



# **WE BEHELD HIS GLORY**

**(Writings of John--I)**

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## INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of St. John is quite different from the other three. John includes much that was omitted by the other Gospel authors. He includes incidents from the early ministry of Jesus that are not told elsewhere. Only John records the marvellous discourses surrounding the Last Supper.

The language of John is very simple and elementary, while the content is profound. There is a very definite form to this Gospel and a specific purpose for its creation. The book was written by John the beloved, later than the other three Gospels. He carefully avoids the use of his own name in the entire text. The purpose of the book is declared specifically at the close of the writing: "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (John 20:31).

Seven miracles, or signs, form the core of John's careful development of the truth that Jesus is the Divine Son of God. This truth is the rock on which the church of Jesus Christ stands. John records the fourfold witness of: John the Baptist, of the miraculous works, of the audible voice of God the Father, and of the Old Testament scriptures; all declaring the Divinity of Jesus. "Everybody ought to know who Jesus is": THE DIVINE SON OF GOD.

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This is the ninth in a series of twenty quarterlies (5 years) covering the greater part of the historical portion of the Bible. This series is now complete. The titles are listed below and are available to any and all:

The Men and Women of Genesis	The Miracles of Jesus
Lessons From Exodus	The Parables of Jesus
Wilderness Examples	The Personal Ministry of Jesus
Possessing the Land of Promise	According to Luke - I & II
The Days of the Judges	We Beheld His Glory (John-I)
Israel's Early Kings	Full of Grace & Truth (John-II)
Lessons From the Kings	Holy Ghost Acts - I
The Captivity and Return	Holy Ghost Acts - II
Matthew: The King and His Kingdom - I & II	

## IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

Read: John 1

Memory Work: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:1

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *It is absolutely essential that we know and acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God.*
2. *Accepting Jesus and receiving Him as Lord and Savior imparts power to the believer to become a son of God.*
3. *In the very first personal introduction to Jesus, He is revealed as the sin-bearer: the Lamb of God.*
4. *The Lord is still calling disciples to follow Him and behold and experience the reality of His glory.*

I The Fourth Gospel: The Gospel of John has been called the most profound book of the Bible. It is written in the most simple words. Students of New Testament Greek always begin with John because of its simplicity. Yet the truths John sets forth are profound beyond natural comprehension. He wrote his Gospel after the other three, and included much material which they had left out. John was with Jesus from the very beginning and tells us of some remarkable events of His earliest ministry. He avoids the use of his own name throughout the book, but it is obvious that no one but "the disciple whom Jesus loved," the one who was nearest and dearest to Jesus among the disciples, could have written such intimate details of His life.

John's purpose in writing the fourth Gospel was not to give us another biography of Jesus of Nazareth, or an additional record of His wondrous ministry; but it was specifically written to inspire saving faith in Jesus, the Son of God. Toward the end of the book John states his purpose: "And many other signs

truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31). So the great aim of the author is to inspire a faith in his readers that Jesus of Nazareth was and is, the Son of God; and through that faith receive the eternal life which He alone can give. John chose seven miracles which Jesus performed in the presence of His disciples (and many others) which convinced the twelve that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. Many sincere inquirers who have read the Gospel of John have been persuaded of this fundamental truth. Of course, there are many other blessed truths in this profound book that will bring us much blessing as we read it attentively and meditate on its teachings. May the Lord open our eyes to behold wondrous things from this unique Gospel.

II In The Beginning: Right at the beginning of the book John proclaims eight facts concerning Jesus. Three are in the very first verse: 1. "In the beginning was the Word;" 2. "And the Word was with God;" 3. "And the Word was God." (John 1:1). John takes us back further even than Genesis 1:1. When the creation took place, the Word was. Our Lord, the Word, was in fact the agency of creation. All things of this natural realm were brought into being by Him. In verse fourteen we have three more of John's profound facts listed: 4. "The Word became flesh." John does not record the story of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, but this phrase is the remarkable summation of the nativity according to John. 5. "And (the Word) dwelt among us;" literally, "dwelt" would be translated, "pitched His tent." 6. (And the Word was) "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The last two great facts are found in verse eighteen: 7: "No man hath seen God at any time," and, 8. "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (vs.18). These eight facts are a progressive revelation of the incarnation: how God the creator clothed Himself with humanity and revealed the glory and love of God to a sin blinded world. God's masterpiece of creation was man. In man alone the Lord created light (understanding). The capacity to worship and enjoy fellowship with God was set into man by the life of the Word. The darkness resulting from the devil as the prince of this world could not and cannot extinguish that light whereby those who will, can find and know God. When the

Word became flesh and dwelt among us the Lord began the new creation. The first creation was natural and temporal. The second or new creation is spiritual and eternal. In general, the world did not recognize or receive its own creator. Nor did the chosen people of God accept and receive Him. However, those who did believe and receive Him were given the power to become the sons of God! (vs.12). This new creation is far more wonderful than the first natural creation, for it unlocks the gates of eternal life to those in whom it operates. The Lord is still operating by His Holy Spirit to give all who will believe, and receive Him, a new birth whereby old things pass away and everything becomes new. We have in verses 15-17 the witness of two men. John the Baptist declared, "This is he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me, for he was before me," while John the Beloved speaking for the twelve affirmed; "And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." These are the truths John sets before us as the foundation stone for our faith. All that follows the eighteenth verse of the first chapter of John is recorded to carefully lead us into complete assurance that the statements about "the Word" are absolutely true and fundamental to our salvation and eternal life. The greatest issues of our lives hang in the balance here. Let us give our sincere and earnest attention to these things and pray that the Lord may give us light (understanding) to grasp these truths.

III Behold The Lamb of God: The four days covered in the rest of the chapter (vss.19-51) must have taken place about six weeks after Jesus' baptism. John the Baptist had seen the Dove descend on the Lord Jesus as He was baptized and thereby knew that He was the One for whom he himself was preparing the way. He understood and believed that Jesus was the Son of God (vss.33-34). The strange combination of priests and Levites came to John from the Pharisees in Jerusalem to investigate his ministry. They wanted to know exactly whom he claimed to be. He clearly told them that he was not the Christ (Messiah). Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, had foretold that God would send Elijah before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. They asked John if he was Elijah and he responded, "I am not." Moses had promised a prophet to Israel like unto himself, and the priests and Levites wanted to know if he was "that prophet." He said, "No." When they

pressed him he explained that he was only a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way for One who was already standing among them. "I baptize with water," John explained, "but he — baptizeth with the Holy Spirit (vss.26,33).

The next day John saw Jesus approaching and cried out, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." This was indeed a most remarkable proclamation. Before this John had spoken of Jesus' majesty and authority: of His fanning the wheat, burning the chaff, of laying the axe to the root of the tree; but now the herald sounds forth a much different note: "Behold the Lamb of God." All who heard it must have understood that the Lamb of God was the sin-bearer. It died in the place of the sinner. Is it not remarkable and noteworthy that when the messenger of His coming introduces and identifies the Messiah, that he does so by calling Him the "Lamb of God." Surely, this shows beyond any doubt that this is what He came to the world to do: to give his life a ransom and so redeem us to God. He is "the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev.13:8).

IV Come and See: The next day, the third day covered in the portion beginning with verse 19, as John stood with two of his own disciples, Jesus was walking nearby and again John said, "Behold the Lamb of God." This time the two left John and followed Jesus. John did not attempt to hold them. His whole mission was to point men and women to Christ and urge them to follow Him. May we do likewise! "He must increase," John said, "but I must decrease" (ch.3:30). So two of John's disciples became Jesus' disciples. When Jesus noticed them following Him, He asked them "What seek ye?" They responded, "Rabbi, where dwellest thou?" Then Jesus invited them to, "Come and see." So they did and they spent the day with Him. We are told that one of the two was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. The other one is unnamed, but could hardly be any other than John, himself: the author of the Gospel who studiously avoids the use of his own name. Probably each of them went to find their brother. We read then that Andrew first found his brother Simon and brought him to Jesus, telling him that they had found the Messiah. When Jesus saw Simon, He at once called him by name, Simon, son of Jonas; and foretold that he would be called Cephas (Peter). Simon, meant reed, while Cephas or Peter is by interpretation, a rock. It is very probable that the other disciple also brought his brother (James) to Jesus.



The next day, the fourth, Jesus Himself found Philip, and called him to follow Him. He, in turn, called Nathanael of Cana to join the group. When Nathanael heard that Jesus was from Nazareth he was skeptical. "Can any good come out of Nazareth" he asked? "Come and see," Philip urged. So Nathanael came to Jesus. When the Master saw him He said to those around him, "Behold an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile!" Nathanael must have been just meditating under a fig tree, on the story of Jacob. He may have just prayed and asked God to take all the Jacob (deceiver) out of him. The Lord's words startled Nathanael and he asked, "Whence knowest thou me?" The Lord said that He had "seen" him before Philip called him from under the fig tree. At once Nathanael was convinced that Jesus was the Son of God and the King of Israel. Jesus told Nathanael that he would see greater things in the future. He, like Jacob, would see the heavens open and the angels of God ascending and descending, as on Jacob's ladder, on the Son of man. So six disciples were convinced that Jesus was the Son of God and began to follow Jesus. Let us be sure that we recognize and testify that Jesus is indeed the only begotten Son of God.

V Who Jesus Is: Notice the many names given to Jesus in this first chapter of John. First He is "the Word" (vs.1). He is also called "the Light" (vs.17). John also introduced Him as "the Lamb of God" (vs.29) and "the Son of God" (vs.34). The two disciples of John who followed Jesus called Him "Rabbi," which means Master (vs.38), and Andrew told Peter that they had found the "Messiah" or anointed one (vs.41). Philip told Nathanael of "Jesus of Nazareth" (vs.45) and Nathanael called Jesus both the "Son of God" and "the King of Israel" (vs.49). Finally, Jesus referred to Himself as the "Son of man" (vs.51). In these ten names of Christ in the very first chapter of John there is much to contemplate. May He be all this and more to us and above all the Son of God, our Savior and King.

LESSON 2

THE FIRST MIRACLE

Read: John 2

Memory Work: The same was in the beginning with God. John 1:2

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Though Jesus Himself did not marry, He sanctified the institution of marriage by performing His first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee.*
2. *What Jesus made was a wholesome, non-intoxicating beverage. It is folly to suppose that Jesus would create 150 gallons of intoxicating wine. It is unthinkable!*
3. *When we do "whatsoever he saith," unto us, we can expect fruitful results.*
4. *If it was important to the Lord that the temple be cleansed of defiling activities, how much more, the temple of our bodies!*

I Called to the Marriage: When Jesus had told Nathanael that He had seen him under the fig tree before Philip had called him, Nathanael was persuaded that Jesus was "the Son of God and the King of Israel" (ch.1:49). Jesus promised him that in the days to come he would see heaven open and "the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man" (ch.1:51). When Jacob saw the ladder in his dream, the Lord, Jehovah, was at the top of the ladder. Now Jesus had come into the world. He was now at the foot of that ladder. God had come to dwell with man. The incident of the Lord's first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee was intended as a proof that God the creator had come to dwell among us.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, the Lord Himself, and His disciples, were invited to this wedding. Some scholars have speculated that the marriage was John's. This seems highly unlikely since John was a disciple of John the Baptist who drank no wine nor strong drink. Whose marriage it was is not important,

but the significance of what transpired there is of great consequence. Here at this wedding feast Jesus performed His first miracle. What a privilege it is to be able to call Jesus and His disciples to your wedding! Marriage should make two hearts become one. That is why Jesus came to earth: to restore the alienated heart of man to union with God. As the marriage feast progressed they ran out of wine. Mary, the mother of our Lord came to Him and told Him that they had run out of wine. His response is most illuminating; "Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." Literally translated Jesus said, "What to me and to thee." The guests had been drinking intoxicating wine. This explains the Lord's strong word to His mother. It was directed, not so much against Mary herself, but against her implied proposal that He should use His divine power to make an evil thing. To paraphrase Jesus' words, He said in response to His mother's remark that there was no more wine, "What is that to us? What do we care about their wine? Are you worried about their lack of earthly, degenerate wine? The hour for the shedding of my blood, the heavenly wine, has not yet come." This explains why Jesus spoke so sharply to His mother.

Mary, none-the-less, told the servants to do whatever Jesus said to them. Jesus saw six waterpots, used to cleanse and purify utensils according to the traditions of the Jews, standing there. He told the servants to fill them with water and they indeed filled them to the brim. These water pots held "two or three firkins apiece," that is 18-27 gallons each. Since there were six pots, it follows that they contained somewhere between 108 and 162 gallons. When the pots were full the Lord told the servants to draw out and serve the governor of the feast. The governor, after he had tasted this wine called the bridegroom and inquired why he had served the better wine when the guests were drunk and could not appreciate its excellence. Truly, what the Lord creates is very good. The disciples who saw this miracle believed on Him. They had, of course, already believed on Him as the result of John the Baptist's testimony and their own personal encounters with Him, but now this "beginning of miracles which Jesus did," confirmed their faith.

What Jesus created for the marriage feast was surely a delicious and delicate sweet grape juice. By no stretch of the imagination can we conclude that Jesus, in order to prove to His disciples that He was the Son of God, would create 150 gallons of wine to intoxicate the guests at the wedding! Ernest Gordon,

author of the well-known "Layman's Greek New Testament" observes:

*"It is inconceivable that our Lord's first miracle after the reception of the Spirit should have been to make intoxicants, ever the opponent of the life of the Spirit (Eph.5:18), or that the wine He prepared was fermented, that is decayed.*

*"Alcohol is the true liquid death. The Lord of life would not in any way have associated Himself with it. That would have been to ruin the great symbol of the communion. 'Ye do show the Lord's death,' said Paul. The Lord's death differed from all other deaths in that His holy flesh did not 'see corruption.'*

*"Could the Creator, when He came in the flesh have made a destructive drink? There are two instances of His creative activity in His human life, -- when He created wine at Cana, and when He created bread in feeding the multitudes. Did He create mouldy bread? Did He create rotten fish? Did He create fermented wine? It is unbelievable."*

The great significance of the first miracle is discovered in the words of Jesus, "mine hour is not yet come." Every time this phrase occurs it is used in reference to Jesus' death on the cross and the shedding of His blood. He was not saying to His mother, "Don't rush me, "I'll work when the time is right." His use of the words "mine hour" makes it certain that He had in mind His sacrificial death. The Old Testament was largely a covenant of water. Water was used to wash and sanitize things that were unclean. The New Testament is altogether a covenant of redeeming blood. It is as if Jesus were saying to His disciples, "My hour is not yet come, but I will at the very beginning of my ministry give you a symbol of the New Covenant that is to supercede the old. I will change the water in these stone jars used for purifying in the manner of the Jews, into the blood of the grape." The wine of Cana symbolized the blood of Calvary. The words "filled to the brim" are also significant, for they refer to the completeness of the atonement Jesus made for us whereby we are saved.

There is surely a blessed lesson in the advice of Mary to the servants. She told them to do whatever Jesus said to them. We, too, should learn to do whatever He tells us to do. If the Lord leads you to visit a needy neighbor, to witness and pray

for him, do it. If He leads you to wait on the Lord for some special need, do it. If He tells you to testify in meeting, do it. Whatever He saith unto you, do it. In so doing, you will enable the Lord to "manifest forth His glory" and your faith in Him will increase.

II Cleansing the Temple: After the wedding, Jesus and His mother and His brethren, who also attended the wedding, and His disciples, returned to Capernaum. After several days Jesus set out for Jerusalem to be present there for the feast of the Passover. He went to the temple there, and to His amazement, found the court of the Gentiles filled with Jewish merchants and money changers. The Lord was filled with indignation. Finding small cords lying about, He fashioned a whip of them and began to drive out those who bought and sold. He overturned the tables of the money changers and sent them flying after their spilled and rolling coins. The sheep and oxen as well as the doves were all driven from the temple court. "Take these things hence," Jesus cried, "make not my Father's house a house of merchandise." At the beginning of His ministry Jesus called the temple "my Father's house," but at the close of His life he said "your house is left unto you desolate." The Lord had to repeat this cleansing in the last visit to Jerusalem before His crucifixion.

The disciples were astonished at Jesus' action and remembered the scripture, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Ps.69:9). The Jewish leaders responded to the Lord's action by asking Him for a sign to prove His authority to do such a thing. When Jesus said, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise," he identified Himself as the Son of God. The Jewish leaders were not about to accept such a claim without some proof. So they asked Jesus to show them a sign. Some students of the book of John find in this cleansing of the temple another sign of the Sonship of Christ. But since no physical wonder is connected with it we will not number it with the signs John recorded that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

Jesus responded to the Jews' demands for a sign by a challenge. "Destroy this temple," he declared, "and in three days I will raise it up." Of course, the Jews and the disciples did not understand Jesus. The Jews ridiculed Him. Forty-six years long has this temple been under construction and you will rebuild it in three days? What a laugh they had. Not until after

the resurrection did the disciples understand Jesus' statement. It was as if Jesus said to the Jews, "The sign of my authority will be my cross and my resurrection." On another occasion when the Jews again asked for a sign Jesus noted the sign of Jonah. He foretold that as Jonah was three days in the belly of the whale, so He would be three days and nights in the heart of the earth. We see from both parts of this chapter that right at the very beginning of His ministry Jesus had His death and resurrection very much on His mind.

In Jerusalem at this time Jesus performed miracles which are not recorded. These signs inspired belief in many of the people who witnessed them. Faith which is based upon the spectacular is usually shallow and temporary. Though many believed in Jesus, the scripture says, He did not believe in them. He knew well the fickle nature of the human heart. Let us be faithful believers and commit ourselves to the One who loved us and gave Himself for us; Jesus the Son of God!

NOTES:

## YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN

Read: John 3

Memory Work: All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. John 1:3

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The miracles of the Gospel attract people to Jesus.*
2. *Ministry to individuals is just as important as ministering to the crowds, if not more so.*
3. *At the very beginning of His ministry, the Lord Jesus included the Gentiles in the provision of salvation and eternal life.*
4. *The new birth is essential to enter the realm of God's kingdom.*
5. *The preacher's job is to lead people to Jesus and make Jesus real to the people. There should be no rivalry between the servants of the Lord.*

I Unrecorded Miracles: At the close of his gospel John tells us that "many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book (see John 20:30). In the story of Nicodemus we have a hint of some of those miracles. After Jesus performed His first miracle at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, His disciples' faith in Him was increased. He went to Capernaum for "not many days" (John 2:12), and then to Jerusalem for the Passover. There He cleansed the temple and foretold His death and resurrection (ch.2:13-22). While at Jerusalem many believed on Jesus when they witnessed the miracles which He performed. The second chapter ends with the observation that though many believed on Jesus because of the miracles He performed, He did not believe in them for He knew what was in their hearts.

The third chapter begins with a word which is omitted in

our King James version. Many other versions begin with the word "now". That first word should probably be "but". John is comparing the curious crowd of believers that Jesus did not believe in, to Nicodemus, the sincere inquirer. He was a ruler of the Jews and is called "the teacher of Israel" in the Greek text (vs.10). He probably was in sympathy with Jesus' cleansing of the temple. The miracles which caused this stir in Jerusalem at this early time are not recorded. They caused many to believe that Jesus was the Christ, and brought about the sincere inquiry from this prominent religious leader. He reasoned, logically, that Jesus must have been sent by God, for no one could perform such miracles unless God was truly with Him (ch.3:2). It was certainly admirable that Nicodemus, despite his rank as a ruler of the Jews and a member of the elite Sanhedrin, came to Jesus at all. The fact that he came by night, while perhaps suggesting that he came secretly, also indicates real determination to seek the truth. Nicodemus was probably occupied during the day and may have come at night so that he could have an uninterrupted interview.

II Ye Must Be Born Again: Now Jesus immediately went to the heart of the matter. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus was puzzled by the Master's first words, and asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?" (vs.4). This was asked not in ridicule or in an argumentative spirit. The emphasis of Nicodemus' inquiry was "how". Shortly before this interview, the Pharisees had sent a delegation to John the Baptist to find out just whom he represented himself to be. That delegation was told that One was already standing among them who was much greater than John himself. Nicodemus could have been in that delegation. Surely, he was at least aware of their report. Now Nicodemus was a fish on the hook. He was deeply interested in this new manifestation. The miracles which Jesus performed attested to the Divine origin of this new movement. The ministry of John the Baptist had a tremendous impact on Jerusalem and Judea. Certainly thousands of Jews had been baptized by John. The masses of Jews recognized John as a prophet.

Now Jesus told Nicodemus "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." What Jesus wanted of Nicodemus was a thorough repentance and a public confession of faith. He



wanted Nicodemus to experience the new inward birth of the Spirit. Nicodemus would have to pay a price to become a disciple of Jesus. Nicodemus was old. Jesus was only 30 years of age. When he was inducted into the elite Sanhedrin, the seventy men who ruled the religious affairs of Israel, Nicodemus had reached the zenith of power and honor, and that, perhaps, after many years. To humble himself, and be baptized and to cast his lot with the Nazarene would undoubtedly cost Nicodemus that place of rank and honor which was his as a member of the Sanhedrin. The Lord "knew all men,...he knew what was in man" (ch.2:24,25) and he knew what was in Nicodemus. He knew the price he would have to pay. "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again," Jesus repeated. He compared the birth in the Spirit to the moving of the wind. Those who are born again of the Spirit of God become controlled by that Spirit. Nicodemus could not understand this. "How can these things be?" he questioned. "Art thou a master (teacher) of Israel, and knowest not these things?" Jesus responded, "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?" (vs.12).

How wonderful it would have been if Nicodemus had counted all his attainments of position and honor and rank as loss and cast his lot with the Savior, then and there. Saul of Tarsus, in later years, did just that. But here Nicodemus hesitated. How wonderful that the Lord did not denounce and reject this sincere inquirer, for in the course of the next three years Nicodemus counted the cost and finally openly acknowledged the Master, and supplied the spices used for the proper burial of the Lord (John 19:38-42). Nicodemus was not cast away. He may well have lost a great part of the heavenly reward that might have been his if he had paid the price that night when he visited Jesus, but at least the patience of our Lord was rewarded in the end.

III Lifted Up: Here, to Nicodemus, Jesus already spoke of His sacrificial death in the figure of the brasen serpent. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (vs.14). God had allowed the fiery serpents to bite and slay many among the Jews in the wilderness because of their sinful murmuring against Moses and against the Lord. When they cried for forgiveness, the Lord directed Moses to make a brasen likeness of a serpent and to lift it up so that all Israel could see it. Whoever then was

bitten, if he looked to the brasen serpent, was healed. Now Jesus likened Himself to a cursed serpent, lifted up so that whoever looked to Him might be saved. He became a curse for us, that we might be delivered from the curse. Here, to Nicodemus, at the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus was already speaking of the cross.

In each of the first three chapters of John we have references made to the cross and sufferings of Christ. In the first chapter Jesus is introduced as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." In the second chapter the Lord spoke of His death and resurrection when He challenged the Pharisees to "destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Here in the third chapter He speaks of being "lifted up" like the serpent which Moses erected in the wilderness. Truly, His sacrificial death and victorious resurrection were much on Jesus' mind in these early days.

IV God So Loved the World: Here, also, to Nicodemus were spoken those marvelous words, so often called "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" (vs.16). Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews. He was concerned with his nation. God's concern was for the whole world. How insignificant, in the light of subsequent history, was Nicodemus' place in the Sanhedrin of an occupied country which some 40 years later was obliterated from the face of the earth. But those who cast their lot with the Master have found a place of immortality in His everlasting kingdom.

It is interesting and significant also that here, to Nicodemus, at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry, He indicated that the work of redemption which He was sent to accomplish was for the whole world and not for the Jews only. "Whosoever" includes Jew and gentile. Thank God, with Him is no respect of persons. God sent not his Son to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved. If our modern Nicodemuses are slow to pay the price and choose to be secret believers we ought not to cast them off, but like the Master, patiently wait and pray for the day when they declare themselves to be His disciples.

V He Must Increase: After the interview with Nicodemus, Jesus and His disciples went to Judea. He baptized the people who came to Him, for it was noted

that Jesus baptized more disciples than John (see ch.4:1). Some Jews attempted to stir up a rivalry between John and Jesus. They told John that now everyone was going to Jesus. This did not make John jealous. He recognized that his job was to prepare the way for Jesus. He noted that a preacher cannot receive anything except from God. He called Jesus the bridegroom, and the disciples, the bride. He counted himself as the friend of the bridegroom whose traditional duty in those mid-eastern times, was to conduct the bride to the bridegroom. This done, John could rejoice to hear the voice of the bridegroom. "He must increase, but I must decrease," John concluded. What an important lesson for modern preachers. We must all remember that we are working for the Lord Jesus, not for our own reputation or organization. Let all jealousy be put aside.

The witness of John the Baptist is recorded in verses 27-30. From verse 31 to the end of the chapter we have the testimony of John, the Evangelist. He tells us that God the Father hath given to Jesus, His Son, all things and admonishes us once again to believe on Him. To believe is to live!

#### NOTES:

LESSON 4

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL, AND THE NOBLEMAN'S SON

Read: John 4

Memory Work: In him was life; and the life was the light of men. John 1:4

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The Christian fellowship is truly without discrimination as to race or nationality or sex or social standing or anything else.*
2. *Only Jesus can give living water.*
3. *Jesus' discernment convinced the Samaritan woman of the reality of His claims.*
4. *We must realize the importance of worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.*
5. *The publicans and harlots responded to Jesus' message more readily than the great religious leaders.*
6. *The Lord seeks to inspire our faith in Him on better grounds than signs and wonders.*

I He Must Needs Go Through Samaria: The ministry of Jesus began to enjoy even greater success than that of John the Baptist. The scripture notes that Jesus baptized more disciples than John, yet He personally baptized none. His disciples did the actual immersing. This parentheses gives at least some ground for the faith, that when converts are baptized by an officiating believer, we may believe that they are baptized by the Lord. So when Jesus realized that the Pharisees knew of the success of His ministry, and that opposition would arise, He departed from Judea for Galilee. The observation that "a prophet hath no honor in his own country" (vs.44) was spoken of Judea and not of Galilee. After all, Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea and His Father's house (the temple) was

there in Judea. As Jesus travelled from Judea to Galilee, He "must needs go through Samaria" (vs.4). This must seems to be a protest toward the Jewish prejudice against the Samaritans. These despised people were of mixed blood. The Assyrians had settled other peoples in the northern kingdom of Israel when they overran it. The remnant that stayed in the land when most Israelites were taken away captive, intermarried with the heathen which the Assyrians settled there. The pure blooded Jews would have no dealings whatsoever with the descendants of these people. They did not speak to them. They would make a long and toilsome detour to avoid passing through Samaritan territory when travelling between Judea and Galilee. But Jesus did not make that detour. "He must needs go through Samaria." As He and His disciples passed through the territory, they came upon the town of Sychar. Jesus, being weary from the journey sat down to rest upon the well at the town's outskirts. The disciples went into the town to buy lunch. While Jesus was waiting for the return of the disciples a woman of Sychar came to draw water from the well. Jesus startled her by asking for a drink of water. She recognized Jesus as a Jew, probably by His clothing. "How is it," she asked, "that thou being a Jew askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria" (vs.9)? Not only does this incident indicate that Jesus had no prejudice regarding nationality, but also, no discrimination against women. In those days it was strictly forbidden for a Rabbi to speak to a woman alone. This event took place in the very early part of Jesus' ministry. By offering to an adulterous Samaritan woman the opportunity to believe on Him as the Messiah, Jesus proved that with God there is no respect of persons.

II Living Water: Jesus then told the woman that if she knew the gift of God and who it was that asked her for a drink, she would have asked Him and He would have given her living water. Only the Son of God could make such a statement! She wondered where Jesus would get this water without anything to draw with. The well is deep. "Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?" she asked.

"Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again but whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be within him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," Jesus promised. Clearly, He was speaking of that spiritual life that

begins when one is born again. Now the woman thought of the wearisome chore of hauling water daily to her home and so asked for this water so that she would never thirst and need not come to draw water again.

III Convincing Discernment: Now Jesus asked her to first go and get her husband. "I have no husband," she replied. "Thou hast well said, 'I have no husband,'" Jesus answered, "for thou hast had five husbands, and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly." The astonished woman knew at once that Jesus was a prophet. Such discernment fully persuaded her that Jesus was someone special. The Master did not rebuke or upbraid her, He simply revealed that He knew the truth about her, as He does about every one of us. The gifts of knowledge and discernment ought to work in the church today to convince people of the reality of God in the midst. Paul explained that by the gift of prophecy, the secrets of hearts may be revealed, convincing sinners that God is in us of a truth (ICor.14:25). Let us have faith for the operation of such gifts for the glory of God.

IV True Worshippers: Now the adulterous Samaritan woman began to speak of her religion, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." The mixed up Samaritan worship was a degenerated combination of traditions from the time of Moses, and remnants of the compromising worships during the Assyrian occupation of Northern Israel (IKings 17:24-41). Moses had commanded that when Israel entered the promised land that the blessings for obedience should be read to all the people from Mount Gerizim (this mountain). Later, after the captivity, a temple was built, and the Samaritans worshipped there. They claimed that Abraham offered up Isaac there (not true) and that Jacob's dream took place there (also doubtful). When that temple was destroyed by the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, the Samaritans continued to worship in the open on the top of that mountain.

"Ye know not what ye (Samaritans) worship," Jesus told the woman; "we know what we worship for salvation is of the Jews." But the day was at hand, Jesus explained, when neither at Jerusalem or at Mt. Gerizim, would people have to go to worship, for the true worshippers could worship the Father in spirit and in truth. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth" (vs.24). To understand

what worship in spirit means we need only look into the Revelation and observe how the Lord is worshipped in heaven. There you find He is worshipped in; a new song (Rev.5:9), with loud voices (5:12), by falling down prostrate before Him (5:14), falling down and ascribing glory and honor and power unto Him (7:11-12), with harps (14:2-3), great singing (15:2-4), and with hallelujahs in His presence (19:4-7). The Psalms, too, give us valuable information on worshipping in the Spirit. May our worship, even if it is harmonious praise or worship as is described in the Bible, never become a form that we can follow thoughtlessly. God is still seeking worshippers who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Do you worship Him that way?

V Is Not This The Christ? The woman now recalled that she had been taught that when the Messiah came, He would tell the people all things. Jesus plainly told her, "I that speak unto thee am He" (vs.26). About this time the disciples had returned with food for the Master but dared not interrupt the conversation. Hardly had Jesus told her plainly that He was the Messiah than off she was to the city, leaving her water pot behind. There she witnessed to the men of the town, (she seemed to know them all) "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?" They all responded and came to Jesus.

In the meanwhile the disciple set the food before Jesus, but He was not interested in food now. "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me," he explained, "and to finish his work." Now as the crowd of Samaritan men approached, dressed according to their custom, in white, Jesus spoke to His disciples, "Say not ye, there are four months and then cometh harvest I say unto you, behold lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white already to harvest" (vs.35). The crowd of Samaritan men listened to Jesus themselves and soon were convinced indeed that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah. "Now we believe," they told the Samaritan woman, "not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (vs.42). What an amazing testimony. And what wonderful results from this very first appeal to non-Jewish people. No wonder Jesus, "must needs go through Samaria."

It is necessary to recognize the importance of one individual whom God causes to cross our path. It would be difficult to find a less likely prospect to start a revival than this loose-

living Samaritan woman. But the Father directed Jesus to that well at the right moment for a great purpose. May we recognize the importance of individuals as we walk through life from day to day. Let it be our meat to do the will of God. Let us never despise any individual whom we meet but have faith that God arranges all our circumstances. Somewhere, somehow, a key soul in God's kingdom may find the way of life and drink from that living water, if we are faithful to do the will of God.

VI Thy Son Liveth: After remaining two days with the Samaritans, Jesus and His disciples continued on their way to Galilee. There He was well received. Some of the Galileans had been to Jerusalem for the feast and had seen the miracles Jesus performed. Jesus went again to Cana where He had changed the water into wine. While there, a nobleman from Capernaum sought Jesus out and begged Him to come and heal his son. The Lord could not refuse to meet this need, but He responded by upbraiding the crowd for not believing in Him unless they saw signs and wonders. It is still true today, that faith in Christ which is based on the spectacular is a shallow and often temporary faith. The Lord desires to manifest Himself to us on a spiritual level, that our faith is sealed by inward union with Himself. This nobleman did not take time to argue the point. He just pled, "Lord, come down ere my child die" (vs.49). Jesus did not do exactly what the nobleman expected or desired. He simply said, "Go thy way; thy son liveth" (vs.50). He believed and went and discovered that indeed the boy was suddenly healed at the very hour Jesus spoke that word. The nobleman, whom some think to have been Chuza (Luke 8:3), Herod's steward, while others conjecture that he may have been Herod's foster brother Manaen (Acts 13:1), believed on the Lord with all his house. The Lord was not hindered from healing the boy by the distance separating Him from the actual need (20 miles). This gives us grounds for faith to believe God to hear and answer prayer anywhere. He is Lord of all.



## AN IMPOTENT MAN HEALED ON THE SABBATH

Read: John 5

Memory Work: And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. John 1:5

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus is well able to heal chronic illness.*
2. *Sin is often the direct cause of sickness.*
3. *Prejudice causes blindness of heart.*
4. *The five-fold witness to the Divinity of Jesus should convince any objective inquirer.*

I Bethesda: Jesus went to Jerusalem for an unidentified feast of the Jews. Most New Testament scholars think this feast was Purim, the holiday commemorating the Jews' victory over Haman in the days of Esther and Mordecai. At Jerusalem, there was a pool surrounded by five porches. At certain intervals the pool was "troubled" by an angel and the first to enter the pool after this troubling was healed. This faint hope brought many sick folk to the five porches surrounding the pool. The blind and lame and withered waited anxiously for the occasional troubling of the water at this pool named Bethesda (house of grace). Among the multitude of sick folk was an impotent man who had suffered from an infirmity for thirty-eight years.

While in Jerusalem for the feast of the Jews, Jesus visited the pool of Bethesda and spoke to this man. "Wilt thou be made whole," Jesus asked? The man was impotent not only in body but also in spirit and will, for he complained in response to Jesus' question, that he had no one to help him into the pool when the water was troubled. Then Jesus commanded him, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" (vs.8). At once the man was healed. He obeyed the instruction of the Lord and walked away from Bethesda and the sick multitude, carrying his bed. It happened to be the Sabbath day when this occurred.

II Sin No More: Quickly, the Jews accosted the healed man and rebuked him for carrying his bed on the Sabbath day. He responded that the One who had made him whole, had told him to take up his bed and walk. The Jews wanted to know who it was that had given such instructions, but the healed man had not thought to ask Jesus' name and so could not answer the question. The healed man went to the temple, probably to give thanks for his miraculous recovery. There Jesus found him and gave him a serious warning. "Behold thou art made whole," Jesus said, "sin no more lest a worse thing come unto thee" (vs.14). This is an important lesson. Jesus implied that the poor man had suffered for those thirty-eight years because of his own sin. Now the Lord warned him not to sin again lest a worse thing come upon him. Much sickness today is the direct result of sin. Venereal diseases are the direct result of the sin of fornication. Many diseases and complications are caused by excessive drinking. Anger and hot temper also affect the health directly. When we keep the commandments of the Lord, He keeps His protecting hand over us (see Ex.15:26; Ps.91:1-10). The reverse must also be understood: when we disobey the commandments of the Lord, we remove ourselves from His special protection and become vulnerable to the attacks and plagues of the enemy. Not only did Jesus warn this man that he might become sick again, but cautioned him that a worse thing might befall him. Let us take warning! The New Testament advises the sick to confess their faults and pray one for another that they may be healed. An unforgiving spirit will hinder the prayer of faith (see Matt.18:34-35). Herod, Uzziah and Nabal, among others, are examples of suffering sickness and death as the direct result of their sins. Of course, not all sickness is directly caused by some specific sin. Sometimes, sickness is allowed to test us and to strengthen our faith. Yet, indirectly, at least, sickness is caused by sin, for there would never have been such a thing as sickness had not Adam plunged humanity into fleshly life.

When the healed man found out that it was Jesus who had healed him, he went to the Jews and told them. They were so blind that they began to persecute Jesus and sought to slay Him because He had healed the man on the Sabbath.

III My Father Worketh, and I Work: This great healing sparked the active opposition and persecution of Jesus by the Jewish religious leaders. The fact that He had healed the man on the

Sabbath day was a great stumbling block to them. In response to protests, Jesus said, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." This made the Jews more angry than before. Now Jesus was saying that God was His Father. This declaration also shows that the healing of the impotent man was not performed by accident or chance. Jesus worked in response to what the Father in heaven showed Him. He did nothing on His own. Now the Jews sought the more to slay Him because He called God His Father, thus making Himself equal with God. The fact that Jesus broke the Sabbath (according to the Jews' silly tradition) and that He called God His Father started the period of controversy which finally turned to conflict and resulted in the crucifixion of Jesus.

In verses 17-30 Jesus set forth His unique relationship with the Father. They worked together like a hand and a glove. Here is a list of these inter-relationships between Father and Son from: JOHN THE GOSPEL OF BELIEF, by Merrill Tenney.

*THE FATHER...*

*stands in a peculiar relation to the Son.....(17)*  
*originated the works of the Son.....(19)*  
*loved the Son.....(20)*  
*showed the Son His works.....(20)*  
*committed all judgment to the Son (22,27)*  
*receives worship of men.....(23)*  
*possesses inherent life.....(26)*  
*endowed the Son with inherent life.....(26)*

*THE SON...*

*is dependent on the Father...(19)*  
*has perfect knowledge of the Father.....(20)*  
*possesses life.....(21)*  
*is equal in honor with the Father.....(23)*  
*will raise the dead.....(25,28)*  
*is the means of salvation....(24)*

The claims made by Jesus in this discourse are by far the greatest He had yet made. He claimed here the ability to duplicate the work of God the Father, and to bestow life on whomever He would, and to execute judgment as well as to raise the dead at the end of this age.

IV Five Witnesses: The Jewish law required that at least two witnesses must agree to be accepted in judicial matters. Jesus here introduces five witnesses attesting and agreeing to His Divinity. The first two witnesses He disregards; His witness of Himself and that of John the Baptist, because he was but a man.

Concerning His own personal witness Jesus said if He witnessed of and for Himself it might be a prejudiced testimony. Therefore, the Lord did not rely on His own witness, though He later pointed out that He knew where He had come from, and where He was going (ch.8:14). Since He sought not His own glory, but that of the Father, His testimony was not prejudiced.

The second witness was that of John the Baptist. He had told the Jews plainly that the Messiah was already in their midst (ch.1:26). He had called Jesus the Lamb of God (ch.1:29 & 36) and the Bridegroom (3:29). He had clearly witnessed to the scribes and Pharisees who questioned him, that he was only the messenger sent to prepare the way for the Messiah, the Son of God. Despite this clear witness of John and the high regard the Jews had for him, Jesus refused to claim this testimony, for John was only a man, and the Lord had greater and more reliable witnesses to set forth.

The next and the greater witness which Jesus claimed was the testimony of the works which He did. One of their own, Nicodemus, had readily admitted, "no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be with him" (ch.3:2). The healing of the Nobleman's son, and the unrecorded miracles (see ch.2:23), and the wonder at the wedding in Cana, all attested to the truth that God had sent Him and was with Him.

Further, Jesus claimed the direct witness of the Father who spoke from heaven in an audible voice at His baptism, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." On two other occasions later in the ministry of Jesus, God repeated His testimony by an audible voice. On the mount of transfiguration and after the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the voice of God Almighty was heard. The Jews did not accept this witness because they did not understand the voice. They heard something but mistook it for thunder.

Finally, Jesus appealed to the very scriptures (especially to the writings of Moses) which the Jews dutifully studied in order to obtain eternal life. "They speak of Me," Jesus told them. If Moses and other Old Testament authors wrote of Jesus, then the Jews would be compelled to believe in Him. At least eighteen references to the Old Testament text are found in the Gospel of John. Many of them are directly applied to the Lord. Still the Jews would not believe. Jesus noted the root of their blindness: they sought not the honor of God, but the honor of each other. May God grant us clear vision and hearing ears and understanding hearts to know and believe in our Lord as the only begotten Son of God. To believe is to live!

## THE BREAD OF LIFE

Read: John 6

Memory Work: There was a man sent from God whose name was John. John 1:6

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Our Lord is well able to satisfy the soul hunger of all who come to Him.*
2. *Priority must be given to spiritual development over material possessions.*
3. *The most important work we can do is to believe on the Lord Jesus Himself and so become one with Him.*
4. *Miracles attract crowds, but the faithful teaching of the whole counsel of God separates true disciples from the curiosity seekers.*

I Feeding the Five Thousand: The importance of this miracle is indicated by the fact that all four Gospels record it. The other Gospels make it clear that the crowd had been with Jesus all day. They were attracted by the miracles of healing which He was constantly performing (John 6:2). Jesus used the occasion to teach the people the truths concerning the kingdom of God (Luke 9:11). As evening drew near the disciples suggested that Jesus send the crowd away to get food for themselves (Luke 9:12), but Jesus had other thoughts. He asked Philip where they could buy bread for the multitude. Philip got to calculating and figured if they used all their money, which amounted to two hundred penny worth, there would not be enough for each of them to have even a little. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, had an optimistic thought. He told Jesus that a little lad had 5 barley loaves (similar to pancakes) and 2 small fishes. After mentioning this fact he laughed at the thought, "but what are they among so many?" (vs.9). All the time Jesus knew what He was going to do (vs.6). His question to the disciples was a test of their faith.

Then Jesus told the disciples to make the people sit down (Luke says in groups of 50) and He took the loaves and gave thanks. He broke the loaves and gave the pieces to the disciples. The bread multiplied in Jesus' hands so that the five thousand not only all received a portion, but were all filled. The fishes too were multiplied and the multitude was able to eat as much as they liked. Finally, the Lord asked the disciples to gather the leftover fragments. This amounted to twelve baskets full, considerably more than they began with. Perhaps some was given to the boy who gave his lunch and if so he no doubt, had a difficult time getting his mother to believe what had become of his lunch.

The men who experienced this miracle associated it with Moses' prediction that "a prophet shall the Lord your God raise up -- like unto me" (see Deut.18:15). Moses gave Israel manna and now Jesus gave them bread. They liked this miracle and were ready to make Jesus their king. The principle still is used today. Promise the general public "free food" or any material benefit and they will vote you in. Jesus knew their hearts. He was not convinced by their faith in Him based upon full stomachs. He would not accept their coronation. Instead He went alone to a mountain to pray while the disciples went to the shore and set out by boat for Capernaum.

II Walking On The Sea: It seems that the disciples waited for Jesus until evening (vs.17). Finally, they started out without Him. Then the sea arose because of the sudden windstorm which came up. They made very little headway. From the shore He saw them struggling in their rowing. Now He came to them walking on the water. The disciples had all they could handle trying to cope with the storm, but now they saw the form of someone coming toward them walking on the water. They certainly feared that it was a ghost or spirit. But the reassuring voice of Jesus rang out, "It is I, be not afraid." They gladly helped Him into the boat and another wonder took place, for immediately they were at their destination. This miraculous manifestation was seen only by the disciples and must have had a tremendous effect upon them. Perhaps the disciples had been a little dissatisfied when Jesus refused to accept the crowd's acclaim to make Him king. They did not yet understand the real nature of the Kingdom of God. If there was any disappointment among the disciples, surely this marvelous revelation of Jesus' authority over the very forces of nature overcame it and strengthened their faith in Him as the Son of God.

III Labor Not For The Meat Which Perisheth: The next day the crowd set out to find Jesus. They had seen the disciples leave without Him, so they assumed He must still be in the area. When they did not find Him they went by whatever boats they could get, across the sea and found Jesus with His disciples. Seeing no other boat they asked Jesus when He had come. Jesus did not reveal the secret of His midnight walk to them. Instead, He upbraided them for seeking Him out because of the desire to get food for their stomachs again. Their motives were fleshly. The spiritual significance of what Jesus had done never entered their heads. They wanted only to eat again and fill their bellies. The truth spoken by Jesus there, is an eternal truth and relevant today in this materialistic world. "Labor not for the meat which perisheth," Jesus advised, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life" (vs.27). They asked what works they had to perform to do the work of God, and Jesus told them simply to believe on the One whom God had sent. This ought to be our daily occupation: to believe in Jesus, that He is our life, that we are one with Him and without Him we can do nothing. Every other labor that we expend is futile and accomplishes nothing that is eternal. "Oh, Jesus, make me to know that I can have you in all of your glory and beauty if only I give up every other desire." What goals have you set for yourself? What are you striving for? Labor for that which endures unto everlasting life!

IV I Am The Bread of Life: The curious crowd asked Jesus to show them a sign to prove the truth of His claims. They hinted that Moses had given Israel bread from heaven. Jesus did not satisfy their curiosity. They had eaten only the day before of the multiplied bread. That did not convince them and neither would another supernatural manifestation. Jesus corrected their idea. "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven" (vs.32). They wanted this bread, no doubt, still thinking it to be for their stomachs. Then Jesus said, "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger" (vs.35). He invited them to come and partake. "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (vs.37). Jesus explained that the Father draws the hearts of those who are taught of God and they may come and feed on this true bread of life.

The Jews murmured because He said that He had come down from Heaven. They presumed to know everything about His

origin and His "father and mother". Jesus did not try to prove His Divine origin. He simply recognized that all that the Father drew would come to believe in Him. Jesus told them that He was giving His flesh as the bread of life and whoever would eat of it would not die, but the Lord would "raise him up at the last day." The materialistic Jews could not understand how Jesus could give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. Let us be sure that we understand this mystery and partake in full measure. He is not speaking here of receiving the Holy Communion, but what that communion represents! We are to feed our spirits daily in full assurance of faith on the risen and glorified Son of God. By faith His life is imparted to us, not by the natural process of chewing and digestion, but by denying self and accepting the indwelling life of the Son of God in us. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (vs.57). This is salvation to the uttermost (Heb.7:25). By constantly keeping before ourselves the truth that Jesus will live His life through us, by claiming the manifestation of His life over and over again through each day, by mercilessly denying the fleshly desires of life, the natural disappears and the Lord of glory takes its place. In this way we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God.

This was too much for many of these "disciples". They said it was a hard teaching. One more tremendous eternal truth was spoken by Jesus at this time: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (vs.63). When many left Jesus to walk no more with Him, He asked the twelve if they too, wanted to go away. Peter spoke for them all, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life" (vs.68). Truly, these words of Jesus are eternally full of life. We may still meditate upon them and by faith receive His flesh as meat and His blood as drink, and rest in His promise that He will raise us up in the last day!



## RIVERS OF LIVING WATER

Read: John 7

Memory Work: The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. John 1:7

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The steps of the Lord Jesus were ordered by His Father in heaven.*
2. *The doctrine which Jesus taught was directly from God the Father.*
3. *His enemies could not silence Jesus until His work was finished and the Word of God fully given.*
4. *Jesus promised that His true disciples would be channels of blessings. Living water would satisfy their own thirst and flow through them to others.*

I My Time Is Not Yet Come: After Jesus healed the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda on the sabbath day, the Jewish leaders were so hostile toward Him that He did not stay in Judea. For that marvellous work of mercy the Jews sought to kill Jesus. The feeding of the five thousand took place in Galilee. One of the great feasts of the Jews drew near, the Feast of Tabernacles. The brothers of Jesus advised Him to go to Jerusalem and show His miracles to "the world." There can be no doubt that Jesus had brothers. James and Jude are named and His sisters are also mentioned. Luke tells us that Mary brought forth her firstborn son, implying that others followed. These brothers did not believe, at this point in time, that Jesus was the Messiah, or the Son of God. Their familiarity with Him made such a faith difficult. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His brother James, who then became not only a believer, but one of the foremost leaders of the Church. Such advice from His brothers was surely a temptation from the devil to work out Himself the purposes of God. Jesus did not yield to their suggestion. He told His brothers that it was not yet the

time for Him to go to Jerusalem for the feast. They could go whenever they pleased, for they were not hated of the world and in danger as Jesus was. He had to move in the center of the will of God to stay protected from the evil designs of the Jews.

II My Doctrine Is Not Mine: After His brothers had left for Jerusalem to go to the feast, Jesus also went, but He went secretly, probably by a different route. He may have gone, once again, through Samaria. One thing is sure, He was not advertising Himself as His brothers had suggested. Apparently, Jesus did not arrive at Jerusalem until after the beginning of the feast. There was a great deal of speculation among the people about Jesus. Their discussions were all in hushed tones, however, because of the hatred of the Jewish leaders for Jesus. The opinion of the common people was divided. Some said that He was a good man, while others felt that He was deceiving the people. The claims of Christ and the Gospel message still often cause division. Let us be sure to be on the believing side.

Despite the conspiracy and open hostility of the Jewish leaders, in the midst of the feast. Jesus appeared at the temple and openly taught the people. Jerusalem was the intellectual center of the Jews, and their teachers prided themselves on their intellectual accomplishments. Now as Jesus of Nazareth taught the people He astonished these doctors of the law by His intellectual presentation. Usually, the Lord taught by simple parables but on this occasion He taught as an accomplished scholar. These old Jewish scholars were dumbfounded by the scholarly presentation of this young upstart from Galilee. "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" they asked. As a boy of twelve He had also astonished the doctors of the law, hearing them and asking them questions (see Luke 2:46-47). Jesus, on this occasion, explained that His teaching and doctrine were not His own, but His that sent Him. He pointed out that since He sought no credit for His teaching, but gave all credit to the Father who sent Him, they could trust the truth of what He taught.

III Judge Righteous Judgment: Jesus accused the Jews of breaking the law of Moses by conspiring to kill Him. They denied this charge, though they knew it was true (see vss.20,25). Jesus was aware of the cause of their animosity. He had done one great work which caused them all to marvel. But because

it was performed on the sabbath day they were angry (and jealous) and conspired to kill Him. He reminded them that they circumcised men on the sabbath day. Certainly circumcising a man was as much work as healing a man. The logic of Jesus was irresistible. They often did the work of cutting a man's flesh on the sabbath day, hurting and incapacitating him for some time, while Jesus did the work of healing on a man who had been incapacitated for thirty-eight years. "Judge not according to appearances," Jesus said, "but judge righteous judgment" (vs.24). Such common sense in Christian Doctrine is necessary today.

The open public ministry of Jesus puzzled the people of Jerusalem for they were well aware of the intentions of the chief priests and Pharisees to kill Jesus. They wondered out loud whether their leaders concluded that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (vs.26). They thought they knew all about the parentage and nativity of Jesus and supposed that when the Messiah came that they would not know where He had come from. Therefore, some of the people concluded that Jesus could not be their Messiah. Jesus knowing their thoughts cried out, there in the temple, "Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not" (vs.28). Some of the crowd wanted to arrest Jesus, understanding that He had claimed to be the Son of God. They would have charged Him with blasphemy. They could not carry out their purpose because His "hour was not yet come" (vs.30). But others in the crowd believed on Him. They reasoned, "when Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?" (vs.31). So even in the midst of this conflict the Lord won disciples.

IV Rivers of Living Water: The Feast of Tabernacles commemorated the Israelites' wanderings in the wilderness before entering the promised land. It was a "camping trip" for those who came from outside Jerusalem. They erected booths (tabernacles) like little lean-tos and attended the services daily at the temple. Each day the priests would bring water in golden vessels from the pool of Siloam and pour it out in the temple to recall for the people how God had given Israel water in the desert wilderness. The feast lasted eight days. The last day was the most joyous of all. Scholars think that on the eighth day no water was brought, and the prophetic passages of Ezekiel and Zechariah regarding the river and fountain of living waters were

read. It was on this last day of the Feast that Jesus stood in the temple and cried out, "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 (inner being) shall flow rivers of living water" (vss.37,38). Here was a powerful invitation to each individual. "If any man", Jesus cried. Each of us must make our own personal response to His invitation. "If any man thirst," Jesus offered. His concern went far beyond the natural thirst for natural water. Jesus alone could offer that which could satisfy every thirst of the spirit. His promise went beyond the satisfaction of the individual's need. He promised that the believer and drinker then would find rivers of water flowing from his inner being out to others to help and satisfy their longings.

The Gospel of John was written long after Pentecost and the parenthesis of explanation inserted by John here is most enlightening. "This spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (vs.39). John probably did not understand this perfectly until after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This promise of Jesus (vs.38), is the true evidence of the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It is a better evidence than the speaking with tongues. Instead of asking whether people have been baptized in the Holy Ghost according to Acts 2:4, the better guideline would be John 7:38. Let us seek the Lord and fill our hearts and minds with His Word, until rivers of living water flow from our innermost being and our witness and work for Jesus is blessed by fruitfulness.

Again, after this inspired invitation some believed on Jesus. But others could not accept Him because He came from Galilee. There was a division among them once more, yet some believed.

V Never Man Spake Like This Man: The chief priests and scribes had sent their soldiers to arrest Jesus. They had come in on His great invitation. They were powerless to carry out their commission. Jesus' work was not yet finished. Six months of active ministry remained for Jesus. He had not yet given His disciples all the Word of God which they needed. All the forces of hell and earth were powerless to cut Him off before His work was finished, so long as He moved in obedience to the Father. The officers were spellbound by Jesus' words. When asked why they had not brought Him, they explained, "Never man spake

like this man." The Pharisees were angry and upbraided them, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or Pharisees believed on him?"

Nicodemus timidly asked if they shouldn't, in fairness, give Jesus an opportunity to answer their charges, but they cut him off, and frustrated again in their purpose to dispose of Jesus, went "every man -- unto his own house." Certainly, the first verse of chapter eight belongs to this chapter: "Jesus went to the mount of Olives." He had no place to lay His head. There on the mount of Olives He could pour out His heart to the Father and receive help and comfort and strength for what lay before Him, while the unbelieving Jews and hardhearted Pharisees went to their houses to sleep and to dream up new schemes to destroy Jesus.

NOTES:

## LESSON 8

## DELIVERANCE OF A SINFUL WOMAN

Read: John 8

Memory Work: He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. John 1:8

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Although Jesus hates sin, He loves the sinner and seeks to restore such.*
2. *As the life of Jesus enters into our being it brings the Light of truth and drives out the darkness of ignorance and prejudice.*
3. *The true children of God recognize His Word, and love it.*
4. *Hatred and deceit in anyone mark such as children of the devil.*
5. *Either Jesus had to be the Divine Son of God as He said, or He was the most impudent blasphemer in history.*

I Sin No More: After the events of the last day of the feast (of tabernacles), all the people went to their own houses while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. There, no doubt, He communed with His Father. Early in the morning He went once again to the temple. The pilgrims who had come from afar for the feast would be leaving Jerusalem on this day. Yet many were present to listen to Jesus teach again. On the last day of the feast, He had stood and cried out like a herald announcing an important event. This day, however, Jesus sat and taught the people. It was the custom for a qualified teacher to sit as he taught. The crowds came to Him. He had something that attracted them. While Jesus was talking to the crowd, the scribes and Pharisees brutally dragged a woman before Him. They shamelessly informed the Lord in the hearing of all the crowd that she had been caught in the very act of adultery.

They had obviously conspired, not only to embarrass Jesus, but to trap Him in one way or another. It may even have been that the whole episode of the adultery was deliberately arranged. One among them may have been the male partner. It is clear that if the woman was caught in the act, the other party also should have been accused. But the Pharisees set this trap for Jesus. They informed the Lord that Moses commanded that such sinners should be stoned. If He agreed with Moses, the Jews could accuse Jesus of passing sentence contrary to the Roman law forbidding the Jews to exercise the death penalty without Roman approval. If Jesus dismissed the woman, the Pharisees would declare that Jesus' teaching was contrary to the law of Moses. The wise Master ignored their insistence for a while. He stooped and wrote on the ground. When they persisted in demanding an answer, He stood up majestically and said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (vs.7). Then He stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. The tradition of the early church was that Jesus wrote their sins on the ground. At any rate the accusers filed out one by one until they were all gone. Then Jesus addressed the accused tenderly, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?" (vs.10). We must note that although Jesus did not accuse and condemn the woman for her sin, yet neither did He excuse her or condone the act. We must not only note the mercy of Jesus when He said, "Neither do I condemn thee," but also His insistence on righteousness as revealed in His instruction to "go, and sin no more" (vs.11). Jesus came to save sinners. He loves them all, but He hates the sin. We must take care that in our desire to show mercy we do not excuse or condone sin. Sin must be confessed, forgiven and forsaken.

II The Light of the World: Each day brought new conflict to Jesus because of the envy of the Jewish religious leaders. On the one hand Jesus taught the words of truth given Him by the Father. On the other hand the Jews challenged every word He spoke and constantly looked for occasion to embarrass and accuse Him. At this time Jesus proclaimed that He was the "light of the world" (vs.12). He promised that those who followed Him would not live in ignorance and darkness, but would possess the light of life. This promise was very similar to that made to the woman at the well. There, Jesus promised that whoever drank the "water" that He offered would never

thirst, but it would be within him a well of water springing up into eternal life (see John 4:14). The Jews challenged Jesus and accused Him of making these claims without any corroborating witnesses. Jesus defended His own testimony because He knew where He came from and where He was going. He had a perfect awareness of the eternal. Yet Jesus also claimed the witness of His Father. The Jews asked, "Where is your Father?" They did not know God the Father in a personal way and so could not see and hear Him in His Son, Jesus. They would have liked to arrest Jesus and dispose of Him, but they were powerless until the hour was come and the work of God was finished.

III Ye Shall Die In Your Sins: Three times the Lord of glory warned these Jews that they would die in their sins (vss.21,24). He warned them that where He was going they would be unable to come. Jesus told the Jews plainly that He was from above while they were of the world (beneath). He also explained why they would die in their sins: "If ye believe not that I am" (vs.24). The word "he" is added by the translators and mars the thought here and in verse 28. Not only those blinded Jews but all today who do not believe that Jesus is the great I AM will die in their sins. Salvation is the gift bestowed on those who believe in and on Jesus Himself. Modernists attempt to believe and obey His ethical teaching without believing on Him personally. Roman Catholics emphasize faith in His Church and millions today are trusting the salvation of their eternal souls to an organization that has turned aside from the rule and guidance of the Holy Spirit to the organization of political religious leaders. The church called "The Disciples of Christ" teaches that only its members can be saved. But let it be understood clearly that only an absolute faith in Jesus Christ as the Divine Son of God and only Savior, will bring to us the glorious salvation so that we will not die in our sins. The Jews asked the Lord, "Who art thou?" He replied, "Even the same that I said to you from the beginning." He told them that the Father who sent Him was true and that all that He told them was what He had heard of the Father. Jesus told them that when they had "lifted up the son of man" (on the cross) then they would know that Jesus was their Messiah. He explained that the Father was always with Him and that, "I do always those things that please him" (vs.29). So powerful was this word of Jesus that many believed on Him. Their faith,



however, seems to have been quite shallow, for before long these "believers" were ready to kill Him. Just as Jesus experienced the Presence of the Father because He always did what pleased Him, so we may experience the constant Divine Presence if we live in obedience to our Lord and do those things which please Him. A. J. Gordon has put this statement of Jesus together with His prayer at Lazarus' tomb. It is an interesting and enlightening combination:

"I do always those things that please Him."

"I know that thou hearest me always."

To strive to please the Lord always and obey His commandments is not legalism, but a life of faith appropriated to be like Jesus and be partakers of the Divine nature. His grace and His Spirit are given us to enable us to live such a life. If we please Him always our prayers will be much more effective and we will bear more and better fruit.

IV The Truth Shall Make You Free: Jesus instructed those who believed on Him to continue in His word. That word, the truth of God, would set them free. The Jews objected that they were and always had been free. They conveniently forgot Egypt and Babylon and Rome, but Jesus was speaking of spiritual freedom anyway. He pointed out that whoever commits sin is the slave of sin and the slave could not inherit the legacy of the Father. They claimed to be the seed of Abraham. They were, in a natural way, the seed of Abraham. But they were not of the same spirit as Abraham. He knew God. He looked for an eternal city. The Jews were materialists. They could not understand the spiritual. The fact that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus proved that they were not children of Abraham. They protested that they were not born of fornication. Jesus flatly charged them with being children of the devil. They claimed God was their Father but Jesus pointed out that if that were so they would love Him for He had come forth from the Father. The Lord showed the reason for calling them children of the devil. He was a murderer from the beginning and he was the original liar: the father of lies. The Jews also were trying to murder Jesus and the truth was not in them. They would rather believe lies of Satan who deceived them into believing that because they were the natural seed of Abraham they were therefore also the children of God. Satan has found foolish ears even among believers of this age who believe and teach the same lies today.

Jesus also made another tremendous statement: "If a man

keep my sayings, he shall never see death" (vs.51). Again the Jews were incredulous. They could not ever think spiritually. They thought only of the body and so fought Jesus' claim. They accused Him of being demon possessed and insulted Him terribly. When Jesus told them that Abraham had rejoiced to see His day they could not take it. "Thou art not yet fifty years old and hast thou seen Abraham," they derided. But Jesus once again in majesty and authority proclaimed "Verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am" (vs.58). Let those who deny the Divinity of Jesus note from this statement that Jesus either must be indeed the One He claimed to be, or else He is the most brazen blasphemer and imposter of all time. After such a claim the Jews were ready to stone Him but His hour was not yet come and He hid Himself from them and passed through the crowd out of the temple to continue the work of His Father.

NOTES:

## THE MAN BORN BLIND IS HEALED

Read: John 9

Memory Work: That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. John 1:9

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *The misfortunes of life may be turned into opportunities for the Lord to be magnified.*
2. *The Lord Jesus is the master even of birth defects.*
3. *The fact that Jesus used clay in effecting the healing of this man's blindness is no justification for the use of all manner of medicines and drugs by those who need healing today.*
4. *Healing led the unfortunate man into faith in the Son of God.*
5. *The determined unbelief of the Pharisees developed into total spiritual blindness.*

I The Disciples' Question: Jesus and His disciples passed by a blind beggar on a street of Jerusalem. The disciples must have had some knowledge of the man, for they were aware that he had been born blind. Perhaps they had discussed or argued about the implications of being born blind before. Now they asked Jesus about the problem. The Lord was not interested in theological discussion but in deliverance. The disciples asked if the man himself had sinned; or if his parents had sinned and caused this judgment upon their offspring. They knew, of course, the warning of the ten commandments, that sins of the father would be punished in their offspring for three or four generations (see Ex.20:5). The disciples' reference to whether the man himself had sinned may have been just a dumb thoughtless question. More likely, however, they may have been curious about reincarnation. Some rabbis of the Jews believed and

taught this false doctrine. Could this man have sinned in a previous life and now be suffering this blindness as a result of that sin?

II The Lord's Compassion: Jesus declared that neither the man or his parents had caused this blindness by their sin. He was interested in delivering the unfortunate man and manifesting the glorious works of His Father. Similar questions arise in minds today. Why was this child born deformed? How can a God of love allow such suffering from hunger? Why does a loved one die prematurely? These, and many more questions present themselves to the human mind. First, we must remember that Satan is the god of this world. Believers are in enemy territory. The kingdoms of this world are not yet the kingdoms of our Lord. The misfortunes and catastrophies that occur cannot be blamed upon God. However, the believers are translated out of the Satanic kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light. For the true believer, God works everything for good. Further, the believers can, by prayer and faith, overrule the disastrous effects of the rule of the prince of this world, and get glory for the name of Christ. Jesus was more desirous of delivering this unfortunate beggar from his blindness, than in discussing the possible causes of his blind birth. Job's three friends were sure they knew the cause of Job's misfortunes, but they were wrong. The New Testament reveals that God's purposes toward Job were full of mercy and pity. Let us learn to be more concerned with deliverance and compassion toward the suffering, than in establishing the blame for the suffering.

III The Light of the World: Jesus saw in this unfortunate case, an opportunity to work the works of God who had sent Him. His time was short, so every opportunity had to be taken to work for God. "As long as I am in the world," Jesus explained, "I am the light of the world." Then Jesus spat upon the ground and made a paste of the combination of clay and spittle. This he placed upon the blind beggar's eyelids and instructed him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. He obeyed and his eyes were opened. When he returned he could see. Now there was considerable curiosity about this healing. The neighbors who knew him well wanted to know how his eyes were opened. He apparently knew nothing about Jesus but His name, for he explained, "A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed

mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight." He apparently had not even seen Jesus after receiving sight. Now the neighbors stirred up trouble by taking the healed man to the Pharisees.

IV The Blind Pharisees: First of all the Pharisees asked the former beggar how he had received his sight. He told them how Jesus made clay and told him to wash. Some of the Pharisees immediately concluded that Jesus was not of God because he had made this clay mixture on the sabbath day. Others, however, said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" The Pharisees finally asked the beggar for his personal evaluation of Jesus. "He is a prophet," he replied. Now the Pharisees would not believe that he had been born blind. They called for the parents who fully testified that he was their son and had indeed been born blind. Knowing that the Jews would cast anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah out of the synagogue, the parents told the Jews to ask their son himself about the healing. Since he was of legal age he could testify for himself. So they called the man again. "Give God the praise," they advised, "we know that this man is a sinner." The happy man knew only that whereas he had been blind, now he could see. They began to question him again, but he said, "I have told you already...will ye also be his disciples?" This angered the Pharisees. They were Moses' disciples and did not know where this fellow Jesus was from.

The healed man's use of the word also suggests that he had connected himself to discipleship even though he knew so little of Jesus at this point. Now the healed blind man logically reasoned that since God did not hear sinners and that considering that there was no record of anyone who was born blind being healed, surely the Pharisees should recognize that Jesus was a man of God. "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing," he concluded. The Pharisees could not refute this reasoning so they turned to ridicule and violence. "Thou was altogether born in sin (as if they were not) and dost thou teach us?" Then they excommunicated him from the synagogue.

V The Progress of Faith: The beggar first showed faith in Jesus by obeying His instructions. Then he was persuaded that Jesus must be a prophet. He withstood the accusation of the Pharisees that Jesus was a sinner and witnessed his belief that Jesus was of God.

Now, after the Jews threw him out of the synagogue, Jesus found him and asked him if he believed on the Son of God. He asked, "Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?" This was the first time he had seen Jesus, but he had heard Jesus' voice before. Jesus revealed, "Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee." The grateful man responded at once, "Lord I believe!" Then he worshipped Jesus. What a day for this man. From darkness, both physical and spiritual, into the glorious light of natural sight as well as the light of the truth of God. He had met the "Light of the World." That Light had shined in his heart and now he was no longer blind. It is interesting to note the progress of this man's faith in Jesus. All he knew at first was that his benefactor was "A man called Jesus" (vs.11). Later, when asked his evaluation of his healer he declared, "If this man were not of God, he could do nothing" (vs.33). Finally, when Jesus revealed to him that the Son of God was the very one whom he was listening to and looking at, and asked if he believed on Him, the grateful man affirmed, "Lord, I believe" (vs.37). Then he worshipped Jesus and that is the ultimate proof of faith.

Jesus was more interested in delivering the man from all his darkness than in discussing the possible theological causes for his blindness. Let us pray for hearts of compassion for the sick and suffering around us. Discussion of these social and spiritual problems is of little value. The prayer of faith and the ministry of the gospel must bring the deliverance to the needy. Those who have a real compassion for the needy will receive the help of God to meet that need.

VI The Blindness of Unbelief: The father who sought deliverance for his oppressed son, cried out, "Lord I believe; help thou my unbelief." The Pharisees cultivated their unbelief to a high degree. Here, they did not want to believe that the man had been born blind. They refused to yield to the inescapable conclusion that Jesus must be of God to do such miracles. So intent were they in their unbelief that they finally conspired to put Jesus, the Son of God, whose miracles they had witnessed, to death, believing that they were saving Israel from grave error and the nation from destruction. Unbelief blinds. "Are we blind also?" they asked Jesus. If only they would have recognized their blindness there would have been hope, but because they were so sure that they saw and understood and knew everything, their blindness was incurable. Because they

did not receive and love the truth they became deluded and blind to the truth.

May our faith grow continually and may all unbelief and darkness be rooted out of our lives that the Light of the World might bring light to our lives.

VII The Moistened Clay: It is sometimes argued that since Jesus used this mixture of spittle and clay as a means to effect the healing of the blind man, the drugs and medicines developed by medical science are proper agencies to be used by believers for deliverance from sickness. Let it be noted, however, that whenever agencies were used to help the sick, they were natural substances and free, while the concoctions and drugs of the medical world are complex developments of the human brain and are very expensive. For Naaman's healing, water was used; for Hezekiah, a lump of figs; for the blind man, moistened clay; and the oil and wine of the good Samaritan. The drugs and medicines of the world are not the proper agency for the healing of God's people. God has made provision for the healing of the sick. He has provided the promises of the Word for us to claim. "He sendeth his Word and healeth them" (Ps.107:20 marg.). He has commanded the sick to call for the elders to anoint them (Jas.5:14), and has also promised healing to those who pray one for another confessing their faults which can hinder healing (Jas.5:16). Healing stands on the same foundation as the forgiveness of our sins, for it is included in the atonement of Jesus (see Matt.8:17). Let us learn to trust the Lord wholly for the healing of the body for "cursed is the man that trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm" (Jer.17:5), and "blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is" (Jer.17:7). Should the Lord lead us to use some material agency such as a certain food or water or rest, of course, we can follow His leading in confidence and expect good results, only let us not trust the means, but the Lord who has promised not only healing, but health (see Ex.15:26).

LESSON 10

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

Read: John 10

Memory Work: He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. John 1:10

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Our safety and necessities are assured as we faithfully follow Jesus, the good shepherd.*
2. *We must learn to know the voice of the Lord and abide in His fold.*
3. *The only way into the realm of Christ's sheep is through Himself. He is the door.*
4. *The greatest claims of Jesus are: that He and the Father are one; and that the Father was in Him, and He in the Father.*

I I Am The Door of the Sheep: The Pharisees had cast the restored blind man out of the fellowship of the synagogue, but Jesus had found him and led him into faith in the Son of God. The Lord sharply criticized the Pharisees for their unwillingness to see the truth. Their willful unbelief made them spiritually blind. The first 21 verses of the tenth chapter of John are a continuation of Jesus' teaching following the healing and birth of faith, in the man born blind. Though the Jewish religious leaders cast this man out of the fellowship of their misguided religious organization, he found the way into the fellowship of believers through Jesus, the door.

The Lord used the illustration of a shepherd, his flock, and the sheepfold, to make plain the relationship between Himself and His people. He also illustrated the danger of hirelings as shepherds, and the false claims of others who claimed to be the Messiah. The sheepfold was an enclosure of four walls usually made of rough stones, with only one door. For the protection of the sheep, the shepherds brought their flocks to these sheepfolds for the night. The walls were high enough to



keep out wolves and other predators which might attack the sheep if they were unprotected. Often several shepherds would use the same sheepfold. As the sheep entered the sheepfold the shepherd would count and inspect his sheep. The parable of the lost sheep and the ninety and nine is based upon this principle. When all of the sheep were safely in the fold, the shepherd would himself lie down in the doorway of the enclosure. No sheep could go out and no wolf, lion or bear could go in without the shepherd's knowledge. In the morning the shepherd would call his own sheep by name and they would come out and follow him. They knew his voice. The sheep belonging to another shepherd would not follow the strange shepherd but only their own, whose voice they recognized.

The Lord explained to the Jews that all who had come before Him claiming to be the Messiah, were thieves and robbers. The true sheep of God did not follow them. Jesus warned that the false leaders came only to steal, and kill, and destroy. Recent headlines concerned such a false leader, who led his followers into mass suicide. Over four hundred misguided adherents are dead because they followed a false Christ. Jesus promised that all who entered the realm of faith through Him, the door, would be saved. They would go in and out and find pasture: they would be able to enjoy the normal way of life and yet be supplied and protected by the One called the good Shepherd.

II I Am the Good Shepherd: The good shepherd is contrasted with the thieves and robbers, and with the hirelings. Those false Christs who had come and led gullible followers after themselves did not really care for them at all. They used these "sheep" for their own selfish purposes. They led them into death to further their own grasp for power. Flavius Josephus describes several of these false Christs in his "Wars of the Jews." The chief of all thieves and robbers is Satan himself who robs humanity of fellowship with God, and of peace, and health, and hope, and life. The hirelings Jesus mentioned are clearly a picture of the Pharisees themselves. They, like an hireling shepherd, do not have real love for the sheep. In danger, the hireling flees. He is most interested, not in the welfare of the sheep, but in his own remuneration. He does his work for pay. The Pharisees were accused by Jesus of "devouring widow's houses," and of covetousness. They did not really care for the people. Their attitude is revealed in their speech

about those who listened to Jesus: "...this people who knoweth not the law are cursed" (John 7:49). These are not the words of a good shepherd. Ultimately, the hireling religious leaders and false Christs led the poor dumb sheep of Israel to death and damnation at the destruction of Jerusalem. The sheep who heard and recognized the voice of the good shepherd and followed Him were spared that tragic end.

Jesus said much about the good shepherd. First, He proclaimed that He had come that His followers might have life and indeed have it more abundantly. To live without Christ is simply to exist while slowly marching to the grave. Life eternal is to know Jesus Christ. Life with the good shepherd is one glorious experience after another. Even the mundane everyday chores glow with meaning as we perform them with and for Christ. The enablement to witness for the good shepherd and bring other sheep to the fold is the most fulfilling work of this life, and the wonder of real inward fellowship with Him makes life glow with the glory of heaven.

The Lord also said that He, the good shepherd, would give His life for the sheep. He meant not only that He would die for their salvation but that also He would rise and by His Spirit impart His own life to his followers. The only things which Jesus said He would do of Himself (vs.18) was to lay down His life. But even that, He explained, he did because He had received this commandment from the Father. Not only did Jesus die for the sheep, but He lived to bless and serve and teach them. In this way, too, He gave His life for the sheep. Those who are called to minister to the people of God today should follow the example of Jesus and be good under-shepherds. We need not die for the sins of the people, but we can and should live to help and guard, and provide for, and teach the precious followers of the great shepherd of the sheep. Let the sheep be warned not to follow those who use them and make merchandise of them. I recently heard a "minister" of the gospel arguing and fighting for more pay to continue his work. Oh, the shame of it. How poor the sheep who are led by such an hireling.

The good shepherd knows each sheep and they know Him. We are not just congregations or groups to the Lord. He knows us as individuals. He knows us by name. There are such large congregations today that the minister does not even attempt to have personal contact with all the members. Our Lord calls all the stars by name, but your name is more precious to Him than that of the stars. Not a bird falls but that He knows. But you

are of more value than many sparrows. Praise God; the good shepherd knows me, and He knows you. He also explained that He had "other sheep." These were the sheep among the Gentiles which would believe on Him in the days to come, and indeed make up the largest part of His flock. The Kingdom of God is open to all. It is and has been the only true example of a kingdom without discrimination. There is no particularism there. All who believe and obey are of one fold and there is one shepherd.

III Tell Us Plainly: Some time later, at the feast of dedication (winter), the Jews surrounded Jesus as He walked in the temple area known as Solomon's porch. They demanded of Him a clear statement as to whether He claimed to be the Messiah or not. Their great difficulty in understanding Jesus and His claims lay in the false assumption that the Messiah was to be a political leader who would deliver them from the Roman oppression and restore Israel to the foremost place among the nations of the world. This was the common teaching among the Jews and still is the same today. They were not interested in any Messiah who sought to deliver them from the inward bondage of sin and the physical result of sickness and death. "Tell us plainly," they demanded. But Jesus simply referred them to the works which He had done among them and explained that they could not understand because they were not of His sheep. Jesus claimed again that the works He did were done in the name of the Father. "I and my Father are one" (in purpose and spirit), Jesus proclaimed. For this they were ready to stone Him. Jesus asked for which of His good works they wished to stone Him. They answered that it was not for a good work but because of His claim to be one with God. So they really did understand what Jesus said, but they could not and would not accept it. Jesus quoted from the Psalms where those to whom God committed His Word were called gods. He reasoned that if they were called gods, to whom the word of God came, it could not be considered blasphemy for Him to declare that He was the Son of God. Finally, they attempted to arrest Him. They had surrounded Him in Solomon's porch but now He escaped again. His hour was not yet come. They were powerless to do away with Him until His work was finished. He left Jerusalem and the unbelieving Jews, and went to the place where John the Baptist had pointed Him out some three years before as "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." There

many remembered the testimony of John and believed on Him. Thank God there are always some who hear the voice of their good shepherd and follow Him. He will keep them and they shall never perish!

NOTES:

## LAZARUS RAISED TO LIFE

Read: John 11

Memory Work: He came unto his own, and his own received him not. John 1:11

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus is the Master even of the prince of terrors, death.*
2. *Safety is in the path of obedience to the will of God.*
3. *Miracles inspire faith, but also harden unbelievers.*
4. *Jesus teaches that death is temporary like sleep.*
5. *This greatest of all signs of Jesus, proves the reality of Jesus' power to raise up His people in the last day, as well as His power to heal from any sickness.*

I The Call For Help: Jesus must have been at least two days journey from Bethany when Lazarus became ill. Lazarus was the brother of Mary, who loved to sit at Jesus' feet, and of Martha, who loved to entertain and serve Jesus in her home. When the sickness of Lazarus worsened they sent a message to Jesus: "Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick." When Jesus received the message, He immediately declared, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby." The Divine wisdom in the Son of God made Him aware of the entire situation. He did not rush off immediately to the side of His sick friend. For two days Jesus continued His work in the place where He was. Then He said to His disciples, "Let us go into Judea again." They reminded Him that the Jews had just tried to stone Him. The steps of our Lord were not ordered by convenience or threat or danger, but by the will of the Father. "If any man walk in

the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world," Jesus explained. He knew that as long as He walked in the clear light of obedience to the direction of His Father, He would not stumble. Duty, not safety, was His first obligation!

Next, Jesus told the disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awaken him out of sleep." The disciples answered that if he was sleeping he would surely recover, but Jesus spoke of the sleep of death. This conversation reveals that Jesus knew that Lazarus had died and that God would be magnified and the Son of God glorified through the restoration of this untimely victim of death. He most assuredly desired His disciples to learn that death was not the end. He had said that the dead would hear the voice of the Son of God (John 5:25). This incident should have provided the disciples a lesson in faith for resurrection which would enable them to have faith for the resurrection of their Lord after His crucifixion, and indeed, for their own resurrection after their earthly days of service were completed. Let us learn the lesson. He is the resurrection and the life!

Now Thomas, seeing that Jesus had turned toward Judaea, said to his fellow-disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (vs.16). It was a characteristic remark from Thomas the doubter. It revealed a certain heroism mixed with much unbelief.

II Too Late For The Funeral: When Jesus finally arrived at Bethany, He found out that Lazarus had been dead and buried for four days. News came to Martha that Jesus was coming and she characteristically ran to meet Him. "Lord if thou hadst been here my brother had not died," she cried to the Lord. Then she added a strange word; "But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (vs.22). Did she have a spark of faith still? "Thy brother shall rise again," Jesus promised. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day," Martha replied. It almost seems that she was trying to prod Jesus into doing something now. Then Jesus spoke with Divine authority, "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." When Jesus asked Martha if she believed this, she replied perhaps ambiguously, "I believe that thou art the Christ the Son of God, which should come into the world." Then she went to get Mary. When Mary saw Jesus

she fell at His feet. That was the place she always took; at His feet. Mary also said, just like her sister, "Lord if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." The Jews which had come from Jerusalem to mourn with the sisters were with Mary when she came to Jesus. As Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews that were with her weeping, he groaned in the Spirit. He asked now where they had laid Lazarus and they said, "Lord come and see." Now Jesus wept also. This caused the Jews to say, "Behold, how He loved him. Could not this man which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?" (vs.34-37). Again this caused the Lord to groan in himself as they approached the place of burial.

III Jesus Awakens the Sleeper: The burial place was a cave. A stone sealed the entrance. Jesus startled Martha by asking her to have the stone removed. Whatever faith or hope Martha may have had when she said, "I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee," vanished in the stark cold cave at the cemetery. "Lord by this time he stinketh for he hath been dead four days," she objected. "Said I not unto thee that if thou wouldest believe thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Jesus reproved. Now the stone was removed. It was a dramatic moment. Jesus lifted up His eyes toward heaven. He did not ask the Father to hear Him: He thanked the Father because He always heard Him. The prayer was for the benefit of the people who were crowding around the opened cave. And when He had prayed, Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!" It must be understood that the dead were wrapped in strips of cloth from the armpits to the feet, leaving the shoulders bare. A cloth or napkin was wrapped about the head and face. At the cry of Jesus, Lazarus appeared at the mouth of the cave, bound in these wrappings. He could not walk and so must have been impelled to sort of "float" forth to the door of the cave. Then Jesus ordered, "Loose him and let him go." Can you imagine the amazement of the spectators. And what a grand reunion when the napkin was unwound from the face of Lazarus and his sparkling eyes met those of his two sisters and then of Jesus, his Lord and friend. Truly, they saw the glory of the Lord that day. The disciples' faith was greatly strengthened. Many of the Jews believed on the Lord because of this miracle. Lazarus was a living witness of Jesus' mastery over death.

But some did not believe. They went and reported the inci-

dent to the Pharisees. They were very disturbed. "What do we?" they reasoned, "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" (vs.4748). They had to admit the reality of the miracles, but their hearts were so hardened that they arrived at the devilish conclusion that Jesus must be destroyed to save the nation and religious system of the Jews.

Lazarus also became the object of conspiracy. Because of his witness many believed on Jesus (ch.12:10-11). Many of those who witnessed the restoration of Lazarus at the grave that day, were in the crowd on Palm Sunday shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (see ch.12:12-19).

Probably because Lazarus was the object of plots by the Pharisees, Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not record the story which is by far the most sensational in the list of miracles performed by Jesus. By the time John wrote this account of the life of Jesus, Lazarus may have been dead and so there was no longer reason to withhold the account from the record.

IV The Greater Sign: This account, prayerfully considered, should cause faith to rise concerning any need. John has chosen seven signs to inspire saving faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The first was at Cana of Galilee where Jesus turned the water into wine. The healing of the nobleman's son was the second and another healing, that of the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda was next. The feeding of the five thousand and Jesus' walking on the water were the fourth and fifth signs recorded by John. The healing of the man born blind was a tremendous miracle. But John has saved the best for the last. The restoration of Lazarus after four days of death illustrates the unlimited power of our Lord Jesus. The other gospel authors record two others who were revived after they had died but in each case the restoration took place within a few hours of death. Jairus' daughter still lay in the bed where she had expired and the son of the widow of Nain was being carried to burial when Jesus intervened. But with Lazarus the conditions were extreme. He had been dead four days. His body and head had been swathed in linen. Deterioration and corruption should have naturally set in. Still, Jesus confidently called him back to life. What a positive proof we have here of Jesus' own proclamation, "I am the resurrection and the life."



Not only can we rest in complete confidence that the Lord will raise us up at the last day should we die before His coming, but we may also be confident that He will manifest His glory in our lives. Eternal life pertains not only to continued existence after the grave, but to the quality of our present life. Let us believe to see the glory of God now and hereafter.

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## LESSON 12

## TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Read: John 12

Memory Work: 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. John 1:12

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *To sit at the feet of Jesus in prayerful meditation and pour out our love and devotion, is pleasing to our Lord.*
2. *Selfishness strangles the life of God in us.*
3. *We must welcome the triumphant King to the throne of our hearts and sing His praises.*
4. *First we must believe on Jesus and receive Him, and then live by His commandments for we will be judged by that word in the last day.*

I Supper in Bethany: The earthly ministry of Jesus was nearing its climax. The passover was six days away when Jesus left the wilderness retreat and returned to Judea. He came to Bethany where He had so recently restored Lazarus to life. There in the house of one Simon, the leper, a supper was made for Jesus. Lazarus was there, and the disciples. Martha and Mary also attended. Martha was serving as usual. This time, however, though she was serving many more guests than in the incident recorded in Luke 10:38-42, she was not troubled and distracted and nervous in her serving. Perhaps she had learned a valuable lesson since that time. Nevertheless, she was serving as usual. Lazarus sat with Jesus at the table. Sat, is not the right word, perhaps, for the custom in those times was to lounge on couches while partaking of meals. Mary also found her accustomed place, at the feet of Jesus. On the first occasion Mary had sat at Jesus' feet listening attentively to His words. Martha had complained bitterly that Mary, her sister, was not helping with the serving. Jesus explained that

Mary had chosen the "better part" and refused to intervene and send Mary away. When Lazarus was dead and Jesus came apparently too late, Mary again found the place at Jesus' feet (John 11:32). Now Mary took a pound of spikenard ointment of great value and poured it upon the feet of Jesus. Then she wiped His feet with her hair. The whole house of Simon was filled with the odor of the precious ointment.

Judas Iscariot criticized this act of devotion. He thought the ointment should have been sold and the money given to the poor. His reaction was based on covetousness more than on love for the poor. John tells us that he was a thief and held the money-bag for the group of disciples. Jesus rebuked Judas for his critical attitude. He explained that the poor would always be around to help, but that His days were numbered. Mary, somehow understood that Jesus' life was about to be laid down. The Lord appreciated her love and devotion. 'May we learn the lesson: our love and devotion is more important than our service. Let us pour out our loyal affection on the One who is truly worthy of it.

Lazarus, it seems, was the object of much curiosity. The people heard of his restoration and wanted to see him. The chief priests, who had previously decided that it was necessary for one man to die to save their nation and traditions, now added another to the death list. They purposed to do away with Lazarus also because many of the Jews believed on Jesus because of his living testimony.

II Thy King Cometh: The next day, after the supper in Bethany, Jesus went to Jerusalem despite the determination of the chief priests to do away with Him. Jesus found (the other Gospels give the details) a young donkey and sat on it and thus rode toward the city. The donkey was the beast of Kings. It was also an animal of peace, in contrast to the horse, which was a beast of battle. A great crowd of people which had come for the feast took palm branches and waved them before Him, crying, "Hosanna: Blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord" (John 12:13). It all happened so spontaneously that the disciples did not realize until later that all this happened in fulfillment to Old Testament prophecies. Some of the crowd had been present when Jesus raised Lazarus. Others had heard of this great miracle and joined the crowd because of it. The grim Pharisees saw that more and more people followed Jesus and they became more determined than ever to do away with Him.

III We Would See Jesus: Among those who came to the feast at Jerusalem were some Greeks. These were not greek-speaking Jews, but Greek gentile proselytes. They approached Philip and asked for an interview with Jesus. Philip in turn told Andrew and together they told the Master. He seemed to take this as a signal that now the hour was come for the Son of man to be glorified. He spoke of His vicarious death in terms of glory. We are not told whether the Greeks ever got the opportunity to see Jesus alone, but their attempt brought forth this remarkable response from Jesus. With those words which indicated the importance of what followed: "verily, verily," Jesus gave an illustration of the value of His own sacrificial death. He compared Himself to a "corn of wheat." As long as that grain remains above the earth, it is but one solitary grain. If, however, it is planted in the earth and dies, then it springs up and brings forth fruit. He called on His followers to consecrate their lives to Him and His cause. He warned that those who loved their lives would lose them and those who consecrated them would preserve them eternally. The call is clear, if we are not called to martyrdom, we may still have the privilege to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to the Lord for His service.

Several times before in the book of John, we were told that His hour was not yet come. To His mother at Cana, Jesus said, "mine hour is not yet come" (John 2:4). To His own brothers He said, "My time is not yet come" (John 7:6). At Jerusalem His enemies could not lay their hands on Him "because his hour was not yet come" (John 7:30). Once again while surrounded by His enemies they could not arrest Him, "for his hour was not yet come" (John 8:20). But now, Jesus said that the fateful hour had come. The question mark in verse 27 is better placed after the first mention of "this hour." It then reads, "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 Lord was certainly not praying to be spared the suffering of the cross. He was pointing out the glory of the death He was about to accomplish. He prayed, "Father, glorify thy name." At once God spoke from heaven, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." The people heard the voice. Some said it thundered. Others said an angel spoke, but Jesus told the people that the voice had come for their benefit.

IV If I Be Lifted Up: This hour was the climax of God's plan

of Redemption. The victory of the cross marked the doom of Satan. The evil one is to be evicted from the domain He has ruled. The process of judgment and destruction of Satan's kingdom began at the cross. It is our business today, through the power of the Holy Spirit to continue to overcome and destroy the work of Satan, while building up the glorious kingdom of our Lord.

When Jesus spoke of being "lifted up" he meant of course, "on the cross" but perhaps the phrase includes more, for He was lifted up from the grave and finally from the natural realm to the throne of the Father where He now has all power in heaven and earth to draw His chosen unto Himself. Let us believe to see many drawn to Him by His sovereign power.

V Yet They Believed Not: John chose seven outstanding signs to convince His readers that Jesus was indeed the Christ, the Son of God. Three of those signs were seen in Jerusalem. The impotent man, sick thirty-eight years was instantly healed by the Lord, at the pool of Bethesda. The Pharisees and chief priests cared only that the man broke the sabbath by carrying his bed at Jesus' command. The man born blind was healed, and the religious leaders noted only that Jesus was a sinner because he made clay on the sabbath. Lazarus was raised from the dead a few miles from Jerusalem, and the blinded Pharisees determined to kill both Jesus and Lazarus. Their unbelief was incredible. Yet traditional religion can be just as blind today. John explained their blindness and unbelief from the prophecies of Isaiah, and we learn that when we harden our hearts in unbelief repeatedly, finally the Lord seals that fate and hardens our hearts further. God forbid that we should persist in unbelief. Many of the Pharisees believed that Jesus was the Messiah but they would not confess that publicly for fear of losing their place in the synagogue. Oh, what a cost to them in the end.

Finally, Jesus spoke one last warning to the public. It was His last public call to the Jews (vss.44-50). He identified Himself with the Father and emphasized again the importance of accepting the word which He had given. It was not His own word. It was given Him by the Father, and that word will judge us in that great judgment day. Let us give earnest heed unto it, and live by it in the power of the Spirit, which He so abundantly bestows to those who seek Him.

## LESSON 13

## WASHING THE DISCIPLES' FEET

Read: John 13

Memory Work: Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:13

What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus was aware of the cross before Him, and of the glory which would follow.*
2. *We all need the washing of the Savior.*
3. *The greatest in Christ's kingdom are those who serve the most and the best.*
4. *Willful sin opens the door to Satan and his demons.*
5. *The love Christians have for one another is the true measure of their Christian character.*
6. *Like Peter, most Christians overestimate their spiritual capacity. We do not know our own hearts.*

I Jesus Knew: The events of the betrayal and crucifixion did not take Jesus by surprise. He knew that His hour had come. He knew that He was about to die. But He also knew that God Almighty had given all power into His hands. He knew that beyond the cross was glorious resurrection. The disciples had begun to understand that He was going to die, but they did not understand that He would rise the third day. The Lord had tried to prepare them for the traumatic experiences they would pass through, but they were slow of heart and mind to understand and believe. The Lord was now thirty-three and one half years old. Three and one half years had elapsed since His baptism in Jordan by John the Baptist. He had finished His public teaching and preaching. The rich and deep teachings of chapters 13-17 were for the disciples. These were the Divinely ordained men who were called and chosen to bear the Gospel

message to the whole world. Jesus understood their weaknesses and shortcomings perfectly, but He also knew that all that they lacked would be supplied when He ascended to the glory of the Father and sent forth the Holy Spirit upon them.

II The Supper Being Ended: The setting of this scene in chapter 13, is that of observing and celebrating the Passover, and the Lord's supper. John does not mention how Jesus sent two of His disciples to locate and prepare for the Passover supper. John also omits the fact that the disciples were arguing at the supper as to which of them should be the greatest (Luke 22:24). With that argument as the background, the action of the Lord Jesus becomes all the more meaningful. There were two parts to that supper with Jesus and His disciples. The first part was the Passover feast. All twelve disciples were there for that, and when that part was ended Jesus got up from the table. He went and got a basin and girded Himself with a towel. That was the mark of a slave. The argument about who should be the greatest among the disciples must have lost some of its heat as they began to notice what Jesus was doing. Of course, none of them would have volunteered to wash the others' feet. Yet they could not stand to see Jesus do that menial service either. When Jesus went to Peter, he protested, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" He knew the roles should have been reversed. Jesus explained that some day Peter would understand what He did by washing the disciples' feet, though at the time Peter did not comprehend it. "Thou shalt never wash my feet," Peter insisted. But he quickly changed his tune when Jesus said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Such a thought was completely untenable. All objections were brushed aside and Peter offered, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Peter was an enthusiast. First, he objected enthusiastically, and his motives were noble; then he insisted enthusiastically, without guile or subtlety. Peter was an open book, and so human that many of us can identify with him. Jesus explained to Peter that only the washing of the feet was necessary. It was a symbolic washing. Those whose feet were washed would be clean "every whit." It is most interesting to consider that Jesus also must have washed Judas' feet at this time. Tradition says that he was the first whose feet Jesus washed. Certainly the Lord gave the traitor every opportunity to turn back from his dreadful purpose. What a hard heart must have been in that son of perdition to let the Son of God wash his vile feet!

When Jesus had washed them all, He asked if they understood the parable He had acted out with them. You recognize me as the Lord and Master, as indeed I am, he explained. "If I, your Lord and Master have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:14). He pointed out that He had given them an example to follow. The lesson for the disciples and for us is to be found in the attitude of a servant. In the proud world society, the greatest of men are served by the lower. But in the kingdom of God, we are all to submit to one another and serve each other as much as possible. When Peter wrote in his general Epistle, "be clothed with humility" he undoubtedly had this scene in mind, where Jesus laid aside His garments and put on a slave's uniform to wash the disciples' feet.

Several groups of believers have adopted ceremonial foot washing as a sacrament along with baptism and the Lord's Supper. The reason that this is not done generally in the evangelical churches, is that there is only one reference to foot washing in the scripture and there is no reference to its practice in the history of the early church. Nevertheless, though it is not observed as a sacrament or ritual in the church, we should be very careful to observe and practice the spirit of it in our whole Christian attitude. We are chosen to serve. We serve the Lord, first, but then we serve one another. There is real joy and fulfillment in this attitude. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17). I have recently heard of a prominent medical doctor who is an earnest Christian. He has chosen to give his time and energy once a week to clean the church where he worships. He does this because of his love for Jesus. If people knew, they would protest that it was beneath his dignity. It is never beneath a Christian's dignity to help another Christian or to do any chore for the glory of the Lord. It must be an unusual sight to see the good doctor pushing and pulling the vacuum cleaner over the rugs of that church, but it is in the spirit of this teaching to the disciples.

III After The Sop, Satan: Before Jesus broke the bread and passed the cup of the first "Lord's Supper", he expelled Judas from the scene. In reality Judas expelled himself. Jesus gave him every opportunity to repent of his evil purpose, but to no avail. Suddenly, Jesus said to the disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me" (John 13:21). Judas must have been startled, but Jesus knew from the begin-



ning who should betray him. All this time, though Jesus knew who would betray him, he treated Judas so fairly that none of the disciples looked at him. They were astonished that one of their number could do such a thing. They could not guess who the traitor could be. Peter motioned to John, who was leaning on Jesus' breast, to ask Him. The Lord told John that it was the one He would give a sop. Now this custom of dipping a piece of bread into the grape juice was a friendly social custom in those times. Jesus was still offering friendship to Judas. But after receiving the sop, Judas was filled with Satan. Jesus spoke to him aside and told him to do quickly the treacherous deed he was contemplating. Judas went out from that holy gathering and the scripture cryptically notes that "it was night." For Judas, truly, it was night; and it was certainly a dark hour for the Jews who conspired with Judas.

IV The New Commandment: As soon as Judas was gone the Lord began to minister again to the disciples. "Now is the Son of man glorified," He said, and although John does not specifically say so, it most likely was at this point that Jesus broke the bread and passed the cup in the institution of the precious "Lord's Supper." It would not have seemed fit for Judas to be partaker with the others. Jesus then told the disciples that He would be with them for only a very short time yet and that they could not follow Him at this time. Then He gave them a "new commandment." Really, it was not the commandment which was new, for the law had taught those under it to love the Lord God and their neighbor as themselves. What was new was the inspiration and enablement He was giving them in these hours. The chapter begins with the significant thought that Jesus loved his own all the way to the end. These men were really becoming united to Christ. As He loved them so they were to love one another. This was to be the evidence that they were true disciples of Jesus. May God help us to pray through to perfect love like that of Jesus. We are to love, not the work of the Lord, or the organization of the church, but the Lord Himself and His people. There are some Christians who are very zealous to work for God, but who have no time or interest for the individual believer. Such a ministry must fail. If you don't love God's people, you fool yourself if you think that you love God. The Christian way is a fellowship, and in it we need each other. You can't make it alone.

V Thou Shalt Follow Me Afterwards: Peter wanted to know exactly where Jesus was going. The Lord told him that he could not follow Him at this time but later he would follow. Peter professed to be willing to lay down his life for the Lord. Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself. He warned Peter that before the rooster crowed twice to announce the next dawn, that he would deny his Lord and Master three times. We all often over-estimate our spirituality and consecration. Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves, too, and yet He loves us. Our confidence must be in His grace and power, and not in our selves. The Lord is interested first of all that we live for Him. Whether we are called to die for Him or remain until He comes let us be totally committed to Him and to the fellowship of His disciples.

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