas. "*Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people*" (v. 14).

Edershiem says of Annas, "No figure is better known in contemporary Jewish history than that of Annas; no person deemed more fortunate or successful, but none also more generally execrated than the late High Priest." Annas who had been High Priest from A.D. 6 to 15, still wielded power through his four sons who held the office and now through his son-in-law, Caiaphas. During the Jews freedom, the High Priest held his office for a lifetime. Now the office was controlled by the Roman politics. It was the man who was willing to be a puppet or pawn of the Roman government that was granted the right to serve.

Annas and his willing successors had become wealthy by cooperating with the Roman government. They, even through extortion, created their own means of making money.

In the court of Gentiles, the sellers would sell an acceptable victim for the sacrifices after which the sacrifices brought by the worshippers were rejected (and this was almost always the case). The sacrifice victim had to be without spot or blemish. The inspectors would certainly find a flaw and force the worshippers to go to the temple booth and buy an acceptable sacrifice. Outside the temple a pair of doves would cost nearly twenty times less than what they would cost in the temple. If a pair of doves cost two dollars outside, the price would go to thirty-seven dollars inside. It was by such exploitation of the worshippers, by trading on the sacred sacrifices that Annas had become wealthy.

The hatred of the household of Annas by the Jews is expressed in the *Talmud*, which says: "Woe to the house of Annas! Woe to the serpents of the treasury; their sons-in-law are guardians of the temple; and their servants beat the people with staves." This is the sordid way that Annas and his household were perceived.

PETER'S DENIAL

This gives a clue as to why Annas arranged that Jesus should be brought to him first. Jesus was the one who cleansed the temple, and in doing so had courageously brought attention to the wicked practices of the priesthood in their robbing from the worshippers. For this reason, among others, Jesus was hated and despised.

While Jesus was being led to Annas, Peter was following Him as did "another disciple" (v. 15). This disciple was known unto the high priest. Though this disciple is not mentioned, most students of the Scriptures and theologians believe it to be John. This disciple, knowing the high priest, was able to get permission to let Peter into the courtyard of the high priest. This was the place that Peter denied the Lord three times before the cock crew (v. 27).

The conditions for which the denials take place (vv. 19-24). While Peter was warming himself by the fire, "The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine" (v. 19). In verse 20 it reads as Jesus answers, "...I spake openly to the world; I even taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in the secret have I said nothing." Jesus asks a question in verse 21, "Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said."

It seems that Jesus, who knew the demands of the law, was calling attention to the fact that He was not to be His own witness. The witness, according to the law, should have originated in another. This continues to show how illegal the judicial system was and to what extent it was breaking its own laws to condemn an innocent man. There would have been no legal indictment against Him had the laws been properly applied. Christ Jesus was absolutely innocent!

Another illegal act on the part of the accusers was when one of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of the hand. Again, the illegalities were not on the part of the accused, but the accusers. Jesus challenges the one who struck Him in verse 23. "Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" A close examination of the Gospels will show how illegal the events

JOHN

were that surrounded and led up to the crucifixion.

II. THE TRAGEDY OF PETER'S DENIAL vv. 25-27 (cf. vv. 10-11)

The tragedy of Peter's denial is implied when considering the true nature of man. This implication is derived from a careful study of not only John, but also of the synoptics. Man, when not Spirit filled, is capable of any fleshly activity that the lost person is capable of committing. Peter was operating on a high dose of ego. He could have been very sincere, but his activities were egocentric rather than Christ-centric. When operating in the flesh rather than in the Spirit, what we do may appear to be proper and right but often is not. Even in the Old Testament the Scriptures reminds us that there is a way that seems right to man but really is not. Let us notice further concerning Peter's denial.

The rebellion in Peter's denial (cf. vv. 10-11). What Peter does may not seem as rebellion. In a very subtle, not acute way, rebellion slips in. What Peter does when he draws his sword, seems to be a very demonstrative display of courage rather than a display of rebellion; but it is rebellion nevertheless.

It was the purpose of Jesus to go to the cross. Peter was rebelling at the concept of the cross. May we observe the cross concept?

The cross was a necessary ingredient in the economy of God. The cross was a very gory place without Christ. With Christ it becomes the glory place. The cross was the place of execution. It is a shameful place, yet it is the preaching of the cross that pleases God. To not preach the gospel makes the "cross of Christ" of none effect (v. 17). How we need to please Him by preaching the cross.

Peter, by not understanding the cross concept, thought that he was doing right by fighting against the cross. Peter failed by not trusting Christ as he prophesized His death by crucifixion.

Peter was rebelling against the idea of Jesus dying. Peter did not want to give Jesus up. Peter simply did not under-

PETER'S DENIAL

stand. For this reason the Lord told Peter that when he was converted that he should strengthen the brethren. When Peter was converted, he would then understand.

The rebuke before Peter's denial (cf. v. 11). The rebuke was a necessary ingredient comprising this entire scenario. Peter was told this after he had cut Malchus' ear off. *"Then said Jesus unto Peter, put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"*

Regardless of how sincere Peter was in his action, they were unacceptable to the Lord. The Lord rhetorically asked, *"the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?"* This question was delivered to cause thinking on the part of Peter. The thinking would later help form conviction. Many never change and repent because they never think.

The prodigal son did not return to the father until he came to "himself" (Luke 15:17). He began to think about what he had left, where he now was, and how he could (should) return. The prodigal thought out his steps for his return. When a person comes to his senses and desires to either be restored, return, or recover, that person may learn from the prodigal and plan definite steps for his recovery, etc. The prodigal was rebuked by his circumstances, whereas Peter was rebuked by his Master. Now may we consider, "The result of Peter's denial"?

The results of Peter's denial (vv. 25-27). *And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew.* When reading the synoptic Gospels along with the Gospel of John, one may see the chronology of Peter's denial more clearly. Just as Jesus had predicted the denial of Peter, it so happened. This once again shows us just how God's omniscience is always at work. God knew that Peter was going to have a time of failure, but He also knew there was going to be a time of conversion or recovery. The Lord told Peter before it all happened, that when he was con-

JOHN

verted that he was to strengthen the brethren.

This should indicate that there is something to be learned from every trial that we experience. It should teach us that God knows us from the beginning to the end. He is the "Alpha-Omega" God. Most of the problems that we face are neither invited nor expected. They appear at the most unwanted time, because "Satan doth desire to have you." When demonic pressures come, they usually come gradually to weaken you. They are then followed by clusters of the same type of pressures. When one is more spiritual, instead of gradually releasing his arsenal upon you, the devil may immediately dump a whole cluster upon you. This brings about a shock, which may lead to discouragement or even depression. The suddenness and intensity certainly was not expected. Peter was not prepared for the devil's attack. He was warned, but not prepared. Later, after he was strengthened he was able to write encouragement to other believers. Notice his words in I Peter 5:6-11, *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."* Peter is now telling the believers to "humble yourselves." Pride contributed to Peter's downfall. Now, Peter is converted and is strengthening the brethren.

One of my favorite verses from this passage is verse 10, *"But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you."* Though you may be suffering for a while it will pass and you will be made perfect, stablished, strengthened, and settled.

Even as I write this book on John, and have been doing

PETER'S DENIAL

so for nearly three years, I am experiencing one of the most difficult periods of my life. Yet I find that Peter is still "strengthening the brethren." This passage offers so much encouragement even as Satan is releasing his "clusters" on me. To God be the glory!

Chapter 45

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT PONTIUS PILATE? John 18:28-19:16

What we are able to know about Pontius Pilate must be known from the account of his governorship of Judea by Josephus. Philo records an incident in *Delegatione ad Gaium* 299-305. Then we have the record of Pilate as it appears in the four Gospels. We will mostly consider Pontius Pilate as he appears in the Gospel of John, recognizing that the serious student may explore the secular information concerning his life and his reported death by suicide.

I. THE FACING OF PILATE vv. 18:28-19:7

After Jesus faced Annas, He then was taken “*bound unto Caiaphas the high priest.*” Verse 28 says, “*Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment....*” This is the first of two appearances before Pilate. The first appearance only took a few moments. The accusers obviously did not have a legal argument to present to Pilate. Had they accused Jesus of being a god, then that would not have at all been challenged because the Romans deemed many of their own leaders to be gods. So with a rather haughty reply, after Pilate asked, “*What accusation bring ye against this man?*” They answered, “*If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.*”

Pilate immediately answered, “*Take ye him, and judge him according to your law*” (v. 31a). Pilate is being investigated by the Roman Emperor at the same time that he is being confronted by the Jews. He wishes to do nothing that would further entangle himself with his own judicial system. The Roman law was world-renowned for its efficiency at carefully exacting the law. Rome was known throughout the world for its court system and its legal justice. Pilate would be willing to hear a civil accusation or charge, but was not willing to involve himself with any religion’s charges. If Pilate appears

PONTIUS PILATE

to be sympathetic to the cause of Christ, it is more so that he is being very careful to precisely interpret Roman law and not involve himself in any legal procedure that does not concern Rome.

The Sanhedrin, lacking the judicial authority to legally execute its accused, acknowledged this to Pilate, "*The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death:*" This outburst was a desperate attempt to get Rome to take their case. They wanted nothing short of the death of Jesus. They also knew that up to this point they had not rendered a charge that was at all worthy of death. With this being their dilemma, they will then resort back to lying. They will fabricate their charges and lie their way to the crucifixion.

As another point of consideration, had the Jews taken Jesus and illegally executed Him as they did Stephen, it would be by stoning. The prophets had already stated that no bone of Him was to be broken (19:36; Ps. 34:20). God in His foreknowledge had already predicted by the prophets every aspect of the crucifixion. All the events will line up and be fulfilled exactly as predicted by the prophets. This is the meaning of verse 32 "*That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.*"

Pilate seeking truth (18:28-38). Verse 33 says, "*Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?*" This is the second time that Jesus appears before Pilate. Pilate asked a very strong question, when He asked, "*Art thou the King of the Jews?*" Pilate's interest was purely political. He likely had heard of Jesus and His powerful reputation; He certainly had heard of the large crowds that would gather around Jesus. He had obviously heard of the miracles that Jesus had performed. The Jews would have only seen Jesus as a religious threat, whereas to Pilate Jesus could have been a political threat. In verse 34, Jesus is answering with a question. Once again not for information, but for inspiration this question is asked. "*Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?*"

JOHN

The way that Pilate answered Jesus indicated that he was in a position to only protect his civil and governmental interest rather than to be involved in the Jews' religious power struggles. Jesus, knowing Pilate's concern tells him, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (v. 36).

"Truth" has certainly been a dominant theme in John's Gospel. As Pilate asks, "what is truth?" he is answering with frustration at what to him should have been a simple and directly answered question. Truth, embodied, was in Pilate's presence but he could neither grasp it nor recognize it. Such is the world today. The world has been given the Word of God, but cannot accept it. The world in a very similar fashion is asking, "What is truth?"

There are many elusive counterfeiters of truth who pretend to have the truth, that neither know what they say, nor know what they have. They say that they speak the truth but in reality they are speaking their pernicious lies.

Credit must be given to Pilate when he said to the Jews, "*I find in him no fault at all*"; yet Pilate lacked the courage to release Jesus. He could interpret truth, but lacked the courage to act upon it.

Pilate senses trouble (18:39-19:6). Pilate borrows from the Jewish custom that would have permitted him to release Jesus at the Passover. It must have been his thinking that the people would have been content to publicly embarrass Jesus and then release Him. Pilate gambled and lost. He lost when he lacked the courage to do what he should have done. The people cried that Barabbas the robber must be released and not Jesus. Such activities on the part of Pilate could have very well led to his eventual suicide.

II. THE FEAR OF PILATE 19:7-11

Fear is a very interesting word. There is a fear that is experienced by the very courageous. Then there is the fear that is in association with the coward. The protective fear of the courageous helps to sustain him. The destructive fear of the

PONTIUS PILATE

coward helps to destroy him. Pilate feared the people more than he feared doing wrong. He was a coward. His fear was a cowardly fear, not a manly fear.

Historically, there have been many such cowards in leadership. Usually this kind of leader has been only a puppet or a pawn of someone else. He lacks the moral courage to initiate and carry out his own agenda. He must cater to the whims of others. Pilate operates this way.

It seems that Pilate was delicately attempting to balance both law and politics. The historians tell us that he was already experiencing trouble with Rome because of his inability to control and quell the Jewish uprisings. Their mobs were prone to erupt at any time and he would be blamed if they were not properly contained. The way he was trying to monitor the situation caused him to cave in to the demands of the Jewish religious leaders. Pilate very cunningly suggested that he offer Jesus to be released hoping this would content the people. Yet they demanded that Barabbas the robber be released instead. With this plan not working, this is when Pilate began to publicly scourge Jesus. The scourging may have been calculated to evoke sympathy, but this also did not work either.

Pilate possibly saw the corruption that existed (vv.19:7-8). The Jews were not satisfied in only the public scourging of Jesus; they wanted His death (v. 7). Pilate, as educated in legal matters as he was, may have seen the corruption that existed, but being the politician that he was, he became more afraid because he knew that he had no answers to bring about Jesus' release (cf. v. 12).

Political and religious corruption is certainly nothing new. It is an ongoing scourge that plagues the world perpetually. Yet there has never been a greater travesty of judgment than that which existed during these final days of Passion Week. The entire judicial system was flawed by its own wickedness. There must have been a part of Pilate that cringed as he attempted to come to a compromised solution. In Hell Pilate may still be trying to wash his hands for his crime against Jesus. There have been students of the Scriptures who were

JOHN

familiar with both the Roman and the Jewish laws who have calculated the number of laws that were broken during the trials of Jesus. No legal trial in history could have been conducted the way that the trial of Jesus was.

Pilate possibly sensed the chaos that existed (vv. 9-11). As Pilate speaks to Jesus in these closing moments of the trial he feels the pressure of a failing judicial system. It is not the precisional court system to which Pilate is accustomed. He is trying to fuse Roman and Jewish thinking together as he questions the person who never has or never will violate the laws of God. The whole process is marked by chaos.

When the law is compromised to force a decision, there is chaos. The laws' purpose is to bring about a fair conclusion to the plaintiff and the defendant. This does not happen in this trial. With everything as it is, this may explain why in desperation Pilate speaks thusly, *"Then said Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have the power to release thee?"* (v. 10)

Pilate may think that He can pressure Jesus to the point of "cooperation." But let us remember Jesus is not at all in a state of confusion, but is in complete control. He answers this truth in this fashion, *"Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin"* (v. 11).

The Lord Jesus Christ is not going to the cross because of His failed legal defense. He is going to the cross to die for the sins of man. Within the providence of God and within God's purpose, all that takes place is permitted.

III. THE FAILURE OF PILATE 19:12-16

Pilate's attempts to release Jesus were seemingly sincere (19:12-15). *"And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar"* (v.12). The Jews would not even hear of the release of Jesus. Pilate seems to make a

PONTIUS PILATE

strong effort to obtain the release of Christ, and when it did not happen, Pilate sarcastically said, "*Behold your King!*" He drew from them the response, "*We have no king but Caesar,*" a blasphemous denial of the kingship of God over their nation (Ryrie).

Pilate, though sincere in attempting to release Jesus, found that the Jews did not at all respect or accept Jesus as the King. The Jews have no purpose but to see Jesus crucified.

The way the natural man refuses the things of God is certainly mysterious. One would think that any person willing to consider the goodness of God would immediately desire to turn in repentance unto the Lord. Yet so many seem to actually become gospel hardened. As a preacher, I often enter the pulpit with such a heavy burden, "preaching my heart out." After preaching I find that a number of the ones who were preached to walk out almost like zombies, seemingly unaffected by what they had just heard. Likewise, all the miracles and proofs of Jesus were refused. The powers of Satan had blinded their eyes and deafened their ears in such a way that they would neither see nor hear. They only wanted Jesus crucified.

Pilate's attempts to release Jesus were suddenly stopped (v. 16). All the political ingenuity and also Pilate's intellectual acumen were to no avail in changing the mindset of the Jews. "*Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away*" (v.16). This is a very strong transitional verse in John that shows the end of the trial and the beginning of the crucifixion.

The absolute and true motives of Pilate will be determined at the judgment bar. Yet if Pilate's attempts in getting Jesus' release were genuine, he was unable to do so. He then immediately delivered Jesus, bringing us to the next section of study that will allow us to focus on the actual crucifixion.

Chapter 46

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT JESUS' DEATH? John 19:17-37

Jesus has been tried but not proven guilty. The trials declared anything but His guilt. Yet, Jesus is now being delivered *"unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away"* (v. 16). The death, the burial, and the resurrection will help to expose mankind to his utter wickedness. In no way does it show Jesus to be the criminal. All the laws were bent to the degree of bruising the Lord Jesus Christ. They were determined to kill Him.

The prophet Isaiah, as well as the other prophets, predicted this event. Notice what Isaiah says in Isaiah 53:1-7. *"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."* This passage of Scripture certainly must describe the Saviour as portrayed in John's Gospel. A thorough reading of the entire 53rd chapter of Isaiah will be profitable while also studying all the events pertaining to Passion Week.

JESUS' DEATH

There are three thoughts that I wish to consider in this important study. (1) The Place of the Crucifixion (vv. 17-18); (2) The Person of the Crucifixion (vv. 19-22); (3) The Prophecy about the Crucifixion (vv. 23-27).

I. THE PLACE OF THE CRUCIFIXION vv. 17-18

It was a destined place (v. 17). Christ Jesus has now met His purposeful reason for coming to the earth. The kenosis has taken a quantum leap from the celestial throne to the Calvary tree. All that the prophets had declared and the Scriptures had recorded are now taking place at the prescribed place at the prescribed time.

The place of the skull had been dedicated by God to serve its intended purpose for centuries foreordained. In close proximity if not the exact spot Abraham had earlier offered Isaac. Golgotha also could have been the spot where David threw down the skull of Goliath. Many years ago, as a younger student of the Scriptures, I read that Golgotha (which means, "place of a skull") was given a name that meant the place of Goliath's skull. The name Goliath was dropped to form its present name, "Golgotha," or simply the place of a skull.

Regardless, of the prior history leading up to the crucifixion and even with what has transpired since, it is amazingly wonderful that the Lord had a place in mind for the ultimate sacrifice to be made. I am certainly grateful for the place of the crucifixion. I am more appreciative with the passing of time, that God had a place of slaughter; it was a place despised by many and perhaps in some ways by myself, until God through His word showed me the real reason for the place. Calvary is not a beautiful place, but it is a precious place. It is not a comfortable place, but becomes a comforting place. When a person comes by faith to the place with conviction, as well as contrition, he may leave changed.

It was a dying place (v.18). The place was predetermined by God for Jesus to die; it was there specifically for Him to die. It was a dying place. There may have been many deaths before, but not one death as this one. This one, Jesus,

JOHN

was positioned in the middle. On either side of Him there were the two thieves.

One cross may be described as the cross of rejection. This cross and its victim describe a large host of people. These people will be introduced to the man who was on the center cross, only to reject Him as their Saviour. They will have many excuses for their rejection. They will be too preoccupied with their worldly pleasures, their wild passions, and their wicked pursuits to accept the man who was on the middle cross. Their attitude is that of the malefactor who said, "*If thou be Christ, save thyself and us*" (Luke 23:39).

Then there is the cross of reception. For the other malefactor said, "*Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*" (Luke 23:40-42). It was not that this malefactor had a better opportunity of coming to Christ than the first mentioned; for the ground is level at the cross. Then what causes some to reject Christ, and some to receive Christ? The answer may be more complicated than we would wish to admit. However, the importance of the law should be recognized. Proverbs 23:14 says, "*Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.*" A main reason for using the rod is to cause a person to have a proper respect for the law when he breaks it. One of the malefactors felt no guilt; he did not properly see himself as a lawbreaker. Could it have been that he was not properly corrected and chastened as a child and felt no responsibility as a lawbreaker? In contrast the other malefactor knew that a toll had been exacted against him, and properly so, as he said, "*we receive the due rewards of our deeds.*"

II. THE PERSON OF THE CRUCIFIXION vv. 19-20

How He was identified (v.19). Pilate truthfully and accurately described Jesus by the wording of the title, "*And Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.*" Not only is Je-

JESUS' DEATH

sus the King of the Jews, He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. This title certainly pierced the proud hearts of the Jews, or at least annoyed them. Not just a king was being crucified, but the "King of Kings" was being crucified. The Creator was being crucified by His creation. The awful curse of sin had been poured out with its terrible dregs not contained. The hands of every descendant of Adam are connected back to the one or more hands that actually drove the spikes into the Saviour's body. We all were guilty of crucifying the King. The King died because of us, but He also died for us!

The Scriptures identify the Lord in many ways. Many of His names identify some attribute pertaining to His person. His name "Light" identifies Him as the means of expelling darkness. His name "Bread of Life" identifies Him as the one who satisfies spiritual hunger. His name "Water of Life" identifies Him as the one who satisfies spiritual thirst. When He is referred to as the "Truth" He must be recognized entirely as that. As "Alpha" He is the Beginning; as "Omega" He is the Ending. These names refer to His Lordship over all time and creation.

Listen to the simplicity of these names, yet how profound when attached to Deity. The names Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd, and the Door are such names. It would be a profitable exercise to search out one or more of His names when going through a crisis and apply that name to your specific concern. For example, if you are troubled, study the name Comforter. You certainly will be comforted in doing so. If you feel yourself to be vulnerable, study Him as the Shield. His name is truly above every name. His names tell us about whom He is. Pilate may not have known how very true the title placed on the cross of Christ was.

Where He was crucified (vv. 20-22). The victim on the middle cross was properly identified. His title was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. The title could have been understood by the religious, cultured, and by the educated. His crucifixion place was near the city, but it was also outside of the

JOHN

city. Hebrews 13:12 also tells us this, "*Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate.*" The place as we have indicated was providentially selected in accordance to God's sovereign purpose. One aspect of Jesus being crucified outside of the gate was to set a supreme example that would challenge us to serve Him and suffer likewise (Hebrews 13:13).

In this section, the Jews wanted Pilate to identify Jesus as only claiming that He is King of the Jews (v. 21). Pilate answered the Chief Priests, "*What I have written I have written*" (v.22). Every aspect of Christ's crucifixion should be with purpose. The sacrifice that He made should cause us to identify with Him and serve Him sacrificially. Paul certainly knew the spirit of this statement when he said, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me*" (Galatians 2:20).

When it comes to identifying with Christ and His crucifixion, be it place or event, many believers suffer from an identity crisis. They just will not identify with the sacrificial aspect of Christ and His crucifixion.

III. THE PROPHECY ABOUT HIS CRUCIFIXION vv. 23-27

It demonstrated God's foreknowledge (vv. 23-27). The Scriptures were not given in the Old Testament after the fact, but before. Most were given by God many centuries before the actual crucifixion. The first fulfillment of prophecy in this section pertains to the garments of Jesus (v. 23). "*Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.*" Continuing in verse twenty-four, "*They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.*" Notice the clause, "that the scripture might be ful-

JESUS' DEATH

filled... ." This indicates to the reader that everything is happening according to God's plan and purpose. Again in verse 28, "*After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*" Then in verse 36, "*For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.*"

In the closing moments of Christ's life upon the earth, until His death, this chapter shows that it was not an accident surrounding these events, but God's providence. With confidence we may trust the hand of God to lead us, to protect us, and to provide for us in ever situation of life.

It demonstrates God's faithfulness (cf. vv. 23-37). The providence of God's work is always in agreement with His foreknowledge. When prophecy is given, and the event transpires it shows the absolute faithfulness of God. What if He were not to be depended upon? What if the Biblical account were not to be trusted? Where would we be in the faith without a faithful God? How foundational is it to properly laid truth that we have a dependable God? How important that He always does what He says He will do? After nearly thirty years in the pastorate, I still have a Saviour in whom I trust. He has never let me down.

For this reason, it is extremely important that we abide in and keep His Word. Everything that we do should be based upon Biblical principles. Our pattern of life should be patterned after Him. In our keeping His Word, He is obligated to fulfill His promises to us. There is no greater counsel than God's Word, and no greater counselor than He.

Chapter 47

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT THE EMPTY TOMB? John 19:38-20:9

Jesus cried, "*It is finished*" and the scriptures tell us that He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost (v. 30). Jesus died, but His death was by His own design. He, who is the Architect of all creation, exactly designed the means of His own death. Some of the old writers say that Jesus died of a broken heart, and I am sure that His heart was broken. Yet it was not just a broken heart that caused His death. The pain that He experienced was undoubtedly the most excruciating pain imaginable, but it was not just the pain that brought about His death.

His death was willed by Himself, only after all that had been charged to His account had been exacted. Once Jesus had satisfied the requirement of God the Father, He was then qualified to give up His ghost. This does not mean that the heart of Jesus did not rupture, for the Scriptures indicate that blood and water issued forth from His pierced side. When Jesus cried, "*It is finished*," the heart was then allowed to explode for Christ Jesus had rendered to a lost and dying world His all. Jesus truly paid it all.

As we answer the question, "What Do You Believe About the Empty Tomb?" may we notice two things. First, consider "The Entombment of Jesus" (vv. 38-42). Then consider "The Empty Tomb of Jesus" (20:1-9).

I. THE ENTOMBMENT OF JESUS vv. 38-42

The petitioning of the body (v. 38). Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate and "*besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.*" The information pertaining to this event is important enough that it appears in all the Gospels. Though each description is slightly different, it is so in a complementary way rather than a contradictory way. The four accounts give us a composite of what happened with great significance.

THE EMPTY TOMB

So much so that it will be profitable to study each account.

In Matthew 27:57-60 we read, *“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.”*

In this passage Joseph of Arimathaea is said to be a "rich man." He also is referred to as "Jesus' disciple." He *"begged the body of Jesus,"* and *"he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth."* Joseph laid the body of Jesus *"in his own new tomb."* The information in John tells us that the body was placed in a "hewn out" tomb. After the body was placed inside, *"he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre and departed."* Matthew tells us much about the important event of claiming the body of Jesus. The Scriptures indicate that though Joseph was wealthy, he was willing to use his means to take care of the body of Jesus. This reminds me that there are still good people, who have been blessed with wealth, who do not mind and even desire to support the ministries of the Lord. Joseph sacrificially gave to Jesus the tomb that he had carved out for himself.

In Mark the similar account of the burial of Jesus is given in Mark 15:42-47. *“And now when the even was come, because it was the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathaea, an honourable counsellor, which also waited for the kingdom of God, came, and went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus. And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And when he knew it of the centurion, he gave the body to Joseph. And he bought fine linen, and took him down, and wrapped him in the linen, and laid him in a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid.”*

JOHN

In verse 43, we are told that Joseph "*went in boldly unto Pilate, and craved the body of Jesus.*" This seems to contrast with John's account in verse 38 that says, "*Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus.*" This does not show cowardly fear, but a healthy fear that insures a greater degree of protection. A practical illustration of this shows that one would not purposely step in front of a speeding automobile for fear of bodily harm. Joseph had the courage to come boldly to Pilate, but wisely avoided the Jews. He knew that the Jews could have hindered his purpose.

In Mark 15:43, Pilate marvelled at hearing that Jesus was already dead, but when it was known of the centurion that He truly was dead, Pilate released the body to Joseph. Joseph took fine linen and wrapped the body of Jesus and laid him in "*a sepulchre which was hewn out of a rock, and rolled a stone unto the door of the sepulchre*" (v. 46).

Mark tells us that both "*Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid*" (v. 47).

May we now notice Luke's account as found in Luke 23:50-55. "*And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counsellor; and he was a good man, and a just: (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathaea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid.*"

Luke describes Joseph as being a counsellor, a good man and just. It is also said that Joseph did not consent to the counsel when the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus. Mark 14:64 gives evidence that may concluded that Joseph was not present when the Sanhedrin condemned Jesus.

The preparation of the body (v. 39-40). In addition to

THE EMPTY TOMB

Joseph of Arimathaea, *"there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night"* to have a part in preparing the body of Jesus. This verse gives indication that Nicodemus is now a convert of Jesus. If he is, it is because he experienced the wondrous new birth.

It must also be added, even if Nicodemus willingly and even lovingly prepared the body of Jesus for His burial, that alone would not have constituted his conversion. He had to be born again, and not by works of righteousness that he had done.

One might ask, if the followers of Christ expected the resurrection of the Saviour to soon take place, why go to the effort of preparing His body? At this time according to John 20:9 the disciples did not know that Jesus would rise from the dead. The Scriptures do explain why the preparation took place. In verse forty, we are told, *"Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury."* The preparation was done as required by Jewish custom. The preparing of the body destroyed any liberal or modernists theory that questioned whether Jesus was actually dead. There was no such "swoon theory" that could be given any credence. Any quiver of life would have immediately halted the preparation process.

Could we then call this time of preparation a further time of examination to conclude beyond any doubt the fact that Jesus was dead? Then add to this the pierced side which issued forth blood and water. A conclusive, unquestionable testimony must be drawn from the sequential events proving that Jesus really did die, and soon would be alive again. Praise God!

At the writing of this, an awful tragedy has just befallen our nation. The Twin Towers in New York, as well as the Pentagon have been flown into by radical terrorists. Now, even as the rescue operation has now turned into a recovery operation, there is the strong hope by each loved one that the slain bodies can be found, identified, and prepared for burial. This will help provide some degree of closure in this sad and awful event in their lives. God be with them.

JOHN

The place of the body (v. 41-42). Beginning in verse forty-one we read, "Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid." We read that there was a garden and there also was a grave. As I write this, the Holy Spirit seems to hint that the garden is the place where the seed is planted and the flower then grows. Certainly after the body of Jesus is planted, a flower will grow. The Rose of Sharon will explode from the ground on resurrection morning. It was in the garden of Eden that sin was conceived; it was in this garden that sin is conquered.

II. THE EMPTY TOMB OF JESUS 20:1-9

The stone removed from the tomb (vv. 1-2). How wonderful it is to get to the Biblical account of resurrection morning. Everything that we have considered in this wonderful book of John reaches its climax in verse one of chapter twenty. As great and as significant as this is, one would think that the horns would be blowing and the fireworks would be exploding. But sadly the disciples were not looking for a resurrection Saviour. May we skip ahead to verse nine and prove this, "*For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.*" This verse tells us that a Saviour to be resurrected was not to be expected. The next several verses will show this statement to be true.

Today many centuries removed, the resurrection has been acknowledged to be an actual, miraculous and historical event. Yet many people still do not seem to believe it. All of our preaching and teaching should bridge back to resurrection truth. The hope for the lost being saved is the preaching that is invigorated by preaching, "Christ arose." A preacher cannot preach unless he preaches this way. The Bible definition of preaching demands this to be so.

With the stone removed, the only thing that entered Mary Magdalene's mind when she ran to Peter was, "*They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him*" (v. 2). She does not at all indicate that a resurrection has taken place. Lest we be overly critical

THE EMPTY TOMB

of these troubled souls, what would be our response? Remember, an event like this is unprecedented; it had never happened before!

The stone removed has practical significance. The Lord in His glorified body stepped out. But Jesus could have walked out without removing the stone. This indicates that the Lord is drawing attention to an empty tomb. In the immediate verses, an examination of the empty tomb will take place with evidence showing that something strange and unusual had taken place.

The strange revelation at the tomb (vv. 3-8). Peter and "that other disciple" came to the tomb. The "other disciple" outran Peter and stooped down "looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself."

There was more than an indication; there was a revelation that the body had not been stolen. Christ Jesus had arisen. The neatly laid grave clothes folded was a strong testimony to the truth that the Lord is not the author of confusion, but Satan is.

Had the body been stolen the grave clothes would not have been left behind. Even if they had been left behind, they would not have been neatly left behind. The grave clothes are to be worn by the dead. The living do not wear them. The casket is for the purpose of holding the dead; the living does not take up its residence in a casket. Neatly and simply put, the Lord had no further need for the grave clothes. For He was alive.

What was indeed strange is that lying in the tomb were clothes that *had* been worn by a dead person who was no longer dead. Jesus was alive, and is alive forever more. Amen!

The Scriptures revealed at the tomb (v. 9). What Jesus and the Scriptures had predicted has now taken place. Prophecy fulfilled is a means whereby Scripture or truth is re-

JOHN

vealed. Perhaps another way of expressing it is that the Scriptures are qualified as being the Word of God by their fulfillment. If truth is predicted to be fulfilled in time, then that is exactly what will happen; it will be fulfilled as predicted. Thus, we have the sure Word of God.

Chapter 48

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES?

PART I

John 20:10-31

The empty tomb was not enough! It was not enough to rid the disciples and Mary Magdalene of their fear. Just an empty tomb could not accomplish what only one thing could accomplish. They needed to see the living Saviour. The living Saviour would do what nothing else would, nor could do.

The disciples, not knowing the scripture, "*that he must rise again from the dead*" (v. 9), "*went away again unto their own home*" (v. 10). Mary stayed and Mary wept. What they desperately needed was what may be called the grand theme of the gospel— a resurrected Saviour.

A resurrection Saviour they needed; A resurrected Saviour they got! The next several appearances will show just how the Lord's appearing conquered their fear, their doubt, and their distress. May we consider: (1) The Lord appeared to conquer discouragement (vv. 10-18); (2) The Lord appeared to conquer distress (vv. 19-25); (3) The Lord appeared to conquer doubt (vv. 26-31).

I. THE LORD APPEARED TO CONQUER DISCOURAGEMENT (vv. 10-18)

See *Mary's heartbreak* (vv. 10-15). Mary was weeping. She could not stand the thoughts of His body not being there. Where was it? Many times people go to the place of burial for their comfort. Knowing that they cannot be near the person they once knew, they want to be near the body. Perhaps this was Mary's reason for coming to the tomb. She had been standing at the tomb since she ran to Peter and John telling them that the stone had been taken away and the body of Jesus was not to be found.

Mary is devastated; her heart is broken. How many times has this scene been replicated? Not in the same fashion, but

JOHN

in the same heartbreak. Death without hope is certainly heartbreaking. I have seen people draped over a casket knowing that they will never, ever see or talk to their loved one again. For they died without hope; they died without Christ. This is such a tragedy. In contrast, I have seen and personally experienced the death of loved ones who are believers. What peace comes when there is hope.

Mary lacks understanding; she does not know that her Lord is alive. She thinks that His body has been stolen. While she is weeping, "*she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre*" (v. 11). She saw two angels in white sitting, with one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been (v. 12). They asked Mary why she was weeping, and she told them that the body of Jesus had been taken. She was heartbroken while thinking this. Mary then turned and saw Jesus. Thinking Him to be the gardener, she neither recognized Him nor His voice as He spoke. It would be difficult to explain conclusively why not. One can only speculate as to why He was unrecognizable.

Yet even in this, there is a lesson. It is possible for us to be in the presence of Jesus while He works and not recognize it. Wonder just how many times Jesus has performed in our midst and we completely failed to recognize Him at work?

See *Mary's help* (vv. 16-18). It only took one word for Mary to be helped. It was her name being called by Jesus. "Mary"... Jesus knew her even if she failed to recognize Him. I must also admit that there have been times when the Lord still knew me even though I did not seem to recognize Him. There have been times of personal discouragement when for a fleeting moment or so, I may have felt that there was no such thing as a personal God. In times like that, the Lord allows by His Spirit a personal sense of His presence. In this way He conquers my own discouragement. It is marvelously wonderful knowing that He knows me.

Usually the sound of one's name being called holds a special place. An exception to this would be when one's name is being called when one is in trouble. Remember during your school days when your name was called when you

HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

were not prepared to give an answer because your assignment was not complete? Outside of that, or something similar to that, the calling of one's name has a special ring to it. In the event of Mary's name being called there was help being offered for her discouragement. She recognized the voice. She was one of the sheep. Remember the words of Jesus. *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out*" (John 10:1-3). Jesus said, *"the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."*

When Mary's name was called, *"She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master"* (v. 16). Immediately after this, the Lord tells Mary not to touch Him, *"Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God"* (v. 17).

Numerous explanations have been given concerning the meaning of what Jesus is saying. I recall that while in Bible college the professor would use this passage and others like it to generate discussion that could never really be unanimously accepted. Perhaps the simplest interpretation and perhaps the most accurate is that Jesus is demonstrating that He has entered into a different relationship as the resurrected Lord.

Mary's help came when she had this personal encounter with the Lord, with whom she also had a personal relationship.

II. THE LORD APPEARED TO CONQUER DISTRESS (vv. 19-25)

See the disciples fear (v. 19). After the terrorists flew two planes into the towers, the Pentagon, the ground, and also with the anthrax scare, there seems to be a spirit of fear gripping much of our land. Some of the multi-cultural groups who

JOHN

are not Native Americans, but live here in America are also afraid. They carry the fear that Americans will take their vengeance out on them. While writing this, there is no way to calculate the outcome of what is now going on.

Yet in Christ Jesus we still do not have to have a spirit of fear. Many are distressed now, even as the disciples were distressed then. The disciples were afraid of the Jews, thinking that they would be called on to die the death similar to Jesus'. They were His disciples yet their Commander and Chief had been put to death. They felt very much forsaken. They seemingly had not accepted the full truth of what Mary told them when she, "*told the disciples that she had seen the Lord*" (v. 18).

Just think how radical that statement of truth must have sounded, "*I have seen the Lord.*" She was not describing a body that she had seen, but instead the resurrected Saviour. The disciples fear of the Jews is so great that they find themselves huddled in a snug little room on resurrection evening. They may have been planning their survival.

See *the disciples faith* (vv. 20-25). For the disciples to experience faith, truth had to be authenticated. Mary told them the truth, but at this time more was required. Truth had to be proven by Jesus Christ Himself. And He authenticated what Mary had previously told by walking into their midst. Notice the first words that He spoke, "*Peace be unto you*" (v. 19). It was just a short time before His crucifixion that Jesus told the disciples, "*Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid*" (John 14:27).

The Lord *comforts* them and then He *commissions* them. As an application of this truth that the Lord comforts and then He commissions, I now have a commission to preach, but am also comforted as I do. For nearly thirty years I have been called on to stand and proclaim the tremendous truth of God's Word. While doing so, I do it with the grave responsibilities that accompany such a call. Yet God has without fail offered me the comfort that encourages my soul that I may speak with courage. Most recently, I had the arduous task of

HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

exercising church discipline. The stress level surrounding such an event was extremely high. As I was preparing for the service which would include both the sermon and the discipline, I was constantly reminding myself that God was with me. Even to the moment of walking into the pulpit, I felt tremendous pressure. Yet when I began to speak, an enveloping calm swept over me and the peace of God was there once more. My people also knew that their man of God was standing in his place doing his God ordained job.

In verse 22, the Lord said "*Receive ye the Holy Ghost.*" This statement reflected on the way the Holy Ghost was specifically called on before the baptism with the Holy Ghost took place (Acts 2).

The Thomas that we often refer to as "doubting Thomas" may have gained this title because of verse 25. "*The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.*"

Thomas' doubt most likely was attributed to him not being present when the Lord showed up. Another application from our text would be that when we miss church and the Lord shows up we too will doubt the things of God. When there is doubt, there is fear.

III. THE LORD APPEARED TO CONQUER DOUBT (vv. 26-31)

Thomas does right (v. 26). The day of worship until the time of the resurrection had been on the seventh day of the week. This was in obedience to the instructions that the Lord gave which were patterned after the creation. In six days He created all that is and then rested.

The resurrection marked a change in the economy of God. Prior to the resurrection the kingdom gospel was being preached and the veil of the temple was in place up until the time of the crucifixion (cf. Eph. 2:11-22). Now the commission is not restricted or limited to the Jews only, but given to the entire world.

The resurrection marks the new day of worship. Paul of-

JOHN

fers further enlightenment concerning this truth in I Cor. 16:1-2. *"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."* The disciples have all gathered on the first day of the week and this day is Sunday not Saturday. It is not the seventh, nor the Sabbath. People who pray "Now Lord bless us on this Sabbath day..." are confusing the seventh day, which is associated with the old economy, with the first day which is the day of worship which introduced the new economy. Verse twenty-six says, *"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."*

The eighth day from the first is Sunday. It was on Sunday that the disciples first met, with Jesus showing up. Thomas was not there. This day was referred to as being the first day of the week. If you count this way, with Sunday being the first day then Saturday is the seventh. Our text says that they met on the eighth day. The eighth day from the first (main, or beginning day which is Sunday) is again, Sunday. For after the seventh day, which is Saturday, comes Sunday. This time Thomas is present. Thomas did right by getting back into church.

It might be noted that the disciples greeted Thomas in a very positive way by saying *"We have seen the Lord"* (v. 25). I wonder what effect it would have upon those whom we invite if we told them, "We have seen the Lord?" How wonderful it is when the Lord shows up in our services and we tell people about it.

Thomas does recover (vv. 27-31). Though Thomas stayed out of church causing him to doubt, he got back into church and recovered. Thomas had indicated that unless he was able to, *"see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe"* (v. 25).

The Lord told Thomas, *"Reach hither thy finger, and be-*

HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

hold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (v. 27). When Jesus spoke this, He demonstrated by His Omniscience that He knew everything that Thomas had said. There is no indication that the disciples told Jesus what Thomas had earlier said. They, knowing what Thomas had said and what Jesus knew, must have been both amazed and comforted by what they were witnessing.

Thomas could only say, not in a profane way, but in a God honoring way, "*My Lord and my God*" (v. 28). Thomas is no longer doubting but believing. Jesus indicates as He talks to Thomas that he saw the Lord and believed. He went on to say, "*blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.*"

Chapter 49

WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ABOUT HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES?

PART II

John 21:1-25

The Crucifixion had taken place and was followed by the resurrection. It was a traumatic time for the followers of Jesus. They were being hurled from one emotional extreme to the next. Even though the resurrection had taken place as Jesus said that it would, the disciples' faith was still unsteady. In each resurrection appearance Jesus is offering encouragement to those who are unbelieving.

The first thing that Jesus conquered by His appearance was *depression*. The second was *distress*, followed by *doubt*. In this study may we notice the way Jesus conquers *defeat*. Then may we determine how He conquers *denial* to be followed by the conquering of *distraction*.

I. JESUS APPEARS TO CONQUER DEFEAT vv. 1-14

By letting the disciples experience a famine (vv.1-14). The disciples are not adjusting very well to the recent events. Under the leadership of Peter they are drifting back into their old lifestyle. Perhaps we could call this a setback or just plain old backsliding. There are seven disciples mentioned with five of them identified by name. In addition to their backsliding, as a group they are growing smaller. Instead of there being ten disciples there are only seven who are together. Their location is the Sea of Tiberias, which is probably where their homes were located. This seems to be a further indication that they were returning to their previous lifestyle.

Yet the Lord was there to keep them from becoming comfortable in their drifting from the Lord's will. They had been commissioned to do a job and to follow Jesus, and He would not let them enjoy defeat. As experienced fishermen they returned to what they were skilled in doing but found that they could catch nothing.

HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a-fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing" (v. 3). Sadly, they were experiencing defeat because they were leaving Christ and also leaving Christ out of things. The Lord was going to let them toil all night and fail to bring in even one small fish.

A great lesson that may be learned from this is that no matter how aggressively we may perform our work in the energy of the flesh, we will never have spiritual fruit. Staying close to Him results in the bearing of much fruit. In our personal devotion we need to be careful not to program and plan without Him.

In verse four Jesus is seen standing on the shore but no one knows who it is. The Lord in His omniscience stands to give the wayward ones instructions on how to be successful. He, being the creator God, knew exactly where the fish were. He may have gathered them to the right side of the ship to be available for the net to be dropped and the fish to be caught.

But until that takes place the fishermen are living in defeat. They, as they fish, are not at all aware of His presence. How often are we the same? We toil and spend our energies unaware of His presence and fail to claim what could be ours.

By letting the disciples exercise faith (vv. 5-8). Faith is a wonderful thing, but until truth is acted upon there is no exercising of faith. Practical faith involves a doing. James tells us that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). Dead faith is a kind of faith that has no practical purpose or significance.

The disciples were struggling with no success; they "caught nothing." Jesus asked them, *"Children, have ye any meat?"* When Jesus called them children He was using a word form that denoted immaturity more than it did youthfulness. The word *meat* as used here would be similar to our meat sauce. It was as though the Lord was addressing them not as fisherman but as novices who were incapable of even catching enough fish to make a stew. This was not to ridicule them, but rather to identify them.

It may be that He worded His question in such a way to

JOHN

bring about conviction. He, being the all-knowing One, certainly knew the answer to the question that He was asking. Their answer was "no" (v. 5).

It was upon their admission of defeat that He gave them instructions on how they could catch fish. He said, "*Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find.*" For the disciples, this is a very critical point in time. Had they proudly suggested that Jesus mind His own business or even ignored His instructions they would have continued to catch nothing. The Scriptures tell us that "*They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes*" (v. 6). This was an exercising of faith.

When the disciples exercised faith they were successful. They exercised faith in this manner. They first admitted truthfully that they had caught nothing; they then received or heard the instructions; then finally they obeyed the instructions. This is the Biblical pattern for exercising practical faith (Romans 10:17).

One dynamic quality of faith is when a lesser power recognizes a greater power. The disciples admitting that they were powerless in catching the fish then acknowledged the instructions of another. Once they caught the fish their faith was perfected. They gained maturity. They recognized and obeyed the instructions from the One who is greater. This causes the believer to develop and grow in the faith. Hebrews 11:1 says, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." One exercises faith when he does so without seeing the end thereof. He grows when he sees the results, or as the Bible calls it, "the substance," after he exercises faith. When there is no acting upon truth or the exercising of faith then that kind of faith is dead faith.

The miracle of the fish, caused in the heart of Peter, awareness that it was the Lord who had allowed them to make a great catch. They were told to cast the net on the right side of the ship. May it be suggested that any obedience unto the Lord will cause things to be on the *right side*. Peter upon recognizing the Lord put His fisher coat on and swam to the Lord while the other disciples stayed in the ship, dragging

HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

their fish with them. They were soon going to enjoy a feast.

By letting the disciples enjoy a feast (vv. 9-14). Verse nine says, "As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread." This verse carries great significance. Think about it. The disciples had returned to their previous lifestyle to catch fish. They alone had failed. Yet when Jesus instructed them they were able to accomplish what they could not accomplish alone. Yet there is a greater truth revealed than even that. They, while dragging their fish to land where Jesus was, saw that He already had a prepared table of fish and bread waiting for them.

Jesus had what they wanted or desired all the time. It is often that we search for things in this world in a vain attempt to satisfy our passions, only to find that Jesus has what we desire all the time. Psalms 37:4 tells us this truth, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

Jesus instructs the disciples to bring the fish that they had "now caught." The net was full holding "great fishes" (v. 11), "*an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.*" The Lord told the disciples to "*Come and dine.*" By this time they knew that it was the Lord who was extending the invitation to them.

As unworthy as they must have felt, the Lord very patiently brought them back to the place of service. Their exercising of faith allowed them to enjoy the feast. It is equally true that many of our churches could be enjoying a feast instead of experiencing a famine if they would only operate by faith. Our worship services ought to be feasting services. Our degree of feasting is proportioned to our degree of faith.

II. JESUS APPEARS TO CONQUER DENIAL (vv. 15-17)

The questions asked (vv. 15-17). Three times basically the same question was asked. One would discover that the questions seemed to be the very same yet there were differences. In Jesus' purpose of conquering denial it seems that there are several things staged to prick the conscience of Peter. When Peter dragged the net full of fish to the place

JOHN

where Jesus was, he saw first the fish and the fire, as well as the bread. The fish could have reminded Peter that the Lord had called him and the other disciples to be fishers of men. The fire could have been a penetrating dagger to the conscience reminding him of warming by the fire at the time of his denial of the Lord. The three questions may have been asked to coincide with the three denials.

Questions are a very probing means of communication. Questions are asked to extract information that may not readily be offered otherwise. Questions may be asked solely for the benefit of the person asking or they may be asked for the benefit of the person that is being asked. In a courtroom setting questions being asked play a major portion in the defining of the total legal setting. A trial could not be conducted without the asking of questions. The questions answered become a part of the evidence.

Peter is not necessarily on trial when he is questioned by the Lord. The questions are being asked to identify an area of concern in Peter's life. Just how devoted is he now to the Lord? Is his love of such quality that he would be less inclined to deny the Lord if faced with another trying situation? We will analyze the questions asked after we consider the answers given.

The questions answered (vv. 15-17). Again, before analyzing the questions answered, may we consider the practical significance of answered questions. In a very common sense and practical approach questions are generally asked to derive or invoke a particular response. Mostly the question is asked to get a bridged response. The response should in its equation satisfy and balance out the demands of the question. The ideal is for a question to be asked with the intent and capability of it being answered completely and accurately. If the simple question is asked, "What is two plus two?" The simple answer meeting all the requirements would be "four."

Questions can also carry more significance than the actual wording involved. The same math question above when asked to a seven-year-old is obviously being asked to determine if he really knows the answer. When the same question

HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

is being asked to a college professor it may be asked to suggest or send a subtle message. We sometimes call questions foolish questions or even stupid questions. The context of why the question is being asked would determine the kind of question. Sometimes a foolishly asked question is answered the same way.

The questions asked of Simon Peter certainly were not foolish or dumb questions. Yet this much is for sure. The Lord did not ask for information. He asked to bring about correction. He wanted to bring correction to Peter who had denied the Lord. Peter's answers show him to be very uncomfortable. May we now analyze the questions and the answers.

The questions analyzed (v. 15). "When Christ entered into this discourse with Peter, it was after they had dined, He foresaw that what He had to say to Peter would give him some uneasiness. Peter was conscious that he had incurred the Master's displeasure and could expect none other than to be upbraided with his ingratitude. Twice, if not thrice, he had seen his Master since His resurrection, and Christ said not a word to him about it. We may suppose Peter to be full of doubts upon what terms he stood with his Master; sometimes hoping the best, yet not without some fear. But now at length his Master puts him out of his pain" (Matthew Henry).

In analyzing the questions asked and answered, Ivor Powell examines the part of the question that asks, "*Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?*" in this manner. "(1) Much interesting comment has been made regarding the meaning of 'more than these.' Some have thought Christ was asking if Peter's love superseded the love of the other brethren. 'Simon, do you love Me more than John and the others love Me?' It is problematical whether this supplies the correct interpretation, as the question might have caused resentment in the hearts of the others had Peter's answer been in the affirmative. (2) Others think Christ's question could be expressed: 'Simon, do you love Me more than you love these brethren?' This question would have been easier to answer; it would not be an offense to the others to reply, 'yes, Lord, I do.' (3) 'Than these...' a few commentators sug-

JOHN

gest Christ was pointing toward the unconsumed fish; that He was saying, 'Simon, so quickly and so easily you went fishing. Simon, do you love Me more than you love to fish; that is, Simon, could you continue to leave your occupation and everything else, just to follow Me and do My will?' It is not wise to be dogmatic about the relative values of these suggestions; the important feature is that Christ must have preeminence in all things. We cannot ask Him to be second in any project."

The Greek words used in the passage to express "love" are not the same. The Lord was asking something like this, "Peter, do you really love Me?" Peter's response was something like this, "Yes Lord, I am fond of you." When the Lord asked the third time, He graciously asked on Peter's level a question that would have sounded also something like this, "Peter, are you fond of Me?"

The Lord then intrusted Peter with the responsibility of feeding the lambs and the sheep. Even though Peter's love was not exactly where it should have been, He now showed Peter that He was going to mature and grow in His love and devotion with the assurance that one day his love would be perfected.

III. JESUS APPEARS TO CONQUER DISTRACTION (vv. 18-25)

A prophecy about Peter (vv. 18-19). As the final words are given to Peter there is a prediction concerning his death. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not" (v. 18).

This passage indicated that the death of Peter would be that of a martyr. History tells us that he died under the hand of Nero. The Lord also told Peter to follow Him. It must have been such a high honor for Peter to realize that he had been forgiven and restored to service and was counted worthy to die under the shadow of the cross.

A problem with Peter (vv. 20-25). "Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which

HIS RESURRECTION APPEARANCES

also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me” (vv. 20-22). These verses indicate that Peter needed to stay focused on his own concerns rather than everyone else's. How true that still is! May we spend our energies strengthening ourselves and growing in the Lord to the extent that we may be a sacrificial blessing to others along the way.

May God bless you. Thank you, Lord, for letting me write this study on John. To God be the glory!

~Completed October 30, 2001 at 2:15 PM~
Praise God!

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