



# The Personal Ministry of Jesus

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## INTRODUCTION

Jesus came "teaching and preaching, and healing," we are told in Matthew 4:23. Each of these ministries was fruitful and blessed. But Jesus also had a ministry of personal dealings with individuals. His personal work with the individuals who came to Him or whom He met in the course of His everyday work was also fruitful and important. We can learn much from Jesus' dealings with these people. He had no set formula of three, or four points to make disciples of them. Every one of them was dealt with in a different way. To the woman at the well He spoke of the Old Testament brazen serpent as a type of His sacrificial death. No two interviews were the same. It is also noteworthy that not all of Jesus' personal ministry was successful. The rich young ruler went away sorrowfully into oblivion. Nicodemus was slow in declaring himself a follower of the Lord. But some of the Lord's greatest success came from these personal contacts. Mary Magdalene was won over to Jesus 100 per cent. Andrew believed after spending an evening with Jesus and brought Peter into the fold. Our personal dealings may not all be successful, but we should believe for some good and lasting fruit from our personal witnessing. Do not underestimate the importance of your personal witnessing for our Lord.

These lessons were written for the Emmanuel Pentecostal Sunday School by the pastor, Robert D. Kalis. This series is now complete. The titles are listed below and are available to any and all:

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

## JESUS AND JOHN THE BAPTIST

Read: Luke 1:5-24, 39-45; Luke 1:76-80; Luke 3:1-18;  
 Matthew 3:1-17; John 3:22-36; John 4:1-3; Luke 7:18-35  
 Matthew 17:1-13

*Memory Verse: And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. (Matthew 3:15)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *An expectant mother can greatly influence her unborn child by her faith and yieldedness to the Holy Spirit.*
2. *If Jesus deemed it necessary to fulfill all righteousness by being baptized by immersion, we do well to follow His example.*
3. *We should be more concerned to point men to Christ than to attract them to ourselves.*
4. *How a man of God treats the poor and the children is a good indication of his motives for serving God.*

**I -- PRE-NATAL MEETING:** The angel Gabriel had appeared to Zacharias as he performed his priestly duties, and promised that he and Elisabeth his wife would have a son despite their old age. The angel instructed the old priest to name the child John, and foretold that he would become the messenger which would prepare the way for the long awaited Messiah. It was also promised that he would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb and would never drink wine or strong drink of any kind. In due time Elisabeth did conceive and withdrew from society for five months. During the sixth month of Elisabeth's expectancy, the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary of Nazareth with the great annunciation. The angel advised Mary that her cousin Elisabeth was in the sixth month. After Mary had accepted and yielded

to the word of the angel, she went to see Elisabeth in the hill country of Judea. Many scholars believe that it was there in the hill country that Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit. When Mary greeted her cousin, the babe leaped in Elisabeth's womb and she was filled with the Holy Spirit and uttered a glorious prophecy recognizing her young cousin Mary as the mother of her Lord. Although John was not yet born, he leaped for joy (see Luke 1:44) when the mother of the unborn Savior greeted his mother. There is certainly a wonderful activity of the Holy Spirit as the New Testament opens. Zacharias, too, was full of the Holy Spirit when the babe was named John. After nine months of dumbness and deafness he was filled with the Spirit and prophesied powerfully of the ministry of his son and of the redemption of the Messiah. We can certainly learn from all this that it is possible for the unborn babes to be filled with the Holy Spirit if their parents are also filled. May our babes be born not of lust, but of the will of God and surrounded by faith and the Holy Spirit. It is an interesting contrast that the angel made regarding John, "he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost" (Luke 1:15). In Ephesians we read: "And be not drunk with wine....but be filled with the Spirit" (ch. 5:18). So the first meeting of John and Jesus was a pre-natal meeting and the Holy Spirit was exceedingly active.

**II -- FULFILLING ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS:** Six months after John's birth Jesus was born at Bethlehem. It may well be that John studied with the Essences in the wilderness near the Dead Sea. We know, for sure that he spent some time in the wilderness before launching his God-inspired ministry in Judea. Jesus went first with his parents to Egypt, and then to Nazareth. There he grew up. The two boys could have met at the age of twelve when Mary and Joseph took Jesus to Jerusalem for the passover feast. No mention is made of such a meeting, however, but we do know that they met at Jordan, when Jesus came to be baptized by John. John protested that he had more need to be baptized by Jesus than the other way around. Jesus insisted, however, that it was appropriate and necessary for Him to fulfill all righteousness including baptism by immersion by John. God had revealed to John that when he saw the Holy Spirit descend in the form of a dove he would know that the one whom the Spirit descended upon was He which should baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Jesus set a fine example for us. If it was necessary for Him to fulfill all righteousness by submitting to the ordinance of adult baptism by immersion, it is

certainly logical that we each should do the same. Since the Father testified by an audible voice at Jesus' baptism that He was pleased with His Son, it is only natural to conclude that the Father will be pleased if we follow the example set by our Lord and take the step of baptism.

**III -- BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD:** One day John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Again the next day John referred to Jesus as "the Lamb of God". This time two of this disciples decided to follow Jesus. They did, and then spent the evening with the Lord. Andrew, Peter's brother, was one of the two and John, brother of James, was probably the other. It is noteworthy that John called Jesus the Lamb of God, certainly alluding to His sacrificial death, at the very beginning of Jesus' ministry. There are many today who teach that Jesus did not intend to offer His life up in atonement for our sins, but rather that He came to earth to become the king of Israel as a temporal and political leader and thus establish God's kingdom on earth. This word of John indicates the error of such a teaching. Jesus came to be the Lamb of God. John did not attempt to keep his disciples for himself. He freely pointed them to Jesus and rejoiced when they followed Him. When some of the Jewish leaders attempted to stir up jealousy by telling John that Jesus was baptizing more disciples than John (see John 4:1), he reminded them that he had told them that one mightier than himself was coming who would be full of the Holy Spirit. John testified that it was his great joy to see Jesus come. "He must increase," John declared, "but I must decrease" (John 3:30). We would do well to learn from John to allow no jealousy to take root in our hearts. We will be happier and healthier if we learn to rejoice in the success and prosperity of others. The ministers of the Gospel do well when they introduce people to the Lamb of God. They ought to be more interested in pointing souls to Jesus than in signing them up for church membership and offering pledges.

**IV -- ART THOU HE?** When John fearlessly reproved Herod for taking his brother's wife, he brought the wrath of that woman on himself. He was imprisoned by Herod and while in prison John sent two of his faithful followers to Jesus to ask Him directly if He was the One for whom John had prepared the way, or if they should look for someone else. Perhaps some doubts had come to John. Or it could be that he

desired to make sure that he had accomplished his purpose in preparing the way for the Messiah. The same hour in which these two messengers reached Jesus, the Lord healed many, cast out demons and opened the eyes of the blind. Jesus told the two to tell John what they had seen. He quoted various passages from Isaiah relating to the Messiah so John should have no more doubt. Then Jesus evaluated John and his ministry. He asked those around him why they had attended the ministry of John in the wilderness. He asked if they realized that John was a prophet. He then revealed that John was indeed more than a prophet and in fact that no none born of a woman was greater than John. When Jesus said that "he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he," it is likely that He was referring to Himself, the "least" meaning "younger". At any rate, Jesus had a very high opinion of John.

**V -- THIS IS ELIJAH:** When the Pharisees enquired of John if he were Elijah, John said "No". Jesus, however, told his disciples' Peter, James and John, that John was indeed the Elijah which was to come. The three privileged disciples had seen Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration and asked Jesus about Elijah's coming before the Messiah. Jesus explained that Elijah had come in the person of John and that they had abused him and refused his ministry. The Jewish teachers expected a reincarnation or resurrection of Elijah to fulfill the prophecy of Malachi (ch 4:5-6). Some present day teachers are also still looking for Elijah to reappear. Some misguided ministers have claimed for themselves to be Elijah. Jesus plainly told His disciples that John the Baptist fulfilled that prophecy. We need not look for another any more than John the Baptist needed to look for another beside Jesus. John, of course, was not a reincarnation of Elijah, but he came in the spirit and power of Elijah. Paul, by the inspiration of the Spirit sums up the ministry of John by revealing that he "fulfilled his course" (Acts 13:25). John's ministry was not a failure. He prepared the way for the Lord and His kingdom. Though Jesus and John had very little personal contact their lives and ministries were each influenced by the other.

## LESSON 2

**NICODEMUS VISITS JESUS**

Read: John 3:1-21; 7:25-44; 19:38-42

*Memory Verse: 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. (John 3:16.)*

**What we should learn from this lesson**

- 1. Miracles attract people to Jesus.*
- 2. God's plan of salvation is for all.*
- 3. Without being born again we cannot enter the kingdom of God.*
- 4. We should not be ashamed to speak boldly on the Lord's behalf.*

**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" (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 (John 2:13-22). While at Jerusalem many believed on Jesus when they witnessed the miracles which He performed.

Nicodemus was a religious ruler of the Jews. He was greatly impressed by the signs which Jesus wrought. Not one of these miracles is described in the gospels. They caused many to believe that Jesus was the Christ, and brought about the sincere inquiry from this prominent religious leader. He reasoned that Jesus must have been sent by God, for no one could perform such miracles unless God was truly with him (John 3:2).



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). 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 puzzled by the Master's first words and he 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?" (John 3:4). 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 denounced and told to bring forth fruits meet for repentance before inquiring about baptism. Nicodemus could have been in that delegation. Surely, he was at least aware of their report. 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 birth of the Spirit. Nicodemus would have to pay quite a price to become a disciple of Jesus. Nicodemus was old, Jesus was only 30 years of age. Nicodemus had reached the zenith of power and honor perhaps after many years when he was inducted into the elite seventy men who ruled the religious affairs of Israel. 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" (John 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?" (John 3: 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 avowed the Master and supplied the spices used for the proper burial of the Lord (John 19:38-42). Certainly Nicodemus must have been a leader in the great company of the priests which became "obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). Once, before Jesus' crucifixion, when the chief priests and Pharisees were conspiring to put Jesus to death, Nicodemus became bold for the Lord. "Doth our law judge any man before it hear him, and know what he doeth?" he protested. But he was silenced by their rebuke, "Art thou also of Galilee? search and see, out of Galilee ariseth no prophet" (John 7:50-52).

The story of Nicodemus might have been so much more wonderful if he had been willing to pay the price. His name might well have appeared in the lists of disciples. Perhaps we would have an epistle of Nicodemus to the scribes and Pharisees. Yet we have in this story an encouraging example of patience on the part of our Lord. 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 brazen serpent. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up" (John 3:14). 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 brazen 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 brazen 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. He was indeed, as

John the Baptist had indicated, "The Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

**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" (John 3:16). 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 forty 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 Nicodemus, 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. But how much better for those who hear the gospel invitation to respond at once, forsaking all to follow Jesus, whatever the cost.

## THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Read: John 4:1-42

*Memory Verse: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. John 4:14.*

### 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 woman of the reality of His claims.*
4. *We must recognize the importance of worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.*
5. *The publicans and harlots truly responded to Jesus' message more readily than the great religious leaders.*
6. *Jesus had good results from His first appeal to the non-Jewish community.*

**I -- HE MUST NEEDS GO THROUGH SAMARIA:** The Samaritans were of mixed blood. The Assyrians had settled other peoples in the northern kingdom of Israel when they overran it. The remnant that remained 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 with them whatsoever. They did not speak to them. They would make a long and toilsome detour to avoid passing through Samaritan territory when traveling between Judea and Galilee. But Jesus

did not make that detour. "He must **needs** go through Samaria" (ch. 4:4). As Jesus and His disciples passed through the territory, they came upon the town of Sychar about noon, the hottest part of the day. 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. 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 was 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 only 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. 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. 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 degenerate combination of traditions from the time of Moses. He had commanded that when Israel entered the promised land the blessings for obedience should be read to all the people from Mount Gerizim (this mountain). Later, after the captivity, a temple was built on Mount Gerizim 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." The day was at hand, Jesus explained, when neither at Jerusalem or Mount Gerizim would people have to go to worship, 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 book of 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) 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 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 would come, He would tell the people all things. Jesus plainly

told her, "I that speak unto thee am He" (vs. 26). If Nicodemus was hesitant to commit himself to the Lord, surely this Samaritan woman was not. 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 ran 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 his the Christ?" They all responded and came to Jesus.

In the meanwhile the disciples 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 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 imperative that we 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.

## LESSON 4

**THE FOUR FISHERMEN**

Read: Matt. 4:17-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11

(Compare the three references above)

Peter & Andrew: John 1:35-42; Matt. 16:13-23;

Matt. 17:1-9; Matt. 26:31-45; Matt. 26:69-75

James & John: Luke 9:51-56; Mark 3:17; Matt. 20:20-24

*Memory Verse: And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets and followed him. (Matt. 4:19-20)*

**What we should learn from this Lesson**

1. *The call of the Lord to serve Him is accompanied by enabling power.*
2. *God calls workers despite their imperfections.*
3. *The infilling of the Holy Spirit brings the needed power for holy living and faithful service.*

**I -- JESUS CALLS FOUR FISHERMEN:** The story of the invitation to Peter and Andrew and James and John to forsake their fishing business and follow Jesus as recorded in Matthew and Mark seems very abrupt and impulsive. This is one of many places that show the value of four gospels. Both Luke and John have valuable additions to the brief account of the other two evangelists. Matthew and Mark simply state that as Jesus walked by the sea of Galilee, He saw the four partners and invited them to follow Him. Immediately they left their nets and did indeed follow Him. Their actions, while to be admired for the quick response, seem at first glance to be rather impulsive. Further investigation, however, brings several very interesting things to light. Luke describes the encounter on the shores of Galilee much more fully. He tells us that many people were listening to Jesus teach when he encountered the fishermen. As the crowd pressed around Him, He saw the four partners and asked



if He could use their boat. Peter's boat was willingly offered and Jesus asked him to thrust it out a bit from the shore. He then sat in the ship and taught the multitude which was gathered on the shore. When Jesus finished speaking to the people, He told Peter to "launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." Peter remarked that they had fished all night and taken nothing, but nevertheless at the Master's suggestion they would try again. The result was, of course, the huge catch which filled not only Peter's boat, but the other ship which the partners had, so that both ships nearly sank. Peter and the others were astonished at the catch and Peter especially recognized it as supernatural. He exclaimed "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord," Then it was that Jesus issued the invitation "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." No wonder they were willing to forsake all and follow Jesus! It was not quite so impulsive as it seems from the account in Matthew and Mark.

The fact that Peter called Jesus "Master" also indicates some prior knowledge of Jesus. John's gospel is the only one which takes us to the very beginning of Jesus' contact with the four fishermen. Careful reading reveals that Andrew, for sure, and John, very probably, were disciples of John the Baptist. When two of John's disciples heard him say "Behold the Lamb of God" referring to Jesus they followed Him. He noticed them following and asked what they wanted. They asked Him where He was staying and Jesus invited the two to "come and see". One of the two is named Andrew, and the other unnamed-follower was probably John. He avoided using his own name in his gospel calling himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved". The detailed knowledge of the writer of these early experiences indicates that the author was present and so he very likely was John. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus and so the three knew Jesus at the very beginning of His ministry. It seems probable that it was at least one year later when Jesus encountered the four fishermen on the shores of Galilee and called them to follow Him.

**II -- MEN OF LIKE PASSIONS:** These men whom Jesus ordained to be with Him were men of like passions as we. They were not at the time of their calling highly developed spiritual giants. What they became was by the grace of God and the power of the Spirit. Andrew must introduce his brother Peter to Jesus, but it was he also that brought the lad with the five loaves and two fishes to Jesus when the Master miraculously fed the five thousand in the desert place (see John 6:5-10). It

was Andrew with Philip who told Jesus that certain Greeks had come desiring to see Him (John 12:20-23). The Lord apparently took this as a sign that His hour had come. Andrew, though not as prominent as his brother Peter or the two brothers, James and John had a way of bringing people to Jesus. May there be many among us that do the same. He was not included in the group of three often called the inner circle. Peter, James, and John made up that privileged group. They were with Jesus at the transfiguration. The same three witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter, and were with the Master in Gethsemane

Peter was certainly the leader of the disciples. He was the spokesman. He received the great commendation from the Lord for recognizing and confessing that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. Just a little later Peter came in for a sharp rebuke when he tried to persuade Jesus to avoid danger. Impulsive Peter had to try walking on the water. When he asked Jesus how often he must forgive his brother, Peter indicated the possibility that he and Andrew had more than one quarrel. How true to human nature! Then, of course, there was Peter's great self-confidence. Though everyone else denied the Lord, Peter was sure he never would do that. It was almost crushing to Peter to realize that in this area where he was so sure of his loyalty, he utterly failed and denied the Lord three times despite Jesus' specific warning. But, Peter went out and wept bitterly. The Lord prayed for him. Peter was not yet the finished vessel. That came with Pentecost. What a change! Praise God! The Holy Spirit still makes the difference.

James and John were no holy mystics either. When Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem with His disciples, He sent John and James to arrange accommodations in Samaria. When they were not received because of the enmity between the Samaritans and the Jews, James and John wanted to punish the inhospitable Samaritans. They asked the Lord if He would like them to call down fire from heaven to punish them. Jesus rebuked them sharply, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of," Jesus said, "For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." It was James and John also, with the help of their mother, who asked to sit on the right and left hand in the kingdom. They obviously were thinking of an earthly political kingdom and desired posts in that administration. Jesus exhorted them in regard to enduring the same rejection and treatment that He would receive, but told them that the places on his right and left hand in the kingdom (heavenly) would be assigned by the Father. The other ten disciples were indignant

with James and John for their attempt to grasp for special honor. These two also were probably involved in the dispute on the way to the last supper as to who was the greatest among them.

**III -- CHANGED BY HIS POWER:** Yes, these were plain men called of God. They had feet of clay. It was these plain men of like passions as we, that Jesus made leaders in His kingdom. Simon the vacillating reed became Peter the rock. John and James the sons of thunder, so quick to want to bring judgment, were filled with the love of God. James was the first to give his life for the cause of Christ. John became the faithful witness of the Revelation and a patient and loving Pastor as indicated by his epistles. Peter indeed was a rock and did in reality strengthen his brethren after he experienced Pentecost.

That same power is working in us. It is available to every believer. No one need be discouraged because of their human shortcomings. What the Lord did for this waterfront crowd He can do for anyone. To His disciples Jesus said, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptation. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me. That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke 22:28-30). Let us also be faithful to "continue with Him". There will be a place for us, too, in that eternal kingdom.

## LESSON 5

**JESUS, SIMON THE PHARISEE, AND THE SINFUL WOMAN**

Read: Luke 7:36-50

*Memory Verse: Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loves much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. (Luke 7:47)*

**What we should learn from this Lesson**

- 1. We must recognize and eliminate attitudes such as Simon the Pharisee had toward this woman.*
- 2. We ought to be alert to learn what it is that enables us to love Jesus more.*
- 3. It is important that we honor the Lord in every way possible.*
- 4. We can learn to recognize the marks of a true prophet.*

**I -- A MEAL IN A PHARISEE'S HOME:** Somewhere in Galilee Jesus was invited to dine with a Pharisee named Simon. Jesus had healed a Centurion's servant at Capernaum. He also had restored the widow's dead son at Nain. These miracles aroused great interest in Jesus. But they also aroused the jealous and suspicious natures of the Pharisees. One of their number, named Simon, invited Jesus to a meal in his home. It seems likely that the invitation was not given because of love for Christ. Probably, Simon invited Jesus so that he could scrutinize His words and actions and find fault with Him. Certainly, Jesus was not treated as an honored guest at Simon's home. The customary courtesies for such a guest were all omitted.

**II -- THERE CAME A SINFUL WOMAN:** While Jesus was sitting in the Pharisee's house a woman of the city, who was known to be a sinner, came and stood by Jesus and began to weep. Her tears fell on the Master's feet as He reclined at the table in the

manner of those times. She dried His feet with the hair of her head and anointed Jesus' feet from an alabaster box of ointment. She also covered Jesus' feet with her kisses as she sought to show her love for the Saviour in deep and sincere humility.

**III -- THE PHARISEE'S CRITICISM:** There is a proverb in the German language which, loosely translated, says: "If you want to beat a dog, you can always find a stick". This Pharisee, Simon, wanted to find some fault in Jesus. Of course, he found a golden opportunity in this sinful woman. "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). The Pharisees had a great disdain for publicans and harlots, but Jesus indicated that many of these sinners would enter the kingdom of heaven before the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees. Of course, Jesus hated the sin, but He loved the sinners. The disdainful attitude of the scribes and Pharisees toward these sinners, made it impossible for them to minister to them. Jesus, on the other hand was able to lift many of them right out of their sinful ways into a new life of faithful obedience and service for God.

**IV -- TWO DEBTORS:** Jesus discerned Simon's thoughts. He told a little story to him. "A certain lender had two debtors," Jesus explained; "the one owed him five hundred pence and the other owed fifty. When they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?" Simon answered logically, "I suppose that he to whom he forgave the most." Jesus declared that he had rightly judged. Then Jesus pointed out to Simon that the love of the woman for Jesus was so much greater than that of Simon. Jesus also revealed the reason for that love. This sinful woman, who obviously had real faith in Jesus as the Savior (see vs. 50), had become aware of her great sinfulness. She had begun to realize how much she needed to be forgiven. It was this that brought her with weeping eyes and broken heart to the feet of Jesus. The Pharisee, on the other hand, was only aware of his own self-righteousness. He had never become convicted of his sins nor did he realize that he, too, had a sinful nature. He knew nothing of his own need for forgiveness. Therefore, his love for Jesus, the forgiver of sin, was very small. He had not enough love to provide Jesus with water for washing His feet. He gave Jesus no kiss. No ointment was offered to anoint Jesus' head. The Pharisee had very little love indeed for the Master. But the sinful woman overflowed with love for Him. As

she became aware of the great sin that Jesus would forgive in her case, her love began to blossom forth. Somehow, the eye of her faith saw in Jesus the hope of forgiveness. "To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Jesus called Simon's attention to the facts that he had provided no water for Jesus to wash His feet, but that the woman, whom Simon so despised, washed Jesus' feet with her tears and dried them with the hairs of her head. Simon gave no kiss of greeting to the Master, but this sinful woman had covered Jesus' feet with her kisses. The Pharisee had provided no ointment for Jesus' head, but again the woman had provided what the careless host had forgotten. She anointed Jesus' feet from an alabaster box of ointment. "Therefore," Jesus said, "her sins, which are many, are forgiven." Now the Pharisee really had cause to accuse Jesus. Who is this that presumes to forgive sins! But these were acts of faith on the part of the woman. She somehow perceived and trusted in the mercy and compassion of Him who on earth had authority to forgive sin. Jesus plainly told her to go in peace, for her **faith** had saved her. The deeds were the result of her faith. Such deeds alone, no matter how beautiful, could not save her nor anyone else. It was faith in Jesus that brought salvation to this needy one.

**V -- MORE LOVE TO THEE:** This little parable points up a very great weakness in the evangelical movement today. The masses which attend evangelistic crusades are often invited to decide for Christ, or to believe and be saved. Little effort is made to make people aware of their sin. The great conviction for sin, that was the earmark of real revival in past centuries, is almost unknown today. People are not less sinful today, but the teaching and preaching of many great evangelists today ignores the exceeding sinfulness of sin and emphasizes the joy and happiness of trusting the Savior. This is certainly not to condemn the work of modern evangelists, but to suggest that perhaps the work would go much deeper if the exceeding sinfulness of sin were taught a little more. Paul saw himself as the chiefest of sinners. That very realization motivated him to love the Lord and serve Him more than all the other apostles. If we see ourselves as the great sinners we really are, and realize the greatness of God's mercy and love to forgive us our sins, we are going to love Jesus more and serve Him better. Let us quit making the way of salvation an easy panacea for the unsaved. Let us teach and preach the awful sinfulness of sin and the price

that was paid for our sins. Let us have faith for the Holy Spirit to bring real conviction on sinners and on all of us so that all will realize the extent of our forgiveness. Then we will all love Christ more and serve Him better. •

*I AM NOT*

*Then there came a sinful woman,  
eyes with weeping dim--  
She had looked on Him.  
He beheld her broken-hearted,  
ruined and undone,  
Yet enthroned above the angels,  
brighter than the sun  
All the while in dust before Him,  
did her heart adore,  
"I am not," that song of gladness--  
"Thou art evermore."  
For his heart to hers had spoken,  
to His wandering lamb;  
In the speech of Love Eternal,  
He had said, "I am."  
Now she thirst no more forever;  
All she would is given;  
None on earth hath she beside Him;  
None beside in heaven.  
Oh, how fair that heavenly portion,  
that eternal lot;  
Christ, and Christ alone, forever--  
Ever "I am not."*

*--H. Suzo*

## THE SYRO-PHOENICIAN WOMAN

Read: Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30

*Memory Verse: Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour. (Matthew 15:28)*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *We should recognize the value of perseverance in prayer.*
2. *It is appropriate that we have an attitude of humility in prayer.*
3. *It is important that we know how our own faith can grow and develop.*

**I-- THE COASTS OF TYRE AND SIDON:** After Jesus fed the multitude with the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes, He explained to them that He was the Bread of Life. They were ready to recognize Him as their political leader and indeed to crown Him king, but when they realized that He had no intention of reigning over them in this way they left Him. Only His disciples remained. Jesus then left the region of Galilee and toured the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He entered into a house secretly hoping to remain unnoticed, but He could not be hidden.

Almost at once a Gentile woman, Syro-Phoenician by race, came to plead with Jesus for deliverance for her daughter. The girl was possessed by an unclean demon. She was grievously tormented. Having heard of Jesus the desperate mother came and fell at His feet beseeching Him to deliver her daughter. Jesus totally ignored her. She then cried after the disciples and they asked Jesus to send her away. But the woman did not quit her quest. "Thou son of David, have mercy on me," she cried. Finally, Jesus spoke to her what seemed to be a rebuke. "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel," He said. Even this did not deter the earnest seeker one bit. She came and worshipped Jesus saying, "Lord, help me."

Finally Jesus gave her a word that would have surely stopped most seekers.



He said, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs." She could have been quite insulted. To think that Jesus would call her a dog! But she cared little about the insult. She wanted one thing: deliverance for her daughter. "Truth, Lord," she answered, "yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table." Now Jesus really took notice of this Gentile woman. "For this saying, go thy way; the demon is gone out of thy daughter," Jesus declared. Matthew's record of the incident reveals that Jesus remarked of her great faith. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. 15:28). And so it was that from that very hour, the daughter was healed. When the mother returned home she found the girl lying on the bed, the demon having gone out.

**II -- PERSERVERING PRAYER:** Jesus taught His followers the value of persevering prayer. Two of His parables were on this very subject (see Luke 11:5-8; 18:1-8). The parable of the persevering widow is especially appropriate for this lesson. She cried to be avenged of her adversary. This Syro-Phoenician woman was doing the same. The widow kept on coming to the judge even though he refused to help her at first. This desperate mother did the same. The widow of the parable kept after the judge until he took her case to get rid of her. The purposeful mother ignored every rebuff of the Lord Jesus until He said "Be it unto thee, even as thou wilt."

An old faithful missionary suffered a paralyzing stroke. His arm was crippled so that he could not raise it one inch. He called upon the Lord. Day and night he sought deliverance. He refused to accept this work of the enemy. He prayed and he praised. Daily he attended services where the Lord was praised and worshipped. For three weeks, morning and evening, he went to the meetings. One morning the leader admonished the congregation to raise their hands in thanks to the Lord for His manifested Presence. The missionary raised the one arm, and then in faith little by little the other arm crept up! Suddenly the crippling bondage was broken and the arm fully restored.

Let us learn to keep dealing with the Lord, not only for the healing of our bodies but for the avenging of our adversary. We ought to keep on crying to Jesus until our entire nature is sanctified and we are like our Lord. We ought to keep right on calling on the Lord until the hindering work of the adversary is destroyed and loved ones are saved and filled with the Spirit. Let us keep on and then let us keep on keeping on. No matter if our prayer at first seems to be ignored. May nothing

turn us aside from obtaining our objective: that the works of the enemy be destroyed, and the name of our Lord be magnified.

**III -- HUMILITY IN PRAYER:** The Syro-Phoenician woman showed real humility in her prayer to Jesus. She was not offended when she was ignored. She did not get upset when the disciples tried to send her away. Best of all, she meekly agreed when Jesus compared her to a dog. The Jews often referred to Gentiles as dogs. She was not angered by this comparison but accepted it, and indeed used it, as a basis to press her claim for deliverance for her daughter. If she had come and claimed healing on the basis of her own goodness or because of her fervent prayer life or on any other ground whatever, she would have undoubtedly gone away insulted at the apparent disregard and even insults she received. It was her true humility that enabled her to accept all rebuff and still press her claim.

We, too, must learn to come humbly to the Lord with our request. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit" (Ps. 34:18). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51:17). The publican who would not lift his eyes to heaven but smote on his breast and cried "God be merciful to me a sinner," went away justified; while the proud Pharisee who recounted his own good deeds to God in prayer, was rejected. Let us remember to come to our Lord humbly and press our claim on the basis of **His Love, His power, and His mercy.**

The Centurion who came to Jesus for the healing of his servant also came in real humility. He felt unworthy to come to Jesus himself, so he sent some Jewish leaders. They told Jesus that the soldier-leader was worthy. But the centurion himself finally came to Jesus and disclaimed all worthiness. He felt unworthy to have the Lord enter his home. But he did have very real faith in the Lord. His humble prayer was heard and the servant healed.

**IV -- GREAT FAITH:** The Centurion and the Syro-Phoenician mother each received the commendation from the Lord of having "great faith" Both of them were Gentiles. "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel," Jesus commented of the enturion! The disciples on the other hand were rebuked for their lack of faith. But the disciples continued with the Lord and in the end they also were men of great faith.

Both the Syro-Phoenician mother and the Roman Centurion came to Jesus interceding for another, the former for her daughter and the latter for his servant. Do we have the deep interest in others that drives us to Jesus in great intercession for them? Let us seek for a spirit of intercession. There is no greater gift in the kingdom of God than a gift of intercessory prayer. That is the work Jesus now does in His glorified state at the right hand of the Father. As we are filled with His Spirit we can expect a burden of intercession to come upon us. Such a ministry bears lasting fruit.

Our faith grows by "hearing the Word of God". We ought to be much in the Word. The word and logic of men may return void, but the Word of God has great power. The more we are in the Word and the Word in us, the greater will be our faith. Great faith also comes by great praying. We are not to have faith in our faith, or faith in our prayer or faith in the church, but faith in Jesus. **He** is the one with all power in heaven and in earth. **He** is the one with a heart that is moved with compassion. **He** is the one who loves unto the end. It is in **Him** that our trust must be placed.

"Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). Let us come humbly, and with true faith in the Savior; and let us come persistently until we are assured, "be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

LESSON 7

## THE WOMAN TAKEN IN ADULTERY

Read: John 7 & 8

*Memory Verse: He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. (John 8:7).*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

- 1. Jesus' union with the Father enables Him to move and speak with confidence and authority.*
- 2. As "rivers of living water" flowed from Jesus, so should it be with us because of the Holy Spirit.*
- 3. Jesus' private prayer brought Him the power necessary to meet the various attacks of the scribes and Pharisees.*
- 4. We ought to judge ourselves and not others.*
- 5. Jesus did not condemn the woman, but neither did He condone the sin.*

**I-- THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES:** After Jesus had performed the miracle of multiplying the loaves and fishes, He taught the people who followed Him that He was the true Bread of Life. The great crowds melted away and only the disciples remained. Jesus' own brothers came to Him and urged Him to go to Jerusalem to show Himself to the public. Jesus, however, did not follow the suggestions of people, no matter how well-intentioned, but moved in response to the will of His Father. When Jesus' brothers had left for the feast, then He also went, but He went secretly: that is, without the publicity His brethren had suggested. It was probably at this time that several individuals expressed their desire to follow Jesus (see Luke 9:57-62). What Jesus told the first of these prospective disciples was certainly proven by the facts

introducing the story of the woman caught in adultery. He told this first inquirer "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). While in Jerusalem teaching daily at the temple, He retreated outside the city in the evening. We learn from the two verses unfortunately separated by the chapter break (7-8) that when everyone went home to their own houses, Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. So it was casually verified that what Jesus told the prospective disciple was exactly true in experience.

Jesus' secret journey to Jerusalem apparently took Him through Samaria. When Jesus was denied lodging in one of the villages of Samaria because He was journeying toward Jerusalem, James and John wanted to call down fire on the inhospitable Samaritans. Jesus rebuked them, however, and advised them that He had come into the world, not to destroy men's lives, but to save them (see Luke 9:51-56).

When Jesus arrived for the Feast of Tabernacles there was much discussion about Him. There was a division among the people. Many were sure He was the long-awaited Messiah because of His miracles. Others were sure He was not the Messiah because He came from Galilee and the prophets had foretold Messiah's birth in Bethlehem, the city of David. The scribes and Pharisees feared that all would believe on Jesus. They were driven to action by the bold teaching of Jesus in the temple. They sent officers to arrest Him. Jesus, meanwhile stood and cried out on the last day of the feast, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37,38). The officers were powerless before the mighty word of Jesus. They returned empty-handed, explaining, "Never man spake like this man." When the treacherous Pharisees wanted to accuse Jesus in absentia, Nicodemus reminded them that the law forbade judgment without giving the accused the opportunity to defend himself. So the Pharisees' attempts to hinder the ministry of Jesus were frustrated and He continued to teach and preach to the people daily in the temple.

**II -- WHAT SAYEST THOU?** After spending the night in the mount of Olives, (probably some of it in prayer) Jesus came, early in the morning, to the temple and taught the people again. Early in the morning He was about His Father's business. All the people came to hear Him again. The feast was ended. It was time for the people

to return to their homes. Yet they came to hear Jesus once more. He sat down and taught them.

Now the scribes and Pharisees had conceived a diabolical plot to entrap Jesus. They brought a woman before Jesus whom they accused of adultery. She had been caught in the very act. They explained to Jesus that Moses, in the law, had commanded that such should be stoned. Now they cleverly asked Jesus what His judgment would be. The trap was cleverly devised. If He approved the condemnation of the woman, the Pharisees could accuse Jesus of passing sentence when He had no civil authority to do so. If He repudiated the condemnation of the woman, the Pharisees could accuse Him of belittling the sin of adultery and condemn Him as a breaker of the law. The clever schemers did not anticipate the Divine wisdom of the Son of God. He ignored them. He stooped down and wrote on the ground as though he heard them not. This is the only record of Jesus actually writing. But the wicked plotters would not let Jesus alone. They pressed Him for his decision. Had they anticipated the turn of events they would not have pressed the issue. Jesus finally stood up and said to them, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." He then stooped down and wrote on the ground again. What did He write? The Lord has not seen fit to record so we better leave it there. How wise of the Lord, not to respond in haste. We should learn from this the wisdom of studying to answer. One cannot help but think that Jesus' prayer on the mount of Olives helped Him in this moment of crisis.

As Jesus wrote on the ground the consciences of the Pharisees forbade the release of that first deadly stone. One by one, starting with the most honorable and continuing to the least, they stole away in shame, thereby confessing their own guilt. How the tables were turned on those scheming Pharisees! Now the woman was left with Jesus and, of course, all those whom Jesus asked her where her accusers were and if no one had condemned her. She replied, "No man, Lord." Jesus compassionately declared, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more."

It must be remembered that although Jesus did not condemn the woman, neither did He condone her actions. Jesus taught very specifically regarding adultery. His doctrine was more strict than that of the scribes and Pharisees. He explained exactly how divorce promotes adultery. His teaching on the lust of the eye in the Sermon on the Mount is a high standard of holiness. The Lord did not lower His standard by this act of compassion.

We are not told all of the facts about the plot. Since the woman was caught in the very act according to the Pharisees' tale it is strange that the man involved was not similarly charged. Jesus did not have the witnesses, of which there had to be at least two according to the law, personally before Him. Even were He legally empowered to pass sentence He could not lawfully (God's law) have passed sentence without the corroboration of two witnesses and without allowing the accused opportunity for defense. Jesus was not lowering the standard of holiness in this case one bit.

Apparently, early Christians thought that this incident compromised Jesus' teaching and it was accordingly left out of some manuscripts. But the incident undoubtedly is true and if, understood with all the circumstances, certainly does not compromise Jesus' moral teaching. It underlines His Divine wisdom, reveals His compassion and maintains His abhorrence of sin. The woman had good reason for penitence and Jesus made the most of it. The sinner was "saved with fear, and pulled from the fire" hopefully to "sin no more."

The interruption ended, Jesus went on teaching the people: "I am the light of the world," He taught. And the Pharisees, too, went right on challenging His every word. Yet many believed on Him. We should be careful not to write off harlots and thieves and other obvious sinners as hopeless cases, but remember that although the Lord hates sin, He loves the sinner. Warm compassion will do more to melt the hard heart of a sinner, than icy disdain. At the same time we must be careful not to compromise the holy standard of the teachings of Jesus.

## LESSON 8

**MARY AND MARTHA AND LAZARUS OF BETHANY**

Read: Luke 10:38-42; John 11:1-157; 12:1-11;  
Mark 14:3-9; Matthew 26:6-13

*Memory Verse: And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her. (Luke 10:41-42).*

**What we should learn from this Lesson**

1. *There is great beauty and value in a Christ centered home.*
2. *We should understand the relative importance of various services we perform for Jesus.*
3. *We must know what the one thing is that is needful.*
4. *Jesus accepts and approves of our sincere acts of devotion.*
5. *Living close to Jesus has great advantages, especially in time of need.*

**I -- A CHRIST CENTERED HOME:** Whenever Jesus was nearby, He was welcome at the home of Martha. The home is designated as Martha's indicating, perhaps, that she had inherited it from her husband. Martha's brother, Lazarus, and her sister Mary, also lived with her. But of Martha it is recorded that she "received him into her house" (Luke 11:38). She was the hospitable hostess. She wanted the Lord at her home, and she wanted to serve Him the very best of everything. Great blessing and honor came to Martha and Mary and Lazarus because of their Christ-centered home.

May it be true that Jesus is the center of our homes today. When an old minister went to visit the new home of his own successful, businessman-son in a



distant city, he went through the beautiful home room by room. When the proud young son asked the old father what he thought of it all, he replied, "Why no one coming in here could ever guess that you are a Christian." Not a scripture motto or Christian painting or anything amongst all the tasteful and costly decor gave a hint of the young man's faith. May our homes be Christ-centered.

Today, too few homes of Christians are as Christ-oriented as they ought to be. Some are furniture showrooms. Others are entertainment centers. Television brings right into the living room movies that no decent Christian would have thought to watch in the theater years ago. The often-divorced-and-loose-living "stars of Hollywood" become the heroes and heroines of young people. The homes of Christians are sometimes sports-spectacular arenas, even on the Lord's day, as one after another of the wide range of sporting events are piped into our homes. The "fans" (abbreviation for fanatics) scream for blood from the contemporary gladiators in the hockey and football arenas, as well as the boxing ring and in untold other events. Let Jesus be the center of our homes.

The Godly atmosphere in my boyhood home has had a great, beneficial effect upon me, and now upon my home. The great and Godly ministers and missionaries of the Gospel were the "stars" I learned to love and admire, as well as emulate. Morning worship was as regular as day following night. The interesting questions and difficulties in the Scriptures were our table discussion. Everything in that boyhood home centered around Jesus and His service and servants. May there be more homes where Jesus is honored and all else is secondary. Let such things that dishonor Christ and compromise our testimony be rooted out of our homes so that Jesus' presence will be felt just as surely as He was present in the home of Martha.

**II -- CUMBERED ABOUT MUCH SERVING:** Martha was a superb hostess. She wanted everything just so. To have Jesus at her home for a meal was such an honor that no effort was spared to make the dinner perfect. How many courses might there have been? The radishes and celery had to be cut just so. The olives must be arranged on the plate in a appetizing manner. The soup, of course, had to be piping hot or the whole meal would be a failure. The guest of honor had to have the proper seat and the napkins and utensils all had to be exactly so. The dinners must be served from the proper side and so on and on and on. All fine and proper and, of course, not sinful. As the moment drew near for the seating of the guests, Martha became

nervous over the last-minute details. Back and forth she ran from kitchen to dining room. Finally, she asked Jesus if He did not care that Mary, who had been sitting at Jesus' feet listening to His every word, had left her to serve all alone. "Bid her...help me" she asked. Martha, Martha, you are careful (full of cares) and troubled (worried) about so many little things. Only one thing is really important and Mary has chosen to be occupied with that good thing, and it will not be taken away from her.

Now, of course, there are necessary duties and menial tasks which we must perform. But let us always get the priorities straight. The secular tasks and proper serving customs and tasteful decorations and formal ceremonies etc., are much less important than fellowship with the Master.

**III -- ONE THING IS NEEDFUL:** That beautiful supper was nice. No one ever served a better dinner, perhaps, but Jesus' aim in life was to minister the Word of the Father to those who would hear and receive it. In Martha's distracted condition she was incapable of receiving and retaining the Word. But Mary knew what was really important. Let us learn to choose the one needful thing, the good part. As we meditate on the Scriptures, we do that. As we listen attentively to the preaching of the Word, we do that.

*Friendship with Jesus, fellowship Divine;  
Oh what blessed sweet communion,  
Jesus is a friend of mine.*

Our reading matter ought to be profitable and Christ-centered. How much time is wasted on silly novels and fleshly stories? There are multitudes of good and edifying books available. Christ can be preeminent in our reading also: you have to make your own choices. How we choose will have eternal consequences. May it be true of us, as it was of Mary, that we choose that better part.

**IV -- A FRIEND IN NEED:** When the brother of Martha and Mary became sick they sent for Jesus to come and heal him. Jesus did not respond at once but told His disciples that the sickness would not end in death but would result in glory for God. When Jesus finally arrived at Bethany Lazarus had been already dead four days. Both Martha and Mary recognized that if Jesus had been there He could have prevented

the disaster. Martha seemed still to have some spark of hope. "I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (John 11:22). The story is familiar. Jesus went to the tomb and called Lazarus back to life and presented him alive and well to his thankful sisters. There were many witnesses to this miracle. It precipitated the final decision by the scribes and Pharisees to do away with Jesus. But how thankful could Martha and Mary and Lazarus be that Jesus was their friend. Let us keep in touch with Jesus. In time of need He will prove Himself a great deliverer.

**V -- AN ACT OF DEVOTION:** After this miracle of deliverance from death, a dinner was held in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper. There, many came to see Lazarus who had been raised from the dead. Again Martha was the hostess and again Mary was at Jesus' feet. Mary poured out the costly ointment she had bought and saved for the appropriate moment. At the other dinner she was criticized by her sister Martha. Now she was denounced by Judas for wasting this costly ointment. But Jesus not only accepted the act of devotion and adoration but commended her. He declared that wherever the Gospel was preached, her act would be mentioned, and so it is. Let us learn from Mary to sit at Jesus' feet and to pour out our deepest love and devotion for Him. He has poured out His very life for us. Give of your best to the Master.

## LESSON 9

## THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Read: Matthew 19:16; 20:16 Mark 10:17-31 Luke 18:18-30

*Memory Verse: Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross and follow me. (Mark 10:21).*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *There is great significance in Jesus' answer to the young ruler's question regarding how to secure eternal life.*
2. *Great blessing results when we go a step further than perfunctory obedience to the commands.*
3. *We ought to be aware of the danger of riches captivating the inner affection of our hearts.*
4. *There can only be disastrous consequences in failing to yield all up to Jesus.*
5. *There is abundant blessing in total consecration.*

**I -- THE QUESTION:** Jesus had taken the little children in His arms and blessed them. He instructed His disciples to receive the kingdom of God as one of them. They had tried to chase the children away. But Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Luke 18:16).

As Jesus went on, after blessing the children, a ruler came running (Mark 10:17) and, kneeling before Jesus, asked Him what good thing he should do in order to secure eternal life. All three of the Gospel writers record that Jesus repudiated the title of "good". Surely there is some point to this. Probably the young man felt

that if anyone was good it was he. He also honored the Lord with the salutation of "Good Master". Possibly he sought the Lord's approval of his own goodness. Whatever was in his mind, Jesus quickly dispelled any thoughts of self-righteousness in the fine young man. "Why callest thou me good?" Jesus asked, "none is good but one, that is God." All three evangelists record this remark of Jesus. No doubt, this put a pin in the young man's self-righteous balloon.

But Jesus went on to deal with the promising seeker who wanted to know how to secure eternal life. Jesus definitely referred Him to the commandments. This is significant. There is much teaching today that denies the necessity of obedience to the commandments. This erroneous teaching would have us set aside the ten commandments, the unchanging law of an unchangeable God, as well as the types and shadows of the old covenant things which are done away in Christ. It is true that Christ is our righteousness. He obeyed perfectly every requirement of the law and His righteousness is imputed to us by faith. But this imputed righteousness does not license believers to a careless disregard of the commandments. Contrariwise, it is intended to produce in us a carefulness for obedience beyond anything known in Old Testament times. The same faith that validates Christ's righteousness as our own, brings to us the very life of Christ. The faith that brings us His life, brings us His obedience. The entire chain of faith breaks apart if we live in sin and disobedience to His commandments. The notion that we can live in sin and disobedience and claim that faith in Christ overrules all our failure is a pipe dream and delusion. Real faith in Christ will bring to us His real life and real power to fulfill all obedience. Thus, when Jesus referred the rich young ruler to the commandments in response to his question about eternal life, He gave us a significant key for New Testament doctrine.

**II -- WHICH COMMANDMENTS?** The young seeker wanted to know which commandments Jesus meant that he should obey. Jesus mentioned commandments V-IX. Honoring parents, and the commandments which forbid killing, adultery, lying and stealing were specifically mentioned. Matthew tells us that Jesus also mentioned the summary commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The ten commandments were divided into two groups: the first four regarding our relationship with God and summarized by, "thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," etc., and the last six regarding our social relations which are summarized by

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." It seems significant that the Lord did not mention specifically the last commandment regarding covetousness, up to this point. It seems likely that He discerned the young man's case and saved this one point to reveal the young man's besetting sin.

The young ruler testified that he had observed all these commandments since his youth. Mark interjects at this point, that "Jesus, looking upon him loved him." He did not regard him as a proud boaster or as a self-righteous liar. He extended to this young man what amounted to an invitation to apostleship.

**III -- ONE THING THOU LACKEST:** "If thou wouldest be perfect," Jesus declared, "go sell,...give,...and come, follow me." There was one thing the young man did lack: freedom from materialism. The love of earthly possessions and means is the greatest contender for the affection of the human heart. How many Christians have failed to step out into the ministry because of material desires. Many a heart has clung to the security of a weekly paycheck when God called to a life of following and trusting Him--as if the omnipotent King of Kings is less able to care for His workers than the secular employer of this world!

When the young ruler heard this he was sad. He had great possessions and obviously they had first place in his affection. Oh that we might learn to set our affection on things above and not on things of the earth. The young man was not willing to pay the price for perfection. I wonder how many Christians live in sad defeat just because of **one area** in their lives where they are not yielded to God. This man's hang-up was wealth. Another's hang-up might be lust. Jesus might well say to another promising worker, "One thing thou lackest, go deny those youthful lusts which war against thy soul, live a life of personal purity and thou shalt have power with God and with men; and come, take up the cross and follow me." Let us be consecrated fully to Christ. How long will we suffer the weakness and futility which results from just one unconsecrated area. Cut the shore line! Sell all! Lay the axe to the root of the tree! Claim the victory God has for you. May the one thing which we lack be consecrated and the victory and fruitfulness God desires of us be realized.

**IV -- HOW HARDLY:** The disciples were quite astonished when Jesus explained that is it was almost impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. The common attitude in the Jewish society of Jesus' day was that riches were the result of the

blessing of God. Wealth was regarded as a sign of God's approval. Now Jesus repudiated this philosophy. He declared that wealth made salvation difficult if not impossible. Isn't it strange that in the light of such clear teaching, so many followers of Christ still seek to get rich. How often we hear of Christians becoming involved with questionable "get-rich-quick" schemes. God, deliver us! "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content."

**V-- WHAT SHALL WE HAVE:** The Lord's system of rewards is different from that of this world. When once a man found a large sum of money on the ground, he began to look for more. Day after day he looked down, both left and right, before and behind, until his shoulders stooped and finally he could not lift himself up straight anymore. That is what materialism does. But consecration and self-denial causes us to look away from earth. It gives us a heavenly outlook. The rewards of the kingdom of God are lasting and glorious.

When Peter noted how the young ruler would not pay the price to follow Jesus, he asked the Lord what he and his fellow-disciples would receive as a reward for their sacrifice of leaving all to follow Him. Jesus assured Peter that there would indeed be rewards both in this life and in eternity, but He advised Peter and his followers not to bargain for any certain reward but to leave that to a loving, generous Lord. We do well to serve Him wholeheartedly and leave the rewards to Him.

#### THE NAMELESS SEEKER

*We are not told his name--this "rich young ruler"  
 Who sought the Lord that day;  
 We only know that he had great possession,  
 And that--he went away.  
 He went away; he kept his earthly treasure,  
 But oh, at what a cost!  
 Afraid to take the Cross and lose his riches--  
 And God and Heaven were lost.  
 So, for the tinselbonds that held and drew him,  
 What honor he let slip--  
 Comrade of John and Paul and friend of Jesus--  
 What glorious fellowship!  
 For they who left their all to follow Jesus  
 Have found a deathless fame.  
 On His immortal scroll of saints and martyrs  
 God wrote each shining name.  
 We should have read his there--the rich young ruler--  
 If he had stayed that day;  
 Nameless--though Jesus loved him--ever nameless  
 Because--he went away. --Unknown*

## LESSON 10

**ZACCHAEUS THE PUBLICAN**

Read: Luke 19:1-10; Exodus 22:1-13; Numbers 5:5-10

*Memory Verse: For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (Luke 19:10).*

**What we should learn from this Lesson**

1. *It pays to seek Jesus.*
2. *Our Lord is interested in us personally.*
3. *Restitution proves the reality of salvation.*
4. *The Lord loves to save the sinners.*

**I -- JERICO: THE PLACE OF A CURSE:** God had condemned the city of Jericho in the days of Joshua. After its walls were miraculously destroyed and the city burned with fire, it was cursed and should never have been rebuilt (see Joshua 6:26). Despite this warning, Hiel and Bethelite defiantly rebuilt Jericho and lost his oldest and youngest sons in the process (see I Kings 16:34). Jericho is perhaps the oldest city in the world. It was a crossroad junction for the ancient trade routes. Jesus passed through the city on His way to Jerusalem. There, blind Bartimaeus (Matthew mentions two blind men) cried out when he heard that Jesus was passing that way, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Jesus stopped and asked him what he wanted Him to do unto him. Bartimaeus responded, "Lord, that I may receive my sight." Jesus answered, "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole." Immediately his eyes were opened and he glorified God and followed Jesus.

**II -- HE SOUGHT TO SEE JESUS:** Within the city was another man who had difficulty seeing Jesus, not because of poor eyesight, but rather because of his short stature. This fellow was not only a publican, but a chief publican. He was also rich. His



riches were obviously tainted by dishonesty. The publicans were tax-collectors for the Romans who were the conquerors and alien rulers of the Jews. The patriotic Jews despised vehemently any Jew who would sell out his national loyalty to collect taxes for the Romans. With some, however, then as now, the love of money is a stronger compelling force than love of country, or God, or anything else. This chief tax collector of Jericho was so short in stature that he could see nothing in a crowd. Now Jesus' fame had been spread abroad. Perhaps Zacchaeus, for that was his name had already heard of the miraculous healing of Bartimaeus. He probably was acquainted with the blind man. Somehow Zacchaeus was determined to see Jesus for himself. All along the route where Jesus was passing, crowds lined the road. Not a place could Zacchaeus find with an unobstructed view. He ran ahead and spied a sycamore tree with strong spreading branches. Up the tree the little fellow climbed and crawling out on a limb where he was sure to be able to see the Lord, he waited. He watched from his high perch as the group around Jesus approached. As they drew near his eyes were fixed on the One in the center. "So that is the great teacher and healer", he probably thought. Now they were just about to pass under his vantage point when Jesus stopped. The whole company stopped with Him. Zacchaeus had never expected to get such a good look at the Master. And all at once He looked up right into Zacchaeus' face. He was discovered! But with twinkling eyes Jesus called him by name! "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for today I must abide at thy house." And he made haste, and climbed down wondering how Jesus knew his name, and received Jesus gladly into his home.

Oh yes! We have a Lord who is vitally interested in the individual. He is not only Creator and Ruler of the universe, but He is a Father, earnestly interested in the least of His children. We read that He calls the host of stars by name. Yet our Lord did not give His life a ransom for the stars. We read again that not a sparrow falls on the ground without the knowledge of the Father. Yet the redemption of Calvary was not for birds. No, it is for you and me. Our Lord is vitally interested in each of us. So much so, that He declares that even the hairs of our head are numbered. He calls the stars by name. He surprised Zacchaeus by calling him by name; and He knows you by name and He loves you; and paid the price for your redemption.

**III -- TODAY IS SALVATION COME:** Now Zacchaeus was not a popular fellow, (few tax

collectors are). The people were not impressed when Jesus chose to visit him in his house--any one else other than this crooked tax collector. They murmured against Jesus. But Jesus was still about His Father's business. He knew it was publicans and harlots who received His teaching and repented, rather than the self-righteous religious leaders.

Zacchaeus took such steps that brings a man salvation. First he sought to see Jesus, who He was. Then he met Him, just as all will who truly seek Him. He made haste and came down and received Him joyfully. The phrases here describe the physical action of the little seeker, but they also, perhaps coincidentally describe the actions necessary for salvation. Zacchaeus made haste and the salvation seeker, too, must not delay. Today if we hear His voice we dare not harden our hearts but yield to Him at once. Zacchaeus came down from his perch in the tree, and the seeker must come down from all good opinions of himself. He must come down to the reality of his own hopelessly depraved condition and then he may, like our wee little friend, "receive Him joyfully." There is no other name given under heaven whereby we must be saved. It is not a new philosophy we must receive. As surely as He entered the house of Zacchaeus, He will enter your life, and that is salvation: to have Jesus. He will straighten things out by and by. But the straightening out is not the salvation! Jesus is salvation. Zacchaeus received **Jesus**. He was not baptized yet. He had not learned the doctrines of Christ yet. He had not yet joined the church. All these things no doubt followed by and by, but Jesus said, "**Today** is salvation come to this house!" That is what Jesus came for: to save the lost! It is why the Gospel is preached: to rescue the perishing. Let no one delay to receive **Him** joyfully.

**IV -- EVIDENCE OF SALVATION:** That very day Zacchaeus knew some of the things he must do. First, he determined to give half of his ill-gotten wealth to the poor. Then he vowed to restore four-fold such money as he had gotten through false accusation. This was the method of collection: the chief tax collector would levy an amount according to his estimate of a man's worth. The individual then had to pay or prove the tax collector wrong. The publican received a percentage, and most of them skimmed more illegally. The Old Testament law exacted a four-fold restitution. "Four sheep for a sheep" says Exodus 22:1. Restitution was clearly taught in Numbers 5:6-7.

The New Testament describes salvation: "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; all things are become new" (II Cor.5:17). Such indeed was the experience of Zacchaeus. His life was changed. It cost him money to enjoy salvation. But it was worth it. Jim Vaus, notorious Hollywood wire tapper, had to sell his house to make restitution when he was save. Such a price proved the reality of his conversion. His very life was threatened because of his previous sinister connections. Mr. Vaus determined to pay whatever price he must, but he would be saved.

How many homes there are where Jesus would like to enter and be welcomed joyfully. May this vivid story find manifold repetition in homes today so that salvation may come to your house and many a house whatever the cost.

## JUDAS ISCARIOT

Read: John 6:64-71; John 12:4-8; John 13:21-30; Matthew 10:1-15;  
Matthew 26:21-25; Matthew 27:3-10; Mark 14:10-11; Acts 1:15-26

*Memory Verse: The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed! it had been better for that man if he had not been born. (Matthew 26:24).*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *It is important that we serve the Lord with proper motives.*
2. *A blessed ministry is no guarantee against future failure.*
3. *Failure to overcome in any area of our lives leads to serious spiritual loss.*
4. *We should be aware of how Satan is able to get into a man.*

**I -- ONE OF THE TWELVE:** Judas was among those whom Jesus sent out to preach that the kingdom was at hand (see Matt. 10:4,7). Judas was the very last one named in the list of Apostles, but his name is there, with the note that he was the betrayer. To Judas as well as to the other apostles Jesus gave power to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons (see Matt. 10:8). What a privilege this man enjoyed. He certainly saw the power of God revealed through Jesus and could have come to the same conclusions as Peter: that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. All of the disciples were imperfect men when they began to follow Jesus. They had to be reprov'd often by their patient Master. But they were faithful to Him and He could finally say to them. Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom." Because they were faithful to the Lord, He was able, at Pentecost, to endue them with power to overcome their weaknesses. But with Judas it was not so.

eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Some said, "This is an hard saying, who can hear it." Jesus recognized that some of His followers did not believe. Judas was among those who did not believe (see John 6:64). When many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Jesus, He asked the twelve if they too would forsake Him. Peter affirmed his loyalty, presuming to speak for the twelve. Jesus recognized, however, that one of the twelve was a devil.

**II -- JUDAS HAD THE BAG:** After Lazarus was raised from the dead a feast was prepared for Jesus. Lazarus was there and many came to see this man Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Martha was the hostess, as usual. Mary, too, was in her favorite place: at the feet of Jesus! She brought a very costly pound of ointment of spikenard and anointed the feet of Jesus. She wiped His feet with her hair. The beautiful aroma filled the whole house.

Judas saw the whole procedure and could not refrain from finding fault with this costly act of adoration. His own attitude toward Jesus was very different. He intended to use Jesus to further his own selfish ambitions and desires. Never would he have considered giving anything costly to Jesus. He was in it for what he could get. Now to see someone give so recklessly, hurt him. "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" he demanded. Not that he cared for the poor, for he controlled the purse strings for the band of disciples and we are specifically told that he was a thief. His objection was a subterfuge. He had no love for the poor. Perhaps the devotion of Mary made him feel uneasy. Has it not often been so that when someone has performed some unusual act of devotion to the Lord, we have felt a little uneasy and embarrassed?

Jesus was not fooled for a moment by Judas' sudden concern for the poor. "Let her alone," Jesus reprimanded, "against the day of my burying hath she kept this. The poor always ye have with you, but me ye have not always." Shortly after the telltale incident, Judas made his way to the chief priests and covenanted with them to betray Jesus to them for thirty pieces of silver.

**III -- THAT THOU DOEST, DO QUICKLY:** Jesus and His disciples celebrated the Passover in an upper room. Judas was there too. The conspiracy was already afoot. Jesus took a towel and washed the disciples' feet. Peter characteristically balked at allowing the Lord to wash his feet, but the treacherous Judas made no protest as the

Son of God bent down to wash the feet of the traitor. How hard his heart had become!

Later in the evening Jesus revealed that He was aware that one of them would betray Him. The disciples began to look at each other. No one seemed to have any idea who it was that should do such a thing. This is a remarkable fact. Since Jesus knew from the beginning who it was that should betray Him (see John 6:64) is it not amazing that He had treated Judas in such a way that he was no more suspect than any other of the disciples? But now John, at Peter's instigation, asked Jesus who it could be, and Jesus said that it was he to whom He would give the sop. When Jesus had dipped the bread, he gave it to Judas. After this Satan entered into Judas. Persistent covetousness, criticism, dishonesty and unbelief, had opened the door for the devil. Jesus said to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly." He went out and it was night. He had walked in the Light and never comprehended it. Now the Light had become darkness and how great was that darkness! Great privilege brings great responsibility. Let us be sure that we walk in the light and continue in the light.

**IV -- FRIEND, WHEREFORE ART THOU COME?** After the supper Jesus went with the disciples to Gethsemane where He often spent hours in prayer. Judas knew the place and was aware that Jesus would go there after supper. He led the band of armed guards from the High Priest's palace to the quiet prayer retreat where Jesus spent His lonely hour. He arranged to give the signal that he had found Jesus by greeting Him with a kiss.

The Lord had been in agony. The sin of the world and the sickness for which He would make atonement probably came upon Him in this dark hour. His perspiration became an unnatural bloody flux. The disciples, whom He had earnestly besought to pray with Him in this dark hour had repeatedly fallen asleep. An angel had come and ministered to Him. And now Judas appeared. "Hail, Master," he cried. Jesus answered without animosity, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Then Judas gave the signal and kissed Him. "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" Jesus reprovved. But the guards now surrounded Jesus and soon led Him away.

**V -- I HAVE SINNED!** Finally, when it was too late, Judas woke up. When he saw what would follow he went back to the high priest to return the thirty pieces of silver. "I

would follow he went back to the high priest to return the thirty pieces of silver. "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood," he confessed. "What is that to us," the priests objected, "see thou to that." Perhaps Judas thought that just as Jesus had escaped from the evil intentions of the Pharisees on other occasions, so at this time, also, He would escape, perhaps invisibly passing through the midst of them. Perhaps he reasoned that Jesus certainly would escape the clutches of the High Priest once more and he would have the thirty pieces of silver.

But now suddenly Judas realized the depth of his own monstrous treachery. He could not face it. Matthew says that he took a rope and hanged himself and Luke says that he fell headlong and burst asunder so that his bowels gushed out. The worst of it was that this man who had walked with Jesus and who had cast out demons and healed the sick had so hardened his heart that he could betray the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver.

Let us take warning! The corrupters tell us that every man has his price. Let us be very sure that nothing which this world has to offer will turn us from faithfully loving and serving our wonderful Lord who gave Himself for us.

## PILATE

Read: Luke 3:1; 13:1; Matthew 27:1-28, 57-60; Mark 15:1-15, 42-46;  
 Luke 23:1-26, 50-54; John 18:28-40; John 19:1-11, 31-42

*Memory Verse: Jesus answered, Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin. (John 19:11).*

### What we should learn from this Lesson

1. *Jesus had no animosity toward the Roman government.*
2. *There is a higher power which overrules the political powers of earth when they are involved with Christ and His church.*
3. *By seeking in every way possible to avoid the responsibility of decision regarding Jesus, Pilate manifests gross weakness of character.*
4. *Knowing that the Jews had accused Jesus out of envy, and knowing that there was no fault in Him, Pilate nonetheless permitted Jesus' execution with faint protest.*
5. *Hypocrisy, political expediency, and lack of principles cause leaders to lose the ability to recognize truth.*

**I -- PILATE THE PROCURATOR:** Augustus had been the head of state at the time of the birth of Christ. Tiberius was the emperor of Rome during the time of Jesus ministry and crucifixion. Pontius Pilate was the appointed governor, or procurator of Judea, a troublesome province of the Roman Empire. He was there to see that the taxes were collected and that no uprising should take place. The historians Philo and Josephus both speak of the great hostility of the rulers of Jerusalem toward Pilate. He was known to be a ruthless and cruel governor. On one occasion he had some



Galilaeans slain as they were making religious sacrifices. He mingled their blood with the blood of their sacrifices (see Luke 13:1). This action was perhaps a contributing factor to the feud between Pilate and Herod. The Galilaeans were from the province over which Herod ruled. At any rate we know the two had been at enmity until the trial of Jesus, when they renewed their friendship.

**II -- THE CHARGES AGAINST JESUS:** When the Jews brought Jesus before their own Jewish Sanhedrin they charged Him with blasphemy: of claiming to be the Son of God, making Himself equal with God. Even there they had a difficult time to find witnesses who told the same story. The Jews, however, had no right to sentence anyone to death (see John 18:31) so they had to get the death sentence from the governor, Pontius Pilate. For what the Jews called blasphemy and other religious offenses Pilate would never sentence Him to death, so the charge had to be different before Pilate. The charge they made was based upon what they knew Pilate must regard as a capital offence, not on any action of Jesus. They officially charged Jesus with insurrection and of teaching His followers not to pay tribute to Caesar. The truth was that Jesus had specifically instructed those who asked, to "render to Caesar the things that be Caesar's" (money for tax, see Mark 12:22).

Pilate himself questioned Jesus as to whether He claimed to be a king. Jesus readily affirmed that He was indeed a king, but He went on to explain that His Kingdom was not of this world (see John 1:36). He explained that He had come into the world to bear witness unto the truth (vs. 37). Pilate had obviously become cynical. Between the ruthless and violent politics of Rome and its heathen worship of deified rulers, truth had become an idealistic fantasy to Pilate. Truth? "What is truth?" he asked. The Jews meanwhile were accusing Jesus of many things. He chose not to answer these charges. Pilate was astonished that Jesus did not argue His defence. When Pilate heard that the charges included deeds which began in Galilee he thought he had found a way out of his dilemma. Galilee was under the jurisdiction of Herod and he was presently at Jerusalem. Pilate cleverly shifted the trial and responsibility to Herod.

**III -- PILATE WASHES HIS HANDS:** Pilate tried everything possible to avoid the responsibility of deciding this case. He first sent the whole mess to Herod. But that wicked ruler, after trying to get Jesus to perform some miracle for his own

amusement, dumped the problem back into Pilate's lap again. Next Pilate remembered that he customarily released a prisoner at the Passover holiday. Here was a way out of this sticky business. So Pilate announced that he would release Jesus according to the custom. But the Jews cried out, "Not this man, but Barabbas." This Barabbas was indeed guilty of the very crimes which the Jews had falsely accused Jesus of committing. To those crimes could be added murder. The hypocrisy of the Jews is unmistakable in their choice of a prisoner for release.

Pilate abandoned that attempt for the moment and instead he had Jesus scourged. The cruel Roman soldiers made a crown of thorns and placed it on His head. Back bleeding, and crowned with thorns, Pilate appealed to their pity. "Behold the man" he exclaimed. Pilate explained that Jesus had done nothing worthy of death. He testified that neither Herod nor himself could find any fault in Jesus and therefore he had scourged Him and would let Him go. This enraged the Jews. Pilate's appeal to their pity was totally wasted. They began to cry out, "Crucify Him, crucify Him."

Pilate's wife added to the frustration of the cowardly politician by revealing that she had been frightened by her dreams about "this righteous man." She advised her husband to have nothing to do with this case.

But the more Pilate sought to release Jesus the more vehemently the Jews cried for His crucifixion. "We have a law and by our law He ought to die," they cried, "because He made Himself the Son of God." This terrified Pilate and he took Jesus aside again and asked Him. "Whence art thou?" But Jesus did not answer him. When Pilate boasted of his power to crucify or release Jesus, the Lord revealed that Pilate could have no power at all against Him except that it was permitted by God Almighty. Therefore the sin of the Jewish leaders was greater than the sin of Pilate.

The virulent envy of the Jews totally blinded them to all righteousness. "His blood be on us and on our children," the envy-maddened leaders cried.

*"Tis envy-which no mercy knows,  
In which hell's flame most fiercely glows-  
Lights this devouring fire.  
All's sacrificed unto its lust-  
Nothing too sacred, good, or just  
To fall to its desire.*

*Oh! woe to those this passion sweeps  
Helpless and bound into the deeps!"*

*---from Passion Play*

Pilate knew that it was for envy that they had delivered Him, but all his cautious efforts were swept aside by these religious fanatics. Finally, Pilate capitulated. In a last ditch protest against the injustice Pilate knew was taking place, he called for water and basin and washed his hands before the mob declaring that he was innocent of the blood of this just man. So the cowardly governor delivered Jesus to the will of the people and released Barabbas.

He had a sign posted on the cross according to custom bearing the accusation for which Jesus died. The sign (significantly in three languages) read "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews." The Jews protested that the accusation should say "**He said**, I am the king of the Jews." Pilate rejected their protest saying, "What I have written, I have written."

When Joseph of Arimathaea, who had been a secret disciple, boldly asked for the body of Jesus, Pilate was surprised that Jesus was already dead, but granted the request.

**IV -- PILATE'S END:** There are several legends regarding Pilate's end. Josephus relates that he was sent to Rome after a cruel massacre of Samaritans. Eusebius, the early church historian says that "wearied with misfortunes," he took his own life. One legend has him banished to Vienna, and another to the mountain by Lake Lucerne now known as Mt. Pilatus. All of these legends agree that his end was suicide.

Try as he might, Pilate could not escape the responsibility of a decision about Christ. It was the single most important action of his life. While he was less guilty than the Jews, he was guilty none the less.

We, too, must make a stand regarding Jesus of Nazareth. We cannot wash our hands of this decision. What will you do with Christ? Either accept Him as Lord of all or He will not be Lord at all. Let us not look for loopholes or try to delay the hour of decision.

Let us also take warning from the envy of the Jews. Envy is a terrible taskmaster. It drives men to insane deeds. Let us recognize and root out the very seedlings of jealousy that they never develop into the terrible ripened fruit of envy.

## LESSON 13

**MARY MAGDALENE**

Read: Luke 8:1-3; Matthew 27:55-61; Matthew 28:1-8; Mrk 15:39-47;  
Mark 16:1-11; John 19:25; 20:1-18; Luke 23:55-56; Luke 24:1-12

*Memory Verse: Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils. (Mark 16:9).*

**What we should learn from this Lesson**

- 1. Our Lord has the power necessary to deliver us from all the work of the enemy within us.*
- 2. Ministering with our substance is an acceptable service which we all can render to our Lord.*
- 3. Great devotion to Jesus will surely bring a great manifestation of Himself to us as it did to Mary.*
- 4. To one who had been oppressed by seven demons, was given the honor of being the first witness to His resurrection.*

**I -- THE CASTING OUT OF SEVEN DEMONS:** The first mention of Mary Magdalene in the Gospel chronology, comes immediately after the story of the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet at Simon, the Pharisee's house. We are not specifically told that the sinful woman was Mary Magdalene and so we cannot be sure. That does seem much more possible, however, than that the sinful woman was Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus. What we can be sure of, is that Mary Magdalene, like the sinful woman who washed Jesus' feet, had reason to love Him much, for she too, had been forgiven much (Luke 7:47).

Both Luke and Mark mention the fact that Jesus had cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene (see Luke 8:2 & Mark 16:9). We are not told any of the specifics

of this wonderful deliverance, but we may certainly be encouraged by it to believe for deliverance for our own hearts from every evil work. Our curiosity is not to be satisfied from the Gospel narrative as to the specific names or nature of the seven demons. The book of Proverbs mentions seven things which are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 6:16). John Bunyan, author of the famous "Pilgrim's Progress", records in the story of his own life "I find to this day these seven abominations in my heart." Dante also describes seven scars inscribed by the pointed sword of truth upon his forehead. Every week the scars were renewed and he was told to be rid of them. Dante names his seven demons: Pride, envy, anger, intemperance, lasciviousness, covetousness, and spiritual sloth.

Seven times

The letter that denotes the inward stain,  
 He on my forehead with the truthful point of his  
 Drawn sword inscribed, And "Look" he cried,  
 When entered, that thou wash those scars away!

Certainly there are sins enough to name seventy times seven, and it matters not how many may have entered in to possess your heart. The wonderful deliverance which Mary Magdalene experienced is just as possible for us to experience, for our Lord Jesus is the same yesterday, and today, and forever. The power of our risen Lord is able to deliver us from every evil bondage. Many good men have never received the light of full sanctification by the power of the blood and the work of the Holy Spirit. But we enjoy this precious divine truth and may be fully delivered, like Mary, from all of the works of the devil.

**II -- WHICH MINISTERED UNTO HIM OF THEIR SUBSTANCE:** Mary showed her gratefulness to Jesus in several ways. She, with several other women, went with Jesus and His disciples as they travelled to every city and village, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God (see Luke 8:1). These women "ministered unto him of their substance." What a privilege to be able to give the wherewithal to enable Jesus Himself to preach the Gospel! Ought we not also to count it a privilege to support the work of Christ and those who preach the glad tidings of the kingdom of God today? We are so quick to recognize a good investment. Some invest in real estate, others in stocks and bonds, others prefer the security of a savings bank. But the

greatest investment we can make is in the kingdom of God. Most of our modern interest is eaten up by the cancer of inflation, but he who invests in the work of the Lord shall have treasure in heaven. Let some schemer appear with a get-rich-quick plan, and see how anxious people are to "get a piece of the action." Many a Christian has had the sad experience of seeing his money vanish with the schemer, because of his desire to increase his worth. Why not invest in kingdom bonds? Let us not be afraid to give to the work of the Lord. To be sure, we must be led in our giving because there are unscrupulous individuals who misappropriate funds, but with the guidance of the Lord and a little common sense we need not be afraid to give exuberantly as these women did but we may give to those who are truly His representatives and who do His work here on earth now. Let us account the opportunity to give to the Lord's work and workers not a bothersome obligation but a glorious privilege.

**III -- AT THE CROSS:** When Jesus was crucified this same group of women stayed nearby. John tells us that Mary Magdalene was still at the cross when Jesus directed John to care for His mother. Probably John took Mary, the mother, away from the cross at this point, sparing her some moments of terrible anguish. But Mary Magdalene stayed to the bitter end. She was absolutely loyal. When it was over she still watched until they took His body from the horrible cross. She followed as Joseph of Arimathea had it brought to his own nearby garden where the body was tenderly laid in the new tomb which had recently been hewn out of the solid rock. Knowing that the body was in friendly hands she returned and with the other women prepared spices and ointments for His body. They rested on the Sabbath according to the law.

**IV -- AT THE TOMB:** Before dawn Mary was awake and soon with the other women, on her way to the tomb. The great stone was in the way, but they would find a way to deliver their last loving gifts for His body. But alas, the stone was rolled away and the body missing. They went off at once to tell the disciples. Peter and John ran back with the women. Peter went right into the sepulchre and saw the linen wrapping lying in such a way that he and John knew and believed a resurrection miracle had taken place. Then the disciples went away again, but not Mary. She had longed for one more glimpse of the One who had delivered her from the oppression and

bondage of the enemy. Now even the body was gone. Apparently she could not yet grasp the fact that He was risen. She sank to the ground, sobbing as the others disappeared. And then someone came behind her and kindly asked, "Woman, why weepst thou? Whom seekest thou?" She supposed it was Joseph's gardener and said, "Sir if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." He responded by speaking her name, "Mary." The voice! --- the tone --- it was so much like --- could it be? --- why of course --- it must be --- it was --- JESUS! risen from the dead. "MASTER!" She cried and would have washed His feet again with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head. But He stopped her. "Touch me not" He said, "but go and tell my disciples that I ascend unto my Father and to your Father, and to my God, and to your God." So Mary came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord and that He had spoken these things unto her. What an unspeakable privilege! First to see the Lord in resurrection--not Peter, the spokesman and leader, not John, the beloved, but Mary Magdalene, a woman out of whom He had cast seven demons!

*Hallelujah, what a Savior  
Who can take a poor lost sinner;  
Lift him from the miry clay  
And set him free --  
I will ever tell the story  
Shouting, glory! glory! glory!  
Hallelujah, Jesus ransomed me.*

There is no limit to the heights of glory to which the Lord will raise us if we, like Mary, love and serve Him and seek Him always.