

THE GOSPEL

OF

JOHN

DR. BRIAN J. BAILEY

“The Gospel of John”

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INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of John was written by John the beloved, the son of Zebedee and brother of James. He was the disciple who was closest to Jesus during His earthly ministry and the one who leaned upon His bosom at the Last Supper (Jn. 13:23). John is spoken of several times as the disciple whom Jesus loved (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7,20).

The Gospel of John was called the “Spiritual Gospel” by the Early Church fathers. It was written last, to complete the revelation of Jesus Christ given by the other three writers of the Synoptic Gospels. It is the most widely printed and well-known book of the Bible in the world.

John’s Gospel was written in a very simple manner, with a Greek vocabulary of about 1,500 words. It is recommended as the first book to be read by all new believers, as because even a child can read and easily understand its message. However, this simplicity contains hidden treasures and depths that even the most profound theologian would acknowledge cannot be penetrated to their fullest extent in a lifetime.

The intricacies of this Gospel can be appreciated by knowing that it is filled with sets of sevens. The number *seven*, which speaks of completion and perfection, also dominates the Book of Revelation. Even the first chapter of John contains seven titles of the Lord Jesus.

In Ezekiel 1:5, we are introduced to the four living creatures that surround the throne of God. Their four faces are the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. They portray the character of Christ. The lion reveals Christ as King. The ox reveals Him as the Priest, for an ox is a sacrifice offered by the priest. The face of man portrays the humanity of Christ and reveals Christ as the Son of Man. The eagle speaks of Christ as the Son of God, who soars into heavenly places. We will see how the four Gospels also reveal Christ in these four aspects.

Four Aspects of Christ Revealed Through the Four Gospels

- 1. Matthew** – *a lion* – Christ as King
- 2. Mark** – *an ox* – Christ as our High Priest
- 3. Luke** – *a man* – Christ as the Son of Man
- 4. John** – *an eagle* – Christ as the Son of God

Therefore, John's Gospel contains truths that one will never exhaust no matter how many times one reads or studies it. In view of this, we present this book to you in trembling and humility. Knowing that although we have tried to expound on some of the truths contained in this most wonderful book, we do not pretend in any wise, shape, or form to claim this as an exhaustive study.

The Purpose of John's Gospel

The purpose of John's Gospel is enunciated in John 20:31, "*But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.*"

The Gospel of John was written that we might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and in believing, have abundant life through His name (Jn. 10:10). John's Gospel speaks of Christ as the Son of God more than of any other aspect of His character. John also refers to Christ as the Son of God more times than do any of the other Gospels.

John's Gospel can be divided and studied in many ways. The Gospel is noteworthy in that Jesus describes Himself seven times by saying, "I Am," followed by a specific declaration of a virtue attributable to Himself. When He says, "I Am," it means that He is Deity. In John 18:5 we read, "Jesus saith unto them, I am *he*..." ("he" is not in the original Greek but was added by the King James translators). When He said this, the power of His name "I Am" caused the soldiers to fall to the ground. Then He said again in John 18:8, "I Am." Christ was saying, "I Am that I Am."

The significance of "I Am" in John's Gospel is explained by the fact that when Moses met God at the burning bush and asked what His name was, the Lord replied, "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14). So when Jesus said, "I Am," He was actually saying, "I am God; I am Jehovah." That is the significance of "I Am."

Three Sets of Sevens in John's Gospel

1. Seven I Am's of Christ
2. Seven Pre-Resurrection Signs of Christ
3. Seven Major Public Discourses of Christ

The Seven I Am's of Christ

1. The Bread of Life (6:35, 48)
2. The Light of the World (8:12; 9:5)
3. The Door (10:7, 9)
4. The Good Shepherd (10:11, 14)
5. The Resurrection and the Life (11:25)
6. The Way, the Truth, and the Life (14:6)
7. The True Vine (15:1)

The Seven Pre-Resurrection Signs of Christ

There are seven pre-resurrection signs in John, and one post-resurrection sign. They are not just miracles, but they are actually called "signs" in the Greek. We will see that each sign is to be followed by the revelation of a spiritual truth.

1. Christ Turns the Water into Wine (2:1-11)
2. Christ Heals the Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)
3. Christ Heals the Paralytic Man (5:1-9)
4. Christ Feeds the Five Thousand (6:1-14)
5. Christ Walks on Water (6:15-21)
6. Christ Heals the Man Born Blind (9:1-41)
7. Christ Raises Lazarus From the Dead (11:1-44)

Post-resurrection Sign:

8. Christ's Miraculous Draught of 153 Fish (21:11)

The Seven Major Public Discourses of Christ in John

1. The New Birth (3:1-36)
2. The Water of Life (4:1-42)
3. The Divine Son (5:19-47)
4. The Bread of Life (6:22-66)
5. The Life-giving Spirit (7:1-52)
6. The Light of the World (8:12-59)
7. The Good Shepherd (10:1-42)

PART ONE

Prologue

1:1-18

CHAPTER ONE

The Word and God (1:1-2)

1:1-2 - *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.”* This is the revelation that John received, and it is so very important to understand. Christ was in the beginning with God. He is eternal. Christ is the Word of God! That is why the Holy Scriptures cannot be destroyed, because it is equivalent to destroying Him. Christ said in Matthew 5:18, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” This is the reason why there is such power in the Word. There is no other book like the Bible because the Bible is the Word of God, and the Word of God is God.

The Word and Creation (1:3-5)

1:3 - *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”* We are introduced to the relationship between God and the Word. Speaking of the Word, John says that He was the Creator of the universe. The Father and the Son are the *Creators* of the universe (notice the plural in Genesis 1:26), which was brought into existence through the spoken Word.

The Apostle Paul had an extraordinary revelation of Christ as the Creator of the whole universe. In Colossians 1:16, Paul gives us an idea of the power of the Word, which is Christ Himself, by saying, “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.” Proverbs 8:22-31 also develops the thought of Christ as the Co-Creator.

The Word is literally creative! Hebrews 11:3 says, “Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.” Genesis begins with the phrase “In the beginning,” as does John’s Gospel. Throughout the first chapter of Genesis we find the Lord speaking the world into being with phrases such as, “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place,” “Let there be light: and there was light,” “Let there be a firmament,” and “Let the earth bring forth grass.”

God created the heavens and the earth by simply *speaking* them into existence. By this we know that there is tremendous power in the Word of God. Likewise, when we preach the Word of God, we are preaching a creative Word that has the power to transform men and women, boys and girls.

That is why the Lord Himself could say in Mark 11:23, “...Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt

in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.” The Word of God is very powerful, and as we declare it, things happen. With this truth in mind, we understand the words from Psalm 107:20, “He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.” We should pray that His words might be in our mouths (2 Sam. 23:2).

Therefore, it behoves us, as ministers, to be in constant communion with God, that we may be filled with His message. That is why Peter said that everyone who ministers should speak as “the oracles of God.” In other words, we should speak as though God Himself were speaking (1 Pet. 4:11). Jeremiah was told in Jeremiah 5:14, “Wherefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.” As we are anointed by the Holy Spirit, His Word will flow from our lips.

1:4 - *“In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”* Jesus is the light and conscience of every man. In Him is our very source of life. The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:6, “The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.” It is not the dead letter of the Word that brings life, but the anointed, quickened Word. When the Word enters our being, we cannot see it with our natural eyes, but we can behold it with our spiritual eyes. When our eyes are anointed by God, we can see the light in those who have received the Word. There is a great difference between the saved and the unsaved.

A number of years ago, three weeks after I had assumed the pastorate of a certain church, the superintendent of the Sunday School program died. This lady had not lived as righteously as she appeared to be living. The night after she died, her spirit appeared unto me. I said to her, “You know that I can do nothing for you now.”

Pondering on this, I asked the Lord, “Why did she come to me after her death?” The Lord spoke to me, “Moths come to the light.” In other words, when she died she could see who had the light, and she was trying to come and partake of that light. Obviously, she had been rejected by Christ, and had been cast into eternal darkness. This is a sobering thought, isn’t it?

Even though people may have known the Lord at one time, if they turn their backs on Him and choose to live a life of sin, they can lose their eternal salvation if they are not restored to the Lord. We have to *live the life* after we are born again.

1:5 - “*And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.*” This is a very important truth for us. The thought of the light shining in darkness is intended to encourage us. Just think about a dark room for a minute. If you strike a match in that room, although the match may be very small indeed, the light of that match will dispel the darkness. The darkness cannot overwhelm the light. This is a truth that should encourage us. We have the Light of the world within us. The darkness cannot overwhelm us, but on the contrary, it must flee from us. When we are in darkness, let us remember this, and encourage ourselves in the Lord.

The Word and John the Baptist (1:6-8)

1:6 - *“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.”*

John the Baptist was sent by God as the messenger of the Lord who came to prepare the way for the Messiah by preparing the hearts of the people for Christ. This was the fulfilment of Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.”

God quickened the bodies of Zecharias and Elizabeth (John’s parents) so that they could have a son in their old age. Although Elizabeth was barren, God performed a miracle that enabled her to give birth to John.

1:7-8 - *“The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”* Jesus is the Light of the world (see Jn. 8:12, Isa. 9:1-2, Mt. 4:14-16). John’s ministry did not last very long, perhaps only 15 to 18 months. His calling was to bear witness of the Light, the Lord Jesus Christ.

John went through 30 years of preparation for one purpose—to prepare the way for Christ and to identify Him as the Messiah. According to Acts 13:25, as John fulfilled his course, he said, “...Whom think ye that I am? I am not he. But, behold, there cometh one after me, whose shoes of his feet I am not worthy to loose.”

The Word Made Flesh (1:9-14)

1:9 - *“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”* What lights us? It is our conscience. Christ gives a conscience to everyone who is born (Rom. 2:14-15). That is why no one has an excuse to do evil. Even people who do not know the Ten Commandments have a conscience. Therefore, when they do wrong, they know that they are committing sin. A number of years ago, my wife and I were at a convention in the highlands of Western Africa. Before it was my turn to speak at this convention, we were listening to an African preacher, who I believe was one of the converts of a former student of ours. As we were listening to him, we saw people coming out of the bush, and walking toward the place where the convention was being held to listen to him preach.

I remember something he would say (often in Pigeon English): “Adultery, you know it wrong. Why you know it wrong? Because you do it in the dark. Amen?” Everybody said “Amen.” It was very clear-cut. It is very interesting to listen to certain African preachers. Sometimes their grammar is not very polished, but their theology is very good indeed. For the most part, everybody knows the difference between right and wrong because they have an inner witness—their conscience, that inner light.

1:10 - *“He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.”* Christ was in the world. In other words, the Light of the world was in the world. Christ came as

a man to minister to a world that was made by Him. As you study these verses and think about God Himself coming to earth as a man to save His own creation, you cannot but marvel at the humility of Christ and the Father. After all, it was the Father who gave His Son to become a man in order to save us.

Christ created and formed this earth. He made Adam and Eve, yet He humbled Himself to be in the world and be made subject to His creation including man, the animal, vegetable, and mineral kingdoms. He was exposed to the cold, the heat, and the elements of nature. Yet, sadly, the world that He created did not recognise their Creator.

A professor at one of the colleges I attended had been a missionary to India, where he met Mahatma Gandhi. He and some other people talked with Gandhi for several hours. He related to us that Mahatma Gandhi could quote the Bible totally from memory.

They talked for a while until my professor finally asked Gandhi a very pointed question, the same question found in Matthew 16:13, "Whom do you say that Christ is?" My professor asked Mr. Gandhi point-blank, "Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God?" Mahatma Gandhi replied, "I believe Jesus is *a* son of God, just as I am *a* son of God." This was an extraordinary statement by Gandhi. In other words, he did not have the revelation that Jesus was the one and only begotten Son of God. We need to be very thankful to the Lord for the tremendous privilege of having our understanding enlightened to know that Jesus is the Son of God.

It takes a revelation of God for anyone to know that Christ is the divine Son of God. Even Christ's disciples, when asked by the Master, "Whom do men say that I am?" responded, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: Some Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

Then Christ asked, "But whom say ye that I am?" to which Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Mt. 16:13-17).

Just think, out of all the billions of people there are upon the face of the earth today, He has sovereignly stretched forth His hand and given us a personal revelation of Jesus as the Son of God, just as He did with Peter. May we ever be thankful for His mercy and kindness toward us!

1:11 - "*He came unto his own, and his own received him not.*" The ministry of Jesus was to reach out to Israel (Mt. 15:24). He came to His own (Israel), but His own did not receive Him. Instead, they rejected Him, even though they were God's chosen nation and they knew Jehovah as their Saviour.

Isaiah 49:5 tells us of the ministry of Christ, "And now, saith the Lord that formed me from the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob again to him, Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength." We see this when Pontius Pilate, the Roman

governor and judge asked the Jews, “What shall I do with Jesus of Nazareth?” and they said, “Crucify him” (Mk. 15:12-13).

The Jews did not know what they were saying. They demanded that their Saviour and King be crucified. When Christ returns, He will say to the Jews (paraphrasing Deuteronomy 32:40), “Here am I; I live forever.” Their reply is found in Isaiah 25:9, “And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.” Here we see the tremendous joy on the part of the defenders of Zion, who will see the city broken into during the last siege of Jerusalem; but Zion will not fall.

In Zechariah we read about the Lord’s appearance on the Mount of Olives, and the ensuing conversation between the defenders of Zion and Christ. Their joy will turn into consternation as they see His hands and ask, “What are these wounds in thine hands?” The Lord will answer them, “Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (Zech. 13:6).

At that time, God will pour out the spirit of grace and supplication upon the Jews, and they shall mourn as one mourns for his only son. They will mourn when their eyes are opened at the return of Christ, when they realise that the One they were looking for is the very One whom they had crucified.

How sad—Christ came unto His own, but they received Him not. That is so true of life, beloved. Many times it is our own people who reject us, while others embrace our ministry and

us. Let us not become discouraged, but look unto the Lord for our comfort in such times.

1:12 - *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”*

Christ is the only begotten Son of God, but through believing in Him, we can become adopted sons of God and co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17). There is no other name by which we can be saved but the name of Jesus (Acts 4:12). When we receive Christ, He gives us power to become the sons of God. In the phrase, “even to them that believe on His name,” we see that if we believe on the name of Jesus, we have everlasting life.

1:13 - *“Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”* There are four categories of birth in this verse.

1. Born of blood
2. Born of the will of the flesh
3. Born of the will of man
4. Born of God

Children can be born of blood through an accident. They can be born because the flesh takes over, or through the parents’ will, by which they determine to have a child. Married couples should always pray and ask God if it is His will for them to have children.

It is not God’s will for some people to have children because He knows that they will not have adequate conditions in their

homes to raise them. Yet, for others it is God's will that they do have children. That is why a couple should always pray first to see if God wants them to have children, how many, and when. We should seek the Lord's counsel in all of these matters.

1:14 - *“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.”* Jesus is the incarnate Word of God. The Word was made flesh when Jesus came and took upon Himself the likeness of man.

God's will is that His Word becomes flesh in us. In other words, He wants His Word to become a part of us, so that we have truth in the inward parts (Ps. 51:6). This is what it means to have the laws of God written in our hearts and in our minds (Jer. 31:33).

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” The Word is Christ—Emmanuel, which means, “God with us” (Mt. 1:23). He came to dwell with His people.

John said that he beheld the glory of Christ, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Jesus is the express image of the Father (Heb. 1:3). When the disciples beheld Him, it was like beholding the Father, because Jesus is just like His Father. Jesus said to Philip in John 14:9, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father...”

Christ was “full of grace and truth” and He brought in a new era of grace and truth. In like manner, the Lord wants us to be

full of grace and truth. Grace means “divine enablement,” and also “unmerited favour.” Paul said in Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Through God’s infilling of grace, we are enabled to accomplish everything He calls us to do.

We, too, should be filled with truth. King David said in Psalm 51:6, “Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.” This means that the Word of God must take root in our hearts and bring forth fruit in our lives. We can see this time and again in John’s Gospel. We are not only to have a head knowledge of the truth or to simply speak of it, but we are to express the truth through our lives.

**God wants
His Word to
become a
part of us!**

The Word Preferred Before All (1:15-18)

1:15 - *“John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.”* This is the key to God’s creation. Who was first? God the Father; therefore, He has the pre-eminence. God the Son came forth from the Father; so He is next in authority and position, and He is followed by the Holy Spirit. Psalm 8:5 says that God made man “a little lower than the angels,” because man was created after the angels. Thus, the angels are next in God’s hierarchy; followed by mankind.

Who was created after man? Woman. First Timothy 2:11 says, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.” The reason

for this is found in 1 Timothy 2:13, which says, “For Adam was first formed, then Eve.” Therefore, the woman is under the authority of the man. Man is the head of the woman by virtue of the fact that he was created before her (Eph. 5:23). Here, John the Baptist was saying that Christ was preferred before him because He was before him.

1:16 - *“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.”* In Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead (Col. 1:19). In order to help us understand this truth, a little illustration would be helpful. Consider a very large bottle of water and a clean, empty glass. If the glass was filled with water from the large bottle, its water then would have the same purity and thirst-quenching qualities as the water in the bottle. The only difference is that the bottle contains a considerably larger amount of water.

In much the same way, the water of life is poured into us when we receive Christ as our Saviour. It is exactly the same life that is in Him; the difference is that He is the source of that life-giving water. Also, the amount of the water of life we contain is directly related to our capacity. His desire is to fill us to overflowing. However, our capacity to contain the water of life is considerably limited compared to His great and abundant reservoir.

1:17 - *“For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”* In verse 17 John repeats what he said in verse 14. The Law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Christ. The Law could not accomplish what

God wanted, which was holiness, because the Law was written on external tables of stone. Therefore, Christ came with grace and truth. His grace enables us to fulfil the Law. The Law is not denigrated; it was fulfilled by Christ. His truth enables us to be set free from our bondages (Jn. 8:32), for whom the Son sets free is free indeed. In the New Testament era, the Law is written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts so that from the heart we can fulfil the righteousness of the Law. To do this we must walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh (Rom. 8:4).

1:18 - *“No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.”* The Father is eternal, and therefore Christ is eternal by virtue of the fact that He was in the bosom of the Father. Then at a certain point in time before the creation of the world, He came forth from the Father.

This is confirmed by Proverbs 8:22-24, where Christ (the personification of wisdom) says, “The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water.” Also, Christ said in John 16:27-28, “For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father.” Christ came out from the bosom of the Father. Everyone else was created, but Christ is the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 1:14,18; 3:16,18; 1 Jn. 4:9). “Begotten” means He came forth from the Father.

This concept of Christ being eternally existent in the Father can be illustrated through the example of Levi and Abraham. Hebrews 7:9-10 says, “And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father [Abraham], when Melchisedec met him.” In God’s eyes, Levi paid tithes in Abraham. Levi was not even alive at this time, but because Levi was in the loins of Abraham when Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, Levi is looked upon as having paid tithes as well. Thus Levi was in Abraham even before he was born several hundred years later.

God looks at it as though Levi had already been born and had paid tithes to Melchisedec because he was in Abraham and would come from Abraham. God is saying that Levi was pre-existent in Abraham. In a similar manner, Christ has always existed because He has been in the Father since the beginning of time, and at a certain point in time He came forth from the Father.

PART TWO

The Commencement of Jesus' Ministry

1:19-51

The Witness of John - 1:19-34

1:19-21 - *“And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.”* The power of God was manifested in such a dramatic way in the life and ministry of John the Baptist that virtually no one denied that he was a prophet. Even though many of the Jewish leaders hated and envied him, they could not refute the anointing that was upon him. The religious leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to John the Baptist to inquire of him if he was the Christ or Elijah. He confessed and declared unto them, “I am not the Christ.”

In Israel, and particularly among those in Judea and Jerusalem, there was a sense of expectancy concerning the coming of Christ. The coming of the three magi (wise men) had certainly contributed to this, as well as the fact that they were led by a star to Bethlehem. When John denied that he was the Christ, they asked him if he was Elijah. They knew that Elijah had to come before Christ because of the teachings of the rabbis

who quoted from Malachi 4:5-6. However, John again said, “I am not.”

1:22-23 - *“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet [Isaiah].”* John was sent to prepare the hearts of the people to accept Christ. This is confirmed by the words of the angel in Luke 1:17, who said that John would go before the Lord to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

To answer the question of who he was, John quoted Isaiah 40:3, “I am the voice of one in the wilderness crying make straight the way of the Lord.” John’s calling was to be the forerunner of the King, for even an earthly king would never go anywhere unless someone went before him to prepare the way.

This is illustrated by Elijah and Ahab. Elijah told Ahab, “Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain” (1 Ki. 18:41). Ahab was a king; therefore, someone had to go before him. As there was such haste, Elijah ran before his horses, manifesting a mighty miracle of strength—for it is impossible for anyone to run 40 miles, outdistancing the king’s chariot drawn by the choicest horses in Israel.

1:24-27 - *“And they which were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water:*

but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

Explaining John's baptism, the Apostle Paul said in Acts 19:4, "John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." John declared the greatness of Jesus, saying that he was not worthy to loosen the Messiah's sandal strap.

So often we do not appreciate the awe with which John revered Jesus. As I write this, I am seeing in a vision the meeting of the two cousins. They were both so holy, and yet John beheld Jesus with such wonder at His matchless purity. Both had spent their thirty years of life in preparation for this moment in time—John to declare Jesus; Jesus to be the unspotted Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

Words are inadequate to express such a scene, but it can be pictured as the meeting of two masters in any field of expertise, with the one who far excels the other being held in rapt admiration by the lesser. Such was the case between these two masters of holiness.

Jesus, later paying tribute to John, said in Matthew 11:11, "Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

1:28 - *“These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.”* Bethabara is the place where the children of Israel crossed the Jordan River in the time of Joshua. Spiritually speaking, the crossing of the Jordan represents the burial of the old life and the rising again in newness of life to walk with the Lord. Water baptism typifies this experience, but to know the full reality of it, we must be crucified with Christ and die to our old nature (Gal. 2:20, Rom. 6:6).

1:29 - *“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* John introduces the earthly ministry of Christ. He was to be the Lamb of God who would die on the cross to take away the sins of the world, as prophesied in Isaiah 53:7. He was our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7), who came to fulfil all the Levitical sacrifices and offerings. It is through His death that we are saved.

1:30-31 - *“This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.”* A king must be preceded by a messenger. That is why Elijah ran before Ahab and also why John came before Jesus. He was the forerunner of Jesus. The purpose of John’s ministry was to turn the hearts of the people to God so that they would receive Jesus, as many did (Lk. 1:16). For John, the presentation of Christ to the nation of Israel was the supreme moment of his life. This was his whole mission in life.

1:32-34 - *“And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water; the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”* God had given John this special sign so that he would know of a certainty who the Son of God was.

The dove is a symbol of peace and also the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is like a dove in many ways. Doves are easily frightened and scared away. In the same way, if we do not welcome the Holy Spirit into our lives by our actions, and if our hearts are not soft toward Him, He will leave us. All those standing around saw the sign, but most of them did not understand it, because there were many doves near the Jordan River. Therefore, only John the Baptist realised its significance.

The First Four Disciples (1:35-51)

1:35-36 - *“Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!”* Jesus was in the area of the Jordan River for at least a day or two. John witnessed and testified again that Jesus was the Lamb of God. John had many disciples—devout and pious Jews who wanted to be associated with this prophet of God. Like the Jewish rabbis, John taught his disciples. Two of John's disciples heard him

declare when he looked upon Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God.” Having been taught by John, and understanding that the purpose of his life was to identify Jesus as the Christ, they would have known the significance of this title.

1:37-39 - *“And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.”*

Aware that two of John’s disciples were following Him, the Lord Jesus turned and said to them, “Whom are you seeking?” They said, “Rabbi, where dwellest thou?” “Come and see,” replied Christ. This took place at about the tenth hour of the day on the Jewish calendar, which is 4 p.m. Roman time. The Jewish day was from 6 p.m. to 6 p.m. of the next day.

This little phrase, “come and see,” is very interesting. It is repeated in verse 46 of this same chapter. Many years ago when I was in France, I was privileged to be a part of the French Pentecostal movement. The key phrase of this movement was taken from John 1:39, “Come and see.” The churches put over their entrances the French phrase “venez voir,” which is translated “come and see.” When you went into the churches, you witnessed the miraculous healings that would take place on a daily basis.

Psalm 66:5 says, "Come and see the works of God..." Oh, may God grant that we will be able to tell people, "Come and see what God is doing! Come and see His wonderful works!" We want to see the Spirit of God move in our churches so that when people come, they see the mighty works of God. May His healing waters flow in our midst!

1:40-41 - *"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ."* Andrew, a disciple of John, left John to follow Christ. The first thing Andrew did after meeting Jesus was to find his brother Peter and bring him to Christ. There is a spiritual truth here. Whenever we meet the Lord in a new way, or even for the first time, we should seek to share those experiences with our family members first so that they can also know the Lord.

1:42 - *"And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."* When Simon Peter came to Jesus, the Lord told him that from then on he would be called Cephas, which means "a stone."

When we come to Jesus, our character will be changed. The whole goal of a Christian is to be transformed (cf. Rom. 12:2). By nature, Peter was governed by his

emotions and was very temperamental. One day he would experience great mountaintops, and the next day he would be down in the pit of despair.

The garden scene is surely typical of Peter's character. First, in an attempt to show his zeal for the Lord, Peter cut off the ear of the servant of the High Priest, and yet later that same evening he denied Jesus when the servant girls challenged him. These tendencies are most unbecoming for a saint. Therefore, the Lord seeks to encourage us (Isa. 54:11-12) that we might become, as Peter, stable as a rock.

1:43-44 - *“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.”* Jesus then went into Galilee and said to Philip when He found him, “Follow me.” Philip was from Bethsaida (a town in Galilee), as were Peter and Andrew. In fact, all the disciples, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were from Galilee.

1:45 - *“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”* Philip went and found Nathanael, who is called Bartholomew in the other Gospels and in the book of Acts (Mt. 10:3, Mk. 3:18, Lk. 6:14, Acts 1:13). Philip told Nathanael that they had found—the Messiah—the One whom Moses and the prophets wrote and prophesied about.

1:46 - *“And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.”* God chose for His Son to be raised in the city that had the worst reputation in the whole nation of Israel. Nathanael said with disapproval, “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”

Nazareth was known to be a city of great mixture. The people who inhabited Nazareth were not pure Jews. They were Samaritans; in other words, people who had been transported to Samaria from heathen nations. Yet it was in this place that Jesus grew up and remained faithful to God. *Beloved, I want to encourage you—God can keep your children in whatever atmosphere they are placed.*

I am supportive of Christian schools, but if you are in a position where you cannot send your children to a Christian school, you should trust the Lord to preserve them. God kept His Son in the city that had the worst reputation in the whole of Israel. The grace of God is able to keep us from falling away from the Lord (Jude 1:24).

1:47 - *“Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!”* What a tremendous commendation of a man! Christ said that Nathanael was a true Israelite, which means an Israelite in heart. Paul said in Romans 9:6, “They are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” We want to be true Israelites in heart, which means to have a circumcised heart that is totally devoted to the Lord (Rom. 2:28-29).

Christ also said of Nathanael that there was no guile in him. This is a description of the Lord Himself, as seen in 1 Peter 2:22. The Lord chose Nathanael to be near Him and to be one of His 12 disciples because there was no guile in him. Those who will be nearest to the Lord in eternity on Mount Zion are those who do not have any guile or deceit in them. We read in Revelation 14:5, “And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.”

1:48-49 - *“Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.”* Nathanael calls Jesus by two of His God-appointed names: “Son of God” and “King of Israel.” There are seven titles of Christ in John chapter 1.

The Seven Titles of Christ in John Chapter 1

1. The Word (1:1-2)
2. The Light (1:9)
3. The Lamb of God (1:29)
4. The Son of God (1:34)
5. The Messiah—Christ (1:41)
6. The King of Israel (1:49)
7. The Son of Man (1:51)

1:50-51 - *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”* This was only the beginning of what Nathanael would see over the next three and a half years with the Lord. He would see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. This is very similar to the vision Jacob had of the ladder to heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending on it (Gen. 28:12).

PART THREE

Signs and Public Discourses of Christ

2:1 - 12:50

CHAPTER TWO

First Sign - The Turning of the Water into Wine (2:1-11)

As we said at the onset, John's Gospel can be divided into a series of sevens—the seven “I Am's” of Christ, the seven pre-resurrection signs of Christ, and the seven major public discourses of Christ. In John chapter 2 we come to the first of the seven signs in John's Gospel. A sign can be either a miracle or healing, but it is distinctly set apart in that its purpose is to reveal a spiritual truth. The all-important thing, of course, is that when we study and meditate on John's Gospel we receive the truths that are *hidden* in these signs. We are now going to look at the first sign, which we have entitled, “The Miracle of Turning the Water into Wine.”

2:1 - “*And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there.*” This sign took place on the third day. The third day speaks of the Lord's resurrection, because He was resurrected after being three days in the heart of the earth. Therefore, there is a truth in this sign concerning Christ's resurrection.

There is also contained in this miracle a truth concerning marriage. It relates to the marriage supper of the Lamb mentioned in the Book of Revelation, also written by John. In Revelation 19:7, we are told that the Bride of Christ has “made herself ready.” The Church is the Bride of Jesus Christ, and by the grace of God, we want to be ready for that marriage day.

2:2 - *“And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.”* Christ is putting His sanction on marriage by His appearance at this wedding. It would not be amiss to reflect at this time upon the fact that marriage was instituted by the Father and declared to be honourable by the Apostle Paul in Hebrews 13:4. Also, it is very clear from Scripture that divorce is contrary to the will of God (Mal. 2:16), and that remarriage while the former partner is still living is termed adultery (Rom. 7:3).

2:3-4 - *“And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.”* Wine was, of course, essential at any feast. So when they ran out of wine at the marriage feast, it was a major dilemma. Spiritually speaking, wine is a symbol of joy, and God wants us to be full of joy.

In the English translation of this verse, it appears that Christ was a little rough with His mother, Mary. However, the original Greek brings out that He was gentle and soft with her, using a term of courtesy that referred to a married lady. It could be translated, “Lady, what have I to do with thee?” It is clear here who is now in control.

“Mine hour is not yet come.” By this, Jesus was saying that the miracle He was about to perform, of turning the water into wine, was a sign of His death. Christ uses this little phrase several times in John’s Gospel (cf. Jn. 7:6,8). Christ was very conscious of the fact that He had to die at the specifically appointed time, and not before. It is interesting that in John 17:1, just before He was betrayed, He said, “Father, the hour is come; glorify Thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.” Jesus knew when His hour had come to offer Himself upon the cross. Thus this miracle is linked with His resurrection.

2:5 - *“His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.”* It is important to understand that at this point there has been a definite change in the relationship between Jesus and His mother, Mary. Jesus is now in command, and Mary recognises it. Thus in no way, shape, or form should prayers be made to Mary. This practice is totally contrary to Scripture.

As you look very carefully in Matthew 12:46-50, when Jesus was told that His mother and His brothers were looking for Him, He said, “Who is my mother, who are my brethren? ... For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Mary had no power over Him as soon as He entered into His public ministry. If she had no power on earth, she certainly has no power in heaven. Therefore, it is abundantly clear from Scripture that prayers should not be made to Mary. Prayers should only be made to the Son of God (and the Godhead), for He is in command.

2:6 - *“And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece.”* The water pots of stone were used for the purifying of the Jews, who would not eat without first pouring water over their hands for purification. Each of these waterpots contained about two or three firkins (approximately 20 to 30 gallons, a firkin being equal to about ten gallons). Six is the number of man; two and three are the numbers of witnesses; and water is a type of the Word.

2:7 - *“Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.”* There is a spiritual and yet very practical truth in this verse. These six stone waterpots represent man. Therefore, we should at all times be filled with the living Word. This is achieved by reading, meditating upon, and studying the Scriptures, and above all, receiving day by day a fresh word for our souls from the Lord Himself.

2:8-10 - *“And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”*

By performing this miracle of turning the water into wine, Jesus accelerated the process of nature. Wine making is quite a process. The vine grows as it is watered, and then the grapes

begin to grow. When the grapes are fully grown and are harvested to be made into wine. There are a few spiritual truths that may be gleaned from this miracle.

As the Word of God waters the garden of our hearts, it causes the fruits of the Spirit (represented by wine) to grow and come to maturity in our lives.

The Lord Jesus is represented here by water, which brings out another spiritual truth. When the water was poured out, it came forth as wine. In like manner, when Jesus died, He shed His blood for us. In the communion service, the wine represents the blood of Christ that was shed for the sins of the world.

It is also significant that the governor of the feast said that the bridegroom had kept the good wine until the end. This was very unusual. Normally, the host of a feast would put out the best wine first, and toward the end of the feast he would put out the less expensive wine that was inferior in quality. Christ did all of this because He wanted to bring forth a very important spiritual truth.

This is a type of what God is going to do in our days. Wine speaks of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The Early Church experienced a tremendous revival, but it will be as nothing compared to what the Lord has reserved for the Church in the last days. God has reserved His best for the Last Day Church. There will be the greatest outpouring of the Spirit of God—even greater than the outpouring on the day of

Pentecost (Hag. 2:9). In addition to this, there will also be the highest quality of Christians.

Let us, therefore, look forward with expectant hearts to the greatest revival of all time. Remembering also that wine speaks of joy, we could say that God's joy will be experienced in the last days as never before.

2:11 - *“This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him.”* These miracles, or *signs* as recorded in the original Greek, were a manifestation of the glory of the Lord and therefore caused His disciples to believe on Him.

Interlude in Capernaum (2:12)

2:12 - *“After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days.”* Capernaum was a city renowned for its wealth, while its inhabitants were known for their pride. Therefore, when the Lord went to minister in Capernaum, in spite of the many miracles that He manifested there, they rejected Him (Mt. 11:20, 23-24).

Capernaum was filled with buildings of great splendour, and one might say that it was the epitome of luxury. Alas, when people have everything, as did the citizens of Laodicea, they have a tendency to say, “Well, why do I need the Gospel?” (Rev. 3:14-22). Yet we find that the poor received the Lord gladly.

The First Cleansing of the Temple (2:13-17)

2:13 - “*And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.*” There are four Passovers mentioned in John’s Gospel that took place during the ministry of Christ. This particular one is the first Passover mentioned. It was the first Passover in His public ministry.

In theological language, this is called the “Quadra Passover” or the “Quadra Pascal Theory.” By means of these four Passovers, we can determine (by comparing John’s account with the other three Gospels) the chronological sequence in the life of Christ. The four Passovers in sequence:

The Four Passovers

1. *The first Passover* (Jn. 2:13)
2. *The feast of the Jews* (Jn. 5:1) (This is accepted by most scholars as the Second Passover.)
3. *The third Passover* (Jn. 6:4)
4. *The fourth Passover* (This took place when Jesus was crucified.)

Six days before the last Passover, Jesus came to Bethany (Jn. 12:1).

In going up to Jerusalem at the time of the Passover, Jesus was conforming to the book of the Law wherein all Jews were commanded to go to Jerusalem three times a year to celebrate the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles—the three great feasts of the Lord (Deut. 16:16-17).

2:14-16 - *“And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables; And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house an house of merchandise.”*

There were two cleansings and purifyings of the Temple during the time of Jesus. The first took place at the beginning of Christ’s ministry, and the second at the end of His ministry (Mk. 11:15-17). These two cleansings signify that the Church would be purified at the beginning of the Church Age, and again at the end of the Church Age. For in between the first and last cleansing, the Church would become immersed in commerce and merchandise. As we know, the Church declined in the Middle Ages.

With respect to the Temple, although Jesus cleansed it during His first Passover, yet by the time of the fourth Passover, the Jews had returned to the practice of commerce and corruption, which necessitated a second cleansing. This suggests that the state of the Church in the End Times will be similar, but that God will cleanse His Church again before His Second Coming.

The method of cleansing is worthy of note, in that one man, Jesus, went into the Temple courts alone and overturned the tables of the money lenders, driving them out of the Temple. He was able to do this because the

anointing of the seven Spirits of the Lord was upon Him (Isa. 11:2). On this particular occasion, it was the Spirit of might that was manifested through Him. This is the same anointing that enabled Samson to perform mighty feats of strength and valour.

The Lord was very angry with the priests for their actions. They required all temple donations to be paid in temple coinage instead of the common Roman money. The priests did this for the sole purpose of benefiting themselves. They charged a very high rate of exchange, which resulted in a very large income for the priestly family of Annas. Thus the motive of the priests was greed and covetousness.

2:17 - *“And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”* This is a quote from Psalm 69:9. We want to be filled with the zeal of God’s house. We want to do things God’s way.

Destruction and Raising of the Temple (2:18-22)

2:18-19 - *“Then answered the Jews and said unto him, What sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”* Here Jesus tells the Jews to destroy “this” temple, and He would raise it up in three days. Christ was referring to Himself, for He is the true temple of God. Jesus was speaking of His death and His resurrection three days afterwards.

The Jews always wanted to see signs. Over and over again they asked Jesus the same question: “What sign are You going to show us?” During one of those so-called “busy days” of His ministry in His second tour of Galilee, Jesus had similar requests for signs from the religious leaders of that region.

We read in Matthew 12:38-40: “Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

2:20 - *“Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?”* The Temple of Herod, as it is called, had been under construction for 46 years. This temple was built by King Herod, the Edomite, on the site of the Temple of Zerubbabel to appease the Jews, who did not accept Herod as a Jew.

This conversation took place at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. The Jews said that the Temple had been in building for 46 years. Jesus ministered for approximately three-and-a-half years. Calculating $46 + 3 \frac{1}{2} = 49 \frac{1}{2}$. Thus, Jesus’ ministry ended in the 50th year of the temple building. We read in Leviticus 25:8 and 10, “And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and

the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years...And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.” The 50th year was the year of jubilee and release in Israel.

Jesus died during the 50th year of the building of Herod’s Temple. This speaks of the fact that He was releasing His people from all the sacrifices of the Temple. It is amazing how the Heavenly Father used a heathen king to give a sense of timing and types, and to illustrate some very important spiritual truths.

Herod’s Temple was only finished about six years before it was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. No temple has been erected on the site ever since, but the Word of God is very clear indeed with respect to this subject. A literal temple will be built in the last days, and in it the Antichrist, the man of sin, will offer up the abomination of desolation and desecrate the Temple.

2:21-22 - *“But he spake of the temple of his body. When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said.”* Many of the things Jesus said were not understood when He spoke them, but later His disciples remembered them, and then their meaning became clear. This is also very true in our own lives. Often the Lord

will speak to us and we will not understand the fullness of that which He is saying until a later time.

No Confidence in Man (2:23-25)

2:23-25 - “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did. But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.”

We need to ask God to reveal to us who people are. This is so very important because if you confide in and commit yourself to the wrong person, you can cause yourself a lot of problems. If you commit yourself to a person who is like Saul, you could lose your life. This was one of the keys to the ministry of Jesus. He did not commit Himself to everyone, only to His disciples. Yet He knew who Judas was from the very beginning. We must ask the Lord to reveal to us people’s spiritual names, for their spiritual names reveal their character and who they really are in God’s eyes.

Years ago, a missionary in Africa asked me to pray for him. The Lord gave me the name, “Mahalaleel,” which means, “Praisers of God.” When I told this missionary the name that the Lord had given me for him, he exclaimed with joy, “I just love to praise the Lord!” I did not know this man, but the revelation of his spiritual name revealed his character to me. We should also ask the Lord who we are in His eyes. That will show us His purpose for our lives.

CHAPTER THREE

The First Discourse - New Birth (3:1-36)

Here we have the first of the seven major public discourses of Christ in John's Gospel. The first of these is entitled "The New Birth." Obviously, new birth (being born again) is a very important subject indeed. Everything in our spiritual walk starts with being born again. George Whitefield was once asked why he always preached on being born again. With a twinkle in his eye, he said, "Because ye must be born again." New birth is indeed one of the most essential doctrines of the Word of God.

3:1-2 - *"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."*

Nicodemus was a notable leader and teacher; one who was revered by many in Israel at that time. He came to Jesus by night because he feared the other Pharisees. In so coming, Nicodemus was acknowledging who Jesus was.

It is very interesting to note what Nicodemus said to Jesus, for it reveals the opinion that the Pharisees had about Jesus. He said, "We know that thou art a teacher come from God." In other words, it is very clear that the rest of the people accepted Jesus as a teacher who was sent by God. For

Nicodemus also said, “No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.” Although they all recognised it, not all of them wanted to receive Him, for in so doing, they would have to change their way of life, since He so often spoke against the Pharisees and their evil deeds. Jesus, ignoring Nicodemus’ greeting, responded:

3:3 - *“Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* Jesus is very straightforward here. Unless a person receives Jesus into his heart and is born again, he cannot enter heaven and will go to hell. This is one of the cardinal truths of the Bible, but it perplexed the knowledgeable Nicodemus.

3:4-5 - *“Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born? Jesus answered, 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.”*

Nicodemus was totally confused because he took Jesus’ statements literally instead of spiritually. He could not understand how a man could be born again and re-enter his mother’s womb. However, because he revered Jesus, he asked Him to elucidate this. Jesus replied, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” In other words, unless a person is born of water (natural birth) and of the Spirit (spiritual re-birth), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Therefore, it is very clear that our works do not save us. Just because someone is a good person does not mean that he will go to heaven. There are many “good people” that have gone to hell (those who seemed to be good in the eyes of man). These people never accepted the Lord into their hearts, and as a result, they were not allowed into heaven.

3:6-8 - *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.”* Succinctly stated, our Lord is saying that as we do not understand where the wind comes from or goes to, and we cannot explain its movements or its workings, so too it is impossible for the natural man to understand the ways of those who are born of the Spirit.

3:9-10 - *“Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be? Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?”* Jesus marveled that Nicodemus was a doctor of the law and yet could not even comprehend the simplest of spiritual truths. This shows what a terrible spiritual condition the teachers of Israel were in at the time of Jesus.

The same things that Paul said about the Hebrew church several years later in Hebrews 5:12 could be said of them: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the

oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” The Jewish leaders were entrusted with the responsibility of teaching the nation of Israel, and yet they themselves needed to be taught.

3:11 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.”* We must only speak that which we know. We must speak from experience. To preach the born again message without being born again yourself is fruitless, for it is the dead letter of the Word. On the other hand, speaking of the things that we know and have experienced imparts life to those who listen.

For me personally, being born again is a reality. The night prior to that glorious event I had a vision of the night. In this vision I saw the world, and men and women being born, maturing and living, becoming old and dying—all seemingly without purpose. Then in a second vision of the night I saw what happened after death, when the souls of the lost fell down into hell. I saw Jesus standing with His hands outstretched to save the lost. At death, all who had received Christ as their own personal Saviour during their lifetime were taken to Jesus and then into heaven beyond. That next day, I went to the research laboratory where I worked. I was in a room alone with a friend of mine who was a Christian, trying to get him to become a member of my political party. I wanted to do something and find my purpose in life. He was very gracious and said, “I do not know much about your politics, but I do know what is going to happen among the nations.”

He talked to me about the Lord's Second Coming, and then he said: "God has a plan for the nations, and God has a plan for your life. It starts when you receive Christ as your Saviour and believe on Him." I said immediately, "I believe," and then Christ appeared and stood right in front of me. That is how I was born again. From that moment on, everything changed. It was as though I was walking on air—I had such joy, peace, and assurance.

3:12 - *"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?"* In effect, Christ is saying, "Nicodemus, if I have told you about natural things, such as being born of water, and the wind that blows, and you do not understand them, how do you expect to understand heavenly truths?"

3:13 - *"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven."* At that time, with the exception of Enoch and Elijah, no one had been to heaven, but here He is saying that the only One who is really qualified to talk about heaven is the Son of Man, for He descended from heaven. Later, Paul had some really remarkable experiences of being caught up to the third heaven (2 Cor. 12:1-4).

3:14-15 - *"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."* Moses lifted up a brazen serpent in the wilderness (Num. 21:7-9). A serpent is a type of Satan and

sin. On the cross, Jesus became sin for mankind, but He also destroyed sin and crushed the power of Satan by His death and resurrection.

We must be very clear that after this life there is eternal judgment, which will determine whether we go to heaven or hell. I am not very optimistic concerning the belief that everyone who accepts Jesus Christ into their hearts will go to heaven. Many, including John Bunyan, have had visions of former Christians in hell. In fact, several people have shared with me their personal testimony of similar visions. Those who were once born again, but do not continue to walk in the light will be cast into hell. Thus the admonition for us is always to do what is right in the sight of God that we might inherit eternal life!

Several people have given their testimony that although they went to church, they were backslidden and not walking in God's ways. They died, and to their horror, they were being taken to hell. They pleaded with the angels to give them another chance, and because of God's great mercy, they were given another opportunity. Today, there are many who go to church on a regular basis, but are "backslidden in heart" (Prov. 14:14). Do not be deceived into thinking, "I am born again, and so it does not matter how I live." Unless we live a righteous life, we will not receive eternal life.

Years ago, the Christian Church of England was divided theologically into north and south by the doctrine of "eternal security." Basically, the doctrine of eternal security states that

once a person is saved, no matter what he does, he will always be saved and go to heaven. One of the great proponents of this doctrine in England was a very revered and godly man. God took him through an awesome experience with a certain teenage girl in his assembly. This teenager had drifted away from the Lord, and every night this godly pastor would weep and intercede for her, praying that God would restore her.

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Then the Lord spoke to him, “Do you realise why you are interceding for her? If she does not come back, she is eternally lost.” Horrified, this pastor realised that he had been teaching a doctrine contrary to the Word of God. Recounting this incident to me many years later, he said, “When there was a Scripture verse that contradicted the doctrine of eternal security, I would turn the page.” But after the young girl came back to the Lord through his prayers, he would pray every time he opened his Bible, “O Lord, show me truth.”

I believe that the doctrine of eternal security has come straight from the pit of hell. God has really convicted me that this teaching is a doctrine of demons. Jesus said in Matthew 7:20, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” By a person’s fruit we know what kind of a person he or she is; likewise, we can tell whether a doctrine is from God or from the devil by its fruit.

It is undeniable that the real consequence of the doctrine of eternal security is that Christians are deceived into thinking

that they can sin and get away with it. Thus the fruit of the doctrine of eternal security is that it gives people an incentive to sin. Many are walking in great delusion, thinking that they are born again and that they can retain their salvation while continuing in sin. The reality of life is that unless people repent after they have backslidden, they will go to hell.

3:16 - *“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.”* The proof of love is that we are willing to sacrifice that which is dearest to us. There is a distinct difference between Christians who are adopted into the family of God, and the Lord Jesus, who was begotten from the very bosom of the Father.

I shared in the previous chapter that one of my teachers in school met Mahatma Gandhi while he was a missionary in India. When asked by my teacher if he believed that Jesus was the Son of God, Mahatma Gandhi replied, “I believe that Jesus is a son of God, just as I am a son of God.”

We have all come from Adam, whereas Jesus came forth from God the Father. We were adopted when we were born again, but He was begotten. Sometimes, people take the doctrine of “the sons of God” to an extreme, stating that we are equal with Christ. That is totally wrong. We must never think that we are on the same level as Christ. However, as we bow before Him in submission and give our lives wholly to Him, He will make us mature sons of God and co-heirs with Him.

There are only two options in this life—*eternal life* or *eternal damnation*! The choice is ours, and whether we realise it or not, we are choosing one or the other. Either we embrace Christ and His ways, or we reject Him, thereby choosing eternal damnation.

As you study the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially His teachings in the Synoptic Gospels, you will find that He spoke far more concerning hell than He did of heaven. It is not God's will that any should perish, as Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 2:4, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." The sad fact is that the vast majority of mankind reject the Lord and His salvation.

3:17 - "*For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.*"

We have to realise that it was God the Father who gave His Son to be our Saviour and the sacrifice on the cross of Golgotha for the remission of our sins. Many people think that Jesus is compassionate and that the Father is an angry God. This is definitely not true.

It was the Father who gave us His greatest treasure, His own Son, to be a ransom for our sins. Remember, as we said before, when He appears on the Mount of Olives to deliver the defenders of Zion at His Second Coming, they will then look at His hands and say, "What are those wounds in your hands?" (Zech. 13:6). You see, Christ will bear those nail scars in His hands forever. The Father has to continually look at Christ and see those wounds. Who crucified Christ? In reality, it

was the Father who gave His Son as a ransom for our sins. The Father has to look on the marred body of His Son, whom He pierced, throughout all eternity.

Therefore, I want to make it very clear that it was God the Father who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for our sins. It was God the Father who so loved us that He gave us that which is the most precious to Him—His Son Jesus. Those of you who have children know that it is far easier to suffer yourself than to see them suffer. Yet the Father permitted His Son to suffer for our salvation.

3:18 - *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* We are all condemned; we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. Our only salvation is to believe that Christ died for us and was raised for our justification, as Paul says in Romans 4:25.

3:19 - *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”* Paul brings out in his epistles that evil works turn our minds against God. They alienate us from God. Paul said in Colossians 1:21, *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.”* People sometimes say, *“Well, it does not matter what I do, everything will be all right.”* No it will not, because what we do has a tremendous effect upon us. When we sin, it affects our mind and turns it

against God. Men reject the light because they love works of darkness. If we sin, there will be an automatic rejection in us of the light of Christ.

3:20-21 - *“For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”* We want to be children of light, and expose our hearts to God so that we may come to the light. Because of their love of sin, men reject salvation and embrace hell. This is a terrible thing to say, but it is true. *“He that doeth truth, cometh to the light.”* It is so important to watch our actions, because what we do will determine if we are drawn to the light or to darkness. It will also have an awesome impact upon us. If we do not do what is right, then we will mock and scorn those who do what is right.

There is a tremendous power in what we do. That is why, by the grace of God, we must always do things that are right, and in so doing, we shall be attracted to the light and desire Christ, and a greater light of glory. Those who are not willing to pay the price of going on to a higher plain of glory will plateau in their Christian experience. There are certain Christian denominations that have plateaued and stopped moving on with God. Those who do not want to go on with God are attracted to these kinds of churches.

By the grace of God, we want to go all out for Him. If people do not give up something that they are told is wrong,

then they plateau spiritually. We want to give up everything that is displeasing to God, and give our “Utmost for His Highest,” as Oswald Chambers’ book is entitled. Only those who do what is right come to Christ and expose themselves to be cleansed from everything that would keep them from hitting the mark of the high calling of God for their lives.

3:22-23 - *“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.”* Jesus and John were baptizing at the same time. However, John 4:2 tells us that it was not Jesus who was baptizing, but it was His disciples who were baptizing the people, albeit Jesus did baptise His own disciples. There were two prophets baptizing people, and in so doing, they were making disciples unto themselves. It was a situation that could not have been permitted to continue, for confusion would have soon ensued.

Incidentally, John 3:23 notes that John was baptizing where there was much water, indicating that this was necessary because he was baptizing by full immersion; otherwise there would be no need for more than a pool to perform this rite.

3:24 *“For John was not yet cast into prison.”* The reason John was cast into prison and executed a while later was because he had to be taken out of the way so that everyone’s attention would be focused on Jesus.

3:25-26 - *“Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying. And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to Him.”* The ascendancy of Jesus over John was evident at this point. John was Christ’s forerunner; therefore, he had soon to make way for the One whom He had come to introduce to the nation of Israel. John’s response was the epitome of humility and one that has strong theological implications.

3:27 - *“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven.”* We need to pause for a moment to consider this beautiful truth. People say, “All men are born equal.” That is not quite true. In one sense, all men are not born equal, for our callings are manifestly different. Moreover, as Paul states in Ephesians 4:7, “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” Some are given abilities that others are not given. We all are equipped for the specific work that God has called us to do. Therefore, John is saying that Jesus could not perform His ministry unless it was given to Him by God.

3:28 - *“Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.”* John made it clear that he had consistently declared that he was not the Christ, but His forerunner.

3:29 - *“He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth*

greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled." Now John the Baptist develops another theological truth that is a great blessing to those who understand the intimate relationship that the Lord desires to have with His people. John the Baptist here reveals Christ as the Bridegroom and himself as the friend of the Bridegroom.

In an Eastern wedding, there are certain formalities and groups of people associated with the ceremony. There is the bridegroom, who is the central figure of the wedding. The father of the bridegroom has an integral part in the choosing of the bride. This will be developed later in the exegesis of the discourses in the Upper Room.

The friend of the bridegroom is the one who is similar in our culture to the best man. He has the same position and duties, making all the arrangements for the bridegroom, handling the dowry and the wedding documents. This is the position that John assumes; and therefore, he speaks of his high and holy calling.

The Bride, of course, is made up of those who constitute the Church, albeit not every believer is automatically in that corporate body known as the Bride. This can be seen in Scripture where it speaks of the marriage supper of the Lamb. There are the groups known as the virgins, from Matthew 25, as well as the invited guests, of whom we read in Revelation 19:9.

3:30 - "*He must increase, but I must decrease.*" It is obvious that John knew that he had reached the zenith of his ministry

at the time he baptized Jesus. His ministry began to diminish from that time, because Jesus had to have the pre-eminence.

Obviously, John had to fade out of the picture because confusion was already rising among the devout and pious Jews. John's ministry lasted only about 18 months. This speaks to us of a very important spiritual truth. There are many races in the Olympic sports. The 100-meter dash takes only about ten seconds, and the 400-meter, under a minute, but the longer races take much more time, especially the marathon which is 26 miles long.

So it is with life in general. Some have a relatively short life span as did John and Jesus, but they hit the mark for their lives and accomplished the work that the Father sent them to earth to fulfil. Let us remember that the key to running a race is first to pace ourselves, for a marathon runner does not exhaust himself on the first 100 yards. Also, a runner must have a strong finish; it is the end of the race that really counts!

We must seek to decrease and have Christ increase in our lives. Christ must be our all in all. By the grace of God, it must be Christ who manifests Himself, speaking through our lives and walking through our beings.

3:31 - *“He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all.”* John is saying, “I am from the earth, but Jesus is from heaven, and He is above all.” Thus, as the heavens are so much higher than the earth, so is He

much higher than we are, to paraphrase Isaiah 55:8-9, which says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

3:32 - *“And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.”* This opening phrase is interesting in that it would lend credence to the belief held by many that some of the parables and stories of heaven and hell, especially that of the rich man and Lazarus, were actual events of which the Lord was cognizant.

Christianity is a religion of experience, and preaching is the outrushing of the soul’s experience, even as the Apostle John said in 1 John 1:1,3: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; ... That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” The revelation of the Lord’s character and His Word, as well as the outflow of these two through our preaching, are based upon our relationship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

3:33 - *“He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.”* This is also borne out in the Gospels. Jesus and the Father are one, and Jesus spoke the words of His Father, but the nation of Israel did not receive His

testimony. On the other hand, those who received His testimony have put their seal to the fact that God is true. In other words, all Scripture is centred upon and fulfilled in Christ. He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

3:34 - *“For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.”* Christ came from God, He spoke the words of God, and He received the Spirit without measure. This is something that we want to ask God to do for us. As Peter says, we are to speak “as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). We must speak the words that God gives us. Many years ago when I was on the faculty of another Bible college, there was a division in that college over millennialism and pre-millennialism doctrines. One day, we were praying and I said to the Lord, “Well, Lord, they believe that, and I feel you showed me this.” Then the Lord spoke to me very clearly and said: “It is not a matter of one having a certain opinion and another having a different opinion; it is *My Word*. You must preach *My Word*, not personal opinions.”

God has anointed us with the seven Spirits of the Lord as He did Christ. However, the difference is that He anointed Christ with the Holy Spirit *without measure*. Our heart condition determines how much of the Spirit we receive. We want to be pure in heart so that we can be clean channels through whom the Lord can speak.

3:35 - *“The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.”* The Father loves the Son and has committed

all things into His hands. To the degree that we love God, to that same degree He will give us all things, even as the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:32, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”

3:36 - *“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”* This is what we must preach—salvation by faith in the name of Jesus Christ. Unless people believe in Jesus Christ and confess Him, the wrath of God will come upon them. God is love, but there is also another characteristic of His nature, which is the hatred of wickedness. In Psalm 45:7 we read, “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness.” If a person loves righteousness, he must also hate wickedness. God’s love is only as perfect as His wrath, because God loves purity and must consequently hate that which is not pure. God loves all those who have received His Son, but His wrath abides on those who reject Him.

It is very important to preach both the reality of heaven, and the reality of hell. There are many Christians who do not believe in hell. Jesus preached on heaven, but He also preached on hell and its everlasting torments. If there is everlasting life, there must also be everlasting punishment; the one cannot exist without the other. There must be a balance. If those who are saved abide in heaven eternally, then it follows that those who are damned will abide in hell for all of eternity. Therefore, by the grace of God, we want to turn people to righteousness (Dan. 12:3).

CHAPTER FOUR

Second Discourse - The Water of Life (4:1-42)

4:1-3 - *“When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, (Though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples,) He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.”*

I want to pause here for a moment to look at 1 Corinthians 1:12-15, where the Apostle Paul finds this same difficulty. Some people were saying that they were of Peter, others that they were of Paul and Apollos, and still others that said they were of Christ.

**God’s love
is only as
perfect as
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Therefore, Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 1:13-15: “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.” In reality, who baptizes you is not the main issue. What matters is that you are baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

In this passage we see that Jesus in actuality only baptized His disciples, and they in turn baptized the multitudes; but when Jesus perceived that this was stirring the Pharisees to envy, He left Judea.

In the time of Christ, the nation of Israel was divided into three major regions: the south (Judea), the middle part (Samaria),

and the north (Galilee). These three geographic regions are confirmed by *1 Maccabees 10:30* and the New Testament. However, the Jewish Rabbis divided the land of Palestine into Judea, Perea, and Galilee, with Samaria being the land of the Cutheans (see page 398 of *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* by Alfred Edersheim). Samaria was the capital city of the old Northern Kingdom of Israel that was overrun by the Assyrians, and where, at the time of the Assyrian kings Esar-haddon and Assur-banipal, there were great deportations. The ten tribes were taken out of their habitations to various countries throughout the Assyrian Empire.

To replace them, Esar-haddon and Assur-banipal brought people from Babylon, Elam, and all over to inhabit Samaria. These foreigners worshipped their pagan gods. As a result, there was great mixture in Samaria. Therefore, the Samaritans were treated by the Jews as heathen. So marked was this hatred that the Jews made it a point never to pass through Samaria.

4:4-5 - *“And he must needs go through Samaria. Then cometh he to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near to the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.”* The Lord, whose life was at all times guided by the Holy Spirit, was directed by His Father to pass through this land that was despised by the orthodox Jews of His day. He came to the city of Samaria, or Sychar, which means “drunken or lying town.”

Originally called Shechem in Old Testament times, Samaria was the place where Joshua led Israel to renew its covenant with God (Josh. 24:1-17). However, in the New Testament

times, it certainly was not known for its godliness. Yet the Father had an inheritance for His beloved Son in this despised and depraved region of Israel.

We should be encouraged by this, for as the Lord said to the religious leaders in Matthew 21:31, "... The publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you." This was indeed the case in the ministry of John, as we continue reading in Matthew 21:32, "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

4:6 - *"Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour."* Jacob's well is about 138 feet deep. There is no record in the Old Testament of this well. Jesus rested upon this well at about the sixth hour, which would be noon our time. My wife and I visited this well when we were in Israel. Amazingly, it is still functioning today, giving fresh, cool water. For a sum of money, a guide is only too willing to draw some water from the well for tourists to taste.

4:7-9 - *"There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."* There is a four-fold, progressive revelation of Jesus given to this

Samaritan woman. Four aspects of the identity of Jesus were revealed to her. First of all, she identified Him quite easily as a Jew. It is quite difficult to discern people's nationality in Israel because of the vast number of ethnic groups, but this woman immediately recognised that Jesus was a Jew.

4:10 - *“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.”* This woman was in consternation as she listened to Jesus because she instinctively thought of the natural water in the well that could only be drawn out with a bucket, which she knew Jesus did not have. However, as He did previously with Nicodemus, the Lord was speaking of spiritual things—of the spiritual water of life.

4:11 - *“The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?”* Here we see that a deeper revelation of Christ has been given to this woman. Now she calls Him, “Sir.” In other words, He is not only a Jew, but He is revealed to her as one who has dignity, authority, and one who deserves respect.

4:12 - *“Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?”* As we have already explained, the inhabitants of Samaria were basically from heathen nations, but apparently this woman had some lineage that took her back to Israel, probably through a mixed marriage. We know this because she calls Jacob, “Our father.”

4:13-14 - *“Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 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.”* When we are born again by the Holy Spirit, the Lord puts a well of living water within our hearts. The children of Israel dug a well, as recorded in Numbers 21:17, and they sang to it, “Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it.” This is a type of the spiritual well that is in the hearts of believers.

The key to having our well bubbling up is to sing songs to the Lord. Paul said in Ephesians 5:19, “Speaking to yourselves in songs, and hymns, and spiritual songs...” We should minister to the well within us by singing to the Lord. As we do, there will be a release of the waters of our well, and they will flow from our hearts to bless others.

4:15 - *“The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.”* This poor woman, who had to seek water in the heat of the midday sun, was worn out by a life of oriental hardship reserved particularly for those of ill reputation. Naturally she was all too ready to have relief from her daily drudgery and chore of drawing and carrying the water from the well to her dwelling place. However, she still did not realise that the Lord was speaking of the water of life within one’s heart.

4:16-18 - *“Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband.”*

Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.” Why did she marry so many times? Basically, she was seeking happiness through human love. The Lord spoke to my wife and me one day: “Everyone is seeking the same thing—*happiness*.” Some people, like this woman, think that happiness is found in human love. Others think it is found in sports. Whether it is he who loves sport or he who loves pleasure, that person shall be a poor man (Prov. 21:17). Others think that happiness is found in money, but Solomon said in Ecclesiastes 5:10, “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.”

Men especially think that they will gain satisfaction in their life through a successful career, position, authority or power. Such was the case of Harold McMillan, a former British Prime Minister. After he had resigned as Prime Minister due to ill health, he said to his wife in Italian, “*La comedia e finita*,” in other words, “the play is over.” He had sought satisfaction in being Prime Minister of England, but he did not find it.

When he became Chancellor of Oxford University, he said, “I find more satisfaction in this than in being Prime Minister.” At the end of his life, he went back to business peddling encyclopaedias. He was still seeking happiness and never found it. True happiness is found on the inside. It is the well of living water that Christ told this woman about. We can be content in whatsoever situation we find ourselves if our spiritual well is bubbling.

4:19 - *“The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.”* The third revelation given to the woman at the well was that Jesus was a prophet. That is an even deeper revelation of Christ than simply a Jew or a Sir (one deserving respect).

4:20 - *“Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”* With this revelation, she takes advantage of the fact that He is a prophet, and asks Him a theological question that had perplexed the people in Samaria, who had come from many nations and had intermarried with the tribes of Israel. There was much confusion among them, particularly concerning religious customs. The mountain which she is referring to is Mount Gerizim, located only a short distance from Jacob’s well. It was upon this mountain that the heathen priests offered up sacrifices, whereas the Jews worshipped in Jerusalem. To this question the following response is given:

4:21 - *“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.”* Jesus was looking forward in time to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. The Roman soldiers burnt the Temple and its stones were cast down to the ground, even as Jesus had prophesied in Matthew 24:1-2: *“See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”*

4:22 - *“Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.”* It is ever the same

throughout all generations of mankind. Those who leave the one and only true God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, fall into great confusion, and their hearts and minds are darkened. But now, reverting to the dispensation of the Spirit, Jesus continues by saying,

4:23 - *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”* Here Jesus was looking forward to the dispensation of the Church when the worship of God would become universal, and saints would worship the Lord in the Spirit (or in other tongues).

4:24 - *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”* We must be filled with the Holy Spirit in order to truly worship God under the control of the third person of the holy Trinity.

4:25 - *“The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things.”* The woman, still bewildered, thought that one had to wait until the Second Coming for all questions to be resolved. However, the Lord then gave this outcast of society a revelation of the true identity of the One unto whom she was speaking.

4:26 - *“Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.”* The Lord’s true mission and purpose, as well as His name, were all veiled from the understanding of others in His day, yet to this woman, He chose to reveal Himself for who He

really was, the Messiah—the Christ of God (Mt. 11:25). This was the fourth revelation this woman received of who Jesus was—the Messiah.

4:27 - *“And upon this came his disciples, and marvelled that he talked with the woman: yet no man said, What seekest thou? or, Why talkest thou with her?”* Then His disciples came to Jesus and were amazed that He was talking with this woman. She was evidently ostracised by everyone in her community. She came out to draw water at midday, around noon, whereas the normal times for drawing water were early morning or late evening.

Jesus’ disciples marvelled that He talked with the woman for a number of reasons. First of all, it was Rabbinical teaching that no Rabbi or teacher should talk to women because they thought that women would not understand. Although the disciples marvelled that He would condescend to talk with her, they did not question His judgment in this matter, for they had great confidence in Him. This should also be our stance when, in perplexing situations, the Lord seems to direct us in ways contrary to human reasoning. Remember, dear ones, He is all wisdom—trust Him implicitly.

4:28-30 - *“The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him.”* The effect of the Lord’s ministry to this woman was that she became a flaming evangelist. We see here an undisputed

witness of the grace of God. Once her life had been changed by the Lord, this woman, who was a social outcast, became an ardent and persuasive witness to her own town people.

4:31-34 - *“In the meanwhile his disciples prayed him, saying, Master, eat. But he said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.”*

The concern of the disciples then turns to the needs of their Master, who as yet has not eaten. His response is that He is sustained by performing the will of God. However, His disciples did not understand what He meant. Sometimes the work of God so sustains us that we can go without eating and even at times without sleeping. The anointing of God is a quickening, life-giving source of strength to our temporal bodies.

4:35 - *“Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.”*

Now Jesus reverts to the thought of evangelising the lost through this woman. Jacob’s well is situated on a hill overlooking the city. As Jesus was speaking, He saw the harvest of men all dressed in white coming up from the city. They were coming to see Him because of the woman’s testimony of Him. Jesus is making reference to the fact that because of this woman’s evangelising of the city, there would be a great harvest of souls there.

4:36 - *“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.”* It is evident that there are rewards in the kingdom of heaven. We are rewarded if we are a good influence on others. Proverbs 11:30 says, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.”

4:37 - *“And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth.”* As in the natural, so it is in the spiritual. There are those who perform different functions in the harvest process. Sowing speaks of preaching the Word, as seen in the Lord’s interpretation of the Parable of the Sower: “The seed is the word of God” (Lk. 8:11).

There are certain people who speak to us about the Lord, but at the time, we might not be ready to accept Him into our hearts. As time goes on, others might speak to us about the Lord and water the seed that was originally sown in our hearts. Then when we are ready for salvation, someone else might be used by God to lead us to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour; this person would be the reaper.

4:38 - *“I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”* Sometimes the Lord will send you to places where other people have preached and sowed the Word of God, and have not seen the fruit of their labour; yet you will reap the harvest that they planted.

Just think for a moment of Adoniram Judson, the famous missionary to Burma (Myanmar). He laboured in that country for nearly six years before he got his first convert to Christianity. Today there is a real move of God in that country. I myself and several other ministers from our fellowship have been privileged to minister there, with several of our books being translated into Burmese. We are reaping the harvest that other missionaries have sown over the years.

4:39 - *“And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did.”* This lady was obviously a well-known woman and the subject of town gossip because of her waywardness and degenerate lifestyle. Therefore, when she spoke of the things of God, it naturally had a profound impact on the people. They came running to meet the Christ.

4:40 - *“So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days.”* Many people turned to the Lord in this place. The key was one woman. She was the most unlikely person to be used by God. But she had a revelation of the Lord, and it changed her life. She became a flaming evangelist for the Lord. There are keys to situations; and some of the keys are the most unlikely ones. When you go to different cities and countries, ask God for the key to release revival in that locality. It could well be a notorious town drunk!

4:41-42 - *“And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of*

thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.” The Lord had an open door to the hearts of the people of this town, which the religious Jews bypassed. It is noteworthy that Jesus’ own nation would not receive Him, but these spiritual outcasts received Him gladly.

Interlude in Galilee (4:43-45)

4:43-44 - *“Now after two days he departed thence, and went into Galilee. For Jesus himself testified, that a prophet hath no honour in his own country.”* While in the country of Samaria, Jesus had been well received and had a remarkable harvest of souls among those pagan people. However, He was opposed by His own countrymen in Judea who had known Him from birth.

It is a spiritual fact that mankind is prone to accept goods, people, and teachings from foreign lands far more readily than from their own. Ezekiel was warned as he began his ministry: “For thou art not sent to a people of a strange speech and of an hard language, but to the house of Israel; Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, whose words thou canst not understand. Surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee” (Ezek. 3:5-6).

4:45 - *“Then when he was come into Galilee, the Galilaeans received him, having seen all the things that he did at Jerusalem at the feast: for they also went unto the feast.”*

One fact that should not be overlooked is that all the disciples, with the distinct exception of Judas Iscariot, were Galileans. Galileans, as we are told by contemporary writers, were very warm blooded, excitable, emotional people. They were ready to show their appreciation for the Lord, having seen the miraculous manifestations of His power during the recent feast days at Jerusalem. They enthusiastically opened their hearts to Him.

Second Sign - Healing of the Nobleman's Son (4:46-54)

4:46 - *“So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum.”* Jesus now returns to Cana of Galilee, which was, as we have already said, a town very close to His hometown of Nazareth. The scene is set for the second miracle after His departure from Judea—the healing of the nobleman's son. Nothing is known about this nobleman except that he was worthy of that rank since he exuded noble feelings toward Jesus by his demeanour.

4:47 - *“When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judaea into Galilee, he went unto him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death.”* This nobleman was a good and loving father, saddened by the plight of his son. However, he had faith in Jesus to believe that He could heal him. He was willing to make a considerable journey, searching Him out in Cana, which was some distance from Capernaum.

4:48 - *“Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.”* It is very true that signs and wonders are given for the sake of the unbelievers. Basically, Christians do not need signs and wonders to convince them that Jesus is Lord, but the unsaved do. Jesus said to Thomas in John 20:29, *“Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*

4:49 - *“The nobleman saith unto him, Sir, come down ere my child die.”* This nobleman treated Jesus with respect and dignified Him by calling Him “Sir,” which was a title for a man of rank in those days.

4:50 - *“Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way.”* This is a very beautiful truth, for it is a fulfilment of Scripture. Psalm 107:20 says, *“He sent his word and he healed them ...”* Jesus sent His word and healed this nobleman’s son. However, there is something more in this than meets the eye. The Word of God must be mixed with faith in those that hear it, in order for it to be creative and effective (Heb. 4:2). This nobleman had that faith and a believing heart. For this reason, the word that Jesus spoke impacted his son.

4:51-52 - *“And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Thy son liveth. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said unto him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.”* Oh the joy there must have been in the heart of this loving

father when his servants told him that his son was alive. To assure himself that the health of his son was indeed the result of the word that Jesus spoke, he inquired what time his son was healed. Amazingly, his son was healed at the very same time that Jesus promised that he would be healed. *The seventh hour* speaks of the end times. I believe that miracles will flow in the last days. When the power of God comes to His Church, we will only have to speak the word and people will be healed.

4:53 - *“So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house.”* The result of this one miracle was the salvation of this nobleman’s whole household. We need to believe for notable miracles that will bring salvation to households such as this one, and indeed to whole cities, as it occurred in the time of Peter in Acts 9:32-35: “And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda. And there he found a certain man named Aeneas, which had kept his bed eight years, and was sick of the palsy. And Peter said unto him, Aeneas, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole: arise, and make thy bed. And he arose immediately. And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord.”

4:54 - *“This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee.”* This second miracle is clearly set apart from the miracles that Jesus did in Jerusalem, which are not mentioned in John’s Gospel. There is a great truth in this miracle for us today, beloved. Those of you who have children with a physical or spiritual

need can believe God for a word of healing. Moreover, if your child is backslidden and spiritually lame, you can touch the Lord by faith and believe that he will be restored. Have faith in God, beloved, for He can do wonderful things in your life and your family!

CHAPTER FIVE

The Third Sign - The Healing of the Lame Man (5:1-9)

Chapter five begins with the third sign (or miracle) of Jesus. It is the healing of the lame or paralytic man. In this miracle, there is also a truth that relates to the nation of Israel. This sign took place at the time of the second Passover, which helps us place this event in correct chronological sequence.

5:1 - *“After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”* This is the second Passover in the Lord’s earthly ministry. Jesus fulfilled the Law as it is written in Deuteronomy 16:16, “Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the Feast of Tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty.” The Lord went to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follows the celebration of the Passover. This, therefore, begins the second full year of His ministry.

5:2 - *“Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches.”* Bethesda means “the house of mercy.” Five aspects of the mercy of God can be seen in these five porches—salvation, healing, provision, peace, and deliverance.

5:3-4 - *“In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.”* The crowd was waiting for an angel to trouble the water. Israel was led by an angel in their wilderness journey, and as a nation they have been dependent upon angels throughout their history (Ex. 23:20).

5:5 - *“And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years.”* This man had been lame for 38 years. Thirty-eight years is the amount of time the children of Israel spent wandering in the wilderness after the Kadesh-Barnea episode (Deut. 2:14). These were the years of Israel’s disobedience. Therefore, in this sign, Christ is seen as coming to heal Israel’s rebellion, for rebellion was the reason that the Israelites wandered in the desert for 38 years.

5:6 - *“When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?”* The Lord was seeking for a certain person. A mass of impotent people was gathered around the pool. He could have spoken a word and they all would have been

healed. However, He chose only to heal one man. On another occasion Jesus said that there were many widows at the time of Elijah, but Elijah was only sent to one (Lk. 4:25-26).

Sometimes it is God's will to heal everyone present, but in this particular instance only one person was healed because his healing was to be a *sign*. It was not only a miracle, but there was a spiritual truth contained in it. That is why Jesus singled out this one lame man. We need to have a listening ear to hear what God's will is in every circumstance, because sometimes God may want us to pray for the healing of only one person.

5:7 - *“The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steppeth down before me.”* This man, unaware of the One who was addressing him, had his thoughts, with respect to his healing, focused upon the pool. There is a lesson for us here as well, because so often we have preconceived thoughts as to how Jesus will do something for us, whereas His ways are not our ways. It is indeed possible to miss our miracle because of preconceived ideas which cause us not to hear what the Lord is saying to us. In this situation, it was the Lord's will to heal by the spoken word.

5:8-9 - *“Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath.”* Jesus performed this miracle on the Sabbath day. To break legalism, Christ intentionally performed miracles and healings on the Sabbath to stir up the legalistic Jews.

The Dispute over the Sabbath (5:10-18)

The sect of the Pharisees possibly originated prior to the time of the Maccabean rebellion, when Antiochus Epiphanes IV desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem. Many of the Jews followed Antiochus and got involved with Greek mythology and philosophy.

The Pharisees, meaning “the separated ones,” were a devout group who adhered to the Law and stood for the purity of the Law. Their origins were good, but in the end they became very legalistic. The jot and tittle of the Law became more important to them than the spirit of the Law. Josephus declares that they numbered approximately 6,000, and yet this small group controlled the centres of worship and synagogues at the time of Christ.

5:10-11 - *“The Jews therefore said unto him that was cured, It is the sabbath day: it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed. He answered them, He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk.”* When he was questioned by the Jews about his healing on the Sabbath, this man, obviously perplexed and not knowing how to answer, simply stated the facts. This was the first occurrence of open hostility toward Jesus.

The Sabbath day was intended by God to be a day of joy, rejoicing, and rest. The Law states in Exodus 20:10, “But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,

thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.” According to Jesus, it was instituted for the benefit of man, as He said in Mark 2:27, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.” However, over the years the Pharisees had added many rules and regulations for the Sabbath that were very burdensome to the people. In so doing they destroyed the spirit of the Law, which was intended for the good of man (who was created for a seven-day-cycle with six days of work and one day of rest).

When the leaders of the atheistic French Revolution changed the seven-day-cycle to a ten-day-cycle, they had to return to the original cycle after a short time period because the populace was unable to function and became very weary. In fact, even the animals became worn out.

5:12-13 - *“Then asked they him, What man is that which said unto thee, Take up thy bed, and walk? And he that was healed wist not who it was: for Jesus had conveyed himself away, a multitude being in that place.”* Jesus healed this man and then slipped away because He did not want a riot to ensue. He did not want everyone to start touching Him, because that would have negated this spiritual sign.

5:14 - *“Afterward Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him, Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”* Christ spoke this to the paralytic man whom He had healed, but He was also speaking to the nation of Israel. He was telling Israel not to sin any more lest

a worse thing come upon them. Yet after this Israel rejected Christ and crucified Him. First, they rejected the words of Moses, and then they rejected the Prophet of whom Moses spoke. Therefore, the holy city and the Temple in which the Lord spoke this word were destroyed by the Romans only a few years later in A.D. 70.

5:15-16 - *“The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole. And therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day.”* Far from rejoicing in this man’s healing, the Jews were upset at the apparent desecration of the Sabbath day. However, the Sabbath day had not been desecrated, for as Jesus reminded them in Matthew 12:11-12, “What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.”

Therefore, in healing this man on the Sabbath, Jesus did what they would have done for an animal, which has far less value than a human being. The Sabbath is a day of rejoicing, and therefore, a day on which we should perform good works.

5:17 - *“But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”* In response, Jesus noted that He was performing these works at the behest of His Father. The Father and Son were working in unison. Jesus said in John 10:30, “I and my Father are one.”

5:18 - *“Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God.”*

The Jews were infuriated by the Lord’s comments. They wanted to kill Him for two reasons: because He asserted that He was the Son of God and because He healed on the Sabbath day, which they felt was disregard for the Sabbath. The Jews’ anger and hatred for Jesus led to His crucifixion. Jesus is the Son of God and the Lord of the Sabbath, and He suffered for the sake of the truth.

Third Discourse - The Divine Son (5:19-47)

5:19 - *“Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”* The Son is showing His eternal dependency upon the Father, and demonstrating the fact that power belongs to God (Ps. 62:11). As we have mentioned before, God is sometimes very selective in whom He chooses to heal. Everything is done according to the wisdom of the Father. We need to develop this holy dependency upon the Father and Son, so that we walk in obedience, thereby fulfilling the work that He has commissioned us to do.

5:20 - *“For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth: and he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.”* Revelation is based on relationship. Who had the greatest revelation among the

disciples? John the Beloved. At the Last Supper when Jesus said, “One of you is going to betray me,” Peter said to John, who was leaning on Jesus’ bosom, “Ask Him who it is.” All the disciples knew that John could ask Jesus who it was and He would reveal it to him.

It was John who received the book of Revelation, which gives a very detailed account of the End Times as well as insight into the era of the New Heavens and New Earth. In his Gospel, John also gives us a glimpse of Christ before the foundation of the world. John received tremendous revelations from the Lord, but he also was called “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” *Revelation*, then, is based on *relationship*.

In this same verse Jesus said of the Father, “*He will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.*” Jesus was saying that He was still going to do greater works than the ones He had already done. After this, He walked upon water and healed the blind, and performed many other miracles, including the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

**Revelation
is based on
relationship.**

5:21 - “*For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.*” Here we have an awesome statement—it is the sole prerogative of the Son to raise the dead. After being born again by His grace, what must we do in order to qualify to have part in the resurrection? We offer two Scriptures for your consideration, dear reader.

Psalm 50:23 says, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.” We have to be careful with our words, for we will either be judged or justified by our words.

The second Scripture I want you to consider is Psalm 34:12-14. In verse 12 we find the question, “What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?” The response, as we can see is to, “Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.” Therefore, one of the qualifications for being raised from the dead is that we must not speak evil. We also have to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

5:22 - *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.”* The Lord Jesus Christ alone was found worthy to be entrusted by the Father with all judgment, since He is both God and man. Therefore, let us walk worthy of our vocation, knowing that one day we will be judged. Second Corinthians 5:10 states, “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

5:23 - *“That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.”* All other religions that do not honour Christ, in actuality, do not honour God. People involved in certain false religions say that they believe in God and that Jesus was a prophet of God, but they do not

believe that Jesus was the Son of God. We should honour Christ even as all the hosts of heaven sing the praises of Him who died for us. Jesus alone is worthy, and He is the only way of salvation.

5:24 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.”* Here is a clear-cut statement by Jesus that we are not saved through works, lest any man should boast. In order to be saved, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God and Saviour of the world, and that the blessed Heavenly Father sent Jesus into the world to be an atonement for our sins through His shed blood.

5:25 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.”* First of all, Christ was speaking of Lazarus, but He was also speaking prophetically of the time when He would be raised up from the dead and many other saints with Him. *“The dead shall hear,”* refers to those who during their lifetime have heard the voice of God. They will be resurrected when He speaks from heaven above on that glorious Resurrection Day (1 Th. 4:13-18).

5:26 - *“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.”* The Father and the Son have life in themselves. Life literally emanates from Christ. *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly,”* said Jesus in John 10:10.

May we, by the faith of the Son of God, be recipients of that abundant life!

5:27 - *“And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”* We can only be judged by our peers, those on our same level. In my native country of England, if a lord has committed a trespass, he is tried by the House of Lords. He cannot be tried by commoners, and vice versa. Peer judgment was instituted in England to prevent the lords from judging the commoners.

We are not going to be judged by God the Father, but by a Man—Jesus Christ. The power of Christ lies not only in the fact that He is the Son of God, but also that as the Son of Man, He triumphed over the world, sin, and the struggles of the flesh. Therefore, He has been given by the Father the right to judge mankind.

5:28 - *“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.”* When the voice of Christ sounds forth, all the dead shall be raised to appear before Him. The books will be opened and the dead will be judged out of them. Revelation 20:12 says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

In heaven there is a book in which every person’s deeds here upon earth are recorded. It is this book that will be opened on

Resurrection Day. Let it be so recorded of us as it was of this godly king in 2 Chronicles 32:32: “Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.” May our lives be filled with the goodness of God, and may it flow through us to others.

5:29 - *“And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”* We have to live the life. I do not want anyone to be deluded. We are born again by the Spirit of God so that we might walk in the Spirit. Philippians 2:13 tells us, “It is God which worketh in you both to will and do of His good pleasure.”

God wants to work in us so that we become like Him. Ephesians 2:10 says, “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” We want to ask, “Lord, what good works have you ordained for me to do today?” Paul says in Hebrews that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). Therefore, we must live a holy life in order to be accepted by God.

5:30 - *“I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”* Christ flows so beautifully with His Father that at all times He expresses His Father’s will. So let it be with us. King David, who had to rule a nation, always wanted to be upright in judgment;

therefore, he prayed, “Let my sentence come from thy presence” (Ps. 17:2). When we are in situations where we have to pass judgment, we must ask God to show us His viewpoint and His judgment.

5:31 - *“If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.”* Deuteronomy 19:15 states, “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” Bearing witness of one’s self is not acceptable. Ministers should remember this when they have to pass judgment on a certain situation. They must be sure that there are sufficient witnesses to determine right or wrong in the matter under examination. Humans are very quick to believe evil of others. To ensure that true justice is executed, God said that a person could not be tried without two or three witnesses.

5:32-33 - *“There is another that beareth witness of me; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true. Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth.”* Here Jesus is clearly speaking of the Heavenly Father, who bears witness of the Son. Jesus also refers to the fact that when the religious leaders asked John who he was, he explained his calling and then spoke of Jesus, referring to Him as the Son of God.

5:34 - *“But I receive not testimony from man: but these things I say, that ye might be saved.”* It would, after all, be demeaning for Jesus, being the Son of the Most High, to seek or accept

testimonies from His own creatures to authenticate who He is. However, He mentions this with the hope that the Jews would believe and be saved.

5:35 - *“He was a burning and a shining light: and ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light.”* This is a beautiful description of John. He was a burning and shining light. This is what we want to be—lights that shine for the Lord in the world (Dan. 12:3). The fire of God should permanently burn within us and the light of the truth of His Word should continually shine forth from us.

5:36 - *“But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.”* Christ did not bear witness of Himself. John and also the works that He performed bore witness of Him.

5:37 - *“And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape.”* Now Jesus returns to the theme of His Father, of whom the Jews had no knowledge. They had neither seen Him nor heard His voice as did their forefathers at Mount Sinai.

5:38 - *“And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.”* In other words, Jesus was saying to the Pharisees: “You do not have the living Word abiding in your hearts. You do not know the Father; and the One whom the Father has sent (Christ), you do not receive.”

5:39 - *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”* The scribes and the Pharisees strongly emphasised the importance of the Word, but they missed its spiritual significance. I have seen groups of churches that have strongly emphasised the importance of the Scriptures, and yet they do not have a living relationship with the Lord. There are many people today, like the Pharisees of old, who know the Bible by memory from cover to cover, but they are not walking in the light of God’s Word. The knowledge of God’s Word is dead and unprofitable unless we walk in obedience to the Word (Mt. 7:24-27).

I knew of a certain man who was reading his Bible on his deathbed, yet he was crying out, “It is getting very hot; please give me some water.” He could feel the flames of hell starting to engulf him as he was dying. This is not an uncommon experience. He knew God’s Word and was even reading his Bible at that time, but because he had not walked in God’s ways, it did not profit him. Beloved, we must have a living relationship with Christ—that is the only thing that counts in eternity!

5:40-41 - *“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life. I receive not honour from men.”* The Jews did not come to Jesus, the Giver of life; therefore, they did not have the life of God abiding in them. As we have already said, it would have been demeaning for the Son of God to seek the accolades of man, whom He had made a little lower than the angels. However, there is a deeper truth here that we need to consider. If we seek the honour that comes from man and not from

God, it will seriously damage our own testimony, and we will be in danger of losing our faith. Why? Because we would be conforming our lives to the standards of the world in order to receive the world's approbation. We must be Christ-centred and not people-centred, seeking only to please the Lord and not people.

5:42 - *“But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.”* Here again the Lord touches on the fundamentals of life. God is love. Thus it follows that those who are His children should be likewise filled with His love. The Pharisees did not have love, for they did not know the One who is love.

5:43 - *“I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.”* This is a very chilling statement. Christ came at the behest of His Father, and they refused to embrace Him. However, He adds that they would receive the one who comes in his own name—the Antichrist. Thus we may say that many Jews will be won over by the flatteries of the Antichrist when he comes up from the pit (cf. Rev. 17:8, Dan. 11:21).

5:44 - *“How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”* Many ministers want to be honoured by their fellow ministers. They want pre-eminence and to have people speak well of them. If you fall into this syndrome, you will also fall into deceit and error. We should only seek the honour that comes from God. His commendation and approval is what we should seek.

5:45 - *“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.”* The confidence of the Pharisees was in their knowledge of the Law as given by Moses. However, Moses will be their accuser, as Jesus now declares.

5:46 - *“For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.”* God the Father said of Christ in Deuteronomy 18:18, *“I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.”* This verse was well-known even among the common people, as seen in John 7:40, *“Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying [of Christ], said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.”*

5:47 - *“But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”* True belief is manifested by obedience. The Jews read the writings of Moses and put all their confidence in the Law and the prophets, but they did not obey the commandments that Moses gave them. Moses will come back in the last days together with Elijah to witness to Israel, as stated in Revelation 11:3-6: *“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. . . . These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.”* In the last days, God will give Israel every opportunity to repent and turn to Him.

CHAPTER SIX

The Fourth Sign - Feeding the Multitudes (6:1-14)

There is a large time gap between chapters 5 and 6. Nearly a year has passed between the events of chapter 5 and the beginning of chapter 6. Some of the events in this year of Christ's ministry are recorded in Mark 2-6, Matthew 5-14, and Luke 6-9. The ministry of Jesus in John chapter 6 took place immediately after John the Baptist's martyrdom. According to Mark 6:31, the crowds that followed Jesus were so great that He went by boat to a desert place to rest, for He had no leisure even to eat. The 12 disciples had themselves just returned from their tour through Galilee in groups of two. We now take up our narrative from John's Gospel.

6:1 - *“After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias”* (cf. Mt. 14:13-21, Mk. 6:30-44, Lk. 9:10-17). Taking a boat, they crossed the sea from the town of Tiberias, an assumption fully justified by verse 23, which speaks of other boats coming over from there. Josephus tells us that the town of Tiberias was built and named by Herod Antipas in honour of the Roman Emperor Tiberias (A.D. 14-37), who had succeeded Caesar Augustus, the reigning emperor at the time of the birth of Christ. It was one of the nine towns around the Sea of Galilee: Tiberias, Magdala, Gennesaret, Capernaum, Bethsaida, Gergesa, Hippus, Philotera, and Ammathus. From Tiberias, Jesus sailed on to Bethsaida, according to Luke 9:10.

The Sea of Galilee had four names, the other three being: the Sea of Tiberias, which was its common name at the time of Jesus; the Sea of Chinnereth, meaning “harp shaped,” for the lake was indeed shaped like a harp (Num. 34:11, Josh. 12:3; 13:27); and the Lake of Gennesareth (Lk. 5:1). Gennesareth was the name of the extended plain that adjoined the lake. Eighteen of the 33 recorded miracles of Jesus were performed in the vicinity of the Sea of Galilee, and ten of these were performed in the city of Capernaum. Thus we can see that the people in this area were open to miracles.

6:2-3 - *“And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples.”* Wherever Jesus went from this point on, the multitudes followed Him. Thus, He sought to escape them in order to get some rest, going up onto a mountain near Bethsaida in the northeastern shores of Galilee.

6:4 - *“And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh.”* It was the time just prior to the third feast of Passover in the ministry of Christ, around March/April of A.D. 29. This took place a little more than 12 months before His crucifixion at the time of the fourth Passover. Thus this is the commencement of the last year of Jesus’ ministry.

6:5-6 - *“When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.”* Obviously,

this was a rhetorical question, because Jesus knew the answer, but He was testing Philip. Sometimes God proves us by asking us questions to which He already knows the answers. He wants to see our response, and also show us our response and heart condition.

6:7 - *“Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.”* A penny was the average day’s wages in the time of Jesus. Thus Philip was saying that 200 days’ worth of wages would not be enough to feed this great multitude.

6:8-9 - *“One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?”* There was a lad there who had five barley loaves (five speaking of grace) and two small fishes (two speaking of witness). We are, therefore, now going to witness the grace of God in His provision for His people.

A beautiful truth that flows throughout the Bible is that the Lord lovingly cares for the physical needs of His creation. In the past year of His ministry that is not covered in John’s Gospel, the Lord spoke upon the Mount of Beatitudes about not being overly concerned with our daily needs, saying, “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Mt. 6:31-32).

As we have previously read in verse six, the Lord (being Jehovah-Jireh, “the Lord our Provider”) knew what He was going to do, but He was proving Philip. Sometimes before a miracle of provision in our own lives, the Lord waits to see what we will do or how we will pray in order to test our faith. The Lord tries us to see what is really in our hearts; if we pass our tests, we will be recipients of His blessing and provision.

6:10 - *“And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.”* This same account is found in Luke 9:14, and there we see that they sat down in groups of 50. There were 5,000 men. Therefore, there would have been about 100 groups of 50. This is the measurement of the Outer Court of the Tabernacle of Moses—100 x 50 cubits.

Apart from the signs and the discourses in the book of John, there is another hidden truth that flows through this precious Gospel—namely, that Christ fulfilled the types contained in the Tabernacle of Moses. In this miracle of feeding the multitude, the Lord Jesus fulfilled the Table of Shewbread in the Holy Place. Christ is the Bread of Life (the Shewbread) who feeds His people (Jn. 6:48).

6:11 - *“And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would.”* After giving thanks to the Father for His provision, Jesus gave the loaves and fishes to His disciples,

who in turn distributed them to the multitude. There are two very interesting truths that we can glean from this passage.

When we give thanks to God for His provision, He multiplies it. However, if we complain, we will not have enough. Also, the people could eat as much as they wanted (cf. Esth. 1:8). The truth here is that God fills us according to our hunger and thirst for Him. We can have as much of the Lord as we want. Dear reader, are you hungry for the Lord? Do you want more of Him, or have the things of this world spoiled your appetite for God? The Lord will fill us according to our desire.

6:12 - *“When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost.”* Christ was very concerned with little details, telling His disciples to gather up everything that was left over. We see, therefore, that there is an abundance of provision in the kingdom of God, but with it also comes accountability—we must not waste anything!

6:13 - *“Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten.”* There were 12 baskets of bread left over. Twelve speaks of government. Thus we see here that Christ has the government of the universe upon His shoulders (Isa. 9:6). As Jehovah-Jireh, He is responsible for feeding everyone. In 2 Kings 4:32-44, Elisha fed 100 men with 20 loaves of bread, giving an Old Testament type of Jesus’ miracle.

6:14 - *“Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world.”* Twice it is recorded in this Gospel that the common people recognised Jesus as the fulfilment of Deuteronomy 18:18, which says, “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” The other reference is found in John 7:40, some six months later at the Feast of Tabernacles.

Fifth Sign - Walking on the Water (6:15-21)

6:15 - *“When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone.”* Jesus refused to be made King on the wrong premises and grounds. The multitude wanted to make Him King because He had fed them. To escape from being made king before the time, Jesus went to a secluded place in the mountains to pray (Mt. 14:23). Perhaps it would be good at this juncture in our study of the Gospel of John to consider the Jews’ concept of the Messiah.

It was certainly not the idea of a suffering Saviour, but a King who was coming to restore the kingdom to Israel. This will be fulfilled, but at the Lord’s Second Coming. Therefore, the scribes and Pharisees completely misunderstood Christ’s first appearance as the Lamb of God. Having seen this miracle, it was quite natural for the multitude to say, “He is our King. Let us crown Him, and overrun the Romans.” It was a

profound disappointment to them to see their Messiah crucified. This sorrow was expressed by the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, who said, “But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel” (Lk. 24:21).

6:16-17 - *“And when even was now come, his disciples went down unto the sea, And entered into a ship, and went over the sea toward Capernaum. And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.”* Jesus constrained His disciples to depart from Him and go to the other side of the lake so that He could manifest this miracle of walking on the water (Mt. 14:22).

6:18-19 - *“And the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew. So when they had rowed about five and twenty or thirty furlongs, they see Jesus walking on the sea, and drawing nigh unto the ship: and they were afraid.”* The Sea of Galilee is approximately six miles wide. Twenty-five to thirty furlongs is about three miles, so they were in the midst of the sea where a strong wind was blowing (Mt. 14:24). The wind here can become violent very quickly, and they were rowing against it. This sudden strong wind is caused by temperature changes, which occur due to the height of the mountains that surround the Sea of Galilee. Jesus saw them toiling as they rowed. He came to them walking on the water, and acted as if He were going to walk right by them (Mk. 6:48).

It is interesting that Scripture records that they had rowed about 25 or 30 furlongs. In God’s Word, 25 and 30 are very significant numbers. The Levites were permitted to assume

their ministry when they turned 25; and when the priests turned 30 they assumed their full duties in the service of the Tabernacle and also the Temple in later times.

6:20-21 - *“But he saith unto them, It is I; be not afraid. Then they willingly received him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went.”* They were afraid of Jesus, thinking He was a spirit. But He said to them, “It is I; be not afraid.” Then they willingly received Him into the ship. The wind ceased and *immediately* the ship was at the shore.

This is similar to the experience of Philip, found in Acts 8:39-40, when he was transported by the Spirit from Gaza to Azotus. I believe that in the last days God is going to transport His people in the Spirit from country to country. Some people have even had visions of this taking place in the last days. It is interesting that once Jesus stepped into the ship, it arrived immediately at land. This was a miracle in itself. I have heard of testimonies of people who were driving their cars and then they would suddenly arrive at their destination.

Fourth Discourse - The Bread of Life (6:22-66)

6:22-26 - *“The day following, when the people which stood on the other side of the sea saw that there was none other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered, and that Jesus went not with his disciples into the boat, but that his disciples were gone away alone; (Howbeit there came other*

boats from Tiberias nigh unto the place where they did eat bread, after that the Lord had given thanks:) When the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, neither his disciples, they also took shipping, and came to Capernaum, seeking for Jesus. And when they had found him on the other side of the sea, they said unto him, Rabbi, when camest thou hither?"

The crowd was puzzled because they knew that only the disciples had entered into the boat, and since there was no other boat available, they naturally asked the Lord Jesus how He got to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus refused to satisfy their curiosity for two possible reasons.

First of all, this was to be a private miracle for the benefit of His disciples. Secondly, it is highly unlikely that the multitude, even after witnessing the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, would have accepted this explanation. He would have been ridiculed or challenged to demonstrate this wonder again. Incidentally, Jesus always refused to perform miracles to satisfy the curiosity of others.

Therefore, as when speaking with Nicodemus, Jesus ignored their questions and came to the subject He wished to discuss. This is a lesson for us. We should not permit the ungodly to dominate or control the conversation; we should dictate the matters for discussion, as did Jesus.

Jesus now addresses the real problem in their hearts. They saw these miracles as a means to meet their economic deprivation. Therefore, they were looking upon Jesus to supply

all their needs. He frankly told them, “That is the reason you follow Me.”

6:27 - *“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed.”* The Gospels are filled with Jesus’ repeated warnings concerning the danger of attachment to this world’s possessions. One of the most well-known warnings is found in Matthew 6:33, where Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” By saying that His Father had sealed Him, Jesus meant that the Father had anointed Him and set Him apart for the ministry.

6:28 - *“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”* This is a very important question, because we need to know how to please God. What can we do to please God? What works must we perform to please God?

6:29 - *“Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”* Jesus said, “What God is looking for is those who will believe on Jesus Christ as the Son of God.” The Father wants us to have faith in His Son and a believing heart.

6:30 - *“They said therefore unto him, What sign showest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?”* The multitude had already seen the mighty

miracle of the feeding of the 5,000, but still they wanted to see another sign.

6:31 - *“Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat.”* Again their thoughts were centred on the satisfaction of their appetites through miracles. They cited the miraculous morning-by-morning appearance of manna upon the ground that sustained the children of Israel during their wilderness journey. It is important that we try to visualise what is happening here. The multitude saw Jesus’ miracles as the source that would meet all their needs. The Jews wanted a king who would liberate them, overthrow the Roman Empire, and bring prosperity to the nation of Israel. Remember, all this was promised by the prophets, but as we said before, it applies to His Second Coming and His millennial reign upon earth.

6:32-33 - *“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world.”* Jesus was seeking to point out the difference between manna, which was the natural food that they received under Moses, and the true Bread of Life which comes through Him. He was trying to turn their attention to the spiritual bread from heaven—Himself. Jesus is the Bread of Life. He was saying, “This bread from heaven is what you need to feed upon; it will make you strong.”

6:34 - *“Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread.”* As with the woman at the well, who failed to see the difference between the natural water and the spiritual water, the multitude misunderstood what Jesus meant by the Bread of Life. They thought He was speaking of the perpetual supply of bread their forefathers received in the wilderness. The people were governed by their carnal appetites. They totally missed what Jesus was trying to say to them. Jesus wanted to nourish their spirits, whereas they were only thinking of their physical needs.

6:35 - *“And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”* Here the Lord declares Himself to be the Bread of Life. In John’s Gospel, there are seven I Am’s that relate to certain aspects of the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus. This is the first “I Am,” and it is repeated in verse 48. The meaning of “I Am” is understood from the first mention of this particular name of God. When the Lord said to Moses in the burning bush, “I AM THAT I AM,” He was in fact declaring that there was no other god besides Himself and that He is the Eternal One (Ex. 3:14).

As we have previously mentioned, a truth that pervades this beautiful Gospel is that Jesus fulfilled the types and truths portrayed in the Tabernacle of Moses. When Jesus says He is the Bread of Life, He is spiritually fulfilling the ministry of the Table of Shewbread. We read in Leviticus 24:5-7, “And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt

set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD.”

Bread represents the Word of God. Wheat must go through a process to become bread. This process represents the spiritual work that God must do in our lives in order to make us broken bread that can feed the nations. First of all, a seed must be planted, and then it must be watered for it to become full-grown wheat. This speaks of the fact that the seed of God’s Word must be planted within our hearts, and take root so that it transforms us. As the Word of God begins to grow in our hearts, it brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Wheat, even when it is full grown, cannot be fed to people; it must go through the next process to become bread. We read in Isaiah 28:28, “Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen.” The wheat has to be cut down and crushed. In olden times, the wheat was crushed by horsemen who would ride over it. Spiritually, this period is often one of great perplexity for the Christian, for he does not understand what is happening. Psalm 66:12 says, “Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place.”

The wheat then must be threshed to separate the wheat and the chaff. In much the same way, the Lord causes us to pass

through difficult experiences to separate that which is spiritual from that which is natural or sinful in our lives. The wheat is then ground into flour and mixed with water to make dough. In order to become the bread of life that feeds the hungry, we must go through this same process.

Next, the dough is placed in the fire to be baked. It is during this process of going through fiery trials that we are chosen by the Lord. Isaiah 48:10 says, "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." We must glorify the Lord in the fires (Isa. 24:15), and ensure that every part of our lives is submitted to the fires of purification. Otherwise, we will be like Ephraim, who was likened to a half-baked cake in Hosea 7:8: "Ephraim, he hath mixed himself among the people; Ephraim is a cake not turned."

6:36 - *"But I said unto you, That ye also have seen me, and believe not."* Jesus is saying, "You have seen everything that I have done, but you still do not believe." This generation was privileged to look upon God in the flesh and to behold the beauty of the Lord, but they did not believe that He was the Son of God.

6:37 - *"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."* In Middle Eastern cultures, it is the father who chooses the bride for his son. Abraham sent his servant to choose a bride for his son Isaac. This custom illustrates a very important spiritual truth, for it is God the Father who chooses the Bride for His Son Jesus. In this we see the sovereignty of God (Eph. 1:4).

God draws us, but we have our own free will; we have to respond. We have the choice either to respond to His drawing and follow the Lamb or harden our hearts and reject Him.

6:38 - *“For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”* Christ came to do the will of His Father, not His own will. On earth, Christ continually said “no” to His own will. He laid down His will upon the altar. Hebrews 10:7 says, “Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.”

6:39 - *“And this is the Father’s will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.”* Christ repeats this in John 17:12, “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.” In a sense it is true that we accept Christ; in actuality, it is the Father who reveals Christ to us. It is tremendously humbling that the Father would choose us and that Christ would accept us.

6:40 - *“And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.”* All those who saw Jesus with their natural eyes and those who see Him with their spiritual eyes must believe on Him for their salvation. If we do, we will receive the precious gift of eternal life, and we will be raised by Jesus from the dead at the resurrection of the just.

6:41 - *“The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.”* This teaching of Jesus was undoubtedly a major stumblingblock for those who had seen the miracles. They obviously were not disposed to consider the deeper spiritual truth that went beyond supplying their natural needs. This is true of mankind in general. At this point they began to reflect upon Jesus’ words.

6:42 - *“And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?”* Everyone knew Jesus and His parents, Joseph and Mary. Many of them had known Jesus from His childhood. Therefore, when He claimed to be divine and to have come down from heaven, it was hard for them to believe.

6:43 - *“Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves.”* Jesus does not offer an explanation of His divinity, but instead rebukes them for their unbelief. Consider how Jesus handles this situation. Jesus did not spend time arguing about who He was; He just stated the facts and then moved on to something else. Jesus did not try to convince the multitude that He really was the Son of God, because He knew that those whose hearts were right before God would believe in Him and those whose were impure would reject Him.

The way Jesus handled this situation gives us great insight for the solution of similar problems that we as Christians and ministers encounter daily with those around us. We would do

well to ask the Lord to show us the eternal destiny and end of a person. This will save us from the continual emotional drain upon our spirits, souls, and even our physical strength, which these confrontations often produce.

We often think that certain people will accept our guidance and teachings, but then they reject it. This indeed causes us much anxiety and many sleepless nights, all for no lasting benefit. We must seek the Lord to find out who are the ones in whom we should invest our strength and efforts. We want to invest in those who will produce abiding and lasting fruit.

6:44 - *“No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”* No one can come to Jesus unless the Father draws him. In this we can see the sovereignty of God the Father.

We are elected by the good pleasure of God into eternal life. Realising this, we who are privileged to know Him should be in a continual state of thankfulness—praising and worshipping Him for His graciousness toward us. The Father has drawn us to His beloved Son that we might have the gift of eternal life. Those who know Him will be resurrected on that wonderful Resurrection Day. Praise the Lord!

6:45 - *“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”* This is almost a direct quotation from Jeremiah 31:34, “And they shall teach

no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

This passage will be fulfilled in the millennial reign of Christ upon earth, although during the Church Age His people will also be taught of God, as it is written in 1 John 2:27: “But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.”

6:46 - “*Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father.*” The only ones who have seen the Father in a vision are those who are born of God. Obviously, the ungodly or those who are not walking in God’s ways are not privileged to see the Father.

6:47 - “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.*” John’s Gospel constantly repeats this theme—“Believe on Christ and you shall be saved and receive everlasting life.”

6:48 - “*I am that bread of life.*” Now the Lord returns to the theme of His fourth public discourse—He is the Bread of Life who alone can give eternal life. He then goes on to contrast Himself with the natural food that sustained the children of Israel in the wilderness.

6:49-50 - *“Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.”* Natural food, even when supplied miraculously by God, does not have the power to keep us alive beyond our predetermined life span. Jesus made it very clear to those listening to Him and all those in succeeding generations who would read His words, recorded by John, that eternal life is offered only through Him—there is no other way to eternal life except through Jesus Christ!

6:51 - *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”* Christ said in Matthew 4:4, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” We have a far greater understanding of Jesus’ words than those in His day. We can read the Scriptures any time we want to. The vast majority of Jews in Jesus’ time only heard the Scriptures when they were read on the Sabbath days in the synagogues.

6:52 - *“The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”* The Jews did not have the faith of God to understand what Jesus was saying; they tried to interpret His words with their human reasoning. When men reason with their natural mind, they are never able to grasp the truth of Scripture.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:14, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are

foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

6:53 - *“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.”* Jesus’ flesh represents the Bread of Life, for He is the Incarnate Word. Therefore, eating His flesh speaks of feeding on the Word of God.

The prophet Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart...” (Jer. 15:16). Also, we must drink His blood. The life of a person or animal is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). Thus spiritually we must partake of the life of Christ. Eating His flesh (the Word) and drinking His blood (His life) gives us eternal life, for His words are Spirit and life (Jn. 6:63).

In a certain sense, this is fulfilled in the communion service. The communion bread represents the Lord’s body, which was broken for us, and the wine (or cup) speaks of His blood, which was shed for us. In Genesis 14, the first communion service recorded in Scripture took place when Melchizedek met Abraham with bread and wine. Communion is a sacrament for believers to remember Christ’s death and imminent return (1 Cor. 11:24-26). However, in John 6, Christ was speaking to unbelievers.

6:54 - *“Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”* If we feed upon His Word and we receive His Spirit, which

is that spiritual well that He has placed within our hearts, we will receive eternal life and have part in the resurrection of the just.

6:55 - *“For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”* This truth is illustrated also in Ezekiel 3:1-2, where God told the prophet, “Son of man, eat that thou findest, eat this roll and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth and he caused me to eat that roll.” Incidentally, that roll was the message that God had for the children of Israel. Thus, in reality, the prophet Ezekiel was told to eat the Word so that the message would become a part of him. Even so, the Lord desires that the message He gives us to preach first become a part of us.

6:56 - *“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”* We must eat Christ’s flesh, spiritually. He is the Lamb of God, and we must partake of Him. It is so important that we as Christians eat the Word of God, so that the message God gives us becomes a part of us. Obviously, if you eat a piece of bread, that bread becomes a part of you. As we feed upon the Bread of Life, the Word of God, it becomes part of us. That is how we dwell in Christ and He dwells in us.

6:57 - *“As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.”* Our spiritual life comes from reading,

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meditating upon, and obeying the Word of God, and most importantly, from being constantly filled with the Spirit of God.

6:58 - *“This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”* Jesus again contrasts those who ate manna in the wilderness with those who eat His bread. Jesus asks, “Where is that generation upon which God rained down manna from heaven?” They are dead! Jesus was emphasising that those who feed on the living Word and the Spirit will receive eternal life. That is the difference between manna and the Bread of Life—manna was temporary, but the Bread of Life is eternal and gives us eternal life.

6:59 - *“These things said he in the synagogue, as he taught in Capernaum.”* These teachings took place in a Capernaum synagogue. In fact, Capernaum, one of the nine towns by the lakeshore, was the town where Jesus performed most of His miracles and did much of His teaching.

6:60 - *“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?”* The demands of the Christian life are very high. Jesus set before us the ultimate standard of dedication, righteousness, holiness, truth, and faithfulness. Many, like these hearers in the synagogue and the rich young ruler, find the cost of following Christ too high.

Faced with the revelation of a higher ground in their walk with the Lord and with greater demands, many Christians

are prone to hesitate and say, “Am I ready and willing to pay the price?” However, there is an abundance of God’s grace to meet our needs. These Jews were not willing to turn to the All-sufficient One who can enable us to meet His standards.

6:61 - *“When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?”* The attitude of Jesus is noteworthy—He did not seek to lower the standards that He had already established. Instead, He added a further truth that reinforces what He has said by posing this question:

6:62 - *“What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?”* To those who saw Him only as the son of Joseph, the carpenter, it was too much to accept Him as the Son of God. Here, He was making allusion to His post-resurrection ascension from the Mount of Olives. He was going to return to the place where He had come from—heaven.

6:63 - *“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”* Reverting to His previous theme, Christ emphasises the difference between manna and the Word of God—His Word quickens those who receive it and imparts life to them.

6:64 - *“But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.”* We should ask the Lord to reveal to us who people really are. It is vital for pastors to know who

will be loyal to them and who will betray them. Jesus knew all along that Judas would betray Him. God can reveal to us people's spiritual names, which reveal their character and destiny. For example, if the Lord reveals to you that someone is an *Absalom*, then you know you cannot trust him because he is going to betray you eventually.

6:65 - *“And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”* With each increasing revelation from the Lord, we need to receive an increasing measure of grace. Some Christians experience salvation and do not progress any further in their Christian walk. The reason is that they have only received grace for salvation.

To others, God gives grace to be water baptised. Some are privileged to be baptised in the Holy Spirit. It is also grace that will enable us to go on to holiness and into the fullness of that which the Lord has for His people in our generation.

6:66 - *“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.”* Many of Jesus' followers became offended and turned away from following Jesus. The number of this verse—666—is very interesting.

Although there were no chapter and verse divisions in the original Scriptures (they were added years later), we believe that the divisions were divinely inspired, especially in this case. The number of the Antichrist is 666 (see Rev. 13:18), and it portrays what will happen in the last days when the

Antichrist appears. Because iniquity will abound, the love of many will wax cold (Mt. 24:12). Many will forsake the Lord in the last days even as in the time of Christ, recorded in John 6:66.

Peter's Confession (6:67-71)

6:67 - *“Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?”* Christ tested the 12 apostles to see if they would turn away from Him, too. Jesus' attitude was very different than that of many pastors and leaders today.

I am currently pastoring a church in Waverly, New York; having pastored several times over the last 45 years, I have seen many people leave the church. Quite often it is the biggest financial supporters who leave. Many pastors are tempted to beg people to stay, because they do not want to lose their financial backing, among other reasons. This was not the case with Jesus. The Lord spoke the truth without compromising it. Jesus did not try to make the truth appealing—He told people what they needed to hear. After many people forsook Him, the Lord Jesus said to His 12 disciples, “Are you going to leave me too?”

It did not affect Jesus at all that many people forsook Him because of His message. This is the position ministers must take. We must be Christ-centred and not people-centred. One of the biggest traps of the ministry is to become people-pleasers and preach for the people. We must declare what God gives us to speak. Some ministers have even told me that they are afraid to preach the truth and declare God's holy

standards because they fear that people will leave their church. We must not be like this, but rather like Christ, who sought only to do the will of His Father.

6:68-69 - *“Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.”* Peter’s response to the Lord’s question was amazing. Speaking for the other disciples as well, Peter declared: “Lord, we have no other option but You. There is no one else we can go to, for You have the words of eternal life. And we know that You are Christ, the Son of God.” In a time of pruning in a church or fellowship, the faithful rise to the top. They make their undying loyalty known.

6:70 - *“Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* Christ knew who Judas was, and what he would do before He chose him to be one of His 12 apostles. Christ was not swayed by opposition or compliments. John 2:24-25 says, “But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.” We must know who we are in God’s eyes. It will help us to understand why we go through certain trials. Also, we must know who other people are in God’s eyes. Be careful whom you follow and allow to influence your life through counselling and teaching; you must know who they are.

Before a leader appoints someone to a position, he must know that it is God’s will. However, just because someone is chosen

by God and appointed to a certain position does not guarantee that he will succeed and remain faithful. Jesus knew that Judas was going to betray Him before He ever chose him to be one of His 12 disciples.

“Why then,” you might ask, “did He choose him to be one of His disciples?” The reason is that it was the Father’s will, because Judas had to fulfil the Scriptures and betray Jesus. There was a purpose behind all of this. Judas was given an opportunity, but he chose to be a traitor.

As the president of our fellowship, I have appointed many people to positions after much prayer and consultation with other pastors in the fellowship. We have warned many people that although we were placing them into their calling and ministry, they would fail unless they walked in God’s ways. Regretfully, several have failed over the years.

When ministers fail, people often criticise those who placed them in the ministry in the first place. What is the real problem? A lack of discernment on the part of those who put them in the ministry? That could be the case sometimes, but usually the problem lies with the people themselves. God called them to the ministry, and the senior ministers felt the witness of the Holy Spirit to install them into the ministry. However, people fail because they do not hearken to the admonition to walk in God’s ways. People are given opportunities by God; what they do with those God-given opportunities is up to them. Some make good use of their opportunities and become very fruitful for the kingdom of God, but others waste their opportunities.

Consider Demas for a moment. Demas had the privilege of travelling with the Apostle Paul and ministering with him, yet Demas later forsook Paul and returned to the world (2 Tim. 4:10). Some might say that Paul displayed a lack of discernment, but this is not the real issue at all. Demas was given an opportunity by God, as King Saul was, but he chose not to take advantage of it. Therefore, we must bathe all our decisions in prayer, and find out what God's will is. We also must know from the Lord who will remain faithful and who will not.

6:71 - "*He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.*" Christ chose Judas to be one of His 12 apostles to fulfil Scripture. Christ had tremendous self-control. He did not tell anyone who Judas was. Christ let everything run its God-ordained course.

If you are a pastor and the Lord reveals to you that someone in your church is a *Judas* or an *Absalom*, you have to keep that knowledge to yourself until God permits you to share it with others whom you trust. Sometimes, God does not reveal to us who people are because we would not be able to handle it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Fifth Discourse - The Life-Giving Spirit (7:1-52)

This is the fifth of the major discourses of Christ, and we have entitled it, "The Life-Giving Spirit." It is a record of Jesus' teachings at the Feast of Tabernacles. From John chapter 6 to

John chapter 7 there is a time gap of about six months, from the Passover in the first month to the Feast of Tabernacles in the seventh month (around October in our calendar). This event took place just about six months before Jesus' crucifixion in April of the following year.

Although we are barely a quarter of the way through John's narrative, we are at the last six months of Jesus' life and ministry. Thus, as with the other Gospel writers, John devotes more space to the end of Jesus' ministry than to any other portion of His life.

7:1 - *“After these things Jesus walked in Galilee: for he would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill him.”* Apart from the incident in Nazareth when the multitude had sought to cast Him over the cliff, Jesus had a more favourable reception in the lands of Galilee, where the people were not so hostile to Him as were those in the southern region of Judea. The Jews in Judea, and particularly in Jerusalem, had determined to put Him to death.

7:2 - *“Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand.”* Let us pause here for a moment to consider the three main feasts of Israel—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16-17). Dispensationally, the Feast of Passover was the principal feast of the Old Testament. The Feast of Pentecost, which opened up the Church Age with God's outpouring in Acts 2, is the principal feast of the Church Age.

The Feast of Tabernacles will be the predominant feast during the Millennium. We read in Zechariah 14:16, “And it shall

come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” In the Millennium, all the nations of the earth will come to Jerusalem to worship the Lord every year during the Feast of Tabernacles.

However, there is also a spiritual fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles for the last day Church. There will be a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit in our days, greater than any revival ever in the history of mankind. This will bring in a mighty harvest of souls, as well as bringing the Church to perfection. Therefore, Christ’s message at the Feast of Tabernacles has special relevance for the last day Church.

7:3 - *“His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judaea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest.”* Apart from the fact that Jesus’ brethren did not believe He was the Son of God, neither did they understand that He was the fulfilment of the Passover Lamb, and as such could not die before the time. For this reason, Jesus had to move with great caution to avoid being killed before His appointed time.

7:4 - *“For there is no man that doeth any thing in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world.”* By this statement it is clear that Jesus’ brothers had wrongly concluded that Jesus sought popularity, which He obviously did not desire. The reason they used the words “in secret” was that Galilee was

far from Jerusalem and the main Jewish population. It is possible that the miracles Jesus performed in Galilee were not widely known in other parts of Palestine.

7:5 - *“For neither did his brethren believe in him.”* Christ’s own family did not believe in Him at that time. It must have caused the Lord much pain to be rejected by His own family. Nevertheless, after His resurrection, two of His brothers, James and Jude, became apostles and Bible authors. Christ experienced rejection like no one else ever has. That is why He could be exalted above everyone else. The degree of rejection that we allow the Lord to pass us through determines our degree of exaltation by Him.

7:6 - *“Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready.”* “My time is not yet come” is a little phrase that occurs several times in the Gospel of John. With these words, the Lord made it known that He had absolute command of His life and that He knew the timing of everything that had to be accomplished. There is a sense here that there was a right time for Jesus to go up to the feast when everyone was already there—held in suspense, wondering whether He would come or not. Thus the middle of the feast was the perfect timing for His appearance. Christ’s timing also has spiritual connotations that we will discuss later.

7:7 - *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”* Obviously, the world loves its own. Generally speaking, sinners love sinners. The unsaved do not appreciate someone who shows them

their sins. Jesus made them intensely conscious of their wicked works. That is why they hated Him.

7:8 - *“Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet unto this feast: for my time is not yet full come.”* He sent His brothers ahead of Him, and again He states that He needed to arrive at the right time. I think that we do well to pause here to realise that timing is very important in all of our lives, even as it is written in Ecclesiastes 3:1, *“To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.”*

7:9-10 - *“When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret.”* Christ went to the Feast of Tabernacles secretly and not openly. Normally, the Jews went to the feasts with their families, but the Lord did not want to be surrounded by His unbelieving brethren.

7:11 - *“Then the Jews sought him at the feast, and said, Where is he?”* As we have already said, Jesus was the main subject of discussion at the feast. His delay prepared the way for His grand appearance in a very significant fashion.

7:12 - *“And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him: for some said, He is a good man: others said, Nay; but he deceiveth the people.”* There certainly was no unified consensus among the people. Some were saying that Jesus was good, while others were accusing Him of being a deceiver. Often the opinions that one has of Christ stem

from one's own heart condition. You can know a person's spiritual condition by his attitude toward the Lord Jesus Christ.

7:13 - *“Howbeit no man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews.”* The Jews had absolutely condemned Jesus. Furthermore, anyone who supported the Lord would be ostracized by the religious community and put out of the synagogue. This would have severe economic consequences.

7:14 - *“Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.”* Christ appeared in the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles and taught the people. Therefore, the Feast of Tabernacles in the last days will be a feast of teaching, and above all, the feast of His appearing. During the latter rain outpouring of the Spirit of God, when the Feast of Tabernacles will be spiritually celebrated by the Church, the Lord will raise up teachers of righteousness. The Feast of Tabernacles will usher in the coming of Christ to His Church.

7:15 - *“And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?”* Christ was never trained in any of the Rabbinical schools of theology (cf. Lk. 4:22). Even though I emphasise studying, I believe that in the last days God will raise up completely unlearned people, who have never been to Bible school, to teach people the mysteries of His Word. The result of the anointing upon Jesus was such that it confounded the learned men, who majored on the letter of the Word (which in actuality kills), and not on the Spirit (which gives life).

7:16 - *“Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.”* The doctrine and truths that Jesus taught were given to Him by the Father. The Apostle Peter stated in 2 Peter 1:20, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” Seeking to explain his own teachings, the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 1:11-12, “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.” When we teach or preach, let us speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11), and not simply express thoughts that emanate from our own human mind.

7:17 - *“If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.”* The key to knowing right doctrine is to do the will of God. In actuality, false doctrines come from God—He sends them to those who do not walk in His ways. God says in Ezekiel 20:24-25, “Because they had not executed my judgments, but had despised my statutes, and had polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers’ idols. Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live.”

God gives His people over to false doctrines when they do not keep His commandments or do His will. It is God who gives error to His Church. When God gives error to a person or a church, you will notice that all they speak about is that error; that is because God is consuming their life and time with it. We must never major on one truth.

We must be balanced and speak the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

We receive correct doctrine when we are obeying the Lord in our lives and submitting to His will. Therefore, we can see the awesome importance of laying down our will to do His will. If we harden our hearts to do our own will, we will be swept away with some false doctrine.

7:18 - *“He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him.”* We must not desire to promote ourselves or our ministry, seeking our own glory and fame. True servants of the Lord are those who point everyone to Christ, like John the Baptist did, not worrying about their own reputation or popularity. We must decrease and lift Christ up instead of seeking our own glory.

7:19 - *“Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keepeth the law? Why go ye about to kill me?”* Herein is a truth that we would do well to heed. Those who overemphasise one virtue or one truth often fail in that very area. The scribes, proponents of the letter of the law, did not keep it—a fact that the Lord continually brought to their attention.

7:20 - *“The people answered and said, Thou hast a devil: who goeth about to kill thee?”* At this point, the common folk became hostile toward Jesus. These commoners tended

to deny their evil intentions and to justify their wrong doings, typical of the wicked. Today there are many who attribute the works of the blessed Holy Spirit to Satan.

7:21 - *“Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel.”* The inference here is not that Jesus performed only *one* miracle; the Lord was referring to His healing of the lame man on the Sabbath day. This miracle offended many in Jerusalem, as recorded in John 5:1-9.

7:22 - *“Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) and ye on the sabbath day circumcise a man.”* Jesus continues by bringing forth the true meaning of the Sabbath day. Circumcision had already been given as a token of the covenant that the Lord had made with Abraham, but Moses made it an ordinance. However, on the Sabbath day males are circumcised.

7:23 - *“If a man on the sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me, because I have made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day?”* In essence, Jesus is saying, “If you do a good work on the sabbath day by fulfilling the law, which states that on the eighth day a male child shall be circumcised, why then are you angry with me for healing a man from his lameness on the sabbath day?” Both are good works.

The Jews were bound by Leviticus 12:3, which says, “And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.” They thought this law overruled the fourth commandment

found in Exodus 20:8-11: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

7:24 - *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”* Men look on the outward, but God looks on the heart. We must judge righteously. Isaiah 11:3 tells us that the Lord would not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears. Those who were criticizing Jesus were concerned only with the outward observance of the Sabbath and not with the purpose of the Sabbath. The Lord intended the Sabbath to be a day that He had a blessed; a day of doing good to one another. Therefore, it was lawful to do good on God’s holy day.

7:25 - *“Then said some of them of Jerusalem, Is not this he, whom they seek to kill?”* Note here the inconsistency of human nature. They had previously denied that they were seeking to kill Jesus, and yet now they are admitting that the rulers sought His life.

7:26 - *“But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him. Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?”* The perplexity of the common people is

understandable, since they did not know the plans or ways of God. The Father has placed all times and seasons under His control. The Father restrained the wicked from killing His Son Jesus until the appointed time, which was the following Passover. It is written in Psalm 76:10, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

This should encourage us, dear ones, to believe that the Lord will rule over our enemies in our difficult circumstances. They can do nothing that He does not permit them to do. So let us be comforted and rejoice in His goodness to us, knowing that we are all under the watchful eye of our loving Heavenly Father.

7:27 - *“Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is.”* They were fully persuaded that Jesus was the son of Joseph, the carpenter. For this reason they dismissed His claims of being the Messiah on the grounds that the Christ would not be known, in the sense that He would not be of common birth as they supposed Jesus to be. Jesus then acknowledged their arguments.

7:28 - *“Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught, saying, Ye both know me, and ye know whence I am: and I am not come of myself, but he that sent me is true, whom ye know not.”* In effect, what they were saying in the natural was true. They indeed knew of His humble origins, but they did not realise that He had also come from God, whom they did not know.

7:29 - *“But I know him: for I am from him, and he hath sent me.”* Jesus always had the presentiment that He had been sent by God, and that He was on a divine mission. We should have the same awareness, for if we do, we will be faithful to our calling and course.

7:30 - *“Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come.”* The whole of Jesus’ life was under the control of the Father. Although they wanted to kill Him, they could not because His hour to die had not yet come. This is stressed over and over again in John’s Gospel. There is a time for all things under the sun, including every event in our lives.

Ecclesiastes 3:2 states, “There is a time to be born;” and certainly the Lord was born at the right time. Galatians 4:4 says, “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” Solomon continues in Ecclesiastes by saying, “and a time to die.” Therefore, in order to fulfil the type of the Passover, Jesus could not be put to death before the Passover, which was still some six months away.

7:31 - *“And many of the people believed on him, and said, When Christ cometh, will he do more miracles than these which this man hath done?”* Jesus performed many miracles, as it is recorded in John 20:30, “And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book.” Jesus’ ministry was filled with miracles, and the people were well aware of this.

Therefore, many believed in Jesus. However, this enraged the rulers.

7:32 - *“The Pharisees heard that the people murmured such things concerning him; and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take him.”* It is as though the religious leaders were intent on doing damage control so that the whole populace would not become His disciples. Obviously, if everyone followed Christ, then the Pharisees would lose their authority in the nation.

7:33 - *“Then said Jesus unto them, Yet a little while am I with you, and then I go unto him that sent me.”* Jesus knew that His time was brief. He would soon return to His beloved Father who had sent Him.

7:34 - *“Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.”* Jesus is speaking here of His resurrection. After the news spread of Jesus’ resurrection, many probably searched for Him, although Scripture does not tell us about their efforts to find Jesus. This is reminiscent of the rapture of Elijah, when the sons of the prophets said to Elisha in 2 Kings 2:16, “... Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.”

7:35-36 - *“Then said the Jews among themselves, Whither will he go, that we shall not find him? will he go unto the*

dispersed among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?"

This saying of Jesus caused more perplexity among the people. This thought was probably the product of the teaching taken from Isaiah 49:6, which says, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."

The interpretation of this passage is that the Lord would become the Light of the world after His death, and that the Church would consist mostly of Gentile believers. The people thought Jesus meant that He was going to minister to the Jews who were living among the Gentiles, as well as teaching Gentile believers. The Jews were quite confused, illustrating once again that the natural mind cannot understand the things of the Spirit.

7:37 - *"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."* Jesus spoke this on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. Therefore, this truth applies more to the last day outpouring during the spiritual celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles than to the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost in the Early Church.

In the last days, rivers of living water will flow from the Church. This is foreseen in Ezekiel 47:1, "Afterward he

brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under, from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar.”

This is the great river of life that will flow from the Temple in Jerusalem during the Millennium. Great multitudes will receive life and healing during the Feast of Tabernacles in the last days of the Church Age, as is seen by this river of life in the millennial reign of Christ: “And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh” (Ezek. 47:9). The fish speak of the great multitude of souls that shall be saved in the last days.

7:38 - *“He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.”* What was happening in Jerusalem on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles? Well, people were very confused about Ezekiel’s visions. They acknowledged that the visions were of God, and they had an understanding of Ezekiel chapter 47, which says that a river will flow out of the Temple. However, they thought Herod’s Temple was the fulfilment of the temple which Ezekiel saw.

You can find this statement in many of the Early Church writings. They admitted that Herod’s Temple was not exactly

like Ezekiel's, but they believed Ezekiel's Temple was fulfilled in the Temple of Herod. But that is not true at all. I have seen glimpses of the Temple of Ezekiel which will be constructed in the millennial reign of Christ.

What they were trying to do was to bring to pass what Ezekiel saw—a river coming out from the Temple. In an effort to fulfil this, the priests marched in solemn procession to the pool of Siloam, where they filled their vases with water. In solemn procession they would return to the Temple and pour the water upon the steps of the Temple. After doing this, they would say that it was the fulfilment of Ezekiel's vision. That was too much for the Son of God. He stood up and cried out at that very moment saying, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." This is a very important statement indeed.

Notice that Jesus said this at the Feast of Tabernacles, and not at the Feast of Pentecost. We know from Scripture that the Feast of Pentecost typifies the Early Church and that the Feast of Tabernacles represents the Last Day Church. Therefore, what He is saying here must have a spiritual fulfilment in the Church of the last days; otherwise these Scriptural types would not make sense.

In the last days, there will be a tremendous revival as the Church experiences the Feast of Tabernacles and the river of God flows out of the midst of the Church. This will truly be the spiritual fulfilment of Ezekiel's vision, whereas the natural

fulfilment will take place in the Millennium after the Lord returns. Also, rivers of living water of the Holy Spirit will flow out of the belly of believers. These spiritual rivers will bring conviction of sin and salvation, as well as healing to the multitudes in these last days.

7:39 - *“(But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)”* John clearly states that the waters Jesus spoke of refer to the blessing of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. As we have said before, if this was destined to be fulfilled in its entirety at the initial outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4), then He would not have declared it at the Feast of Tabernacles.

7:40 - *“Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.”* Many of the people believed the Lord and said, “Of a truth this is the Prophet.” This was the second time that Jesus was identified by the common people as the Prophet of whom Moses spoke (Deut. 18:18). The first time was in John 6:14.

7:41-42 - *“Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?”* However, others said, “Christ will not come from Galilee; He is from the house of David.” Many people rejected the Lord Jesus because they thought He was from Galilee.

Jesus was raised in Galilee, but He was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, which was also the city of the promised Messiah. God intentionally kept it concealed so that those who were not true in heart would have an excuse to be offended. There are certain things that we simply have to accept by faith, and in time they will become clear. Salvation is by faith.

Incidentally, they knew that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem because it was prophesied in Micah 5:2: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”

7:43 - *“So there was a division among the people because of him.”* Divisions occur constantly because of the Lord, for He said in Matthew 10:34-35, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.”

7:44 - *“And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him.”* And here again we see the controlling hand of the loving Heavenly Father who orchestrates all things according to His will.

7:45 - *“Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought*

him?” The rulers of the Jews had an army of officers and men who were permitted by the Romans to enforce their religious commands. They were fully intent upon taking Jesus into custody immediately.

7:46 - *“The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.”* These officers were unable to take Jesus because they were amazed and overwhelmed by His words. One of the things that is reiterated in the Word of God is that Christ did not speak like the scribes and Pharisees. How did the scribes and Pharisees speak? Their manner of teaching was to quote each other. When they were asked questions about the Scriptures, they would say, “Rabbi ‘so-and-so’ believes this, whereas Rabbi ‘so-and-so’ believes that.” They thought they were giving people the personal choice and option to decide who and what to believe.

God’s anointing is very different. Many authors of theology fall into the same trap as the Rabbis, the scribes, and the Pharisees. One should write under the unction of the Holy Spirit and declare what the Spirit of God says. That is not to say that you must never quote another author. I believe that it can be very beneficial, but you must be taught of God Himself and determine by the Spirit what is truth. You must present your listeners and readers with only one opinion—the truth. Let us hear from God and speak forth the Word of God under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

This was the difference between Christ and the other Rabbis. The people were absolutely amazed because Christ did not

quote any of the Rabbis. His authority came from the Father Himself, whereas all the other teachers quoted each other.

7:47-48 - *“Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?”* The rulers were very sceptical. They considered Jesus to be a great impostor; and they thought they were the final authority in religious matters because of their erudition. A fatal error of judgment can be made, as illustrated by the Pharisees, if one believes that there is no wisdom outside one’s own select circle. Let us never fall into the trap of being exclusive and thinking that one’s own church or fellowship has more knowledge and revelation than another’s.

7:49 - *“But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.”* The Pharisees and Jewish scholars rejected the testimony and the views of the common people concerning Jesus. The teachers looked down upon the common people because they were uneducated and had not studied under the learned masters of theology of their day. According to the Pharisees, because these commoners did not know the Scriptures, they had fallen into error and were cursed by accepting a false Christ. But then one of their own, Nicodemus, reproved them.

7:50-51 - *“Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?”* Nicodemus, one of the great masters of Israel and a member of the Sanhedrin, then spoke in defense of Jesus. He reminded the Pharisees that a matter had to be thoroughly examined before

judgment could be passed, as mandated in Deuteronomy 19:18, “And the judges shall make diligent inquisition.”

Let us ask the Lord to give us grace to follow Him completely.

7:52 - *“They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”* The Pharisees were enraged by Nicodemus’ defense of Jesus. They said to Nicodemus, “Are you a Galilean? Are you one of his supporters? Search it out, and you will find that no prophet comes from Galilee.” This was a true statement, but they did not know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea.

7:53 - *“And every man went unto his own house.”* Every man went to his own house. This is very interesting. When a controversy arises, everyone sides with his own spiritual house—his denomination, church, and so forth. We must make sure that our church is going all the way for God; otherwise we will remain on a plateau somewhere along the way, and not go on with God. Let us ask the Lord to give us grace to follow Him completely.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Adulterous Woman (8:1-11)

The previous chapter closed on the theme of judging righteously according to the Law. This chapter reveals Jesus as the Judge. As we study this chapter, let us remember that

if we walk in obedience to God, we will often be called upon to pass judgment on a variety of subjects, not least of all, in matters pertaining to illicit sexual relationships. John chapter 8 opens with Jesus in such a role, and we will indeed learn much from His handling of this particular case of the woman caught in the act of adultery.

8:1 - *“Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.”* The Mount of Olives is where the Lord will return to judge the nations. Thus this opening verse is setting the stage for the judgment that the Lord is going to pass.

8:2 - *“And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them.”* Early in the morning Jesus went into the Temple and began teaching the people. The Temple is a type of the Church; and the thought expressed here is of the Lord arising to judge His people, as written in Psalm 50:4, “He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.” Another aspect worthy of note is that the Lord was seated, which is the position that a teacher would take in those days when he had something important to teach his students. Normally the Rabbis taught their followers while they walked, but they sat down when they had something really important to say.

8:3-5 - *“And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded*

us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. There was no question that this woman was guilty. They quoted the Law of Moses that said that such a woman should be stoned (Lev. 20:10, Deut. 22:22). Then they tempted Him by saying, "The law of Moses commands that she should be stoned, but what do You say?" They put Christ in a very difficult position because He had to uphold the Law.

The scribes and Pharisees, quoting the Law of Moses, said that she should be stoned. Their motives for bringing this woman to Christ were not pure, for they sought to accuse Him. They were trying to force Him into a situation where He would deny the Law.

As leaders, we must know how to handle a situation of adultery, because unfortunately adultery does occur in the Church. We have to determine the sentence that must be passed upon the offenders. By the grace of God, I trust that we can give you some guidelines on how to deal with adultery.

8:6-7 - *"This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."* Jesus responded by writing upon the ground with His finger. Many believe that He wrote the Ten Commandments.

Christ upheld the Law. He did not contradict the Law, but neither did He deny that this woman was guilty. He said to them, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” Jesus could not deny the Law, for He Himself testified in Matthew 5:17, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” We also must uphold the Law, because the essence of the New Covenant is to have the laws of God written upon the fleshly tables of our hearts. Hebrews 8:10 says, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.”

8:8-9 - *“And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”*

If Jesus indeed was writing the Ten Commandments the first time, it is possible that the second time He wrote the second part of the Decalogue—that is, the last five commandments that deal with our duty toward our fellow man. If the first five commandments had not convicted them, certainly the second five would have had an effect on them. The last five commandments deal with the sins of adultery, stealing, and covetousness—sins for which the Pharisees were soundly condemned by the Lord.

As Jesus wrote on the ground the second time, conviction overwhelmed these hypocritical rulers; they could not bear to remain in the presence of the Lord because of the tremendous anointing that was upon Him. They crept out one by one, beginning with the eldest (who had more to account for), until no one was left except Jesus and the woman, presumably in the midst of the common people.

8:10 - *“When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?”* The reason Jesus asked this woman where her accusers were was that no one could be judged or put to death in Israel without the testimony of two or more witnesses. Jesus was upholding the Law again. Deuteronomy 19:15 states, “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.”

This must not be taken to mean that one can freely forgive a person without any punishment. In Psalm 17:2, King David prayed, “Let my sentence come forth from thy presence.” Ever since God quickened this verse to me, I have prayed, “Lord, when I have to make decisions, let it be Your sentence and not mine.”

In some cases involving adultery, I have felt to insist that the guilty parties make an open confession before the church. In other cases, I have felt from the Lord to give a

private judgment without telling anyone else about it. Other times, I felt I could even overlook it because God had already dealt with the situation.

The important thing to note here is that adultery must be dealt with. If someone in the church commits adultery, it must be addressed. You have to deal with adultery God's way. At times, God does not require a public confession, but other times He does, as in the case of David. King David had to make an open confession before the whole nation. Through this he became a very broken and humble man.

So great was God's restoration of King David that he will be the prince of Israel in the Millennium. The nation of Israel (which has committed murder, adultery, and all kinds of sin) will be restored when the Lord returns. David will lead the Jews in worship of Jehovah. David will be able to sympathise with the Jews because he has been through the same experiences.

You have to look at the whole spectrum of the Word of God. Consider Hosea for a moment. What are you going to say to a husband if his wife commits adultery? Hosea had to place his wife on probation before he could resume a normal marital relationship with her. Hosea said to his wife Gomer in Hosea 3:3, "Thou shalt abide for me many days; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for another man: so will I also be for thee." We must be prepared to handle situations like the woman caught in adultery and Hosea's wife.

Before we pass judgment, we must pray and hear from the Lord what His will is in the matter. One incident I had to deal with involved a married man who had an affair with another woman and had children with her. How do you deal with a situation like this? This man had to break off his adulterous relationship with this woman and return to his wife, but he had to support the other woman and her children. We hate to see people commit adultery, but if they have fallen into sin, we must always try to lead them to repentance and pray that they will be restored.

8:11 - *“She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.”* Jesus did not condone her sin, but He chose to show mercy. He forgave this woman, but told her not to sin anymore. The Law must be upheld. If something is wrong, it is wrong; sin is sin! But what is God saying about the situation? He can choose to show mercy if He so desires. It is God’s prerogative to show mercy. We must hear God’s judgment in every situation.

This passage should be carefully studied along with other passages, since Jesus clearly condemns adultery, and gives a far higher standard than contemporary morals would hold. Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Jesus not only condemned adultery, but also lust, the root source of adultery.

In some situations, the Lord will punish a person, while in other cases He will freely forgive. It is God's exclusive privilege to show mercy to a person; He shows mercy on those whom He chooses. Exodus 33:19 says, "And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

The Sixth Discourse - The Light of the World (8:12-59)

8:12 - *"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."* This is the second "I Am" of Christ in John's Gospel—He is the Light of the world. He repeats this in John 9:5. This is the theme of the sixth public discourse.

8:13 - *"The Pharisees therefore said unto him, Thou bearest record of thyself; thy record is not true."* According to the Law, for a record to be true it had to be confirmed by two or three witnesses.

8:14 - *"Jesus answered and said unto them, Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go."* The Lord was ever seeking to implant in the minds and hearts of His listeners His divine origins, and also the fact that He would return to heaven to be with His Father after His life's work was completed.

8:15 - *“Ye judge after the flesh; I judge no man.”* We must be careful not to judge after the flesh, by outward appearance. We must know the Lord’s mind and judgment in every situation we encounter.

8:16-17 - *“And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true.”* This is a quotation from Deuteronomy 17:6, but we will consider Deuteronomy 19:15 again: “One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established.” The Lord explains again that His testimony is true.

8:18 - *“I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me.”* There are two witnesses in this case, the Father and the Son. An ever-recurring theme in this Gospel is that the Father and the Son flow as one. It is a truth that we need to understand, for later in this Gospel we will see that even as the Father and the Son are one, they desire that we as believers might be one with them. Dear ones, we are a family with a very good Father and a wonderful Elder Brother—our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

8:19 - *“Then said they unto him, Where is thy Father? Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also.”* Because they were not born of God, the Pharisees were not part of

the family of God. Therefore, they could not understand that the Son and the Father were one.

8:20 - *“These words spake Jesus in the treasury, as he taught in the temple: and no man laid hands on him; for his hour was not yet come.”* They could do nothing to Christ until His hour to die had come. I want to encourage you, beloved, that if you are walking with God, no one can lay hands upon you until your work is finished.

Jesus spoke these words while He was in the Temple treasury, the place where people gave their offerings. As such, it was accessible to women as well as men. It is sometimes referred to as the Court of the Women for this very reason. There were about 13 trumpet-shaped boxes placed there, each with an inscription denoting the purpose for which the offering would be used. It would have been the place where the widow cast in her two mites. Luke 21:1-2 says, “And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites.”

8:21 - *“Then said Jesus again unto them, I go my way, and ye shall seek me, and shall die in your sins: whither I go, ye cannot come.”* Christ was telling them this because they did not believe in Him. As a result, they would not know the blessedness of having their sins forgiven. They would die in their sins, and would not go where He was going—heaven. They would seek Him, but would not find Him.

8:22 - *“Then said the Jews, Will he kill himself? because he saith, Whither I go, ye cannot come.”* One truth that is very important to learn in life is that our works affect our mind. Colossians 1:21 says, “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works.” The rulers of the Jews were very wicked, and they could not comprehend what Jesus was saying. Therefore, they came up with these ridiculous explanations. In no way, shape, or form was the demeanour of Jesus suicidal.

8:23 - *“And he said unto them, Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.”* The Lord brought out something that is very true to life in the Parable of the Tares. Jesus was asked, “Who sowed these tares?” He replied, “The evil one.” He was speaking of people who are influenced by the devil. Thus there are people who are Satan’s emissaries. The Pharisees belonged to this world and to the prince of this world (the devil); and their destiny was the pit of hell where their prince reigns.

8:24 - *“I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.”* To be saved, we have to believe that Jesus is the Son of God and our only Saviour. Without the saving knowledge that Jesus Christ has forgiven our sins, we will die in our sinful condition, without hope and without God—and our eternal abode will be in the pit of hell.

8:25 - *“Then said they unto him, Who art thou? And Jesus saith unto them, Even the same that I said unto you from*

the beginning.” Again they were bewildered. They asked Jesus again who He was, but Jesus simply replied that He had already told them.

8:26 - *“I have many things to say and to judge of you: but he that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him.”* In other words, Christ is saying that He is the messenger of God, who is true. Jesus only declared those things that His Father told Him to declare.

8:27 - *“They understood not that he spake to them of the Father.”* This is one of the truths that we need to have firmly planted within our hearts. Because God the Father is from everlasting to everlasting, He is the One who directs all things. We should seek to have a loving relationship with Him so that we may fulfil His will for our lives and please Him, even as we desire to bring pleasure to our earthly fathers.

8:28 - *“Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things.”* Jesus did nothing of Himself. He was totally directed by His Father. He is saying that when He is lifted up on the cross, they will know that He is Christ. The Lord Jesus said in John 12:32, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” Also, we read the words of Christ in John 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.”

8:29 - *“And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.”*

The Son was totally committed to the Father and He always sought to please Him. We must have that same level of commitment. Our desire must be to please Him. Christ did not live for popularity; He had one single purpose—to do the will of His Father.

8:30 - *“As he spake these words, many believed on him.”*

Among the bevy of unbelievers, there were those with honest hearts to whom the Holy Spirit could witness the truth. They believed that Jesus had come from God.

8:31 - *“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.”*

Here again we see another life-giving principle. Although being born again is essential for entering heaven, it is also vital that we continue to walk in the truth of the Word of God. One experience with God is not sufficient; we have to walk in the pathway of righteousness for the rest of our lives until that day when we are received into heaven by the Lord.

8:32 - *“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

We are liberated as we read the Word of God and receive the anointed truth from God. The truth and only the truth will set us free from the bondages of our sinful nature. We need to have a love for the truth in our hearts.

8:33 - *“They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be*

made free?” The response of the Jews to this statement is sad. At this moment, we see the tremendous bondage that the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees placed upon the people. The Rabbis gave false security to the people by saying, in effect, that they would automatically be guaranteed entrance into paradise when they died because they were of the seed of Abraham.

Moreover, the Jewish teachers went to extremes. They said that an Israelite did not have to worry even if he sinned because when he fell into the flames of hell, good father Abraham would be there to catch him and carry him up to heaven. The Jews’ trust and confidence was not in the Lord or His righteousness, but in the fact that they were descendants of Abraham.

8:34-35 - *“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever.”* Jesus makes it very clear that those who sin, no matter what pedigree or heritage they may have, are the servants of sin, and that they will be cast into hell. The Psalmist cried out in Psalm 119:133, “Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.” When we give ourselves to sin, it binds us, controls us, and makes us its servants. If a person continues in sin, he becomes enslaved by sin and actually becomes the servant of sin. The more we sin, the more powerful the bondage becomes. Those who are servants of sin are not permitted to remain in the Church (or house of God) forever. God raises up a stumbling block that offends them and turns them away. However, the Son of God abides in the house of God forever.

8:36 - *“If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.”* We want to be those who meet Jesus on every issue in our lives. When He liberates us, we are free indeed. We want the Lord to set us free from every bondage in our lives. For this to happen, we must seek Him earnestly.

8:37 - *“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.”* Those who did not receive the words of Jesus turned against Him and sought to kill Him. If the Word of God has no place in a person’s heart, he is automatically going to reject and become an enemy of those who preach the truth. The Lord said in Matthew 12:30, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”

8:38 - *“I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.”* Christ is contrasting here the two fathers—*God*, who is intrinsically good and loving, and *Satan*, who is the epitome of all that is evil.

8:39 - *“They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham’s children, ye would do the works of Abraham.”* The Jews appealed on the grounds that they were the descendants of Abraham. Even John the Baptist warned against this assumption in Matthew 3:7-9, which reads, “But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits

meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” While acknowledging that they were the natural seed of Abraham, Jesus contended with them and said that they were not the spiritual seed of the great patriarch.

8:40 - *“But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.”* If they were truly the seed of Abraham (in heart), they would have manifested love toward the Lord, even as did Abraham, who was called the friend of God. Instead, they sought to kill Jesus. This is indeed a warning for all who call themselves Christians and yet do not bring forth or manifest the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, and peace.

8:41 - *“Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.”* In other words, they knew Jesus very well, and they attributed His birth to fornication, since the rumour was that Joseph had known Mary prior to their marriage. Jesus told them that they did the deeds of their father, the devil. They responded, “We have one Father, even God.”

8:42 - *“Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.”* It is indeed obvious that those who love God must also love His only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Jews did not love the Son of God; therefore, they could not claim that God was their Father.

The truth that Jesus was sent by God was developed earlier, when He said in John 3:16, “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.” Once again it is made very clear that the Father originates all things. Above all, He planned the redemption of mankind long before the foundation of the world.

The Son is the principal figure around which the redemption story revolves, and therefore, He is called in Revelation 13:8, “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” We want to be the Lord’s messengers and be sent by Him in His time. In 2 Samuel 18:22-30, Ahimaaz commissioned himself to go, but he did not have the message that David needed. We want to be like Cushie, the messenger who was sent to deliver the real message to the king.

8:43 - *“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word.”* The Jews could not understand what Jesus was saying because of their heart condition. They could not hear His words because they were spiritually deaf and their hearts had been hardened. We need to pray, “Oh God, break up the fallow ground in my heart and circumcise my spiritual ears so that I can hear what You are saying.”

8:44 - *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* Speaking now with great simplicity,

and enunciating His words with clarity and directness, Jesus tells them that they are like their father, the devil, because they manifest his evil works. They sought to kill Jesus because they had the same nature as their father, who was a murderer and did not abide in the truth. In other words, when Satan was still Lucifer he was filled with the light of God; but he chose not to keep his estate and position. Seeking to be as God, Lucifer left his God-appointed place and rebelled. The result was that he was cast down into hell. As God the Father is the origin of life and truth, so is Satan the father and originator of lies.

8:45 - *“And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not.”*

The Jews could not believe Jesus because of their evil works. Paul said in Hebrews 12:3-4: “For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” Christ suffered with the Jews’ unbelief.

It is so important that we always do what is right, for righteousness conditions our hearts to believe. One has the sense in these chapters of the tremendous contention and battle between the godly and the ungodly. There are very definite lines that have been drawn between the righteous and the wicked because they are governed by different fathers—the righteous by the Heavenly Father and the wicked by their father, the devil. That will be very much the case in the last days. The Antichrist will draw all of his followers to himself, and he will put a mark on their foreheads (Rev. 13:16-17). Now Jesus, the spotless One, asks His accusers a question:

8:46 - *“Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me?”*

**Righteousness
conditions our
hearts to believe.**

Truly, the Lord Jesus is the Lamb of God without blemish that takes away the sin of the world. When Pilate, the Roman procurator, examined Jesus, he had to confess no fewer than three times that he found no fault in Him. Therefore, Jesus again asks, “Why do ye not believe me?”

8:47 - *“He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.”* As in life in general, relationship is the key to understanding a person. An intimate knowledge of a person enables one to really appreciate and comprehend his message. This is true of the Lord Jesus. Most of us hear what we want to hear, but when we have an intimate relationship with the Lord, we can truly hear and understand His words.

8:48 - *“Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?”* With two very cutting accusations, the Jews sought to destroy Jesus’ credibility:

1. By saying that He was a Samaritan they meant that He was not a Jew, and also not a true worshipper of God.
2. By saying that He had a devil, they were attributing all of His miracles to Satan and denying the power of the Holy Spirit in His life and ministry.

To the first accusation, Jesus made no reply, because they had already contradicted themselves. They said that He was born of fornication, acknowledging that they knew His parents, who were indeed Jewish. But to the second accusation He replied:

8:49 - *“Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me.”* Clearly, He denies the instrumentality of Satan in His life. He declares that the purpose of His life is to honour the Father. This too should always be our goal, that in all things the Father and the Son might be glorified and honoured. The Jews, of course, were not honouring the Son, but seeking to make Him of ill repute.

8:50 - *“And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth.”* Now the Lord develops the fact that He does not seek His own glory. Neither should we seek our own glory. We will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account to Him of the things done while here upon earth.

8:51 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.”* Jesus again is speaking of the Word of God, which is able to give us eternal life as we walk in the light of the Word.

8:52 - *“Then said the Jews unto him, Now we know that thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, If a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death.”* By this last statement the Jews concluded that Jesus

was promising that one would live forever in this body, without ever dying physically. They then cited the fact that Abraham and all the prophets had died.

8:53 - *“Art thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? and the prophets are dead: whom makest thou thyself?”* The challenge again is to the person of Jesus, because He is placing Himself on a higher plain than others. But then again, He was and is the only begotten of the Father. He is divine, whereas all others have been created by Him.

8:54 - *“Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God.”* The Lord here is refuting the accusation that He is seeking His own honour, saying rather that everything He does is because of the anointing that the Father has placed upon Him. Acts 4:27 speaks of God’s holy child Jesus, whom the Father had anointed. The Jews were in reality fighting the messenger that the Father (whom they claimed to serve but did not know) had sent—His own dear Son.

8:55 - *“Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying.”* The desire of the Father is expressed through this conversation between Jesus and the Jews. The Father desires that His children love Him and know Him. After all, the natural reveals the spiritual; and is it not the desire of every father that his children both know and love him? Once I had a vision of the Father surrounded by

young children who were utterly content and happy in His presence, and He in theirs.

8:56 - *“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.”* Father Abraham was a man of unusual vision. Because of his intimate relationship with the Lord, Abraham had a revelation of Christ. Abraham was called “the friend of God” (Jas. 2:23). He saw the days of Christ and rejoiced.

Abraham saw in vision form the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, *revelation comes through relationship!* The Lord said in Genesis 18:17 concerning the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?” Abraham had such an intimate relationship and friendship with the Lord that the Lord could reveal His plans and purposes to him. Just think for a moment about the ones you share your secrets with—your wife or your best friend, right? Well, it is the same with the Lord—He shares His secrets with those who are closest to Him.

8:57 - *“Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?”* Nonplussed before this assertion (in verse 56), the Jews still were thinking with their natural minds. They thought Jesus was claiming to have physically lived upon earth before the patriarch Abraham. They did not realise that Jesus is eternal and that He had beheld all things upon earth from heaven, including the life of Abraham.

8:58 - *“Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.”* The same divine title that was revealed by God to Moses at the burning bush was used here by Jesus to denote His pre-existence. Therefore, He could quite naturally say that He was before Abraham. John the Baptist said in John 1:30, “This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: *for he was before me.*”

8:59 - *“Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by.”* Jesus miraculously hid Himself from those who were seeking to stone Him. This miracle is similar to Jeremiah’s experience when the Lord hid him from the king. Jeremiah 36:26 says, “But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.”

There are times when the Lord will hide us and spare us from our foes as well. When my wife and I, together with several missionaries, were due to attend a certain seminar in an African country, the car we were travelling in would not start. For three days the mechanics worked on it, but could not get it to start.

Then, apparently for no reason that the mechanics could discover, the car suddenly started and ran perfectly. Arriving at our destination some three days late, we discovered that

the town in which we were scheduled to speak had been riddled with bullets by troops, and many people had been killed. We were assured that if we had arrived three days earlier we would certainly have been slain. How good God was to hide us away until the danger was over! And God can do that for you too, beloved.

CHAPTER NINE

The Sixth Sign - Christ Heals the Man Born Blind (9:1-41)

A sign is now added to emphasise the spiritual truth that Jesus is the Light of the world. John chapter 9 continues in the flow of John 8, for there are no time breaks between these chapters. At this point, Jesus and his disciples have escaped from the threatening crowd.

9:1 - *“And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth.”* We must understand that this was not a chance happening, for His life was orchestrated by the Heavenly Father, as were the lives of those who came in contact with Him, for the Father’s purposes. By divine appointment, Jesus met a man who was born blind, for he was to be a sign of the spiritual state, not only of the hapless Jews, but also of Adam’s entire fallen race.

9:2 - *“And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”* The disciples were possibly thinking of the rabbinical teaching

which stated, “There is no death without sin, and no suffering without sin.” The common belief of the day was that if someone suffered, it was because he was a sinner. However, the rabbis were not known for their theological accuracy. Jesus put this case in its true perspective.

9:3 - *“Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him.”* It is a human tendency to think that when a person is suffering from a physical ailment he has sinned and incurred God’s judgment. That was the attitude of Job’s three friends. But Christ makes it very clear here that this man was born blind in the purposes of God, that God might receive the glory through his healing. For God to do a miracle, someone has to bear the sickness.

This was made even clearer to us when my wife and I were the directors of a Bible college in Switzerland. At the Bible school, a very precious blind lady oversaw a work for blind people. Many of God’s children are prone to despondency, and this is especially true of those who are blind.

One day, this dear lady was feeling the burden of her blindness and said to the Lord, “If only I could see, I would be much more effective in my work.” Then she reached for a volume of her Braille Bible, hoping to receive comfort from the Lord through the Scriptures. Taking it from the shelf, she opened it and found her fingers gliding over the passage where another saint of God had poured out a similar complaint to the Lord about his physical disabilities. Moses

had also considered himself unsuitable for the ministry because of his speech impediment.

This passage was Exodus 4:10-12, which says, “And Moses said unto the LORD, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the LORD said unto him, Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”

The Lord then very graciously and tenderly said to this lady that He had permitted her to become blind so that she would be able to empathize with the blind people to whom she was called to minister. Thus we can see that this man born blind, as well as this blind Swiss lady, were made blind for the glory of the Lord.

9:4 - *“I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.”* There was a conscious urgency in the life of Jesus. He had certain works to do and only a set time in which to perform and finish them. Likewise, we have particular things to accomplish upon earth and only one lifetime to do so.

Cecil Rhodes, founder of Rhodesia, now renamed Zimbabwe, once said, “So much to do, and so little time to do it in.” The Lord also brings out the fact that darkness will come upon the earth when the Antichrist begins his reign of terror, and no one will be able to work at that time.

9:5 - *“As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”* The Lord was truly the Light that lighted this world when He walked among His people. However, He said to His disciples on the Mountain of the Beatitudes, *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Mt. 5:14,16). Because He is the Light that enlightens everyone that comes into this world, we should seek to let Him shine through our lives that we may bring the Light of the world to those who sit in darkness.

9:6-7 - *“When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing.”* Here Christ proved that He was the Light of the world by opening this man’s eyes and causing him to see. He also showed that He was the Creator by using clay to heal him, because Adam was formed from the dust of the earth. It is also interesting that Jesus told him to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam, which means “sent”—revealing Christ as the Sent One.

9:8-9 - *“The neighbours therefore, and they which before had seen him that he was blind, said, Is not this he that sat and begged? Some said, This is he: others said, He is like him: but he said, I am he.”* This notable miracle became quickly known among the whole community

because this man was a very recognisable figure. Some people tried to disclaim the miracle by saying that this man was not born blind, but there were many witnesses who had known him before his healing.

9:10-11 - *“Therefore said they unto him, How were thine eyes opened? He answered and said, A man that is called Jesus made clay, and anointed mine eyes, and said unto me, Go to the pool of Siloam, and wash: and I went and washed, and I received sight.”* Then the opportunity was given for this man to testify of Jesus. This special vessel, chosen by God to be the recipient of one of the seven signs in Christ’s ministry, was truly a formidable witness to the power of God manifested through Christ. There is no better source of irrefutable evidence than the one who was healed.

His testimony was clear and precise, but he offered no explanation as to why he was singled out for this miracle. According to Scripture, he was not a devout or pious person. Nevertheless, as the facts unfold, we see that he was indeed one who had the courage to stand up for his convictions. He covered the essentials in his short testimony.

9:12-13 - *“Then said they unto him, Where is he? He said, I know not. They brought to the Pharisees him that aforetime was blind.”* Another interesting factor that is borne out in this account is that this man did not know Jesus or who He was. Certainly he was not one of His disciples or followers. This situation reminds me of Cyrus, king of Persia, of whom

God said 150 years before his birth, “For Jacob my servant’s sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me” (Isa. 45:4).

God calls and uses people who do not know Him for His glory. Likewise, Nebuchadnezzar was called “the servant of God” (Jer. 25:9), long before he came to know God as his Saviour (Dan. 4).

That was true also of this blind warrior of the faith, for that is indeed what he became, as we shall presently see. This man was brought by his neighbours to be examined by the religious rulers, but he remained firm in position.

9:14 - “*And it was the sabbath day when Jesus made the clay, and opened his eyes.*” It is indeed noteworthy that Jesus performed many of His miracles on the Sabbath day. This angered the religious leaders, for they looked upon it as a desecration of the Sabbath. Although Jesus could quite easily have avoided this confrontation, He deliberately chose to confront the Jews on this issue, because this was the prevailing spirit that opposed Him.

It was the religious spirit of hypocrisy that governed Israel in those days. This was the spirit that challenged Him everywhere He went, and was the one responsible for His crucifixion. But praise the Lord; this was the very same spirit that He defeated upon the cross, as well as all the hordes of Satan and hell.

9:15 - *“Then again the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. He said unto them, He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see.”* Thus this miracle had been established before two sets of witnesses—his neighbours and the rulers.

9:16 - *“Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This man is not of God, because he keepeth not the sabbath day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division among them.”* Even the religious rulers were divided over Jesus. Some despised Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, while others felt that He had to be from God to perform such miracles.

The Sabbath day was the main religious observance of the Pharisees, and they had added to it many rules which had been handed down to them through the traditions of the elders. Jesus continually emphasised that it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath. Jesus was constantly battling the legalism of the scribes and Pharisees.

9:17 - *“They say unto the blind man again, What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes? He said, He is a prophet.”* The Pharisees showed their own perplexity by asking this question, for normally the Rabbis would never have asked such a man for his opinion on a highly volatile religious subject such as this. In fact, they were putting themselves in a very vulnerable position by allowing an unlearned man to establish the credence of the One (Jesus) whom they detested.

9:18 - *“But the Jews did not believe concerning him, that he had been blind, and received his sight, until they called the parents of him that had received his sight.”* The leaders did not believe in the miracle because it was one that far exceeded anything that had ever been performed in the history of this chosen nation.

9:19-20 - *“And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind.”* His parents confirmed he had been blind from birth.

9:21-22 - *“But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself. These words spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue.”*

Instead of being overjoyed that their son was healed and proclaiming it widely, they became reticent for fear of the Pharisees. To be cast out of the synagogue would have meant economic deprivation for the parents, since no Jew would have sold to them or bought from them, nor hired them. They would not have received the typical benefits such as care for the elderly and the sick, which was extended to those of the household of the Jewish faith. The interrogation of this man’s parents provides a useful basis of enlightenment concerning Jewish life in this epoch.

9:23 - *“Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.”*

Their actions were not the actions of true parents. Even though their son was of age, they should have protected him and rallied to his side. After all, a parent is a parent for life—there is no age when a parent ceases to be a parent. This response seemingly satisfied the Pharisees; thus they returned to the cross examination of their son.

9:24 - *“Then again called they the man that was blind, and said unto him, Give God the praise: we know that this man is a sinner.”* This latter statement is in itself peculiar. They now declare that Jesus is a sinner, whereas some little time prior to this they were asking this man for his appraisal of Jesus. The inconsistencies of the wicked are never apparent to them or to their followers.

9:25 - *“He answered and said, Whether he be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.”* There can be no refutation of an experience. A person with a God-given experience is not at the mercy of someone with a theory about the same issue. The scribes and Pharisees had a theory that you could not heal on the Sabbath day, and this man refuted it. He said, “This one thing I know: before I was blind, but now I see.” How can you deny this man’s experience? You can’t!

9:26 - *“Then said they to him again, What did he to thee? how opened he thine eyes?”* So often when people are seeking to refute truth, they tend to go around in circles, constantly repeating the same questions and arguments. How

important it is to have an honest heart to examine sincerely that which is new and arrive at the right conclusion.

9:27 - *“He answered them, I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be his disciples?”* This was not the answer that the Pharisees wanted to hear. This man was very bold. He was the recipient of one of Christ’s miracles, and one can only imagine the anointing and joy he had after his encounter with Christ. Therefore, he challenged them boldly about their intentions by saying, “Will ye also be his disciples?”

9:28-29 - *“Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art his disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.”* Their questioning now turns to scorn, as they declared the man born blind to be a disciple of Jesus, whereas they arrogantly declared their allegiance to Moses.

This highlights one of the great dangers in life—that of living in the past, and not in present truth, as Peter declares in 2 Peter 1:12. God is the God of life; and life is progressive—it does not remain stationary. We, likewise, must move on with God, even as the Israelites of old in the wilderness were obliged to move with the cloud.

9:30 - *“The man answered and said unto them, Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes.”* It was a natural assumption on the part of the man born blind that the

religious leaders knew Jesus, in view of the fact that He had performed this mighty miracle as well as many others of which they were surely aware.

9:31 - *“Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth.”* It is evident by his answer that he had a certain understanding of religious principles and apparently also a knowledge of the Scriptures.

9:32-33 - *“Since the world began was it not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing.”* Certainly, the man born blind was right when he said that this miracle could only have been performed by One sent from God. It is true that there is no scriptural account of anyone receiving sight after being born blind. The miracle most similar to this one was when Elisha prayed that the army of the king of Israel would be smitten with blindness. Afterwards their eyes were opened again.

We find this account in 2 Kings 6:18-20, “And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha. And Elisha said unto them, This is not the way, neither is this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria. And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see. And the LORD

opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.”

9:34 - *“They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.”* The Pharisees refused to be challenged by this commoner, and so they cast him out. Can you see the terrible pride of the scribes and Pharisees? They had great knowledge and learning, but all their learning did not profit them, because it caused them to reject Christ. That is why we have to be very careful in our studies to ensure that they are always coupled with the anointing. We must not get sidetracked with the letter of the Word, for it kills. We need the anointing of God to teach and preach.

When Dr. Morgan, a renowned teacher at the turn of the century, visited the Welsh revival, he was amazed at the anointing that was upon Evan Roberts and the other ministers there. Mr. Morgan said, “I would give up all of my learning if I could have what they have.” The anointing is what makes the difference.

9:35-38 - *“Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.”* After Jesus heard that this man had been cast out by the religious rulers, He went and sought him out.

Jesus' desire was not only to heal him physically, but also to give him eternal life and salvation. So He asked this man if he believed on the Son of God. This man was completely ignorant of the fact that Jesus was the Son of God, but he had a willing and hungry heart. There are many people like this man who are ignorant of the truth, but when they are told the truth they embrace it gladly as this man did.

When he received the revelation that the One who had healed him was the Son of God, he worshipped the Lord and said, "I believe." This man's salvation experience was very similar to mine. I was born again when the Lord appeared to me while I was working at a research laboratory. I said to the Lord, "I believe." Having a believing heart is very important.

Here, the Lord sets before us a pattern. Not only are we to pray for people to receive physical healing, but then we must also seek to lead them into the all-important truth—salvation. It is far more important for a person to make it to heaven than to be healed.

9:39 - *"And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."* Jesus performed this miracle to reveal that in reality He is the Light of the world. The reason for the miracle was to reveal the truth to those who before were spiritually deprived of the truth of God's Word.

We want to have a heart that is well conditioned to receive all that God has for us.

On the other hand, the religious rulers, who had been given the privilege of knowing and studying the Scriptures from their youth, had not obeyed the truth. Therefore, in reading the Scriptures they would no longer be able to spiritually discern the truth of God's Word.

A former Archbishop of Canterbury, the head of the Church of England, had a dream at the time of his coronation. He saw people trying to get to the centre of a maze, but they could not find their way there. Then he saw other people who came in and went right to the centre without any problem at all.

Often those who have been seeking revival the longest reject revival when it comes, while those who were spiritually blind suddenly understand the Gospel. Their eyes are opened to see the light. Revival is always built around the nucleus of the previous move of God. However, many of those who participated in the former revival usually reject the new move of God. We want to have a heart that is well conditioned to receive all that God has for us.

9:40-41 - *“And some of the Pharisees which were with him heard these words, and said unto him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.”* The Jews were blind to the fact that they were sinners. This sign illustrates that mankind is born spiritually blind and needs the Light of the world to open their spiritual eyes.

In a very succinct way, Jesus condemns the Pharisees. “You are telling everyone that you see the truth,” the Lord said. “If you see the truth and reject it, then you are condemned. If you had been blind and had not understood, sin would not have been imputed to you.” May we ask the Lord to open our spiritual eyes to know the truth.

In Revelation 3:18, God said to the Laodicean Church (which is a type of the Church in the last days), “Ask of me and I will give you ointment that you might see.” We want to pray that the Lord will anoint our spiritual eyes that we might see. Let us pray, “Oh God, open my eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law” (Ps. 119:18).

CHAPTER TEN

Seventh Discourse - The Good Shepherd (10:1-42)

In this chapter, we see Jesus in one of His best known roles, that of the Good Shepherd. It flows so beautifully with Psalm 23, where King David speaks of the Lord as his Shepherd who cares for him and guides him in the pathways of righteousness.

The narrative begins as Jesus contrasts the thieves and the True Shepherd. It was not in the minds of the ancients that a shepherd was one who cared for the sheep, but rather one who owned and ruled over them. David is the shepherd king who will be raised up at the return of Christ, as we see in Ezekiel 34:23, “And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed

them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.”

10:1 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.”* When Jesus prefaces His teachings with the words, “verily, verily,” what follows is of great importance. Obviously, this verse is true in the natural as well as in the spiritual.

Many years ago, a minister friend of mine, who was an Army chaplain stationed in Africa, was late to a church parade. Instead of entering the parade ground through the door or the gate, he hopped over the wall. His commanding officer, observing him coming into the parade ground in this fashion, said, “I say, old fellow, isn’t the one who hops over the wall a thief and a robber?” This remark by my friend’s commanding officer provides an excellent natural illustration of what Jesus is saying. We cannot come to the Father except through Christ. He is the Door of Salvation, typified by the Door of the Tabernacle of Moses. (This will be developed later in the discourse.)

10:2-3 - *“But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.”* Naturally, the true shepherd would come in through the door, for he is the one responsible for the sheep.

Jesus now depicts what was a common occurrence with shepherds in Jesus’ time. At night, the shepherds would take

their sheep into the sheepfold. The sheep would be placed under the care of a porter, who would lock the gate and make sure that all the sheep were in. There were many flocks there; so when a shepherd would return for his flock, he actually called them by name; and his sheep would come forth from among the rest of the sheep because they knew the voice of their shepherd.

We want the Lord to know us by name. This blessed spiritual truth is illustrated in the relationship that the Lord had with Moses, as we read in Exodus 33:17, “And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and *I know thee by name.*” We should also note that there are some Christians whom the Lord does not know.

This can be seen in Matthew 7:21-23, where the Lord said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” We want to be known of the Lord; and we want to know Him and recognise His voice so that we may follow Him.

10:4 - “*And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.*” The shepherd will always lead his sheep, and their

sole responsibility is to follow him. The ministry of a shepherd (or leader) is shown very clearly in the prayer of Moses found in Numbers 27:16-17: “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation, Which may go out before them, and which may go in before them, and which may lead them out, and which may bring them in; that the congregation of the LORD be not as sheep which have no shepherd.”

A good shepherd goes before his flock to find fresh pastures. He examines the new field very carefully and then when he is sure that there are no poisonous weeds there, he returns to bring his flock into the new grazing lands. This is true in our walk with the Lord, for as we keep our heart open to Him, we will be able to hear His voice and follow Him to the higher plains of glory and truth that He has for us.

10:5 - *“And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.”* A young child who is accustomed to the voice of his parents will not respond and will even run if strangers try to speak to him. Every true child of God will run from those who pretend to be ministers of God and yet are really emissaries of the wicked one.

10:6 - *“This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.”* This passage is called a parable, and it would be good to say a few words about parables so that we understand what the Lord is saying here.

Basically, parables are truths veiled in familiar stories or day-to-day occurrences. The stories can be clearly understood, but the truth that they convey is not so easily grasped. Jesus was challenged by His disciples on His method of teaching the multitudes in Matthew 13:10-11: “Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” The Lord spoke in such a manner to hide the truth from those who do not love the truth.

10:7 - *“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep.”* Christ is the Door. This is the third “I Am” in the Gospel of John, and it is repeated in verse nine. Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (Jn. 14:6). He is the only way of salvation. There was only one entrance into the Outer Court of the Tabernacle of Moses. There also was only one gate (or door) into the Holy Place, and only one way (the veil) into the Holy of Holies. There is only one door into heaven, and that is Jesus Christ.

10:8 - *“All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.”* Notice the phrase, “All that ever came before me.” This is a very important truth, because the Antichrist is a man who preceded Christ, and must therefore come before Christ appears at His Second Coming. Christ is saying that all who have come before Him are thieves and robbers, seeking only the destruction of the sheep of God.

10:9 - *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.”* The Lord is the Good Shepherd who makes us “to lie down in green pastures” (Ps. 23:2). Let us also consider for a moment the role of pastors in shepherding the flock of God.

A pastor has to lead his flock into “green pastures.” He must ensure that the doctrines he teaches are pure and devoid of error, so that the flock can be fed on the truth of God’s Word. He also must feed every member of the congregation—giving the sincere milk of the Word to those who are newly saved and the finest of the wheat to those who are more mature. It is the pastor’s responsibility to spiritually feed the members of his congregation. He is held accountable by God if they are not fed good spiritual food.

10:10 - *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”* There are two reasons why pastors should be very careful about whom they allow to preach in their pulpits. If a pastor allows the wrong person to preach in his pulpit, it can cause untold damage in the church, because false ministers seek to steal sheep from the congregation or to propagate a false doctrine. By their words, they can sow the wrong seeds in the hearts of the people in your church. However, Christ the True Shepherd has come that we might have life, and life more abundantly.

10:11 - *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* The Greek word “kalo” translated

here as “good” actually means not only one of high moral character, but “one who has excellent qualities with respect to his profession.” This word bears the thought of one who is good at being a shepherd. Thus the Lord is morally good and He is also good at being a Shepherd. These are two attributes that we should emulate.

The third aspect of a good shepherd is that he cares for his sheep and will defend them against all attackers. There have been some very gruesome accounts in olden times of shepherds who were hacked to pieces by the knives of marauding Bedouins who were trying to steal their sheep.

The relationship between the shepherd and the sheep is literally a bond of love. The sheep have grown up with him, and all that they have ever known as a master is their beloved shepherd. Their shepherd cares for them when they are sick, anoints their wounds with oil, feeds them on good pasture, and guides them throughout their lives. The shepherd loves his sheep the same way a nanny loves the babies she takes care of. Those who are called to be leaders, whether they be pastors or missionaries or fathers, should emulate these qualities of Christ the Good Shepherd.

10:12-13 - *“But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.”* Now the Lord contrasts a true shepherd with a hireling (or hired caretaker).

A hireling is not bonded to the sheep through love. He has become a shepherd solely for his own personal and financial interests. A hireling is not committed to the sheep; he does not really care about them. His wages are his only concern. When danger comes (such as a wolf), a hireling will flee for his life and leave the defenceless sheep to be ravaged.

By contrast, a true shepherd will defend his sheep against their attackers, whether they be wolves, lions, bears, or any other predator. King David was a true shepherd—he risked his life to protect his sheep when the lion and the bear tried to attack them (1 Sam. 17:34-36).

10:14 - *“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.”* In many cases, the shepherd would actually purchase and own his sheep; they were very precious to him. This is true of the Lord Jesus who has purchased us with His own blood. Therefore, like a shepherd, He knows the sheep that He has purchased. Also, the sheep know their Shepherd, for He is their friend, guide and protector. He has His own special way of calling them.

If we are called to be leaders, we should cry out to the Lord to give us a true shepherd’s heart. A shepherd must be gentle and patient with his sheep. The shepherd must know where he is going. He has to go before the sheep and test the pasture. Joshua and Caleb had a foretaste of what the Promised Land was like; therefore, they could lead the children of Israel into it. Above all, a shepherd has to be longsuffering with his sheep, because sheep go astray very often.

10:15 - *“As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”* The relationship between the Father and Jesus Christ the Son is the same relationship that they both desire to have with us. They yearn, if I may say so, for our companionship. What a privilege it is to know the Trinity. The Lord Jesus, being the Good Shepherd, has laid down His life for us.

10:16 - *“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.”* This can be explained in several ways. Firstly, Israel was divided at that time. The prophets had said that when Israel was restored, Judah and Israel would become one stick in the Lord’s hand, and that David would be the shepherd or prince over them. But there is also another thought here.

Jesus was ministering to Israel, but there was yet another fold that He had to bring in—the Gentiles. Christ is quoting from Isaiah 56:8 with reference to the Gentile Church. When revival comes, there will be those on the outside whom God wants to bring into His fold.

10:17 - *“Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.”* We see here the great love that the Heavenly Father has for the world, and in particular for His Son Jesus. The Lord Jesus won His Father’s heart because He willingly laid down His life for those whom the Father loved—us. Therefore, in a very real sense, we should lay down our lives for the sheep (the people of God);

and in so doing we will win the heart and favour of our Heavenly Father.

10:18 - *“No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.”* Jesus had to fulfil Leviticus chapter 1. He had to be a *voluntary* offering. He had the power to come down from the cross, but He voluntarily gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins.

10:19 - *“There was a division therefore again among the Jews for these sayings.”* As always, there are those who accept the Gospel and those who reject it. Rare is it when mankind dwells in unanimity. This is especially true with respect to the identity of Jesus and His demands upon His followers. He said in Matthew 10:34-35, *“Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.”* Therefore, in this case they expressed different opinions.

10:20-21 - *“And many of them said, He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him? Others said, These are not the words of him that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?”* The supernatural power of God was evident in the ministry of Jesus; none could deny it. Therefore, because they could not disprove it, they declared that Jesus performed miracles under the influence of an evil spirit.

10:22 - *“And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.”* This discourse was delivered during the Feast of Dedication, which took place in the wintertime, about two months after the Feast of Tabernacles, from December 1-8. Judas Maccabaeus instituted this feast in 164 B.C., when the Temple that had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes was purified. The Jewish name for this feast, “Channa Khah,” means “dedication” or “consecration.”

During the eight days of the Feast of Dedication, the Psalms known as “Hallel” were sung (Psalms 113-127), and other rites which resemble those of the Feast of Tabernacles were observed. It was also called the Feast of Lights because many people illuminated the Temple and their private homes.

10:23 - *“And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch.”* Jesus walked in the part of the Temple called “Solomon’s porch.” Why is Scripture so careful to note this for us? The reason is that Christ is the One who is greater than Solomon (Mt. 12:42). Christ gave the pattern of Solomon’s Temple to King David. Christ, in the truest sense, is the personification of wisdom. It was Christ who gave Solomon the Spirit of wisdom, and He is wiser than Solomon. Christ is the source of all wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:2-3).

10:24 - *“Then came the Jews round about him, and said unto him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.”* How many more times did Jesus have to tell the Jews before they actually heard it and

believed it? They had hardened their hearts to the truth; therefore, they could not hear or comprehend what Christ was saying (Mk. 8:17-18).

Thus was the saying of Moses in Deuteronomy 29:4 fulfilled, “Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.” The Apostle Paul quoted another Scripture that relates to this: “Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (cf. Isa. 6:10). We need to pray that God will not make our hearts hard and insensitive to the truth of His Word.

10:25 - *“Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, they bear witness of me.”* The Lord had clearly told them that He was the Messiah. His appeal to them was that they might believe Him, if not for His words, at least because of His miracles.

10:26 - *“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.”* From the onset the Lord had said that there were two principal divisions of mankind—those who are His sheep and others who are not His sheep. In Matthew 25, the Lord Jesus made a difference between sheep and goats.

10:27 - *“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.”* Those who are the Lord’s sheep hear His voice and follow Him. It is so important for us to know God, and

for God to know us. Those whom the Lord does not know are the ones who do not expose their hearts to Him. He is not permitted to enter into all the inner recesses of their lives. The Lord will say to them, "I never knew you." We should seek to please the Lord so that He will acknowledge us.

10:28-29 - *"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."* We have to be very careful about these two verses. Some people have taken these verses to an extreme. Those who believe in eternal security say that once we are saved, we will always be saved. While it is true that nobody can pluck us out of God's hand, we certainly can take ourselves out of His hands by our own will.

Yet, it is so reassuring to know that if we walk uprightly with God, no one will be able to take us out of His hands. The Apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:38-39: "For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." However, we take ourselves out from under His loving care and protection when we disobey Him.

10:30 - *"I and my Father are one."* Jesus again expresses the beautiful unity that exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for the Godhead is Three in One.

The Final Rejection of Jesus by the Jews (10:30-42)

10:31 - *“Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him.”* Stoning was the method of religious execution in those days. It dates scripturally to the time when Achan and his family were stoned to death in the valley of Achan. It was also incorporated into the Law in Leviticus 20:2, “Whosoever he be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn in Israel, that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him with stones.”

The thought expressed in the Law was that before any sentence was passed, there was to be a diligent inquiry and the accusation had to be proven true beyond a shadow of a doubt before a person could be stoned (Deut. 17:4). Furthermore, two or three witnesses were required. Deuteronomy 17:6-7 says: “At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.” The Jews, who were accusing Jesus of breaking the Law, were themselves breaking the Law, because they were acting as judge, jury, and executioner. There certainly was no examination of the validity of Jesus’ claims.

10:32 - *“Jesus answered them, Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye*

stone me?" Jesus asked them why they wanted to stone Him. All He did was manifest good works. "Why, then, do you desire to kill Me?" He asks.

10:33 - *"The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God."* They accused Him of claiming to be the Son of God. They did not realise that He was the Son of God. On the other hand, the Antichrist will claim to be God, and many of the Jews will accept him (2 Th. 2:9-12).

10:34-36 - *"Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken. Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?"* The Lord now responds by quoting an obscure verse from Psalm 82:6, which is often bypassed in one's studies of the Psalms. In reality, the Lord is saying, "How can you say that I blaspheme by calling Myself the Son of God, when in the Psalms God called His people "gods?"

Let us consider what the Lord is saying here. When we are born again, we take on the nature of God. 1 Peter 1:23 says, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Therefore, in this sense, and only in this sense, we can be called "gods," with a lowercase letter "g". In no way are we "God" with a capital "G". We read in Psalm 82:6,

“I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.” By becoming His adopted sons and daughters, we take on His divine nature and are called “gods.” However, if we do not walk uprightly, we will perish like the heathen, as we read in Psalm 82:7: “But ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.” Therefore, the One whom God has sent into the world has every right to declare that He is the Son of God.

10:37-38 - *“If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him.”* As Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount, we know people by their works and their fruits. By both His demeanour and His works (miracles), Jesus was showing that He was sent of the Father. Jesus presented a powerful argument, saying, “If you do not believe Me for what I say, then believe Me for all of the miracles I have performed.”

Jesus knew that no one could deny the miracles. We, too, should ask God for the healing stream to flow in our ministries and churches so that we may see miracles in abundance. When the power of God is released, many people will believe because of the miracles.

10:39 - *“Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand.”* Many times the Lord saved Himself out of the hands of His enemies because His hour had not yet come. While it is true that the Father had appointed a perfect time for His Son to be crucified, Christ

was not careless and did not tempt His Father. We must use wisdom, too. The wise thing, for Jesus to do, was to not walk openly among the Jews any more (Jn. 8:59; 11:54).

10:40-42 - *“And went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John at first baptized; and there he abode. And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there.”* Christ’s return to the place where John first baptised was a sign that He was the Man of whom John spoke. The people testified that everything John said about Christ was true, and as a result, many people believed on Him.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Seventh Sign - Christ Raises Lazarus (11:1-44)

In John chapter 11, Christ raises Lazarus from the dead. This is the seventh sign of John’s Gospel. The underlying purpose of this miracle was not to manifest the compassion of Jesus for those whom He loved, but rather to substantiate that He is *the Resurrection and the Life*.

11:1 - *“Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.”* Lazarus, meaning, “God has Helped,” is first mentioned here and is only mentioned again in the next chapter. Bethany was a secluded, quiet town situated on the eastern

slopes of the Mount of Olives, about two miles (about an hour's journey) from Jerusalem (15 furlongs), and yet not visible from the city.

Bethany means "the house of figs." Figs speak of sweetness. Bethany was the site of Jesus' marvellous act of kindness toward His friends. The time period is about three or four months after the events of the previous chapter. This seventh sign occurred just before His last Passover when He was crucified.

11:2 - "*(It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.)*" John interjects this account, which he develops in detail in the following chapter, in order to identify the family, and Mary in particular. Mary and Martha are identified as the sisters of Lazarus. It was a family that He loved, and their home was His home away from home when He was in Jerusalem. Luke 10:38 records another time when Jesus was in their house: "Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house."

11:3 - "*Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.*" It is clear that there had been a long standing relationship between Jesus and the members of this family. They felt free to appeal to Him on the basis of their friendship. This is the level of friendship that the Lord Jesus desires to have with each one of us.

11:4 - *“When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.”* There is a similarity between this event and the healing of the man born blind in John 9. Both maladies had been permitted by the sovereignty of God, who planned to manifest His power through His Son with these miracles.

As you study the Word of God, you find that the Lord moves in a different way in every situation so that we can never force Him into a mould. It is very important for us to have the mind of the Lord in every circumstance. What is God’s will? What methods does He use to heal? God’s will here was to raise Lazarus from the dead, but He could not perform a mighty miracle until after Lazarus died. In the case of the nobleman’s son, the Lord said to his father, “Go thy way; your son is healed.” So you see, we cannot put God in a box because He moves in different ways.

11:5 - *“Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.”* Jesus really loved these three siblings who lived together, apparently after the early deaths of their parents, since none of them were married yet. As with all siblings, their characters varied greatly. However, Jesus loved each one of them with their different natures and personalities—showing that we should love even those whose temperaments are very different than ours.

Jesus places Martha before Mary, even though we are told that Mary had chosen the better way. The Lord said to Martha

in Luke 10:41-42, “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.”

People serve the Lord in different ways. Some of us are called to do menial tasks, but like Brother Lawrence of old, who served the Lord in the kitchen of a Parisian monastery, we can still have sweet communion with our blessed Lord. We can practice the presence of God even while we are washing pots and pans. Be encouraged, dear ones; it is not our task that determines our relationship with the Lord, but our attitude while performing our God-appointed duties.

11:6 - *“When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days still in the same place where he was.”* Christ deliberately waited two more days after He heard that Lazarus was deathly sick. His purpose for this was that Lazarus would die, because a greater miracle could be performed through his resurrection than through his healing. The Lord has been remembered throughout all generations for this great miracle.

11:7-8 - *“Then after that saith he to his disciples, Let us go into Judaea again. His disciples say unto him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?”* At the appointed time, Jesus decided to go see Lazarus. Jesus’ decision to return to Judea astonished His disciples because they all knew that they had left Judea to avoid the Jews who were seeking to take His life. However,

the Lord knew that He would be protected by His Father, and that the Jews could do nothing against Him because His hour had not come.

11:9 - *Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.*” Here Jesus was stating a simple fact, that both the Roman and Jewish days were divided into 12 hours, which varied in length according to the season. During these 12 hours of daylight a person could see clearly where he went because the day was lighted by the sun. There is also a spiritual message hidden here. There are only 12 “working” hours in a day. Therefore, we should redeem the time and not waste the precious hours God has given us. *We must make every hour count for eternity!*

11:10 - *“But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him.”* Conversely, because there were almost no street lights in Jesus’ day, there was no light to guide one’s steps at night, and one could stumble easily in the dark. But now Jesus moves from the natural to the spiritual. If a person does not walk in the light of God’s presence, he will stumble. He was referring to Himself as the Light of the World. If a man has the light of Christ within him, he will be guided safely through life. If we have the light of Christ, we will not walk in the darkness of this world.

11:11 - *“These things said he: and after that he saith unto them, Our*

**“Redeeming
the time,
because the
days are evil.”
(Eph. 5:16)**

friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep.” Jesus now returns to the theme of Lazarus. John recorded many sayings of Jesus that were misunderstood at first, but were then clarified by the Lord. Other examples are His conversation with Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1-21) and the woman at the well (Jn. 4:1-15).

The expression “sleepeth” in Scripture has two usages: the first refers to natural sleep, and the second to death. An example of the latter can be seen in the case of Jairus’ daughter who was dead, but Jesus said she was “sleeping” (Mt. 9:24). Stephen, we are told, fell asleep when he was stoned (Acts 7:60); and Paul refers to those who die in Jesus as being “asleep” (1 Cor. 15:6; 1 Th. 4:13). Therefore, in the mind of Christ, the state of the blessed is likened to sleep, even as Samuel referred to his own state as one of rest when he was disturbed by Saul and brought up from the grave (1 Sam. 28:15). Therefore, it was very natural for Jesus to say that He was going to awaken His friend Lazarus out of the blessed state of *sleep* (or death).

11:12-13 - *“Then said his disciples, Lord, if he sleep, he shall do well. Howbeit Jesus spake of his death: but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in sleep.”* The disciples, still interpreting the words of Jesus in the natural sense, thought that everything was fine if Lazarus was just sleeping. Like the disciples, we are prone to misinterpret the words of Jesus when He speaks to us. We need to develop a listening ear to fully understand the Lord’s commands and instructions. Also, we need to be

patient so that we do not misunderstand what He says to us, rush to conclusions, and do something that is not His will. Many people have wrecked their lives because they misinterpreted the Lord's words to them.

11:14 - *"Then said Jesus unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead."*

As in other narratives of John, Jesus explains His original sayings that were misconstrued by His listeners, in this instance His own disciples.

11:15 - *"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe; nevertheless let us go unto him."*

Christ was glad that He was not there when Lazarus was sick because He would have healed him; and it was not the Father's will for Jesus to heal him. Christ had healed many people, but the Father wanted Jesus to do an even greater miracle now and raise Lazarus from the dead, using this miracle to show that He is the Resurrection and the Life.

11:16 - *"Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellow disciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him."* Thomas was unbelieving at first, but later he believed on the Lord with all his heart and was even willing to die for the Lord. I have visited his tomb outside of Madras, India, where he was martyred. In this account, we have a very heroic statement. Thomas was willing to lay down his life because of his love for Jesus.

Many Jews had two names, a Hebrew name and a Greek name. Thomas was his Hebrew name and Didymus, which

means “twin,” was his Greek name. There has been much unprofitable speculation concerning who his twin brother was. Where Scripture is silent we should be like David, who said in Psalm 131:2, “Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.” If Scripture is silent about a certain subject, there is a reason for it; and we must not get engrossed in endless speculations.

11:17 - “*Then when Jesus came, he found that he had lain in the grave four days already.*” This time period can be accounted for in the following manner: Jesus was about one day’s journey from Bethany at this time. Therefore, the messenger would have taken one day and Jesus would have tarried two days. Thus Jesus would have arrived in Bethany on the fourth day. When associated with death, *the fourth day* has a special meaning to the Jews. They believed that the soul of the deceased remained in the vicinity of its corpse for three days, hoping to re-enter, but it would leave after four days when decomposition had taken place. I want to make it clear that this is not a doctrinal fact; I mention it to point out that if the miracle had taken place before the three-day period had ended, many of the Jews may well have challenged it.

11:18 - “*Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off.*” Bethany is the place of unripe figs (Mt. 21:17-19). It was 15 furlongs from Jerusalem. Fifteen in Biblical numerics represents *divine separation* (Gen. 7:20), signifying that a miracle that separated the divine from the natural was about to take place.

11:19 - *“And many of the Jews came to Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.”* At this time, there would have been a considerable number of Jews in the vicinity, since the Rabbis taught that there were four basic functions a man must do to imitate God:

1. God clothed the naked (Gen. 3:21).
2. God visited the sick (Ex. 15).
3. God comforted those that mourned (Gen. 21).
4. God buried the dead—Moses (Deut. 34:6).

The first two were also enjoined by Jesus when He said in Matthew 25:36, “Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.” Paul declared in Romans 12:15, “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” Because God buried Moses, it became a Jewish tradition to give a suitable burial to the departed. The Jews honoured the dead, even as Abraham honoured his wife Sarah, as recorded in Genesis 23:2, “And Sarah died in Kirjatharba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.”

11:20 - *“Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him: but Mary sat still in the house.”* Martha and Mary are contrasted here in their attitude toward the coming of Jesus. Always the impetuous one, Martha rushed out to meet Him, while Mary quietly and humbly awaited His arrival.

11:21-22 - *“Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know, that even*

now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”

It appears that Martha chided Jesus for not coming sooner to save her brother. But then seemingly in the very next breath, she prepares the occasion for a miracle by her statement of faith. We see here the tremendous confidence and assurance that Martha had in Jesus, and His response to her faith.

11:23-24 - *“Jesus saith unto her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”* Again we see that those who talked to Jesus in this Gospel had a different conception of what He was saying, for they often diminished the importance of His words. When Jesus said that Lazarus would rise again, Martha immediately thought He was referring to the resurrection of the dead. Martha precipitously and incorrectly interpreted the words of Jesus by her own understanding, as every one of us is so prone to do, rather than letting Him explain what He meant.

11:25-26 - *“Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”* In response to Martha’s interpretation, Jesus pronounced the fifth “I AM” of John’s Gospel: “I AM the Resurrection and the Life.” The Lord followed this statement by challenging Martha’s faith, asking her, “Do you believe this?”

11:27 - *“She saith unto him, Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the*

world.” As impetuous as always (being very much the female counterpart of Peter), Martha declared the identity of Jesus. Our salvation is based upon our believing that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and our Saviour. We can only receive salvation through the grace of God the Father, as the Lord said to Peter in Matthew 16:17, “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

11:28 - “*And when she had so said, she went her way, and called Mary her sister secretly, saying, The Master is come, and calleth for thee.*” We now see the beauty of Mary’s character, which is also seen in the Bride of Christ—she patiently and humbly waited until the Master called her. Queen Esther depicted this same lovely virtue when she stood in the inner court of the king’s house awaiting the good pleasure of the king; she waited to be called by him.

Waiting in submissive humility to receive the beckon of the King of kings is a beautiful character trait—one that we should all earnestly pray for. There was a certain intimacy between Christ and Mary. He called for her *secretly* to have communion with her.

11:29 - “*As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly, and came unto him.*” Once the call came, Mary promptly responded. This again is the virtue of any bride who loves her husband. How unlike Vashti who refused to come when her husband the king called for her.

11:30 - *“Now Jesus was not yet come into the town, but was in that place where Martha met him.”* The Lord was met by Martha outside the town and remained there obviously awaiting further directions to the grave. Jesus did not intend to go to their house because of the crowd of mourners. It would have been unseemly for a king to make His way through the crowd. With dignified demeanour, King Jesus was content to take His time and proceed with quiet authority to do His Father’s bidding, which was to raise Lazarus from the dead.

11:31 - *“The Jews then which were with her in the house, and comforted her, when they saw Mary, that she rose up hastily and went out, followed her, saying, She goeth unto the grave to weep there.”* We should not overlook a continuing truth concerning mankind that flows through many chapters in John. Succinctly stated, it is that man very often rushes instinctively to a wrong conclusion. In this case, the Jews thought Mary was going to the grave, whereas she was actually going to meet Jesus.

We should take this lesson to heart, and weigh, examine, and try the facts before we, too, draw wrong conclusions in situations. By so doing, we will save ourselves from much heartache due to meditating upon thoughts that are not true.

11:32 - *“Then when Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw him, she fell down at his feet, saying unto him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”* This touching scene moved Jesus’ heart. The prophet Isaiah tells us that “in all their affliction He was afflicted” (Isa. 63:9), as is any father

when he sees his children in distress. Mary and Martha had the confidence that Lazarus would not have died if Jesus had been there. When their brother passed away, they wished that Jesus had been with them. Making the scene more poignant was the fact that they had informed Him about their brother's sickness and He had deliberately delayed His coming. They were almost reproaching Him for His apparent lack of concern, causing Him even more concern.

11:33-34 - *“When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see.”* This caused the Saviour to be grieved and burdened in His own spirit. The grievous sorrow of others was like a heavy weight upon Him. When Jesus inquired where Lazarus was buried, He still did not confide in them the reasons for His delay nor seek to relieve their grief.

11:35 - *“Jesus wept.”* Jesus participated in their sorrow. Even today, the Lord participates in the grief and sorrow of mankind. Not too long ago the Lord appeared to me, and I saw His face wreathed in pain. I said to Him, “Lord, why did You create the world, knowing in advance all the sorrow that You would have to endure because of the anguish and pain of those you created?” The Lord responded by showing me in a vision those who had triumphed gloriously in this life's battles. He said that it was worth it all because of these precious saints. I could not help but agree as I saw their beautiful faces filled with joy and victory.

11:36 - *“Then said the Jews, Behold how he loved him!”*

Through this situation, the love of Jesus not only for Lazarus, but also for mankind was manifested to everyone. We need to know God’s love for us and the pain that He suffers as we pass through the trials of life that are absolutely necessary for our perfection.

11:37 - *“And some of them said, Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?”* Even the Jews were amazed that Jesus had not healed Lazarus, for they believed that He could perform any miracle.

We read in Isaiah 55:8-9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.” God’s thoughts are much higher than our thoughts; and in this case, God wanted to do something far greater than a miracle of healing. He wanted to raise Lazarus from the dead and perform a miracle that would be remembered throughout all generations.

11:38 - *“Jesus therefore again groaning in himself cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it.”* Jesus was so grieved that His whole body was affected by His anguish. He entered into the sorrow of His friends.

The Jewish custom was to bury loved ones in either a natural or man-made cave, which was divided into two sides with three

shelves on each side to lay the dead upon. Thus there could have been several other bodies in the cave already. This tomb, which has now become a monument in the town known today as El-Aziriyeh (in Arabic), has spaces for other corpses, which must have disintegrated over time. There was no door, but a cartwheel shaped stone was placed in front of the opening, usually in a groove so it could be rolled back and forth.

11:39 - *“Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days.”* Martha again incorrectly interpreted Jesus’ words. She thought He wanted to look upon the face of His friend Lazarus. Because of the conditions of those days, by this time his body would have reached a high degree of decomposition and would have been unrecognisable.

Martha reminded Jesus that Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. It is interesting to note how many times the Lord Jesus had to overcome natural thinking, even on the part of His friends, to perform the will of God.

11:40 - *“Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”* Jesus now gently chides Martha by recalling her very own words when she said to Him in John 11:22, “But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee.”

11:41 - *“Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said,*

Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me.” Jesus knew that His Father had heard Him. This is essential before we attempt to do something for God; otherwise we will move in presumption rather than in faith. Spiritually, this stone can speak of things that are blocking a person from coming forth and blossoming in God. The hindrance, whatever it may be, must be removed from our lives so that God can bring forth those miracles that He desires to perform on our behalf.

11:42 - *“And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me.”* This beautiful little verse shows the loving and abiding union and communion that Jesus enjoyed with His Father. It is this same relationship that He wants us to have with Him and with the Father. As we will see later in chapters 15-17, the secret is to abide in the Vine—the Lord Jesus Christ.

11:43 - *“And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”* Christ said, “Lazarus, come forth.” The power of God upon Christ was so strong that if Christ had just said, “Come forth,” everyone buried there would have come out of their graves. John 5:28 says, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice.”

11:44 - *“And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”* A certain person who had a vision of this scene saw Lazarus

completely bound with grave clothes, even over his face. As Lazarus hobbled up the stairs and came out of the grave, the Lord said, “Loose him and let him go.” They took off his grave clothes and released him.

There is a spiritual here truth that we must not overlook. God raised Lazarus from the dead, but it was the people’s responsibility to loose Lazarus from his grave clothes. This flows with the command given in Isaiah 58:6, where we are told to loose the bands of wickedness, let the oppressed go free, and break every yoke. While there is a natural interpretation of both these verses, there is also a spiritual one. After the Lord has met us with a fresh anointing, we have the power to break our own bondages.

11:45-46 - *“Then many of the Jews which came to Mary, and had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him. But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.”* This tremendous miracle caused many people to believe. However, others hardened their hearts and rejected the truth. Regretfully, not everyone chose to believe even when there was a clear-cut demonstration of the power of God so that no one could further doubt that Jesus was sent from God.

The evidence that Jesus Christ is Lord, especially in the case of Lazarus’ resurrection, is irrefutable. This miracle forced people into a decision. Unfortunately, many of them made the wrong decision and did not believe in Jesus. They went their way and told the Pharisees what Jesus had done.

Their love for the honour of this world and being thought well of by their leaders was of greater importance to them than acknowledging the truth.

We read in Jeremiah 17:9 that the heart of man “is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” Also, we are told in Isaiah 26:10, “Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the LORD.”

11:47-48 - *“Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.”* They could not deny the miracles of Jesus. These miracles were performed on people who were very well known in their communities.

Here we see the true character and motive of the Pharisees. They loved their position and honour. They rejected Jesus because they did not want to lose their position among the people. Pilate knew that the chief priests had delivered Jesus because of envy (Mk. 15:10). They were also concerned that Jesus would lead an insurrection against the Romans, causing the Romans to come and take away their positions.

11:49 - *“And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all.”* Caiaphas the High Priest was an ungodly man, yet God used him to speak

to the people. We often think that a person is godly if God speaks through him. However, God speaks through all kinds of people.

The fact that someone is used of God does not mean that he is approved of God. In Switzerland, there was a young Greek girl at our Bible School who excelled in the realm of prophecy and visions. On several occasions when we were seeking the Lord for guidance, the Lord spoke to us His will through this young girl. Outwardly, she appeared to be very spiritual, but she was not living uprightly. Therefore, we must realise that God can even speak through the ungodly.

11:50 - *“Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.”* Caiaphas prophesied of Jesus’ death for the salvation of the world. The Jews wanted their nation to be saved from Rome, and they saw Jesus as a threat to political stability. They did not see Jesus as their Saviour. Of course, when the Lord Jesus returns, He will save the Jews from the political domination of the Antichrist and the political powers of the last days which will besiege Jerusalem.

11:51-52 - *“And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.”*

Let us take note that the Lord Jesus honoured the *office* of the High Priest (cf. Mt. 23:2-3), not the *man* himself. The Lord often honours the position that people hold, but if they are

wicked, He will not honour them personally. When Paul realised that he had condemned the wicked High Priest Ananias, he said in Acts 23:5, “Brothers, I did not realise that he was the high priest; for it is written: ‘Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people’” (NIV). Therefore, we must honour those whom God has appointed to specific offices and positions of authority.

11:53 - *“Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.”* The High Priest, as well as the Jewish religious rulers, continued with their plans and plot to have Jesus put to death.

11:54 - *“Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went thence unto a country near to the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim, and there continued with his disciples.”* Leaving now the scene of this mighty miracle at Bethany, Jesus crossed over Jordan and went to a city called Ephraim. Ephraim was the son of Joseph who received the firstborn blessing and a double portion. Ephraim’s name means “doubly fruitful” (Gen. 49:22-24, Deut. 33:17). Jesus is truly the One who has received the “double portion” of the Father, being the Firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

Like Joseph of old, the Lord Jesus was the provider of bread for His people, both in the natural and in the spiritual. Also, He was the branch that goes over the wall, in the sense that He would be the Saviour of the Gentiles after He had been rejected by His own nation. Jesus remained in the city of Ephraim until the appointed time for His reappearance in Jerusalem to fulfil all the Scriptures pertaining to His death and resurrection.

11:55 - *“And the Jews’ passover was nigh at hand: and many went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the passover, to purify themselves.”* The Passover was the feast that was celebrated the most by the Jews in Old Testament times. To partake of this feast, the Jews had to purify themselves in the Temple, and this took time.

This was the most memorable of all Passovers, for on this particular Feast of Passover, the Lord Himself fulfilled prophecy by becoming the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

11:56 - *“Then sought they for Jesus, and spake among themselves, as they stood in the temple, What think ye, that he will not come to the feast?”* The Jews undoubtedly gathered in little groups, looking for Jesus. Jesus was the centre of the Jews’ conversations, if not the central attraction at the feast.

11:57 - *“Now both the chief priests and the Pharisees had given a commandment, that, if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him.”* The chief priests and Pharisees were seeking to take Jesus’ life. In fact, they had commanded the people to report Jesus’ whereabouts so they could take Him by force.

At this time, Jesus could not move freely because of the envy and jealousy of the priests. However, in perfect peace Jesus waited for the appointed time for His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and to be recognised as King of the Jews.

CHAPTER TWELVE

The Close of Christ's Public Ministry

As we continue our studies in this delightful Gospel, we should remember that John's Gospel has a distinctly different message than the Synoptic Gospels. John gives us specific cameos in the life of Jesus, and omits much of what is covered by the other Gospel writers.

Thus, when we look at the introduction to John 12, which records Jesus' visit to Bethany in His last week upon earth, nothing is mentioned about His journey from a city called Ephraim located in the wilderness. In this interval, several events took place that are recorded in Matthew 20:17-34, Mark 10:32-52, and Luke 18:31; 19:1-28.

12:1 - *"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead."* This Passover was not a normal Sabbath; it was a *high Sabbath* (Jn. 19:31). The 14th of Nissan in A.D. 30 was a Wednesday. Six days before the Passover was the 8th of Nissan, and therefore a Thursday.

12:2 - *"There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him."* Jesus was in the house of Simon the leper (Mt. 26:6). Lazarus is mentioned, no doubt, to place emphasis on the completeness of his miracle. He was perfectly restored, being able to fellowship and eat in a normal manner, although

just a short time before his flesh had experienced decomposition in the grave.

12:3 - *“Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.”* In the Word of God, spikenard represents peace (compare Song of Solomon 4:14 with Galatians 5:22). Why was Christ anointed with spikenard? The reason is that He is the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

This event is recorded in both Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9. This apparently took place two days before the Passover, which would have been the Tuesday evening of the Passover week. This ointment, which was a very costly perfume, was stored by girls in an alabaster box until their wedding day when they would open the box. Their whole house would be filled with the precious fragrance of the alabaster box. Mary was in reality showing that the Lord was her Bridegroom.

John only records that Mary wiped the perfume off His feet—an act of adoration, devotion, and humility toward her Beloved. However, the other Gospel writers mention that she first anointed His head. The liquid perfume would have cascaded down His head, down His garments, and then down to His feet. That is why she wiped His feet.

12:4-5 - *“Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, which should betray him, Why was not this*

ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?" This ointment was worth three hundred pence. The number 300 speaks of walking with God. In Genesis 5:22 we are told that Enoch walked with God for 300 years. Three hundred is also the length of Noah's ark (Gen. 6:15). Christ was a man who walked with God.

12:6 - *"This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein."* Judas did not care for the poor; he only thought of himself. He was a thief, and as Jesus' treasurer, he wished that the perfume had been sold for three hundred pence so he could have stolen the money from the treasury bag, which he was entrusted with.

Jesus' choice of Judas as treasurer is very interesting and has been much debated throughout the centuries. Judas came from Judea whose inhabitants were noted for their administrative ability. He was the only non-Galilean of the 12 disciples. Here again he misused the trust that had been placed upon him, and stole from the communal bag that he carried, which contained the offerings that Jesus and the disciples received for their daily necessities.

12:7-8 - *"Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."* Mary's offering and act of devotion was accepted by the Lord. It shows that the poor do not necessarily have to claim our prime attention, but rather the Lord. Like many today, Judas wanted us to

believe that the second commandment—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—should take pre-eminence over the first commandment, which is our duty toward God.

We must not be unbalanced in this realm. I thank God that the churches in Zion Fellowship have the privilege and honour from God to give to the poor and support humanitarian projects. However, let me emphasise, as Jesus did that although we should give to the poor and needy, we must never allow our eyes and focus to be deflected from the Lord. He is to be our all in all. There is always the danger of getting caught up in the ministry and taking our eyes off the Lord. We are to be Christ-centred in everything we do.

12:9 - *“Much people of the Jews therefore knew that he was there: and they came not for Jesus’ sake only, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead.”* The Jews were then given one last irrefutable proof of Jesus’ God-given ministry. Lazarus was living evidence that Jesus had come from God. Many of the Jews came to see Lazarus.

12:10 - *“But the chief priests consulted that they might put Lazarus also to death.”* The Jews were so intent upon saving their position that they disregarded the truth of God’s mercy that was right before them. Therefore, they sought to destroy the evidence—Lazarus. Why?

12:11 - *“Because that by reason of him many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus.”* The Jewish religious

rulers were faced with a mounting number of witnesses who they feared would oppose them in time. It is a terrible stigma upon the human race that they would defy reason in order to promote their own viewpoint. If this were an isolated case, it would be sad enough, but regretfully, it happens all the time. On many occasions in my own ministry I have known many believers, including ministers, who have rejected the truth to follow their own plans of self-aggrandisement. They are usually the ones who rebel and oppose those who desire to do what is right in the eyes of God.

12:12 - *“On the next day much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem...”* The next day refers to the day after the sixth day mentioned in verse 1. Therefore, it would have been most likely the tenth of Nissan (April), which was the day when the Passover Lamb was to be inspected and approved. Exodus 12:3 says, “Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.”

12:13 - *“...Took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord.”* The interpretation of this gesture on the part of the people is related to the palm branches they carried. Palm trees speak of righteousness, as it is written in Psalm 92:12, “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree.” Thus the people were declaring that Christ was righteous and without blemish.

Although the people did not totally realise it, the act of throwing branches signified that Jesus was the fulfilment of Zechariah 3:8, which says, “Behold, I will bring forth My servant the Branch.” There is a problem here with respect to the chronological order of events. It is clear from Mark’s Gospel that the triumphal entry took place at the beginning of the week, and that many things transpired between this event and the supper at the house of Simon the leper (Mk. 11:11-14:3).

However, it is not unusual for both secular and religious writers to place events out of their chronological order, sometimes for mere effect and other times to emphasise a particular truth that they are seeking to develop. This is the way John wrote his Gospel. He opted not to record many of the events that took place during Christ’s last week on earth. He wanted a certain message to run clearly through his Gospel.

The message of John was that Christ was the Son of God, the “I Am.” Jesus performed certain signs to confirm His claims to be the “I Am.” Thus the event at the house of Simon took place two days before the Passover, as we are told in Mark’s Gospel. John 12:1 took place four days before John 12:2.

12:14 - *“And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written.”* According to the harmony of the Gospels, this event took place on the tenth of Nissan, the day when the Passover lamb was chosen. This account is explained in more detail by the Synoptic writers, as we read in Mark 11:1-2: “And when they came nigh to Jerusalem,

unto Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount of Olives, he sendeth forth two of his disciples, And saith unto them, Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied, whereon never man sat; loose him, and bring him.”

12:15 - *“Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass’s colt.”* This is a quotation from Zechariah 9:9: “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”

The King of Israel made His entrance to Jerusalem riding upon an ass, a symbol of servanthood. Jesus did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister. However, when He comes again, He will come as the mighty Conqueror. Revelation 19:11 speaks of the Lord’s Second Coming, “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.”

12:16 - *“These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.”* Jesus’ disciples did not understand these things at first, but after His resurrection, they realised their significance. Very often the people of God do not comprehend the dealings of the Lord in their own lives, and it takes time for them to see the wisdom of God.

This was true with the children of Israel on their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land.

12:17-18 - *“The people therefore that was with him when he called Lazarus out of his grave, and raised him from the dead, bare record. For this cause the people also met him, for that they heard that he had done this miracle.”* The irrefutable truth of Jesus’ miraculous power swept through the population like a surging tide. The resurrection of Lazarus caused Jesus’ fame to spread throughout the whole region. This makes it all the more remarkable that the other Gospel writers make no mention of Lazarus’ resurrection. Also, this miracle revealed the Pharisees’ true motives.

12:19 - *“The Pharisees therefore said among themselves, Perceive ye how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after him.”* The Pharisees were not interested in the truth. They were interested in their own position and in securing Israel’s place as a nation within the Roman Empire. Can you see the division among the people here? The common people embraced Jesus, but the religious leaders opposed Him out of envy.

12:20-22 - *“And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus.”* This is so beautiful. These Greeks who came to Philip wanted to see Jesus. I think this should ever be our cry—we want to see Jesus.

**“Sir, we
would see
Jesus.”
May this
ever be
our cry!**

A number of years ago, I was invited to preach at a certain church in Australia. When I stepped behind the pulpit, I looked down and I saw the words from John 12:21, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” This was quite a humbling situation. I had to preach afterwards. People wanted to see Jesus, not the minister. Therefore, we should seek to always manifest Jesus in our speech, actions, attitudes, and in our daily walk.

12:23 - *“And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified.”* Previously Jesus had said, “Mine hour has not yet come,” but now He says, “The hour is come.” Jesus spoke of His crucifixion as being glorified. He counted His death all glory. Is this not also the triumphant cry of the Apostle Paul in Romans 5:3? When writing to the saints, he declares, “And not only so but we glory in tribulations...”

Like the Lord Jesus and the Apostle Paul, we should look at tribulation, suffering, and the crucified life as the means whereby we can glorify the Father and receive glory. As we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him (2 Tim. 2:12).

12:24 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”* Jesus here expounds on a law of nature. A potato must be buried in the ground in order that it may produce a crop of potatoes. The same is true of wheat.

There is this principle in nature: multiplication is only possible through death.

Jesus is speaking of Himself here. Through His death, He would bear much fruit, because His fruit would be the salvation of all the believers throughout the history of man. The same truth applies to us, beloved. As we die to ourselves, we are multiplied. We must die to self in order to produce spiritual fruit.

12:25 - *“He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.”* In like manner, to inherit eternal life, one must hate one’s life in this world. We cannot serve two masters; we must choose between God and self.

12:26 - *“If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”* To be a servant of Christ, we must follow His example. Jesus came to be the Servant of all, to lay down His rights in order to serve others. By the grace of God, we must follow His pattern.

Although many of us are probably not called to suffer physical crucifixion, there is a spiritual crucifixion that we must experience. The Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” We must die to ourselves, and

our will, so that we can serve others in humility and live for the glory of God.

12:27 - *“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.”* Jesus was always very conscious of the fact that He had come to die. This was His purpose and mission in life—to die for the sins of the world. We often ask the question, “Who crucified Jesus?” Was it the Romans or the Jewish religious leaders? In one sense it was both of them, and in another sense it was neither of them. In reality, it was God the Father who, out of His great love for the world, sent His Son Jesus to be crucified.

The plan of redemption, which included Jesus’ death upon the cross, began in the heart of God the Father. He needed someone to lay down His life to redeem fallen mankind. The only One who qualified was His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. This is why we read in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that *he gave his only begotten Son*, that he that believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Thus it was decided before the foundation of the world that Jesus would come to die for the sins of the world.

Satan and all of his fallen angels knew that if Jesus went to the cross they would be totally defeated. That is why Satan tried so hard to deflect Jesus from going to the cross. In His temptation, Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would bow and worship him. That would have immediately disqualified Jesus from being the Saviour of

the world. On numerous occasions Satan moved people to try to take Jesus' life, but God's plan was not thwarted. Jesus was determined to finish God's plan for His life.

12:28 - *“Father, glorify thy name. Then came there a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.”* Including this account, there are three recorded incidents in the Gospels in which the Father spoke audibly to His Son.

First, at the Jordan River where Jesus was baptised, the Father spoke from heaven and said, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mt. 3:17). After the Lord passed through His period of preparation, He was ready to be anointed and placed into His ministry.

Second, when Jesus was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration before John, Peter, and James, the Father again spoke from heaven and said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mt. 17:5). This time the Father enjoins the disciples to listen to Jesus. In other words, there was a fresh authority and a new anointing on His words.

Third, the Father spoke here from heaven like thunder saying in John 12:28, “I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” The Father had glorified His name through the life of Jesus and through the miracles of Jesus, especially the raising of Lazarus; and He would yet glorify His name when Jesus went to the cross. Jesus finished His course and glorified the Father.

12:29 - *“The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him.”*

Those standing by heard the voice of the Father and said it sounded like an angel. A similar experience is recorded in Daniel 10:7, when the prophet, although surrounded by others, experienced a unique visitation from an archangel: “And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.” In this vision, God’s purpose was to speak to Daniel, not to his companions, whereas here in the Gospel of John, others heard the voice, too.

12:30 - *“Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes.”* In other words, Jesus was saying, “The Father did not speak for My sake, but for your sake, that you might believe in Him and in Me.”

12:31 - *“Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out.”* The world condemned itself by crucifying the Son of God. What appeared to be Satan’s victory was actually his defeat. It was on the cross that Jesus crushed Satan and stripped him of his power.

12:32 - *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.”* This is speaking of Jesus’ death on the cross. Applying this to our days, the key to a fruitful life is to lift up Jesus and magnify Him in everything we do.

12:33 - *“This he said, signifying what death he should die.”* Christ prophesied of His death by crucifixion several times.

He said in John 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up.” In John 8:28 He said, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He.” Finally, the Lord said in John 12:32, “If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto me.”

Jesus was speaking about His body being lifted up on the cross so He would become salvation for all those who believe. The question arises, why did He choose death by crucifixion? The reason is that the Law said that whoever hung upon a tree was accursed of God (Deut. 21:23), Therefore, Jesus came to take the punishment and curse that we deserved so that we might have eternal life.

12:34 - *“The people answered him, We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of man must be lifted up? who is this Son of man?”* The Jews were very confused. They had contemplated the Scriptures which said that Christ would live forever, but they had overlooked the Scriptures, such as Isaiah 53, which spoke prophetically of His suffering and death. Jesus’ portrayal of His death did not fit the Jews’ description of their triumphant King. They thought He would come to release them from Roman bondage.

12:35-36 - *“Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe*

in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them.” Jesus is the True Light. He was telling them that He would not be with them much longer and that they should believe on Him while He was still with them. Jesus is the Light of the world, and without His direction and guidance, we are lost in darkness.

We need to realise as the prophet Jeremiah said that, “it is not in man to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23), and we do not have the ability within us to plan our lives wisely. We need the assistance of the Holy Spirit. God has already designed a wonderful plan for our lives; our responsibility is to discern that plan and fulfil it. The whole key is to find out what God wants us to do in life.

Years ago at a certain convention I attended, the evangelist who was preaching said that when he first started out in the ministry, he had already planned his whole life and ministry. He decided that he wanted to be a youth pastor first, then an assistant pastor, and eventually a senior pastor of a church. However, God had other plans for his life. God sent him to many countries as an evangelist, and he never did become a senior pastor. Therefore, let us say to the Lord, “What have You planned for my life, and what do You want me to do?” God is able to plan our lives far better than we can, so let us put our trust in Him.

12:37 - *“But though he had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him:”* The people did not

believe on the Lord because of their hardened heart condition. The key to believing is the condition of our hearts. We can see all kinds of evidence, but we will not believe unless our hearts are right.

12:38 - *“That the saying of [Isaiah] the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spake, Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?”* This is a quotation from Isaiah 53:1.

12:39-41 - *“Therefore they could not believe, because that [Isaiah] said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them. These things said [Isaiah], when he saw his glory, and spake of him.”* John now quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. The reason the Israelites could not believe was that they approached the Lord with their mouths, but did not draw near to Him with their hearts (Isa. 29:13). Because of this, God smote them with spiritual blindness. It is true today that the same heart condition prevents some people from going on with God (see Mt. 13:15).

What a privilege the Lord has bestowed upon us to understand His Word. It is not something that we have attained because we have been brought up in a Christian home or because we decided to become Christians. It has been given to us by God. What a privilege! We should reciprocate His love by living in such a way that we give much pleasure to the One who has done so much for us.

12:42-43 - *“Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.”* Some of the chief rulers believed in Christ, but they did not confess Him because they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. They did not want to lose the praise and friendship of their peers. Christ said in John 5:44, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”

12:44-45 - *“Jesus cried and said, He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me.”* Jesus is again expressing the unity that exists between the Father and the Son. If we believe in Jesus, in reality we believe that the Father has sent Him into the world. On the other hand, if a person does not believe in Jesus, he does not believe in the Father who sent Him. If we embrace the works of the Son, we in fact believe in the works of the Father, who accomplishes all things through His Beloved Son. In actuality, it was the Father who orchestrated the plan of redemption prior to the foundation of the world. Continuing the sublime identification of the Father and the Son, Jesus says, “If you have seen Me you have seen the Father.”

12:46 - *“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.”* Therefore, Jesus is the Light of the world that makes the eternal purposes and works of the Father clear to mankind.

12:47 - *“And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.”* Here the Lord makes it very clear that His mission was to save mankind from their sins, not to condemn them. Paul echoes this same thought in 1 Timothy 2:4 where he says, “God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” After all, it was because of God’s great love for this world that He sent Jesus to die for us. Nevertheless, the Father has given man a free will, and with it the ability to either accept or reject His salvation.

12:48 - *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”* The Lord here gives a warning to those who reject Him and His words—they will one day be judged by the very words that they have rejected.

Eternal judgment is a very real thing, as is hell. Jesus spoke on eternal judgment more than He did on the glories of heaven. There are innumerable torments in hell, but the greatest torment of all is to be cut off from God’s presence forever. There is absolutely no hope in hell.

Many who “grace the portals of the churches” and have heard the message of God, yet have not embraced it, will forever have a gnawing regret within their being because they had the opportunity to receive salvation but rejected it. Instead of spending all eternity with the Lord and all the saints, enjoying the pleasures of the kingdom of God, they will be condemned to the raging flames of hell forever and ever.

12:49 - *“For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak.”* Here we see the reality of the Spirit-led life that was manifested by the blessed Son of God. He was a perfect and undefiled channel for the message of God to that generation. Even as Christ did not speak His own words, we should not speak our own words but only the divine message of God. We should be anointed of the Father to speak the words that He gives us to speak.

12:50 - *“And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.”* Christ was perfectly controlled by the Father. He only spoke the words of His Father, and none of His words fell to the ground. We want to be filled with His words also.

There was a beautiful relationship of union and communion between the Son and the Father. Whenever Christ opened His lips to speak, it was the Father who filled them with the words that were on His heart. By the grace of God, we want to have that same union and communion with Christ so that we only speak the words that He gives us to speak (1 Pet. 4:11). This marks the end of the Lord’s public ministry.

PART FOUR

Farewell Discourses

13:1 - 17:26

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Chapter 12 finished the public ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now there are the Farewell Discourses of the Lord in the Upper Room. These are very intimate discussions between the Lord and His beloved disciples. Between this chapter and the previous one there are several events not recorded in John, but covered by the Synoptic writers. During this time, Judas made a covenant with the chief priests to betray Jesus, and the Upper Room was chosen to be the place where they would celebrate the Passover together (see Mk. 14:10-16, Mt. 26:14-20).

13:1 - *“Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.”* Here we are challenged by the perfect, unbroken love of Christ for His own disciples. Jesus loved them in spite of their weaknesses. They had been Jesus’ constant companions throughout His three years of tumultuous ministry.

He said to them in Luke 22:28-30, “Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. 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.”

However, although they were His closest companions, just prior to this the disciples were disputing among themselves which one of them would be the greatest. We read in Luke 22:24, “And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.” This took place at the Last Supper, just prior to His crucifixion, when He so desperately needed their comfort and strength. I believe this is a lesson for us. Often we are not understood by those closest to us in our time of greatest need. However, just as Jesus continued to love His disciples, so must we ever be loyal to our loved ones—those who have walked with us and been faithful to us over the years.

13:2 - *“And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray him.”* The devil had already put into the heart of Judas the desire to betray Christ. Judas had a heart that was open to evil. He did not guard his heart (see Prov. 4:23, 2 Tim. 2:26) and as such, his heart became fertile ground for the Devil to sow such a desire in it.

Psalm 109:16-17 says prophetically of Judas, “Because that he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart. As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.” Judas was a vile person, but he was anointed and performed many miracles and cast devils out of other people.

13:3 - *“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God.”* For a time Jesus battled to believe that He was the Son of God. If you notice carefully, Satan knew this and used it in the temptation. Satan always zeroes in on a person’s weakest point. He said to Jesus, “If thou be the Son of God then command that these stones be made bread.” Again he said, “If thou be the Son of God...”

In other words, Satan was casting doubt upon the fact that Jesus was really the Son of God, because he knew that it was a test of faith for Jesus. However, after all the miracles and countless signs, Jesus then knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that He had come from God and that He would return to God. Many times, new believers have this same struggle.

They give their hearts to the Lord, but then Satan comes and tries to make them feel guilty for their past and tells them that they are not really saved. We need to be assured that we are truly the sons and daughters of the Most High God.

13:4-5 - *“He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.”*

Laying aside His garments (representing His position and authority), the Lord took the place of a servant and washed His disciples’ feet. This was an act of extreme humility; it was the duty of the lowest servants in the Middle East to

wash the feet of others. This act of foot washing was an example of humility that Christ wants us to follow. We should be humble and serve others. We have to condescend to the level of people to serve them.

13:6 - *“Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?”* It was normal practice that when one entered into a house, the lowest of the servants would wash one’s feet. On the other hand, to have your friend, let alone your Lord and Master, wash your feet was indeed a humbling situation. This was too much for Peter to bear. We see that he did not understand the spiritual importance of this act.

13:7 - *“Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”* Again, as we have remarked previously, there are things in our lives that we do not understand when they occur. We have to accept them by faith.

13:8 - *“Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.”* Jesus said to Peter that if he did not allow Him to wash his feet, he would have no part with Him.

This is true spiritually as well. Unless we allow the Lord to wash us spiritually, we will have no part with Him. How are we washed spiritually? We are washed by the water of the Word of God (Eph. 5:26). Therefore, if we do not read God’s Word daily and spend time listening to His voice, we will

have no part with Him and our relationship with Him will be broken.

13:9 - *“Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”* Peter, as usual, went from one extreme to the other. First, he told the Lord that He would never allow Him to wash his feet. Then he told the Lord to wash his hands and his head also. Peter was not very stable, but he had a good heart, and in time the Lord made him as solid and stable as a rock. So often we can relate to Peter and his instability; but thank God, that we can also take comfort from the fact that Peter did settle down in his later years.

13:10 - *“Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.”* Jesus points out here that not all of the 12 disciples were clean. He was referring to Judas who was unclean in heart because he was evil and had not allowed the Word to cleanse him. Christ said in John 15:3, “Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.” We are washed through the reading of God’s Word and as we obey His Word.

13:11 - *“For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.”* Jesus washed them by speaking unto them the Word of life for three-and-a-half years, but not all of them were made clean. How true it is that people can sit in church listening to great teachers and never be changed by the same Word that is transforming others around them. Judas was privileged to listen to the Greatest Teacher of all

time, the Word Incarnate—the Lord Jesus—but his heart was never transformed. Demas travelled with Paul for many years, but turned back because he loved this world (2 Tim. 4:10). We need to keep our own hearts with all diligence so that we might remain faithful to our blessed Lord unto the very end.

13:12 - *“So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?”* Now comes the explanation of this act of humility that was to serve as a poignant reminder of the lifelong attitude that they were to have toward their brethren.

13:13-14 - *“Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”* Jesus pointed out to the disciples that He was indeed their model, showing them how to treat one another. We are called to be servants. Here is that thought of the humility of mind that is so necessary for serving one another.

13:15 - *“For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”* Christ’s washing of His disciples’ feet was an example of humility that we should follow. We should serve and prefer one another before ourselves. Christ said in Mark 9:35, “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.”

13:16 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he*

that sent him.” We are not greater than our Lord. Since He came to minister, we also should adopt that same attitude.

13:17 - *“If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.”* Jesus is saying, “If you know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” True happiness comes from obeying the commandments of the Lord, and in this case, from loving and serving others.

We need to adopt the attitude of a servant. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Roman believers in Romans 1:14, “I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians...” We are to pay that debt in caring for one another and being servants one to another.

13:18 - *“I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.”* This is taken from Psalm 41:9, which was originally written by King David about Ahithophel, the man who betrayed him (2 Sam. 15:31). Most importantly, this psalm was prophetic of Judas’ betrayal of Christ. In the Middle East, the eating of bread together has the significance of close fellowship and unswerving loyalty to one another. “Lifting up the heel” is similar to the action of a horse that kicks its owner who has cared for it for many years.

13:19 - *“Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he.”* Jesus is clearly identifying Himself with the poor and needy man of Psalm 109:16, who

died of a broken heart. He was betrayed by the one whose office would go to another (v. 8). This verse was quoted by Peter in Acts 1:20 at the time when the apostles met to choose a replacement for Judas in the apostolic band.

13:20 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.”* When we receive people in the name of Jesus, we are actually receiving Jesus. And the way we treat them is the way we are treating the Lord. Therefore, we should always be hospitable and kind to people. Again we see that Jesus is emphasising the fact that we have to receive Him in order to please God. In receiving Christ, we are in reality receiving the Father.

13:21 - *“When Jesus had thus said, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”* So often our own spirits are troubled when we are being betrayed by those with whom we once walked. Betrayal is a very upsetting experience. It brings trouble and suffering not only for the person betrayed, but also for the betrayers, yet to a much greater and more serious level of trouble and pain. The betrayers will suffer terribly for their acts of disloyalty and unfaithfulness.

13:22 - *“Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spake.”* The disciples had no idea who the betrayer was, for if they had known who he was, they probably would have lynched Judas; and he would never have had the opportunity to complete his betrayal of the Lord. Jesus kept

it hidden very well. Jesus was always good to Judas and treated him like the other disciples, ever hoping to turn him around. Jesus' self-control was amazing.

Right from the beginning when He chose the 12 disciples He said, "I know that one of you has a devil," but the other disciples had no knowledge of who Judas was (Jn. 6:70). Jesus treated Judas just like the others. This is the place the Lord wants to bring us to, so that He can entrust us with secrets concerning people's lives and futures. We must have Christ's same self-control in order not to treat them differently in word, thought, or attitude, so that those around us will have no knowledge of their true character.

13:23-24 - *"Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake."* Peter told John, who was leaning on Jesus' bosom, to ask the Lord who the betrayer was, because Peter knew that John was so close to the Lord that He would tell him. Revelation is based upon relationship. Who had the closest relationship with Jesus? John. That is why he received the revelation of who the betrayer was, although he did not understand it at first.

13:25 - *"He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?"* This confident but humble assurance on the part of John is very touching. This is degree of intimacy that the Lord desires to have with each one of us. He longs to enjoy close fellowship with His people.

13:26 - *“Jesus answered, He it is, to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon.”* As we have mentioned before, this act of breaking bread one with another was a mark of friendship. The one to whom the sop was given was considered to be united with those present and was considered a member of their family. Therefore, this was love’s last appeal to Judas, but he rejected it.

13:27 - *“And after the sop Satan entered into him. Then said Jesus unto him, That thou doest, do quickly.”* Jesus was always in command, even in His betrayal. Jesus knew that His Hour had come, and He did not want anything to delay heaven’s program.

13:28 - *“Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spake this unto him.”* When Jesus gave the sop to Judas, the disciples viewed it as a sign of friendship between Jesus and Judas. They were still ignorant of the betrayal that was being put into motion by Jesus’ command to Judas.

13:29 - *“For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of [for] the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor.”* The disciples assumed that the Lord was merely giving some instructions to Judas, the treasurer, concerning provision for the feast. However, it was essential for them to know nothing about the plot, for they would certainly have intervened and thus prevented the fulfilling of Scripture.

13:30 - *“He then having received the sop went immediately out: and it was night.”* Judas was completely possessed by Satan, and yet Satan could only do the will of God. Satan moved Judas to betray Jesus out of envy, but in actuality, he was fulfilling the will of God.

The Disciples’ Questions (13:31-14:31)

13:31 - *“Therefore, when he was gone out, Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”* When the one who caused strife left, there was an entirely different atmosphere. The same is true in churches. When those who cause strife are plucked out by God, there is a change that takes place for the better. A different atmosphere now prevailed in the Upper Room. Jesus was now among those who loved Him, and He could share with them many of the beautiful truths that He had in His heart for this very hour. It was then that He said, *“Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him.”* As a wise Son, Christ brought glory to His Father. We want to be wise sons who bring glory to our Heavenly Father.

13:32 - *“If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him.”* The Lord is saying that if we glorify God then He in turn will glorify and bring us to honour.

13:33 - *“Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to you.”* In other words, He said,

“I am leaving, and you cannot follow Me.” But then He gave them a new commandment.

13:34-35 - *“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”* Love is the proof that we are the Lord’s disciples (cf. Eph. 5:25). The world will know that we are Christ’s disciples if we manifest love toward one another.

Christ emphasised three virtues in the Upper Room: *love*, *joy*, and *peace*. It is wonderful when God develops and perfects these virtues in our hearts.

13:36 - *“Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, whither goest thou? Jesus answered him, Whither I go, thou canst not follow me now; but thou shalt follow me afterwards.”* Always inquisitive, Peter asked the Lord where He was going. The clear implication was that Jesus was going to the cross, and Peter could not be with Him at that time because Jesus alone could die for the sins of the world. To allow Peter to be crucified at that time would have confused the Gospel message.

13:37 - *“Peter said unto him, Lord, why cannot I follow thee now? I will lay down my life for thy sake.”* This conversation is developed in the Synoptic Gospels in more detail. In a nutshell, what the Lord said concerning Peter’s request was, “I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be

scattered abroad.” To Jesus’ statement, Peter responded, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended” (Mt. 26:31-33). By saying this, Peter opened himself up to temptation, and made himself a target for Satan by his proud declarations of undying loyalty. The result was that he denied the Lord.

13:38 - *“Jesus answered him, Wilt thou lay down thy life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto thee, The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.”* The reason Peter could not follow Christ was that, like all of us, he had to have grace for each step of his life; and the grace to die would only be given to him when his hour had come. This is true of our walk, too; for there will be no grace given us if our hour has not come.

Many years ago, when I served as an assistant pastor in France, we had in our congregation people who had been members of the Marquis, the French Resistance Force. These people were armed at all times because they had to face very difficult situations. Their purpose was to break up the German reservoir of control over France by gathering information for the allies.

Many Christians were in favour of the resistance movement, but their pastors warned them time and time again about the error of this uprising. The pastors pleaded with the people, saying, “Let us accept the German occupation; let us believe that God will remove them in His good time.” Unfortunately, these Christians did not obey the counsel of their pastors and said, “We will fight.”

By joining the Marquis, people were literally putting their lives on the line. The Germans tortured every member of this organisation they captured in order to find out the identity of the rest of the members. One tactic the Germans used to torture the members of this group was to light matches under their fingernails.

There was a particular pastor involved with the Marquis at that time who thought that by torturing himself he would be able to withstand the German tortures if he was ever captured. The interesting thing was that none of his preparation helped him when he was tortured by the Germans. He was the first to give in.

We must receive grace to go through torture, and in fact, to go through every circumstance of our lives. It is important to remember that grace will only be given to us when our hour is come. Peter's hour had not come; therefore, there was no grace given him. On the other hand, it was Christ's hour, and grace was given to Him to go to the cross. May we learn this lesson, and ask God to pour out His bountiful grace when our hour has finally come (see Mt. 26:31-33, Mk. 14:29-31, Lk. 22:31-34).

The Reasons for Peter's Denial of the Lord

1. He declared that he would follow the Lord, even after the Lord Himself had said that he could not follow Him (Jn. 13:36-37).

2. He declared himself to be better and more loyal than the other disciples. In Matthew 26:33, he said to the Lord, “Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.”
3. He refuted the fulfilment of Jesus’ saying (Mt. 26:31-33).
4. He did not heed the warning that Satan had desired to sift him as wheat (Lk. 22:31).
5. He did not repent when the Lord warned him that he would deny Him three times before the cock crew.

Peter could not follow the Lord to the cross because it was not his time to die. Therefore, there was no grace available for him to be crucified. In the original Greek, there were no chapter breaks between chapter 13 and chapter 14. Therefore, in John 14:1, the Lord is still speaking to Peter. Jesus told Peter not to let his heart be troubled. He did not want Peter to become overwhelmed by his denial of the Messiah and give up.

When the Lord was resurrected, the angels commanded the women who came to the grave to tell the disciples and *Peter* that the Lord had been raised from the dead (Mk. 16:7). Peter was singled out by name. The Lord wanted to make sure that Peter recovered from his failure.

While it is true that both Peter and Judas betrayed the Lord, there was a tremendous difference between the two of them. Peter boasted of his great loyalty to the Master because he wanted to be faithful to the One whom he loved, whereas Judas was bent on betrayal. Judas was an evil man controlled by his love for money. Peter was a good man who needed to mature.

Peter could not have been crucified with the Lord Jesus. There is only grace to do something if it is the will of God, and it was not the will of God for Peter to be crucified at that time. However, Jesus knew Peter's heart and told him not to be troubled, but to simply pick up where he had left off.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

14:1 - *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”* As we have mentioned, in the original manuscript there were no chapter divisions. This verse is the continuation of Christ's words to Peter in chapter 13. We must understand that the Lord knew Peter's heart. He also knew that Peter was genuine when he said that he did not want to deny the Lord and that he wanted to die with Him. God could not allow one of the disciples to die with Christ because that would have blurred the image of the crucifixion. Therefore, the Lord's concern now is that Peter would not lose faith; so He tells him, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me.”*

14:2 - *“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for*

you.” In the original Greek, the word *mansions* means “habitation or dwelling places.” Heaven is a large place, and there are different levels of dwelling places. We want to be near the Lord in heaven (cf. Zech. 3:7, Rev. 21:9-21).

“I go to prepare a place for you.” The Lord said to Daniel, “But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days” (Dan. 12:13). Those who have seen heaven know that there are many beautiful mansions prepared for us. Nevertheless, we need to understand that the materials for our heavenly mansions must be sent up from here.

In other words, our mansions in heaven are prepared, in a sense, according to our good works; and we must send up material. Some time ago, a pastor’s wife shared with me a vision she had of heaven. In heaven she saw that her father’s house was almost ready, and surely enough, her father died shortly afterwards. She also saw her mother’s house, which still needed more work. Then she saw a few sticks lying on the land where her house was going to be built. An angel said to her, “You have to send up more material, because without the material of good works we cannot build your house.” Therefore, dear reader, let us major on good works.

14:3 - *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* When our time to die comes, the Lord Himself escorts us to our heavenly abode. One of my students named Madeline in a Bible school in Switzerland

had a call to Africa, but she was diagnosed with leukaemia at a very young age. As she lay on her death bed, seven pastors including myself gathered around her to pray that God in His mercy would take her to heaven, for we felt that it was God's time to take her.

As we were praying I saw the chariots of Israel come across her bed with amazing power. Then I saw the portals of heaven open. There was a path that came right down to Madeline's bed. The Lord Himself walked down this path and touched her. She came out of her body and He escorted her to heaven on His right arm. As they walked toward heaven, they were talking to each other like bride and groom. Because of this, we put on her epitaph the words "the bride hath made herself ready."

Two or three days later I saw her in heaven. She was dressed in white, walking with other young girls in the beautiful grasslands of heaven. Although I did not hear the words, I knew that they were singing the songs of Zion. I also saw her playing an instrument that was veiled from my eyes. Obviously, it was a heavenly instrument that the Lord did not want to reveal here on earth.

14:4 - *"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."*

The Lord had taught the disciples very clearly the way of salvation and placed their feet upon the pathway of the just, which David, when instructing Solomon, described as "the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18).

14:5 - *“Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?”* Even at the last hour when everything was going to be entrusted into the hands of His disciples, one of them (Thomas) needed further instruction.

14:6 - *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”* This is the sixth “I Am” of Christ. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus is the only way of salvation. This can be illustrated in the following way:

The Way	The Outer Court	Jer. 6:16; Ps. 23:3
The Truth	The Holy Place	Jn. 18:38; 7:17; 8:32, 36; 14:17, 26; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:9-10
The Life	The Holy of Holies	Jn. 10:10, 28; Rom. 5:17

There is only one way and only one door into heaven. This is brought out in the Tabernacle of Moses, which only had one entrance into the Outer Court, one entrance into the Holy Place, and only one entrance into the Holy of Holies. As we can see, truth is found only in Christ, as Paul says in Colossians 2:3,

“In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” Outside of Christ there is no wisdom. Christ is the door and the only means of eternal life.

“No man cometh unto the Father but by me.” It is vital that we understand this very simple truth. One of the Archbishops of Canterbury, leader of the Episcopal Church at that time, visited India several years ago. While observing many worshippers entering their heathen temples at Madurai, he made this statement, “How devout they are.” However, a little English missionary near him said: “But they are lost, your Grace; they are lost. There is only one way.”

There is an ecumenical movement in the Church today to embrace all religions. Many people say, “The Muslims have their form of worship, the Buddhists have theirs, and we have ours; but we will all go to heaven.” That is totally false! There is only one way, and that is through Christ. Unless a Muslim or a Buddhist accepts the Lord Jesus Christ into his heart as His Saviour, he is going to hell. We must love the unsaved and seek to win them to Christ; and we have to be very clear about the fact that they are going to hell if they do not embrace Christ. There is only one way to heaven, and that is through believing in Jesus Christ. Outside of Him, there is no salvation.

14:7 - *“If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.”* Here Jesus is clearly stating that the only way to know the Father is through knowing His Son; therefore, if we know Jesus Christ we also know the Father.

14:8 - *“Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”* It is obvious that Philip did not understand what the Lord was saying. This is a perfect depiction of what usually happens when the Lord speaks to us. Yet the Lord, as the Good Teacher, continues by patiently repeating His message.

14:9 - *“Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”* To see Jesus is to see the Father, because He is the express image of the Father (Heb. 1:3).

Christ and the Father are one, and They have called us to be one with Them. I remember the story of a little boy in England who was approached by a missionary in one of the poorest streets in town. The missionary asked him, “Do you know Jesus?” The little boy said: “Oh yes, I know Him. He lives on the other street, house number such and such.” The missionary, being somewhat surprised at the boy’s response, asked him, “What do you mean?” “Exactly what I just told you,” said the little boy, “That is where he lives.” Having taken note of the house number, this missionary went there and discovered that it was a pastor’s house. The little boy had identified this pastor with Jesus! The Lord wants to bring us to the place where the life of Christ shines forth through us so that others see Jesus in and through our lives.

14:10 - *“Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not*

of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” Gently, and with great patience, Jesus repeats and emphasises what He has been saying all along, seeking to engrave these truths in Philip’s mind and understanding.

If you are a teacher, remember that some people will understand your teachings, but others will surprise you by not even grasping some of the simplest and most fundamental truths. If this happens to you, do not be discouraged or lose hope; do not think that you have failed as a teacher. I have often found that those who have the most difficult time understanding a certain truth are the ones who eventually grasp, retain, and teach that truth more effectively than those who seemingly grasped it the first time.

14:11 - *“Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.”* The Lord Jesus is trying to emphasise that He and the Father are One, and that the Father is working through Him.

14:12 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.”* Elisha did greater works than Elijah because he was anointed with a double portion of Elijah’s anointing. Elijah is a type of Christ, and Elisha is a type of the Church. In the last days, the Church will do greater works than Jesus did.

In the Early Church, the very shadow of Peter healed the sick. Paul was also mightily used by God in the realm of healing.

People would take aprons, cloths and scarves off of his body, lay them on the sick, and they would be healed. Philip was transported by the Spirit of God from Gaza to Azotus. This was the beginning of the fulfilment of Christ's promise, but of course, it was nothing compared to what is going to happen in our days. Tremendous miracles will take place in these last days. We want to be encouraged by Christ's promise. Greater works will be done in the last day Church because the Lord has kept the best wine until last (Jn. 2:10).

14:13-14 - *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.”* Christ said in Matthew 7:7-11, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”

Again, Jesus was stressing the relationship that should exist between our Heavenly Father and us. A son feels free to ask his father for the things he desires; the father delights in giving them to his son. Obviously, there are certain limits to this truth. If a son is very young, the father is not going to give him things that would harm him or that he would not appreciate. In the same way, our loving Heavenly Father

protects us by not giving us things that could deflect us from His path, but if we ask *according to His will*, He will grant our requests.

14:15 - *“If ye love me, keep my commandments.”* This is the true hallmark of love. A wife who loves her husband does what he wants her to do. In much the same way, one who truly loves the Lord seeks to please Him at all times. If we really love the Lord, we will keep His commandments.

14:16 - *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.”* The word for Comforter in the Greek is *“parakletes,”* which means “someone who walks alongside another to encourage.” The Roman armies had “comforters” who continually encouraged them to march and fight. In the same manner, the Holy Spirit walks beside us to comfort us. Incidentally, this is one of the virtues of the Godhead. God Himself is called “the God of all comfort” in 2 Corinthians 1:3. Jesus Himself also comforts us since He referred to the blessed Holy Spirit as *another Comforter*.

14:17 - *“Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”* Even in the Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit dwelt with the saints of God. The difference between the Old and New Testaments is that in the New Testament times, the Holy Spirit dwells inside us. This refers both to the action of the Holy Spirit in our salvation when we are born again and the baptism

of the Holy Spirit with the initial evidence of speaking in other tongues.

14:18 - *“I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.”*

It is reassuring to know that when we cry out to the Lord, He will come to us. This was shown to me in a vision in which I saw the Lord standing above the world. Someone cried out, “Jesus!” Then I saw Jesus Himself standing beside the person, listening to his petition. He did not send an angel, He came Himself. That is how precious we are in His sight.

14:19 - *“Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.”*

Now referring to His crucifixion which was only hours away, Jesus was in effect saying that His purpose on earth was finished, and that after His death the world would see Him no more. However, those who love Him can say as David, “I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Ps. 16:8). The Lord then concludes this verse by reminding us that we have eternal life because of Him.

14:20 - *“At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father,*

and ye in me, and I in you.” This beautiful truth of Christ’s dwelling in the hearts of His people is expressed in Ephesians 3:16-19, where the Apostle Paul says, “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend

with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

14:21 - *“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.”* If we truly love the Lord, we will keep His commandments and obey Him. If we do obey Him, He will manifest (or openly show) Himself to us. The Lord manifests Himself to those who obey Him. We want to see Christ as He is (1 Jn. 3:2).

14:22 - *“Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”* Judas and the other disciples did not understand that the Lord was speaking of His death and resurrection. After being raised from the dead, He would become omnipresent once again and would be able to appear to His loved ones, unknown to the world.

14:23 - *“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”* Love for the Lord and obedience to His commandments go side by side.

If a wife loves her husband, she does what her husband asks her to do. Love and obedience go together. The proof that

we love Jesus is that we keep His commandments and His Word. The Lord will make His abode with us if we obey Him. He will abide in His living temples (1 Cor. 3:16).

14:24 - *“He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s which sent me.”* The reverse is also true. Those who do not love the Lord will not pay attention to His wishes nor heed them. To their chagrin, they will find that Jesus speaks the words of His Father. Those who do not listen to Him will in turn not be heard by the Father in the time when the pangs of death take hold of them and their souls slip down into the blackness of darkness forever.

14:25 - *“These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you.”* The Lord is saying that He is about to end His earthly teachings, but that after His death He would speak to them again through the Holy Ghost.

14:26 - *“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”* It is the Holy Spirit who brings these things to our remembrance. The beauty of the anointing is that even while we are preaching, the Holy Spirit brings things to our remembrance.

When we are preparing messages, it is very important to pray and be anointed by the Spirit of God. Then the Lord Jesus brings to our remembrance certain Scriptures and events that

will help us bring forth and illustrate the truths that are upon His heart for that specific day. When we are preaching from the pulpit, all kinds of fresh thoughts that were not in our notes come to us.

14:27 - *“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”* In verse 27 the Lord speaks to His disciples on the subject of peace. There is a great difference between having peace with God and having the peace of God (Rom. 5:1). We want an impartation of God’s peace. The peace of God is a wonderful blessing; it will keep your mind through all the difficulties of life. Unfortunately, not many people in the world have the peace of God.

When I was in Bible school the Lord said to me, “I am going to give you My peace.” To tell you the truth, I was a little disappointed because I was praying for other things at that time. Nevertheless, over the years I have come to appreciate His peace. Dear reader, ask the Lord to give you His covenant of peace.

Fear is one of the most powerful weapons that the enemy uses against us. Fear torments our minds, whereas perfect love casts out fear (1 Jn. 4:18). Years ago when my wife and I were in a certain city, I asked the Lord for a Scripture before we went to bed. He spoke to me and said, “Troublesome times are coming.” Without asking the Lord the interpretation of this word, we went to sleep.

About 8:30 in the morning, the windows of the hotel where we were staying started to shake; the walls cracked, and the floor moved up and down. Since I did not know what was happening I asked my wife, "What is going on?" She had been through an earthquake before; so she explained, "It is an earthquake." What was amazing about this whole experience was that before we even had time to pray, it was as though a tent came down and covered us. We had such peace that it did not seem real; it seemed like we were watching something on television. The peace of God is an invaluable treasure for those who possess it, especially in times of trouble and conflict (Rom. 16:20).

Another time we were in Guatemala at the time of the earthquake in 1976. This earthquake was followed by approximately a thousand aftershocks. I remember being in a certain hotel where we were having lunch with several missionaries when the building began to shake. Our table was right in the centre of this restaurant, and everyone in the restaurant looked at us when the aftershock began. It was as though they were saying, "If the missionaries move, we move; if they stay, we stay." The chandelier above was shaking, but we continued eating our meal, and everyone else settled down, too.

It is a wonderful thing to have the peace of God at all times. The peace of God is one of the blessings that God gives to His people, and one of the greatest treasures that He has made available to mankind. However, it is only through the Prince of Peace that we can receive the peace of God that passes all understanding.

14:28 - *“Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.”* One of the joys of the Christian life is to know that when our time on earth is finished we will enter into the joys of heaven above. Thus the Lord told His disciples that they should rejoice because He was finally going to be reunited with His Heavenly Father.

14:29 - *“And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe.”* He was sharing with them all these blessed truths so that by the grace of God, they would remember them on the day of Pentecost and know for a certainty that He is the Christ, the Son of God.

14:30 - *“Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.”* At this point, Jesus knew He had only a few hours left to teach His disciples. From this time on He was going to face the greatest onslaughts of Satan. As they were preparing to leave the Upper Room, Jesus said, “I do not have much more time to talk to you.” This was His last opportunity to talk with His disciples. For this reason, He delivered some of His most important teachings. What did He speak of at that time? Principally, love, joy, and peace. Certainly, these are treasures that no money can buy, no power can obtain, and no position of authority can command.

14:31 - *“But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise,*

let us go hence.” Chapters 13 – 14 were spoken in the Upper Room, but at this point in the narrative, Jesus and His disciples were making their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. Chapters 15–17 were spoken on the way to Gethsemane, just before crossing the Brook Kidron.

Christ continued sharing His heart with His disciples as they walked through the streets of Jerusalem until they crossed over the Kidron Brook in chapter 17. That was the mode of the Rabbinical teaching. The Rabbis in Jesus’ day would teach as they walked along with their disciples. The composure of Christ just before His betrayal and crucifixion is amazing. He was talking about love, joy, and peace just before He was killed.

In other words, He said, “The world will know that I have pleased the Father because I have received the commandment from God, and I have indeed fulfilled what He told me to do.” Then Jesus said, “Come on, let us go,” and they arose from the last supper. They walked down into the valley of Kidron. All the time He was teaching them with heavenly composure, knowing full well that in the garden He would be betrayed by Judas and taken captive.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

On the way across the Kidron we are introduced to the seventh “I Am” of Christ: “I am the True Vine.” This profound doctrine and truth was not given in the serenity of a college classroom or in the peaceful atmosphere of a synagogue. It was revealed in one of the most tempestuous moments of His life when

His heart must have already been near breaking due to the onslaughts and contradictions of the wicked.

The True Vine (15:1-16)

15:1 - *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman.”* Chapter 15 opens up with the seventh “I Am” of Christ. Christ is now portrayed as the True Vine. In the Old Testament, Israel (the nation of God) was referred to as “the vine.” Psalm 80:8 says, “Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.”

Isaiah 5:2 also speaks of Israel as a vine: “And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” Unlike Israel, Christ produced the choicest fruit. As with any vine, this particular one was cared for by a husbandman, who is none other than the Heavenly Father.

15:2 - *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”* This verse absolutely destroys the doctrine of eternal security. An orchard keeper plants trees because he is interested in producing fruit. All that he is concerned with is fruit. Therefore, every branch or tree that does not bring forth fruit is useless to him, and so he cuts it off. There are a number of Scriptures in which the Lord Himself expresses this truth. Consider the following Scriptures:

- The warning of the Lord concerning false prophets—“*Ye shall know them by their fruits.*” (Mt. 7:16)
- The Parable of the Householder, which reveals the Father’s expectation of receiving fruit from His vineyard. (Mt. 21:34)
- The warning to Israel—“*The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*” (Mt. 21:43)

“*The branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it.*” The word “purge” means to prune. When a branch is fruitful, the husbandman prunes it so that it will bring forth more fruit. In the same way, the Lord *prunes* us and cuts away things that are keeping us from being very fruitful!

The word “purge” in Scripture is used in a variety of ways, applying to the following topics:

1. Sin (Ps. 51:7; 79:9, Isa. 1:25)
2. Rebellion or rebels (Ezek. 20:38)
3. Leaven (1 Cor. 5:7)
4. Dishonour (2 Tim. 2:21)
5. Our conscience (Heb. 9:14)

The doctrine of eternal security is from the pit of hell, and from Satan himself. In actuality, these branches are Christians. Christ says very clearly, “Ye are the branches.” There will be

born again Christians who will be taken away from the vine because they do not bear fruit. That is a very solemn thought. That is exactly what an orchardist does with unfruitful branches.

When I pastored in the West Coast, I lived in a town that was filled with orchards. In fact, one of my elders had an orchard. One day I was with him, and as we were walking down the orchard he was breaking off branches. When I asked him, “What are you doing?” he responded: “These branches do not produce fruit. If I do not break them off, they will take the sap from the tree, and take the life away from the branches that produce fruit.”

Orchardists always cut off the branches that do not produce fruit, and it is the same with the Lord. The Lord is the True Vine and His Father is the Husbandman. It is the Father who plucks off branches that do not bring forth fruit. By the grace of God, we must realise that we have to bring forth fruit in order to remain in the vine.

If we produce fruit, the Father then will take us through the process of pruning. This applies to churches, fellowships, and individuals. God snips off little “twigs” in our lives that are hindering us from being really fruitful. Sometimes the Lord prunes us by limiting our activities or taking away certain friendships. It is a difficult process, but it is very necessary for us to be fruitful!

When we want to get involved in activities, the Lord might tell us, “I do not want you to do that.” We might say, “But

Lord, they are good activities!” However, having our best interest at heart, God will respond, “Yes, they definitely are, but I want you to bring forth more fruit than that; so I am going to cut off these activities.” That is how God works in our lives—He cuts away unfruitful activities that will hinder us from bearing much fruit.

15:3 - *“Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you.”* We are cleansed by the washing of the water by the Word of God (Eph. 5:26). First Peter 1:22 says, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth...” In a very real sense, we must be clean in order to bring forth fruit.

15:4 - *“Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.”* In order to bear fruit we have to abide in Christ. We can only bear fruit as we abide in Christ. You probably have seen branches full of fruit that are cut off from the tree. These branches cease to produce fruit because the life flow is in the tree, not in the branches. Apart from Christ, the Vine, we have no life.

15:5 - *“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”* There are three levels of fruit bearing:

1. Fruit (v.2)
2. More fruit (v.2)
3. Much fruit (v. 5)

These three levels of fruitfulness are also seen in the Parable of the Sower: “But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundred fold, some sixty fold, some thirty fold” (Mt. 13:8). If we are not bearing fruit, the Lord will cut us off, even as a vineyard keeper cuts off branches that are not producing the desired fruit. Therefore, we must always have a holy fear because it is always possible for us to lose our salvation if we do not continue to walk in God’s ways.

On the other hand, if we are bearing fruit, the Lord prunes our lives from dead works so that we bring forth “more fruit” and “much fruit.” The Lord is not happy with just a little fruit in our lives. He wants us to bear *much* fruit. Therefore, although we might be bringing forth fruit, the Lord desires to prune us so that we bring forth much fruit. The pruning process is always painful and confusing, but if we allow God to do His work, we will bear much eternal fruit for His glory and honour.

15:6 - *“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.”* Branches represent believers. If a branch (someone who was once saved) ceases to abide in the Vine—Christ—it withers and dies. Then it is cut off from the vine, cast into the fire, and burned. Therefore, it is very clear that there is no such thing as eternal security.

Let us examine the admonitions of King David to his beloved son Solomon in Proverbs 2:12-13, “To deliver thee from

the way of the evil man, from the man that speaketh froward things; Who leave the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness.” To leave the paths of righteousness, a person had to have walked in them at one time.

Proverbs 2:16-18 continues, “To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; Which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.” We must have a present day experience with God, and be currently abiding in the Vine. The issue is not whether or not we were born again ten years ago. The question is: Do we have a present day experience with the Lord? Are we abiding in Him today? Is His life flowing through us today?

15:7 - *“If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* The Word of God must abide in us. We live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Mt. 4:4). The Word of God must constantly flow through us for us to have life; otherwise we will dry up and die. Christ is our source of life. Therefore, we have to receive that flow of life constantly.

In verse seven, He takes up what He had already said in John 14:14 in the Upper Room, “If you ask anything in my name it shall be done.” He develops this thought again: *“Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”* As the life of Christ flows through us we can make our petitions known unto the Lord and He will grant them.

15:8 - *“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.”* The Lord is glorified when we bear much fruit. Obviously, our purpose is to glorify the Father. How does a tree glorify the orchard keeper? By bearing much fruit.

As I said, we lived in an area with many orchards for some time, and our friends (who were orchard keepers), used to take us through their orchards. They were so proud of certain trees that bore much fruit. When we neared some of those trees, they would say, “Look at the fruit this one has produced!” This is the same joy that the Heavenly Father has when He contemplates mankind. He meditates on our lives and says, “This son glorifies Me; look at all the fruit he is producing! This daughter glorifies Me; look at all the fruit she is bearing!”

15:9 - *“As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love.”* The Lord Jesus loves us with the same love that the Father has for the Son. His divine love is overwhelming. He ends with an awesome warning to continue in His love.

15:10 - *“If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.”* Abiding in Christ means that we keep His commandments and obey Him. This is the reason that the Father loves the Son so much.

15:11 - *“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.”* The

heart of Christ was broken at this moment. One of His 12 disciples, Judas, had just gone out to betray Him. Furthermore, He was about to face His arrest, trial, scourging, and crucifixion. Nevertheless, just hours before His death, He spoke about three things: love, joy, and peace. Christ was so wonderful. His only concern was for His disciples to carry on His message.

Where was He at this time? In all probability, He was coming out of the precincts of the city, on His way to Gethsemane. Consider what He is saying, “That my joy might remain in you.” Jesus was extremely joyful at the end of His life. He was about to give Himself as the supreme sacrifice, yet He had great joy. Jesus was at the climax of His life about to fulfil the purpose for which He had come into the world. He was taking great delight in finishing His course because He knew that when He was done, the Father Himself would welcome Him into heaven.

It is no contradiction to say that the Lord had a broken heart, but that at the same time He was very joyful. His sorrow was for those who were opposing Him, while His joy came from His Father who was leading Him to the cross to fulfil His will.

The key to experiencing the Lord’s joy is found in Psalm 45:7, “Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Righteousness and joy are inseparably linked. If we love righteousness, the Lord will fill us with His joy!

15:12 - *“This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you.”* Again the Lord repeats that we must love one another. We should love one another as Christ has loved us. Christian perfection is love, for we are perfected through love.

There was a very well known preacher in England who repeatedly preached against a certain archbishop whom he did not think highly of. Often his words betrayed his thoughts. This preacher always read a portion of Scripture after supper while his family was gathered around the dinner table. No matter who was in the house, he would read the Scriptures in the evening and would then ask those present different Bible questions.

One night, there was a knock at the door. When he opened the door, a stranger said, “May I come in?” The preacher courteously invited him to have supper with his family. After the customary Bible reading, the pastor asked everyone questions from the portion of Scripture that he had read. Finally, it was the stranger’s turn. The preacher thought, “Well, I do not know who he is, so I should probably ask him a very simple question that anyone could answer.” He asked this stranger, “How many commandments are there?” The man replied, “Eleven.” The preacher asked again and said, “No, how many commandments are there?” Again the man said, “Eleven.”

This preacher was known for his fiery temperament, and on this occasion, his temper got the better of him. He said,

“Everyone, even a child, knows that there are only ten commandments!” The man said, “A new commandment I give unto you, Love one another.” At that moment, the stranger took his coat off. To the surprise of the preacher, it was the archbishop whom he had attacked on numerous occasions. Praise the Lord, for these two men were reconciled to each other at that time!

15:13 - *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* Commenting on the great love of the Saviour for His people, Paul wrote in Romans 5:7-8, “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” John also wrote in 1 John 4:19, “We love him, because he first loved us.”

15:14-15 - *“Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”* Not only do we want to be the Lord’s servants, but we also want to be His friends. The requirement to be the Lord’s friends is that we must obey Him.

There is a big difference between a servant and a friend. Servants do not know their master’s will or heart. They simply do as they are told. On the other hand, with your friends you can share the secrets of your heart. The Lord’s friends know what He is doing (Gen. 18:17-18).

In this passage, Jesus is also saying that the disciples are privileged to know what the Father said to the Son. In declaring this, He makes it clear that we can also have fellowship with the Father. Years later, the beloved apostle would write these same words in 1 John 1:3, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Consider the amazing condescension and humility of the Godhead. They humble themselves to share their thoughts and purposes with fallen man. It reminds me of the words of a beloved hymn (written by Joseph Ludgate): *“Friendship with Jesus! Fellowship divine! O what blessed, sweet communion! Jesus is a Friend of mine.”*

15:16 - *“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.”* We did not choose the Lord, He chose us.

Ephesians 1:4 says, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” No one can come to Christ unless the Father draws him. Therefore, since He chose us, we should be willing to do anything He asks of us.

We must bear in mind that simply because the Lord chose us does not suggest that the Lord predestined some to heaven

and some to hell. In His foreknowledge, the Lord knew who would accept Him and who would reject Him; therefore, He chose those who would respond to be conformed to the image of His Son (see Rom. 8:29). John Wesley and George Whitfield disagreed on this, but I believe there is a balance between these two scriptural truths—of God’s predestination and God’s foreknowledge. It is Christ who has chosen us, and what a privilege it is, for we are so unworthy of Him.

“I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.” It is not enough to have had fruit in the past. We want our fruit to remain. Are you producing fruit for the Lord? If you are, are you producing fruit that will remain and abide? I hope we all do. Some people go through very fruitful times in their lives, but often the fruit does not remain. A pastor may have a very large church for a certain period of time, but if that church is not built on the right foundation, it will collapse sooner or later.

We should constantly pray to the Lord, “Please give me fruit that remains.” We should ask the Father to help us not to labour in vain. Paul said to the Galatians who had gone back to the law, “I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Gal. 4:11).

15:17 - *“These things I command you, that ye love one another.”* On His way down the Kidron Valley and up the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord was consistently talking about love, joy and peace. Bearing in mind that this was Christ’s

last opportunity to speak to His beloved disciples while on earth, He must have spoken about those truths that He considered the most important in life. He naturally stressed the truth that surmounts all others—namely, love. Paul repeats this in 1 Corinthians 13:13, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

15:18 - *“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.”* We should not be surprised if we, as Christians, are hated by the world, since the world is governed by Satan (the prince of this world), who is at odds with our Head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan was the very first one who rose up against the Lord, and his hatred for the Lord is also directed against His people. It is a fact that Christianity and the world are not only incompatible, but they are also implacable enemies.

15:19 - *“If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”* We are all loved by our own. The Church is the “ecclesia” of God, meaning “the called out ones.” We are chosen out of this world by the Lord; therefore, we do not belong to this world. If we reject the standards of this world, the world will hate us.

15:20 - *“Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.”* If people attack Christ, they will attack us as well. We need to realise that we will be persecuted. In

2 Timothy 3:12 we read that all those who desire to live a godly life will suffer persecution.

The Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:6-8, “Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory. Which none of the princes of this world knew for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”

The world persecutes Christians because of a lack of understanding. Jesus cried out on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” They crucified Christ in ignorance because their hearts were blinded. Their eyes were closed to the truth, and as a result they did not have the revelation of who Christ was.

We should cry out to God every day, “Oh God, circumcise my heart, take away the hardness from my heart and anoint my eyes so that I can see wondrous things from Thy law.” Sometimes people do things out of ignorance. They are not granted light because they love wickedness.

15:21 - *“But all these things will they do unto you for my name’s sake, because they know not him that sent me.”* The world persecutes us because they do not know the Father who sent Jesus. It is very evident in the Word of God that the Father desires His people to know Him. It is normal for

a natural father to desire that his children know him and fellowship with him. It is the same with the Heavenly Father—He yearns for His people to know Him intimately.

It is God the Father who puts within our hearts a deep desire to know Him and His Son. That is why the Apostle Paul cried out in Philippians 3:10, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.” *Our highest calling is to know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.*

15:22 - *“If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.”* The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were literally clothed with the shrouds of hypocrisy. Luke said of them, “Which devour widows’ houses, and for a show make long prayers: the same shall receive greater damnation” (Lk. 20:47). They were unmasked by the life and teachings of the One whom they professed to worship.

15:23 - *“He that hateth me hateth my Father also.”* Jesus constantly emphasised the fact that He and the Father were one. They are one in thought, nature, and works. Thus in a very real sense those who reject Jesus are also rejecting the Father. Jesus came as the Light of the world, but they rejected Him.

15:24 - *“If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.”* The

chief priests and scribes had absolutely no excuse, because they could not refute the resurrection of Lazarus. They crucified Jesus out of envy.

15:25 - *“But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.”* The Lord Jesus concludes this teaching on the world’s hatred for Him and for His Father by telling His disciples that this was a fulfilment of Holy Scripture. Jesus is quoting here from Psalm 69:4, which says, “They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty.”

Likewise, we will have enemies who hate us without a cause. We will never be able to placate their anger, because often they give themselves over to Satan. But be encouraged, beloved, we can be more than conquerors in every circumstance through Him who has loved us, for He will give us an abundance of grace in our time of need.

The Work of the Holy Spirit (15:26-16:15)

The Lord now turns His attention to the work of the Holy Spirit, whom He calls “The Comforter,” the One who will walk alongside us to encourage us in the way. (The Holy Spirit is covered more extensively in our book entitled *The Comforter*.)

15:26 - *“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.”* This aspect

of the ministry of the blessed Holy Spirit is very precious. He is the teacher sent from God to lead us into all truth. He will testify of Christ.

15:27 - *“And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning.”* The disciples were eyewitnesses of Christ. The Apostle John said in his first epistle, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 Jn. 1:1). The whole first chapter of 1 John deals with fellowship with Christ. It is amazing how much John wrote about love. This came from Christ’s own teachings to His disciples in His last few hours before His crucifixion.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

This chapter opens with a very important subject—offences. Offences have caused many to lose not only their inheritance in Christ, but also their salvation in certain cases. Christ delivered this warning to His own disciples.

16:1-2 - *“These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.”* Over the years I have encountered many people and whole churches who have become offended. They pose as wounded people who have been hurt by the actions of brethren in their own churches or denominations.

Offended people become bitter and disillusioned, and often they speak against the person who offended them. The Bible tells us that an offended brother is harder to be won than a strong city (Prov. 18:19).

We need to realise that offences are going to come. Jesus said in Matthew 18:7 that offences must come! God permits offences to come to test His people. If we take up an offence, that offence will take us out of the path of God for our lives. By the grace of God, we must not allow our hearts to become offended.

We must learn to overcome offences. Well, how do we overcome offences? Psalm 119:165 gives us the key to being able to triumph over every offence that might come our way, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.” The key not to become offended is to love God’s Word. Also, we must guard our hearts and not meditate upon the offence (Prov. 4:23).

As Christians, we will encounter all kinds of difficult situations. People might speak against us or rise up against us. If we pay attention to these things, we can become offended very easily. You can begin to think, “I did this and that for this person and now he has turned against me.” On the other hand, if we seek God for the grace and turn to His Word in every situation, we will understand why people attack us. If we do this instead of becoming offended, we will surely triumph.

I want to emphasise this because I have known many who have turned out of the path of God. They became offended by what

someone said about them or did to them. To avoid this, we must go to the Lord in prayer and search the Scriptures. Once we take that step, the Lord will quicken Scriptures to us that will give us great peace in the situation. We must learn how to gain the victory over offences. This is one of the most important things in life.

We must say, “Lord, speak to me about this situation.” Once we have asked God for His perspective on the situation, He will start speaking to us, and we will have great peace and joy. We will then have compassion for those who rise up against us and will earnestly pray for them that the Lord will have mercy upon them and free them from their bondages.

16:3 - *“And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.”* People rise up against us because they are not walking in the light as they should, and they do not know the Lord. They are not hearing from God, for if they were hearing from God, they would be on our side. In actuality, these people have failed of the grace of God, and have begun to pity themselves.

As I have already said, evil spirits also can be involved when people attack us or persecute us. One time I saw the fallen angel that controlled a whole group of churches which had become offended. This angel was offended against God because He had cast him out of heaven after he had rebelled with Satan. These particular churches were filled with people who were not living uprightly. They became offended when their actions were reproved by the godly. Instead of putting

things right, they left their church and formed their own fellowship of disgruntled and offended people.

16:4 - *“But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.”* One of the beautiful aspects of walking with the Lord is that He tells us things to come.

I well remember once when I was in Africa and I felt burdened to pray. When I prayed, the Lord showed me that several of my board members would turn against me and betray me. It seemed impossible at the time, for they all seemed very supportive, but over the years it has come to pass. What a comfort it was to know what was going to happen beforehand; and I was able to rest in the Lord.

16:5-6 - *“But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart.”* Jesus greatly desired fellowship in the most painful hour of His life, but the disciples were very unmindful of His need. They had not even thought to ask Him about His troubles. If they had, He would have shared His burden and concerns with them.

It was only when the Lord said that He was leaving them that their hearts were filled with sorrow at the thought of losing the companionship of the One whom they dearly loved. Often, we also have to go through our darkest trial completely alone,

being surrounded by people who are disinterested in our need for consolation.

16:7 - *“Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.”*

Although Christ was crucified for our salvation, His departure also opened the way for the Holy Spirit to be poured out upon the Church.

John the Baptist said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and *with fire*” (Mt. 3:11). One of the main truths that the Lord wanted to emphasise to His disciples was the coming of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we all should be baptised with the Holy Ghost, speak in other tongues, and major on the gifts of the Spirit. It was the glorious promise of the Father that He would pour out His Spirit upon the seed of Christ, as recorded in Isaiah 44:3.

16:8 - *“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”* It is the work of the blessed Holy Spirit, and not ours, to bring conviction upon people. Our responsibility is to be the Lord’s messengers, but it is the Holy Spirit alone who can convict people of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Therefore, we should heed the exhortation of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:24-25, “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose

themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” It is God who determines whether or not a person receives repentance.

16:9 - *“Of sin, because they believe not on me.”* The Lord’s main condemnation of the world is that they do not believe on Him. Many religions believe that Christ existed, and a number of them believe that He was a prophet, but that is not enough. To be saved we must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

16:10 - *“Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more.”* Speaking of the sacrifice of Christ, the Apostle Paul said in Romans 4:25 that He was raised again for our justification. So when Christ was raised from the dead, it meant that He had been accepted by the Father on our behalf.

16:11 - *“Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.”* The cross of Jesus both judged and defeated Satan. Colossians 2:15 says, “And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it [the cross].”

16:12 - *“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now.”* Like any good teacher, the Lord took His beloved disciples from one level of truth to another. Isaiah 28:9-10 says, “Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For

precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”

Although the disciples had been with the Lord for three years, there was so much more that He had to teach them, but they were not ready for it yet. That is how the Lord teaches us, too. We can only bear truth to the degree that we have experienced it. A first grader is not ready to hear his teacher talk about calculus. You cannot jump from first grade to high school; you have to progress step by step in your level of knowledge. It is the same in our Christian walk.

16:13 - *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.”* Another aspect of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to guide us into all truth. In other words, it is He who opens up the Word of God to us.

We need to pray, “Lord, show me wondrous things from Thy Word. Anoint my eyes to see the truth.” However, we should also pray that God will only grant us revelation to the same degree that He clothes us with His humility. If revelation and knowledge are not coupled with humility, they can make us proud and puffed up (1 Cor. 8:1). The Holy Spirit will speak to us what He has heard the Father and Son say, for He will not speak of Himself.

The Holy Spirit will also show us things to come. This is one of God’s most glorious promises—to show us what He

has purposed and planned for our lives. I think that is very wonderful indeed! Therefore, we should pray, "Lord, show us the end of the matter." As David said, "Show me my end." It is very important to know how something is going to turn out.

16:14 - *"He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you."* The Holy Spirit always seeks to glorify the Son, and He will reveal the things of Christ to us. First Corinthians 2:9-10 says, "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The Holy Spirit is constantly searching out the deep things of God to reveal them unto us. God is constantly progressing, and new truth is constantly being revealed. That is why we have to study continually and ask the Lord for fresh revelation.

16:15 - *"All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."* Christ and the Father are One; and that which the Father has belongs to Christ. The Holy Spirit takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us.

Some Difficulties Solved (16:16-18)

16:16 - *"A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father."* In a little while, the disciples would not see Jesus because He

was about to die. When He was resurrected they would see Him briefly, but then He would ascend to the right hand of the Father.

16:17-18 - *“Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.”*

The disciples were still perplexed by Jesus' words. On their way to Gethsemane, they talked among themselves like students trying to unravel the mysteries of their professor's teachings. In a strange way, this is encouraging to us. Even the 11 disciples who had been in the presence of Jesus for three years had difficulty comprehending Jesus' words. Therefore, do not be discouraged if you have difficulty understanding the Word of God or difficulty understanding the Lord when He speaks to you because it happened even to the apostles.

16:19-20 - *“Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye inquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.”*

Knowing all things, Jesus spelled out their problems so that they would realise that He understood their concern. In other

words, the world was going to rejoice greatly because of the crucifixion and death of the Lord; but at His resurrection, the sorrow of the disciples would be turned into joy.

16:21 - *“A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.”* The Church Age has been a time of travail to bring forth the purposes of God. There is tremendous sorrow in travail. A woman almost dies in pain to bring forth life.

However, once her child is born, she is filled with intense joy and forgets all the sorrow and pain that she had to go through to bring him forth. That will be our experience in the spiritual realm as we seek to bring forth the purposes of God for our lives.

This is the constant cycle of life. There is always sorrow and travail in order to enter into a new position in God. Psalm 126:5-6 says, “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

Psalm 30:5 says, “For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.” Psalm 30:11-12 goes on to say, “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; To

the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.” Rejoicing comes after we have emerged triumphantly from sorrow!

16:22 - *“And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”* The world was going to rejoice when Christ died, but His disciples would mourn. This is similar to the time in the last days when the two witnesses (Moses and Elijah) will be killed. The whole world will rejoice and send presents to each other in celebration of their death (Rev. 11:7-12). But when the Lord resurrects them, they will be taken to heaven and everything will change. Then the world will be judged and weep, and the saints will rejoice in the Lord. Therefore, Christ tells His disciples that at His death they would have sorrow, but at His resurrection they would have great joy that no one could take away from them.

16:23 - *“And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.”* The Lord develops again this theme of asking and receiving. The whole purpose of asking is to receive, isn’t it? You do not ask just for the sake of asking, but you want your prayer to be answered. If we ask anything in the Lord’s name, we will receive it.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:7-8, “Ask and it will be given to

**We must
ask in
order to
receive!**

you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.” Throughout His ministry, Jesus consistently emphasised that we must ask in order to receive. We want to be “askers” so that we can be “receivers” for the glory of God.

First John 5:14-15 says, “And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” John qualifies this statement by saying that we will receive if we ask *according to God’s will*.

16:24 - *“Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”* In His last few hours with His beloved ones, Jesus emphasised the importance of asking in His name. If we ask the Father for our necessities, He will give them to us. Like any father, the Heavenly Father loves to give gifts to His children so that our joy may be full.

16:25 - *“These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall show you plainly of the Father.”* As we mentioned before, parables have hidden truths that are only revealed to the Lord’s chosen ones. This teaching method was necessary because the Lord was not only preaching to His disciples, but to many other people, including the hypocritical religious leaders. God did not want to cast His

pearls before swine (Mt. 7:6). For this reason, Jesus had to preach in parables so that only those who had pure hearts would understand the truth. Parables were preached to two groups of people:

1. The multitudes (Mt. 13:10-15)
2. The disciples (Jn. 16:25, 29)

Even at this point, just hours before the Lord's crucifixion, the disciples did not understand certain truths. There were some things that they would not comprehend until after the Lord's resurrection and the day of Pentecost. The Lord said that the day was coming when He would speak to them openly about the Father. The more we mature, the more truth we can understand.

The Lord has a particular time to make His ways known to His people. This is illustrated in the wilderness journey of the children of Israel. Deuteronomy 29:4 says, "Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day." It was not until the Israelites reached the land of Moab that God opened their understanding concerning the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. A whole disobedient generation was oblivious of God's ways (Ps. 95:10).

Moreover, there are certain things that we cannot know on this earth. There are certain secrets that the Lord has reserved to be known only in heaven. Deuteronomy 29:29 says: "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those

things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.”

16:26 - *“At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you.”* When the Lord ascended to heaven, His disciples and His followers in succeeding generations would have a new relationship with Him. We now have access to the presence of the Father by faith, and we can ask Him directly for all of our needs. Hebrews 7:25 tells us that Jesus “ever liveth to make intercession” for us. Jesus Himself also prays to the Father for us. We should have confidence and assurance in prayer that the Father hears our prayers and also that the Lord Jesus is also presenting our requests before His beloved Father.

16:27 - *“For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.”* Jesus is saying: “I do not need to ask the Father on your behalf because the Father loves you. Because you believe in Me, the Father will give you whatever you desire.” We need to appreciate the great love that the Father has for all those who love His Son.

16:28 - *“I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.”* Christ reiterates the fact that He came down from heaven’s palace of glories to a sinful and corrupt world, and that He would return to His Father, where He would be seated at the right hand of His Father, the Majesty on high.

16:29-30 - *“His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.”*

At this point the disciples understood exactly what the Lord was saying. They were now confident that they had comprehended Jesus’ message.

16:31-32 - *“Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”* Little did the disciples realise that everything was not going to be as simple as they thought, since other Scriptures still had to be fulfilled.

The Lord quoted Zechariah 13:7, which says, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” Jesus would be abandoned by His disciples, and yet He would not be alone because His Father was always with Him.

16:33 - *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”* In the world we will indeed have tribulation (Mt. 24:8-13, Jn. 16:2), but our trust must be in the Lord who has overcome the world (Rom. 16:20, 1 Jn. 4:4). Therefore, we should not fear, but rest in the Lord’s peace. Remembering that Jesus and His disciples were on the pathway to Gethsemane and that He

knew He was going to be betrayed and crucified, all we can do is but marvel at His words: “Be of good cheer.” The joy of God was bubbling up within His heart.

Jesus had such perfect serenity in His heart when He said, “These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace.” One of the gifts that God wants to give us is His peace. We must keep the peace of God with all diligence when trials and pressures come. Whenever a trial comes your way, go to the Lord in prayer and say, “Lord, explain this to me through your Word.” As you do this, the peace of God will flood your heart as He shows you what is really happening.

It is a fact that as Christians we will have tribulation in this world. Often the reason for tribulation is that others do not seek God. They do not seek to know the mind of God. There is much tribulation in the Church today, but praise the Lord, we can have peace in the midst of all the storms that come against the Church.

There is a beautiful example of this truth in the life of Noah. Although he went through tribulation, he had rest and peace inside the ark. People were drowning and screaming all around him, but Noah was in the ark enjoying the peace of God. Let this encourage you, for regardless of the nature of your trial, the peace of God can cause you to triumph. Moreover, as you go through trials and difficulties you can be of good cheer, because the Lord Jesus has overcome the world. Christ had great victory in His darkest hour; and we want to have that same victory!

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The High Priestly Prayer of the Lord

Chapter 17 contains some of the most sublime moments of intimacy between the Father and the Son ever recorded. Mortal man is privileged to see the beautiful relationship between the Father and the Son. Jesus poured out His heart to His Father during the few moments left of His last night upon earth. As the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Jesus was interceding from earth to the throne of His Father in heaven on behalf of Himself and His loved ones whom He now had to leave. Jesus prays that His followers will have love and unity.

17:1 - *“These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee.”* It was not until this time that the Lord said, “The hour is come.” Previously, He had emphasised that His hour had not yet come. He saved His own life on several occasions because He knew it was not His time to die.

There was a specific time for the Lord to die, and He did not want to die before the appointed time. He also wanted to die in the appointed place. Jesus had to be tried in Jerusalem, for He said in Luke 13:33-34, “Nevertheless I must walk to day, and to morrow, and the day following: for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how

often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!”

As Ecclesiastes 3:2 says, there is a specific time to die. We want to die at the right time and in the right place. The little phrase, “My hour is not yet come,” is repeated again and again throughout John’s Gospel. The Apostle John wanted us to know that every event in Christ’s life was carefully planned. If anyone has doubts that the crucifixion was pre-planned before the foundation of the world, then I commend a study of the words, “The hour has come.”

Christ’s prayer, “Glorify thy Son that thy Son also may glorify thee,” is very important indeed. It was only through the eternal Spirit that Christ could accomplish His Father’s will by offering Himself without spot to God.

Hebrews 9:14 tells us, “How much more should the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” In other words, Christ was in the same position that we are in. Like us, He was dependent upon the anointing, grace, mercy and compassion of His Father to fulfil the purpose for which He had been sent into the world.

We cannot accomplish the will of God apart from His grace. This is brought out in Romans 9:11, where the Apostle Paul speaks of the children that Rebecca gave birth to: “That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” So you see, everything depends

upon God. We need to realise that we cannot do anything in our own strength.

17:2 - *“As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.”* Christ said in Matthew 28:18 after His resurrection, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” The Father gave His children to the Son. Everyone belongs to the Father, and the Father has given those whom He has chosen to the Son. The emphasis here is that God the Father is in control, and again we have the thought of the Bridegroom and the Bride. It is the Father who searches out the Bride for His Son.

17:3 - *“And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.”* Eternal life is available to us only if we know the one true God and Jesus Christ, the Father’s only begotten Son.

17:4 - *“I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.”* Christ glorified His Father on earth by finishing the work that the Father gave Him to do. Each of us has a work to accomplish upon earth. The Father is glorified when we accomplish His will for our lives.

The Apostle Paul was a true disciple of the Lord; he also finished the work that the Father gave him to do on earth. Just before his martyrdom, Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Paul had finished his God-appointed course,

and there was a crown of righteousness laid up for him in heaven (2 Tim. 4:8). We also will be rewarded when we finish our course.

Christ is the Alpha and Omega. When Christ appeared to John, He said in Revelation 1:8, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending." He is the Author and Finisher of our salvation, and we must finish the work that we were sent to accomplish on earth.

17:5 - *"And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."* Christ now yearns for that glory that He had with the Father before the world began. This speaks clearly of His pre-existence.

17:6 - *"I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word."* The Father is sovereign. He gives His Son men and women out of the world. Obviously, if this truth is repeated over and over again in the Gospel of John, it is because God wants us to understand fully what Christ was saying. Christ manifests Himself to those whom God gives Him. In actuality, God is the One who does the choosing. Therefore, we need to cry out to God, "Oh God, may I find favour in Your sight." It is God the Father who qualifies us.

17:7 - *"Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee."* Jesus made it very clear to

His disciples that everything He had was resident in the Father and not in Himself. The psalmist says, "Power belongeth unto God" (Ps. 62:11). John the Baptist asked, "What can a man have that he did not receive?" In other words, we are what we are by the grace of God, as Paul said. Grace is given to the humble. Therefore, we must ask God to work in us His humility so that we may be recipients of His abundant grace.

17:8 - *"For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me."*

Jesus gave His disciples the words that the Father had given to Him. We should spend our time and energy on those who are going to make it. We need to ask the Lord to show us the people we should pour our lives into and spend the most time with so that we reproduce the message in them, that they in turn may carry on the vision after we die.

A good businessman invests his finances in a venture that is going to make money. In the same way, the Lord spent the most time with His 12 disciples because He wanted them to carry on His message after He was crucified. He preached to the multitudes, but poured His life into His 12 disciples.

Jesus was faithful to deliver the words of His Father to His disciples. The Apostle Paul said in Acts 20:27, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." Years ago when my wife and I were ministering in Africa to some

very primitive tribes, I asked the Lord, “What can I teach them?” He said, “You are to teach them everything that you teach in other places around the world, but you must break it up so that they can assimilate it, because I am going to have kings and priests from every tribe and nation and language.” For a few weeks after this incident I had a continual vision of the meal offering, broken up so very, very fine, speaking of the Bread of Life. I sought to pour into them everything I knew. My duty was to prepare them to be kings and priests unto the Lord.

17:9 - *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”* We should expend our energies upon God’s chosen ones, not on those who will spend their eternity in hell.

17:10 - *“And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.”* Here Christ is giving back to the Father all those who had been given to Him. He was now able to say, “I am glorified in them.” Christ wants to be glorified in us. When we are presented by Christ to the Father, we want to be worthy of this honour so that Christ can take pleasure in presenting us to His Father.

17:11 - *“And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.”* Now that He was about to depart from this earth and go to heaven, Christ’s prayer was that the Father would keep those who belonged to Him.

17:12 - *“While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”* Christ is the Good Shepherd. He kept all of those that the Father gave Him. The shepherd does not own the sheep; he takes care of them for the owner and makes sure that none of them is lost. Jesus is speaking of His 11 disciples. Judas, the son of perdition, was chosen to fulfil Scripture (Ps. 109) by betraying Christ. Why did Christ have to be betrayed? It was so that He might know the fellowship of the sufferings of God the Father who was betrayed by Lucifer. To experience the fellowship of His sufferings, we will have to experience betrayal as well.

17:13 - *“And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.”* Here again is the thought of joy. We should be vessels of joy. This is what God wants for us. The joy of the Lord is our strength, as it bubbles up within us, we can indeed overcome.

17:14 - *“I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”* We have to expect persecution from the world because we are not of the world. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:13, “Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.” We will be disdained and reproached by the world. By accepting Christ into our hearts, we embrace a standard and way of life that condemns the world; and so the world hates us.

17:15 - *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.”*

Because all those who belong to Christ have a mission to accomplish, they must be tried and tested. God wants us to be holy, not innocent, and to be holy, we must be tested. Therefore, the Lord leaves us in the world, but He gives us the grace to remain pure and unspotted.

17:16-17 - *“They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* We must remember that our call is to holiness—which is a separation from the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are not to walk in the ways of the world. Rather, we are called to be holy, even as our Heavenly Father is holy.

Moreover, we are sanctified by the Lord, who is the Word of God (Jn. 1:1) and the Truth (Jn. 14:6). To be sanctified means “to be set apart for a purpose.” The Word of God separates us from the world and as such, we are set apart by the Lord for the purpose of serving Him.

17:18 - *“As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.”* We need to remember that although we are separate from the world, we are sent into the world to be a witness. Christ made this very clear. We are not to live a monastic life! God has sent us into the world with a commission—we are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature under heaven (Mk. 16:15). We are called to be the light of the world.

17:19 - “*And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.*” By this verse, we can clearly see the difference between sanctification and holiness. Jesus is saying to His Father, “I sanctify Myself now for the work that You have called Me to do.” He is referring to the cross. Christ is the holy Son of God. He was already holy, so holiness and sanctification must be different. He said: “Because I separate Myself, I am leading the way that they may also be separated through the truth.”

Perhaps this may be more clearly understood from Isaiah 13:3, where God said, “I have commanded my sanctified ones, I have also called my mighty ones for mine anger, even them that rejoice in my highness.” In this verse the Lord was referring to the Medes, who could not under any circumstance be termed *holy*. They were separated by God to do His will, which was to destroy Babylon.

Clearly, sanctification is being *set apart* for the work and ministry that God has called us to. Holiness is the *quality* of being separated from the world, the flesh, and the devil, and being joined unto the Lord that is *developed* in us through trials and testings.

17:20 - “*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.*” Jesus looked at His 11 disciples and said: “I am praying for them, knowing that they are going to produce fruit, more fruit and much fruit. And I am also praying for all those who are going to believe on Me through them.”

17:21 - *“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”* This is what the Gospel is all about—Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27). As the Father and Son are one, so we as believers are to be one. By our unity the world will know that the Father sent Jesus. How is the world going to believe that Christ was sent by God? Through the testimony of His ambassadors and emissaries, and through their unity.

17:22 - *“And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.”* God’s will is that we are one with Christ and our brethren. There are four types of unity in the Word of God.

1. The unity of the heart: “Unite my heart to fear thy name” (Ps. 86:11).
2. The unity of the Spirit, whereby we are all baptized by the same Spirit, speaking in tongues (Eph. 4:3).
3. The unity of the faith (Eph. 3:11-13), whereby we all believe the same thing.
4. The unity of the brethren.

Unity is likened in Psalm 133 to the beautiful ointment that flowed down Aaron’s beard. The ingredients of this ointment are listed in Exodus 30:22-30: “Moreover the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, And of cassia

five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin: And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil. And thou shalt anoint the tabernacle of the congregation therewith, and the ark of the testimony, And the table and all his vessels, and the candlestick and his vessels, and the altar of incense, And the altar of burnt offering with all his vessels, and the laver and his foot. And thou shalt sanctify them, that they may be most holy: whatsoever toucheth them shall be holy. And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office.”

The constituents of this ointment reveal the virtues that we must have in our lives in order to have unity with our brethren. The spiritual interpretation of these spices is as follows:

Myrrh speaks of *meekness*

Sweet cinnamon speaks of *goodness*

Sweet calamus speaks of *gentleness*

Cassia speaks of *humility*

Olive oil speaks of *peace*

17:23 - “*I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.*” The goal for the Church is to be made perfect in one. Perfection comes through unity. The Church is likened to the human body, and every member of the Body of Christ has something to give to others and something to receive from them. We

grow through that which every joint supplies (Eph. 4:16). It is utterly foolish to reject what others have to offer. We can receive directly from Christ and from personal studies, but we also receive life from our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

For example, if your hand rejects the nutrients that flow from other parts of the body, it will become weak and will eventually die. As the Body of Christ, we need each other. The purpose of being perfected is that the world may know that the Father sent Christ, and that He loves us as He loves His Son. As the Church comes to unity in the last days, the whole world will see the love of the Father perfected in us.

17:24 - *“Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.”* Christ prays that all the believers will be with Him where He is and that we may behold His glory. The key to becoming like Jesus is given in 2 Corinthians 3:17-18, “Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We are transformed as we behold the glory of the Lord.

At this point Christ is constantly referring to the time “before the foundation of the world.” Proverbs 8 speaks prophetically of Christ before the creation of the world. Proverbs 8:30 says, “Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was

daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Christ was very conscious of the fact that in a matter of a few hours He was going to leave this world. We must not overlook the fact that He spent three days and three nights in the depths of the earth before He went to His Father; and then He returned to earth for His 40-day ministry after His resurrection.

17:25 - *“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.”* The world cannot know or understand these truths. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, for these things are spiritually discerned.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:11-12, “For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” The Lord says that the only way we can know Him is by a revelation from the Father. Then referring to His disciples, He says, “But these have known that thou hast sent me.”

17:26 - *“And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.”* As the Apostle Paul brings out in Colossians 3:14, love is the bond of perfection.

Ephesians 3:16-19 says, “That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with

might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” May we, dear ones, be filled with His love and have every fibre of our being exude the love of God, for God is love.

Those who have seen heaven generally emphasise two things: *love* and *wisdom*. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.” God is love, and in order to be like Him, we must have His love *developed* in our hearts so that we can manifest God’s love to others. Love is the greatest virtue; therefore, let us seek to be filled with love.

Wisdom is the principal thing (Prov. 4:7). We need wisdom for every aspect of our lives. James tells us that if we lack wisdom, we should ask God, and He will give it to us (Jas. 1:5). All we have to do is ask our Heavenly Father. In every situation we face, we should cry out to God for His divine wisdom. Therefore, beloved, let us major on love, joy, peace, and wisdom.

PART FIVE

THE CRUCIFIXION

18:1 - 19:42

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

This section covers a very intensive period in the life of the Lord Jesus. It covers His betrayal, arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

The Arrest (18:1-12)

18:1 - *“When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where was a garden, into the which he entered, and his disciples.”* The brook Kidron (or Cedron) flowed to the east of Jerusalem just outside the city walls.

Higher up the slope toward the east is the Garden of Gethsemane, which obtained its name from the olive press that was located there. This walled garden was filled with olive trees. In fact, many of those same trees from the time of Jesus are still there today. In a sense, it is very poetic that it was here that Jesus prayed before His betrayal when His forehead sweated great drops of blood because of the intensity of the enemy’s onslaught. None of this is mentioned in John’s account, but is recorded in the other Gospels.

18:2 - *“And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus [oftentimes] resorted thither with his disciples.”* It was a place that Jesus frequently visited when He needed to spend some quiet time alone with His disciples. It is good for Christians to retreat to quiet, peaceful places for times of prayer.

When I go around the world, missionaries and pastors alike show me their favourite places where they commune with God. Sometimes like the prophet Daniel, they choose spots by the riverside. Other times the retreat might be a clearing in a tropical forest region in Africa. Others have made for themselves tree houses to escape the chattering tribes of monkeys. Wherever Christians may be, they can always have a place where they meet with the Lord. Returning now to the narrative, we read that the process of betrayal is well underway.

18:3 - *“Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, cometh thither with lanterns and torches and weapons.”* Judas brought a band of men and soldiers with him. The Greek word for *band* is “speira,” which means a company of up to 1,000 auxiliary soldiers. There were also all the armed Temple police. This was a tremendous compliment to the power of Jesus. When the authorities decided to arrest Him, they sent a veritable army to take Him, as was done with Elijah (2 Ki. 1:9) and Samson (Jdg. 16). They came with lanterns, torches, and weapons, thinking that Jesus would be hiding. Yet it is very clear that the Lord was totally in command of this whole situation.

18:4 - *“Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said unto them, Whom seek ye?”* Jesus knew everything that was going to happen (Isa. 50:4). He went up to them and asked them who they were looking for. What boldness! Do not be fooled; Christ was in command. No man had the power to take His life, but He gave it up freely. Christ was not afraid. This was His mission in life—to die.

18:5-6 - *“They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus saith unto them, I am he. And Judas also, which betrayed him, stood with them. As soon then as he had said unto them, I am [he], they went backward, and fell to the ground.”* When they told Him that they were looking for Jesus of Nazareth, He said, “I Am” (*he* is not in the original Greek; it was added by the translators). This was a proclamation of His deity (Ex. 3:14). As soon as He said, “I Am,” they all fell to the ground. They were not able to stand at the revelation of His name.

18:7-8 - *“Then asked he them again, Whom seek ye? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus answered, I have told you that I am [he]: if therefore ye seek me, let these go their way.”* Christ said, “I Am that I Am” (Ex. 3:14). Christ was in command and in control of this situation. They would not have even been able to move if He had not let them get up from the ground. Therefore, He told them to let His disciples go to fulfil the prophecy of Zechariah 13:7, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the

shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”

There is, however, the act of the good Shepherd, who by asking the question, “Whom seek ye,” makes it very clear that the authorities were only seeking Him and that His disciples should not be included in the arrest. Therefore, He literally commands them to let the disciples go free. Christ was in charge of His own arrest!

18:9 - *“That the saying might be fulfilled, which he spake, Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none.”* This is a direct quotation from His High Priestly Prayer (cf. Jn. 17:12). Clearly, as we have already mentioned, Jesus was intent upon saving His disciples from arrest and death. It was not the Romans or the priests who were crucifying Jesus, but rather the Heavenly Father. The adversaries were powerless against the Son of God. The Father had decided to use their wrath and actions to further His plans, which had been decided before the foundation of the world. Remember, Jesus was the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world.

18:10-11 - *“Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest’s servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant’s name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”* Peter was very courageous and strong in himself. He wanted to protect the Lord, but he did it in the flesh, cutting off the ear of the high priest’s servant; and I am sure he was not aiming for his ear.

Peter needed to have his strength and courage corralled so that he could use it for the will and purposes of God. Indeed, his strength was later used to promote the kingdom of God. However, it was the will of the Father for Christ to go to the cross. The cup, which Christ is alluding to here, is the cup He drank at Gethsemane, which was filled with all the sins of the human race. It was there that “God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

The Jewish Trial and the Denials (18:13-27)

18:12-13 - *“Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.”* To appreciate the intricacies of Jesus’ trial, it is necessary also to know who were the so-called judges before whom He appeared. He appeared first before Annas.

Annas

1. Annas was the high priest from A.D. 6 to A.D. 15.
2. Four of his sons had held the high priesthood, and one would become high priest shortly after this time.
3. Caiaphas, the high priest at that time, was his son-in-law. Under the Levitical law, the high priests held their

office for life. However, the Roman government gave the high priesthood by appointment to the highest bidder and arch-collaborator.

4. The family of Annas was extremely wealthy, and they bribed their way into office, while Annas remained the power behind the office.
5. Annas became rich through corruption in the sale of temple offerings. He refused animals that were bought outside of the temple, accepting only those sold at inflated prices inside the temple. The place of inspection and sale inside the temple was called the “Bazaars of Annas.”
6. In the Talmud there is a passage which says, “Woe to the house of Annas! Woe to the serpent’s hiss! They are high priests; their sons are keepers of the treasure; their sons-in-law are guardians of the temple; and their servants beat the people with staves.”

18:14 - *“Now Caiaphas was he, which gave counsel to the Jews, that it was expedient that one man should die for the people.”* Caiaphas prophesied this in John 11:49-52. He was the high priest the year Jesus was crucified.

18:15-16 - *“And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other*

disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.” Peter and John followed Jesus after He was arrested. John was known to the High Priest. Probably, because John’s father Zebedee sold fish to him (Mk. 1:19-20). John was allowed free access into the High Priest’s palace, but he had to ask permission for Peter to come with him.

18:17 - *“Then saith the damsel that kept the door unto Peter, Art not thou also one of this man’s disciples? He saith, I am not.”* Peter is asked if he is one of Christ’s disciples, and he denies it. The one who was willing to die with Christ is now denying that he is even one of His disciples.

Peter’s Three Denials of Christ

1. To the damsel who was the doorkeeper (v. 17)
2. To those who warmed themselves by the fire (v. 25)
3. To Malchus’ relative (v. 26)

Luke tells us that between the first denial and the second denial a little while elapsed (Lk. 22:56-58). Then there was a space of an hour between the second and third denials (Lk. 22:59-61). It is generally accepted that the cock crowed at 3:00 a.m.

18:18 - *“And the servants and officers stood there, who had made a fire of coals; for it was cold: and they warmed themselves: and Peter stood with them, and warmed himself.”* As one looks carefully into the facts surrounding Jesus’ trial, one realises that it was held in most adverse circumstances

for Him. Christ was far away from the fire and would have become cold by now.

18:19 - *“The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine.”* The High Priest here mentioned would have been Annas, since he sent him to Caiaphas later in verse 24. The rationale was that Annas would have effectively been the High Priest, for that was a lifelong post in the eyes of the Jews, and according to Jewish law. At any rate, Annas was the power behind the office. This questioning itself was illegal according to Jewish law, since the accused had to be convicted on testimony of witnesses and could not incriminate himself.

18:20 - *“Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.”* In a sense, Jesus is reminding Annas of the law. Jesus had said everything in the presence of many witnesses.

18:21 - *“Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.”* Macimonides, the medieval Jewish scholar, said, “Our true law does not inflict the penalty of death upon a sinner by his own confession.” A man could not convict himself by his own words. The Jewish law required two witnesses. Therefore, Christ was reminding Annas of the law and pointing out the error and illegality of His trial.

18:22-23 - *“And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying,*

Answerest thou the high priest so? Jesus answered him, If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" When Jesus said this to Annas, one of the officers struck Jesus on the face and said in effect, "Are you telling the High Priest how to conduct a trial?" This was another illegal action. The accused (Jesus) was physically abused and intimidated while speaking in His own defence.

18:24 - *"Now Annas had sent him bound unto Caiaphas the high priest."* It seems as though Annas, the legitimate High Priest, was in the palace and interrogated Christ first. Then Annas sent Christ bound to Caiaphas, his son-in-law, who was in another part of the palace with the chief priests and scribes. Annas was a preliminary interrogator. Caiaphas, the High Priest at the time (in the eyes of the Romans), conducted the trial of Jesus (Mt. 26:57,68). This trial took place very early in the morning.

18:25-27 - *"And Simon Peter stood and warmed himself. They said therefore unto him, Art not thou also one of his disciples? He denied it, and said, I am not. One of the servants of the high priest, being his kinsman whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Peter then denied again: and immediately the cock crew."* Peter denied the Lord for the second and third time, and then the cock crowed, just as Jesus had said.

There was no grace given to Peter to remain faithful because he was not in the will of God, and he had challenged the Lord. John was also there with Peter, but no one said to John, "Are

you also with Christ?" John was not tested, but Peter was because he had argued with Jesus and said that he would go to the cross and die with Him. Another reason Peter was tested was that he said he was more faithful than his brethren. To prove to Peter that he could not remain faithful to Him in his own strength, Jesus tested Peter and allowed him to fail. John was protected because he did not challenge the Lord's word (see Jn. 13:36-38, Mt. 26:31-35, Mk. 14:27-31).

The Roman Trial (18:28 - 19:16)

18:28 - *"Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the passover."* They probably sent Christ to Pilate about 6:00 a.m. on Wednesday, the day of the preparation of the Passover. Therefore, the Jews did not go into the hall of judgment because it was a Gentile domain, and they did not want to be defiled.

These Jews were so hypocritical and legalistic. They were trying an innocent man, the King of Israel, and yet to observe their feast they did not go into the judgment hall so that they would not be defiled. They thought that keeping the Law outwardly would make them clean, and yet they were crucifying the Lord of glory, the One who gave the Law to Moses.

Pontius Pilate

Let us now consider Pontius Pilate for a moment. Pilate committed three very wicked deeds from A.D. 26-35:

1. Pilate threatened to massacre in an amphitheatre certain Jews who were pressuring him to remove the Emperor's bust from the standards of the soldiers. The Jews offered to submit to martyrdom, and Pilate had to retract.
2. Pilate used temple money to build a much needed aqueduct in the city. The people rioted, and Pilate had his soldiers kill many Jews.
3. Pilate had the shields in Jerusalem made with the Emperor's effigy. The people objected and reported Pilate to the Emperor, who ordered them removed.

Because of his actions, Pilate was vulnerable to being reported again to the Emperor. Thus, he capitulated when the crowd said, "We have no king but Caesar," and accused Pilate of not being the friend of Caesar (Jn. 19:12, 15). Pilate, in spite, then writes the statement of the crimes for which Jesus was accused: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (Mt. 27:37, Jn. 19:19-22).

Several years after Jesus' death, Pilate crushed a revolt in Samaria in A.D. 35. Because of this he was sent back to Rome by the Syrian legate to be tried by Emperor Tiberius. Tiberius died before Pilate's return so he was tried by Galba, who sentenced him to commit suicide. This was the normal method of execution for nobility. Seneca, for example, was commanded to commit suicide by Nero.

18:29-30 - *“Pilate then went out unto them, and said, What accusation bring ye against this man? They answered and said unto him, If he were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered him up unto thee.”* Pilate, aware of their scruples, said to them, “What accusation do you bring against this man?” The Jews really had no case at all against Jesus. When the judge asked for a specific accusation, they said that He was a malefactor. Pilate’s question was a normal question for any judge to ask, but the Jews’ reply was unusual. The Jews expected a summary execution because the Romans had helped in the arrest of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. Therefore, the Jews’ response was very weak and not specific.

18:31 - *“Then said Pilate unto them, Take ye him, and judge him according to your law. The Jews therefore said unto him, It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.”* At this point, Pilate already is showing a desire to wash his hands of this matter; so he told the Jews to judge Jesus according to their law. The chief priests and scribes were determined to kill Jesus. They brought Him to Pilate because they did not have the authority to put anyone to death under Roman law. They wanted Him to be crucified.

18:32 - *“That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying what death he should die.”* The Jews had the authority to stone for certain crimes, but Jesus had not committed any crimes worthy of death. The reason they wanted Christ to be crucified was so that the curse of Deuteronomy 21:22-23 might be fulfilled: “And if a man

have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.” They were fulfilling the will of God through their insistence.

The Romans put criminals to death by crucifixion, a practice which had originated with the Persians. At any rate, it was the sentence given to non-Romans. A Roman could not be crucified, because death by crucifixion was deemed to be too cruel to be carried out upon a Roman citizen.

John emphasises in his Gospel that Jesus had to die by crucifixion. John records twice that Jesus escaped death by stoning in John 8:59 and John 10:31. He does, however, emphasise that Jesus Himself declared that He must be lifted up (Jn. 3:14; 8:28). John explains that in this declaration Jesus was signifying the manner in which He would die (Jn. 12:32-33).

18:33 - *“Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews?”* Pilate began His interrogation of Jesus with a direct question, “Are you the King of the Jews?” This is the charge that the Jews brought against the Lord, as recorded by Luke: “And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King” (Lk. 23:2).

18:34 - *“Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?”* Jesus asked Pilate, “Where are My accusers?” In other words, were His accusers Jewish or Roman? If they were Roman, the question was political—was He trying to become king in opposition to Caesar? On the other hand, if the Jews were accusing Him, they were declaring that He claimed to be the Messiah. It was on religious grounds that He was accused; and that did not fall under the jurisdiction of Pilate.

18:35 - *“Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?”* By the reply of the Roman procurator, it was clear that the charges were not political. Therefore, He was being charged on religious grounds.

18:36 - *“Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.”* Jesus replied to the religious charge, stating clearly that His kingdom at this time was not political, but rather eternal in the heavens, and therefore did not entail the attention of Rome. That is why Jesus told Peter to put his sword back into its sheath (Jn. 18:11).

18:37 - *“Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”* Jesus now acknowledges that He is

a king. He is “the prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev. 1:5). Everyone that is of the truth hears the Lord’s voice, but those who are evil and do not love the truth cannot hear His voice. The ability to understand truth is a heart issue. The hearts of the Jews had been hardened through envy and hypocrisy, and therefore they could not hear His voice.

18:38 - *“Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all.”* Now Pilate has indicted himself. He said that he found no fault in Christ. Therefore, when he delivered Jesus over to the Jews to be crucified, he was breaking the Roman law because he himself had declared that Jesus was innocent.

When Paul was brought before the Roman ruler at Corinth, Gallio manifested the character of a true judge. We read in Acts 18:12-16: “And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. And he drave them from the judgment seat.” Pilate should have acted in the same way by dismissing the charges on the grounds that they were religious and not political. Pilate seemed to be looking for an escape or compromise.

18:39-40 - *“But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.”* Unbeknown to Pilate, he was enacting an event which was carried out on the day of Atonement every year in Israel.

Two goats were brought before the Lord, as we read in Leviticus 16:8-10, “And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’S lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness.” Both Barabbas and Jesus were accused of sedition. One was guilty—Barabbas (Mt. 27:16, Mk. 15:7)—and the other was innocent—Jesus (Lk. 23:18). The Innocent died and the guilty was set free.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

The Roman Trial Continues Before Pilate

19:1 - *“Then Pilate therefore took Jesus, and scourged him.”* This was a travesty of justice, since Pilate himself had said that Jesus was innocent. Pilate had no backbone. He gave in to the pressure from the Jews. It appears that Pilate was simply trying to appease the Jews, saying in effect that he had punished Jesus enough, and that the scourging was sufficient because He had not done anything worthy of death.

This flogging was a fulfilment of Isaiah 53:5: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.” It was extremely painful. When a person was scourged, the flesh on his back would be ripped off. Psalm 129:3 vividly tells us, “The plowers plowed upon my back, they made long their furrows.” However, by the Lord’s stripes we have received healing (1 Pet. 2:24).

19:2-3 - *“And the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe, And said, Hail, King of the Jews! and they smote him with their hands.”* Here the power of Rome, representing the kingdoms of this world, declared that Jesus was not simply a religious ruler, but that He was also the King of kings. However, the soldiers mockingly crowned Him.

19:4 - *“Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him.”* Pilate again says that he does not find any fault in Christ. This is the second time that he has made that declaration. When a judge makes the statement that he finds no fault in a prisoner or criminal, the accused person should be released immediately.

19:5 - *“Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate saith unto them, Behold the man!”* This is a quotation from Zechariah 6:12, “Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place,

and he shall build the temple of the LORD.” Thus prophetically Jesus was the man who was going to build the true temple of the Lord—the Church of God.

When Pilate brought Jesus forth, it was a tremendous testimony to the Lord’s qualities of physical endurance, since most men were incapable of standing after such an ordeal. Many people even became mad from the pain that was inflicted by the flogging. It could well have been that Pilate brought Jesus before the people in the hope that they would have pity upon Him, but it did not work.

19:6 - *“When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him.”* Pilate said three times that he did not find any fault in Christ; but then he gave the order for His death sentence. What a terrible judge he was! Pilate tried to appease the Jews because he did not want to lose his position. In so doing, he broke the Roman law that he was supposed to uphold. Obviously, a judge is supposed to release a man if he declares that the man is not guilty.

19:7 - *“The Jews answered him, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God.”* The Jews then declared that Jesus should die because He declared that He was the Son of God. They accused Him of blasphemy (see Jn. 5:18; 8:58; 10:33). The law states in Leviticus 24:16, “And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation

shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death.”

19:8 - *“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid.”* The Romans were very superstitious. Pilate, bound by superstition himself, was extremely afraid.

19:9 - *“And went again into the judgment hall, and saith unto Jesus, Whence art thou? But Jesus gave him no answer.”* Most prisoners were very vociferous in their own defence. Especially when charged with a capital offence, a prisoner was intent upon saving his life. For this reason, Pilate was amazed by Jesus’ silence.

19:10 - *“Then saith Pilate unto him, Speakest thou not unto me? knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?”* Pilate, thinking that Jesus was ignorant of judicial procedures, informs Him that all power is invested in the governor to free the accused or put him to death. By this Pilate acknowledged his responsibility for the illegal crucifixion of Jesus.

19:11 - *“Jesus answered, Thou couldest 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.”* Jesus, in effect, tells Pilate that this whole trial was orchestrated by the Father in heaven. Pilate could only do what the Father permitted him to do. Christ says that those who delivered Him to Pilate have the greater sin—referring

to the chief priests, and in particular, Caiaphas the High Priest who delivered Jesus to Pilate. The tribe of Levi crucified the Son of God. The Levites were very cruel. They slew many people. They were responsible for slaying the offerings, and in this case the Supreme Offering—the Lamb of God.

19:12 - *“And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar’s friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.”* Pilate was deadly afraid of being accused to Caesar by the Jews again. Because of his previous lifestyle and unjust works, Pilate gave in to the pressure to crucify Jesus.

The Jews blackmailed him into compromising what he knew to be true. A noble judge could have weathered this accusation, but Pilate had already been reported to Tiberius and had received a reprimand for carrying effigies of the Emperor into Jerusalem.

19:13 - *“When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.”* The structure of this sentence in the Greek suggests that a temporary seat was placed on the pavement, since the judgment seat would normally have been within the Praetorium (or judgment hall). This undoubtedly was to accommodate the Jews who would have been unwilling to come into a Gentile building on a feast day.

19:14 - *“And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!”* It was about the sixth hour by Roman time, which is about six in the morning. Mark 15:25 tells us that Jesus was crucified at the third hour Jewish time, which would be about 9 a.m. in Roman or Western time.

19:15 - *“But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar.”* When Pilate asked the Jews if they wanted him to crucify their king, they replied, “We have no king but Caesar.” What a terrible declaration by the religious leaders. By this statement they absolutely rejected the Lord as their King.

This terrible statement points to the time of the Antichrist, when the Jewish nation will accept the Antichrist as their legitimate king and ruler. The Antichrist will win Israel’s acceptance in much the same way that Antiochus Epiphanes IV did—through flattery. Antiochus won the acceptance of many Jews, who then acknowledged him as their king. Herod was acknowledged as the king by a group of Jews known as the Herodian party.

Jesus Put to Death (19:17-42)

19:16-17 - *“Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha.”* Thus by that

sentence Pilate sealed his eternal infamy. He later committed suicide like Judas. Pilate threw himself into Lake Lucerne in Switzerland from a height now called Mount Pilatis.

As all those who were sentenced to death, Jesus was obliged to carry His own cross. When He was at the point of exhaustion, Simon a Cyrenian was conscripted to carry it for Him. The place of His crucifixion was called Calvaria in Latin (Calvary), and Golgotha in the Hebrew (meaning “the place of a skull”). It may well be that the skulls of those beheaded were left there. The sight of Golgotha determined by General Gordon also has the appearance of a skull formed in the hill.

19:18 - *“Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.”* Crucifixion was a form of death first practiced by the Persians, adopted by the Carthaginians, and used later by Rome. It was such a cruel death that no Roman citizen could be crucified. It was reserved for slaves and particularly for those who had committed insurrection. That is why they gave Jesus the title, “King of the Jews,” signifying that He had revolted against Caesar.

Men ordinarily were crucified naked, but Jewish sensitivities dictated a loin cloth. Normally, the feet would touch the ground, but in certain infamous cases, the cross was quite high, as in the case of Jesus. That is why the Jews said to Him, “Come down from the cross and we will believe You” (Mt. 27:40,42).

Crucifixion was marked by screams of rage and pain, wild curses, and the shouts of indescribable despair of the victims.

That explains the attitude of the two malefactors that were crucified with the Lord. Yet the poise and demeanour of the Lord under such conditions was tremendous. His quiet dignity and thoughtful pronouncement evidently convicted one of the two men who were crucified with Him (Lk. 23:40-43). Christ portrayed deity to such a degree that both the thief who repented and the centurion recognised Him as the Righteous One, the Son of God (Mt. 27:54, Lk. 23:47).

19:19 - *“And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.”* In Jesus’ days, the accusation of a criminal was written above him. For Jesus it was a declaration by the world powers that He was indeed the King of the Jews.

19:20 - *“This title then read many of the Jews: for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin.”* The title of Jesus’ accusation was written in three languages: Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Hebrew was the religious language; Greek was the common language; and Latin was the language of the Roman rulers.

19:21-22 - *“Then said the chief priests of the Jews to Pilate, Write not, The King of the Jews; but that he said, I am King of the Jews. Pilate answered, What I have written I have written.”* The Jews wanted Pilate to change the title, but he refused. Pilate realised that the Jews had forced him to do something which he should not have done. So to get even with them, Pilate said, “What I have written I have written.”

19:23 - *“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.”* There were four soldiers who crucified Christ. The soldiers, whose reward for the crucifixion was to divide the garments of the crucified one, divided Christ’s garments into four parts. His coat was woven from the top, representing His divinity, and it was also seamless, symbolic of the fact that He was the Eternal One without beginning or end. Psalm 90:2 says, “From everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.”

19:24 - *“They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.”* The four soldiers cast lots for His coat to fulfil Psalm 22:18, which says, “They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”

19:25 - *“Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.”* There were four believing women at the cross who were eye witnesses of His crucifixion:

1. Mary the mother of Jesus
2. Mary’s sister, Salome (Mk. 15:40), the wife of Zebedee and mother of James and John
3. Mary the wife of Cleophas (or Alphaeus)—the mother of James the less and Joses (Mk. 15:40)
4. Mary Magdalene

19:26-27 - *“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”* The Lord said to His mother from the cross, referring to John, “Behold thy son!” Then the Lord said to John, “Behold thy mother!” Christ was fulfilling the fifth commandment by honouring and caring for His mother as the eldest son.

The Lord loved John so much that He even trusted him with His own mother. Of all the disciples, John had the closest relationship with the Lord. John the beloved was Jesus’ cousin, because John’s mother, Salome, was the sister of Jesus’ mother. Thus in reality John would be caring for his aunt Mary.

19:28 - *“After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.”* This fulfilled Psalm 69:21, which reads, “They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” The Lord was thirsty because of the intense suffering and dehydration He was experiencing, and He asked for some fluids to moisten his lips so that His last words could be heard. But they gave Him vinegar to drink.

19:29-30 - *“Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head,*

and gave up the ghost.” Jesus said, “It is finished.” The Lord had finished the task that God had sent Him into the world to do. He had hit the mark for His life. The cross was the purpose for which He came into the world. As the Lamb of God, He came to be our Passover Lamb and to take away the sins of the world. After He said, “It is finished,” He bowed His head in submission to the Father and died.

19:31 - *“The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away.”* As we have already mentioned, Jesus was crucified on Wednesday. The sabbath began that evening at sundown. Those who were crucified had to have their bodies removed from the cross so that their corpses would not defile the sabbath in accordance with the commandment of Deuteronomy 21:23, “His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.”

19:32 - *“Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.”* Since the first two men who were crucified with Christ were still alive, the soldiers broke their legs so that they would die sooner and not defile the Passover.

19:33-34 - *“But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the*

soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.” Then the soldiers came to Jesus, but He had already died. This was surprising to them because death by crucifixion normally took several days, and at least many hours. The other two who were crucified with Jesus were still alive. Because He was already dead, they did not break His legs, but one of the soldiers pierced His side, and blood and water came out.

Christ died of a broken heart as prophesied in Psalm 69:20, “Reproach hath broken my heart.” His heart had ruptured and broken on the cross through the pain of reproach and rejection. Although they would eventually have killed Him, Christ did not die from the physical wounds of the crucifixion. He died from a *broken heart*. That is why water and blood came out of His side. This also has a spiritual significance. Water is a symbol of the Word.

19:35-36 - “*And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.*” This is a fulfilment of Psalm 34:20 which reads, “He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.” Jesus had to die before the soldiers came to break the legs of those who were crucified because He had to fulfil prophecy.

A broken bone is a symbol of disobedience. Shepherds break one of the legs of a rebellious lamb so that he does not go astray any more. Therefore, a broken bone is a symbol of

rebellion and disobedience. We know that Christ was the One who surrendered His own will in order to obey the will of His Father. Therefore, none of His bones could be broken. The Passover lamb could not have a broken bone (Ex. 12:46, Num. 9:12); therefore, Christ the Lamb of God could not have a broken bone.

19:37 - *“And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.”* The side of Christ had to be pierced to fulfil Zechariah 12:10, “And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.”

19:38 - *“And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.”* Joseph of Arimathaea was a devout disciple who was looking for the kingdom of God (Mk. 15:43, Lk. 23:51). He was a rich man (Mt. 27:57). He was good and righteous, and he was also a counsellor. He had not consented to the Jews’ counsel to crucify the Lord (Lk. 23:51). Normally, those who were crucified were not given a burial, except by application to a magistrate, and even then it was rarely approved. The fact that Pontius Pilate approved the burial of Jesus again substantiates the fact that he knew that Jesus was not guilty.

19:39 - *“And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.”* Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea were secret disciples of Jesus for fear of the Jews. They brought with them 100 pounds of aloes and myrrh. That was the quantity of ointment that would be used for the burial of a king. One hundred speaks of bearing a hundredfold fruit (Gen. 26:12, Mt. 13:8). This signified that Jesus had been exceedingly fruitful in His life.

Myrrh symbolises meekness and aloes symbolises temperance (or self-control). These are the two virtues that Jesus manifested so poignantly at His trial and expiration on the cross. He was the meek Lamb of God who did not even open His mouth in the presence His accusers (Isa. 53:7).

19:40-42 - *“Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews’ preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand.”*

Jesus was buried in Joseph’s own tomb which was very close to the place of crucifixion (Mt. 27:60). He was buried with the rich (Isa. 53:9). Christ was laid in the tomb because of the Jews’ preparation day. The Passover lamb had to be killed on Wednesday before evening to be eaten that night. Wednesday night was the Passover night.

PART SIX

The Resurrection

20:1-29

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Empty Tomb (20:1-10)

20:1 - *“The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.”* The first day of the week is Sunday. When Mary Magdalene came to the sepulchre very early Sunday morning she saw that the stone had been rolled away.

The great testimony to the power of Christ is the fact that His tomb is empty. His empty tomb authenticates that Jesus is the Son of God, for He was raised from the grave by the power of the Holy Spirit. That is why we celebrate the Lord’s resurrection on Easter. Through the resurrection of Jesus we have the assurance that God has accepted His life, sacrifice, and death for our sins (Rom. 4:25).

20:2 - *“Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.”* Mary Magdalene ran and found both Peter and John (see Lk. 24:1-12). Mary must

have been reasonably young, as were most of the band who followed Jesus, for she ran as fast as she could to find the disciples. It is noteworthy that it was Mary Magdalene who is here mentioned since she was the sinner out of whom Jesus had cast seven devils.

Mary was the first person Jesus appeared to after His resurrection, as recorded in Mark 16:9, “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.” Mary epitomises the words of Christ in Luke 7:47, where Christ said that those who are forgiven the most love the most.

20:3-5 - *“Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in.”* Peter, who had denied his Lord and wept bitterly afterwards, likewise was seeking to make amends by rushing to the tomb, but he was outrun by the younger John. John deferentially did not wish to intrude into this hallowed place.

20:6-7 - *“Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.”* Ever the impetuous one, Peter ran at breakneck speed into the sepulchre. He was privileged to see what those on the outside could not. The napkin that had been placed over His head

was laid separately from His other clothes. It was wrapped together in a place by itself. This signified that Jesus the Head had finished His work, and that the Body, the Church, still has to complete its work.

20:8 - *“Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.”* John entered into the sepulchre after Peter had gone in. John had an experience when he entered that tomb, for what he saw caused faith to arise in his heart, and he believed. He saw the empty tomb with his very own eyes; he was an eyewitness (Jn. 19:35, 1 Jn. 1:1).

Everything John wrote was written with one purpose in mind—that those who would read his writings would believe in the Lord Jesus. John 20:31 says, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”

20:9 - *“For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.”* The Scriptures concerning the Lord’s resurrection had not been revealed to the disciples at that time. Looking at some of these Scriptures we see how clearly they declare that He would be raised from the dead.

Hosea 6:2 says, “After two days will he revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight.” We also read in Isaiah 26:19, “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise...”

Jonah 1:17 says, “Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” This was even quoted by the Lord Himself in Matthew 12:40, “For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” The three days and nights that Jonah spent in the belly of the whale typified the three days and nights that Jesus spent in the heart of the earth.

20:10 - *“Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.”* In reading this same account in Luke 24:12 we find that Peter returned to his own home, wondering. The disciples returned to their own homes, not fully understanding what had happened. However, the day was not over!

The Appearances (20:11-29)

20:11-12 - *“But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.”* It appears that Mary Magdalene returned to the tomb after she spoke to Peter and John. These two angels may well have been the angels that appeared and spoke to the other women. There was one angel at the head and one angel at the feet of where Jesus’ body had lain. This signifies that just as the Father took care of the Head, He will take care of the rest of the Body, the Church.

The feet speak of the last day Church because they are the last part of the body. The Last Day Church will see many angelic manifestations.

20:13 - *“And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”* Mary loved Jesus and she missed Him very much. Not even the appearance of the angels could console her. This is a lesson for us. Our love must be for Jesus and Him alone. There can be no substitute for Him in our lives.

20:14 - *“And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus.”* Mary turned around, and saw Jesus standing nearby, but did not recognise Him at first. The Lord Jesus has the ability, as do angels, to transform Himself so that we cannot recognise Him. Mary thought He was the gardener.

20:15 - *“Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.”* Mary was distraught, for she did not realise that Jesus had been resurrected. She thought someone had taken His body away. At this time she did not see the Lord with the eye of faith as did the beloved Apostle.

20:16 - *“Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master.”*

However, the Lord chose to reveal Himself to her. When He very gently spoke her name, she was overcome with His presence. She said to Him, “Rabboni,” which means Master.

20:17 - *“Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.”* Jesus was resurrected after lying in the grave for three days.

During these three days Jesus was in Paradise, as recorded in 1 Peter 3:18-22, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.”

Jesus had already been resurrected, but He had not yet ascended unto the Father. He could not be defiled by human hands because the perfect sacrifice had to enter into heaven to make an atonement for heavenly things with His blood (Heb. 9:23). Shortly after this incident He ascended to the Father, and then returned to earth for another 40 days until His ascension at the Mount of Olives. Notice that Jesus told Thomas after this time in John 20:27 to touch His wounds.

20:18 - *“Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.”* After her encounter with the resurrected Lord, Mary immediately ran to tell His disciples. John’s account takes us immediately to the appearance of the Lord to His disciples. However, the other Gospel writers record a whole series of other events that took place in the interim period.

20:19 - *“Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.”* This is Sunday evening of the Resurrection Day. It is evident that the Lord had presented Himself to His Father between the appearance to Mary, when He forbade her to touch Him, and His entrance through the walls into the midst of the disciples.

20:20 - *“And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord.”* As proof of His identity, Jesus showed them His nail-scarred hands and His pierced side. After seeing the Lord in person, their mourning was turned to joy, even as He had promised them in John 16:22, *“And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.”*

20:21 - *“Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.”* It was at this moment that the disciples were commissioned for the service to which they had been destined (Isa. 52:7, Eph. 6:15). Jesus

commissioned His disciples and sent them out as ambassadors of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). Jesus was sent of the Father; therefore, we also have to be sent by the Lord. It is hard to believe that just a little time before this the disciples were being trained and were qualifying themselves for their high and holy calling. However, not all of them passed the test—Judas failed miserably. Jesus said, “For many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt. 22:14).

20:22 - *“And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”* This was the disciples’ “born again” experience. Before the cross, believing saints did not experience what we experience today after the cross. They were justified by their belief in the Lord and by their righteousness. This is clear, for the Lord said to Peter in Luke 22:32, “When you are converted, strengthen your brethren.” Therefore, the Lord blew on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit into their hearts.

These verses meant a lot to me personally, because I was seeking the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I visited church after church, but I did not receive it. Then I decided to take a week off from work to go down to one of the mountains in Southwest England. When I got there and started to seek the Lord, I felt drawn to John’s Gospel. As I turned the pages in my Bible, my thumb stuck at these two verses: “Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” That is when I received the confirmation that I was called to the ministry. Then I heard a voice say, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.” I thought to myself: Something is going to happen.

I knelt down, and I began to feel the rolls of the Spirit of God inside me, and then I began speaking in other tongues. I had to go from that mountain back to my hotel in a bus. I sat in the corner of the bus so I could speak in tongues all the way because I was afraid that I would lose that experience if I stopped speaking in tongues. I did not realise that it would come back again! Anyway, the conductor wondered what I was doing, and several people gave me funny looks, but praise the Lord, it was a very real experience for me.

20:23 - *“Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”* As Christians, we have the power to remit or retain sins. If God has quickened this verse to you, then you have the power to forgive sins and also the power to retain sins. I have used this verse on several occasions to forgive people. By the authority of God I told them that their sins were forgiven, and they were so relieved. If the Lord quickens this verse to us, we can also have the power to retain sins so that a person is held responsible for his or her sins for all of eternity. And I have had to do this at times as well.

20:24-25 - *“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.”* Thomas was not with the other disciples when the Lord appeared to them, and he did not believe that the Lord had indeed been resurrected.

Thomas is often called “doubting Thomas” by many people, but do not forget that he was also the one who said, “Let us go up to Jerusalem that we might die with Him.” His tomb is a short distance from Madras, India where he was martyred. Thomas was totally dedicated to the Lord, it just took him a little while to believe. Therefore, we should be more gracious in our thoughts and words about Thomas.

20:26 - *“And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.”* About eight days after these events, the Lord walked right through the door of the building where the disciples were gathered. I had this same experience when I was six years old. The door of my bedroom was closed, and there was no other way in, but the Lord Jesus walked right through the wall.

20:27 - *“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.”* The Lord is aware of everything we say. He also meets us on our own terms. Therefore, since Thomas had demanded to touch Him, Jesus humbly granted that request.

20:28-29 - *“And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”* Thomas’ transformation was profound. Thomas no longer doubted

Jesus' deity and resurrection. However, the Lord gently chided him. There is a greater blessing pronounced upon us when we believe without seeing any proof or evidence than when do not believe until we see it with our own eyes. Let us, therefore, have a heart like the Apostle John, who believed before he saw the resurrected Lord. Amen!

PART SEVEN

The Purpose of John's Gospel

20:30-31

20:30-31 - *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”* The purpose of John's Gospel is that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and that through believing in Him we might have eternal life.

John's Gospel was written so that we may believe on the Son of God. John consistently quotes Scripture to prove that Jesus was the fulfilment of Scripture. John's goal was to prove that Jesus is the Messiah of whom the Old Testament prophets spoke.

PART EIGHT

The Epilogue

21:1-25

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The Miraculous Draught of Fish (21:1-14)

21:1-2 - *“After these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise showed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.”* After these things the Lord appeared unto seven of His disciples at the sea of Tiberias. The number seven portrays the fact that these last things were to complete John’s testimony of Jesus.

21:3 - *“Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing.”* Peter went fishing because he was discouraged. When we are in a despondent mood, the tendency is to return to our former occupation. The others followed Peter. After fishing all day long, the disciples were discouraged because they had not caught anything.

21:4 - *“But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.”*

Again in His wisdom, He chose not to reveal His identity immediately to them.

21:5 - *“Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.”* The Lord asked them if they had caught any fish. He was trying to get them to admit that they could not accomplish anything in their own strength. This is the place to which the Lord has to bring each one of us so that we realise that we cannot accomplish anything by our own strength and efforts.

21:6 - *“And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes.”* At first the disciples went fishing in their own strength and caught nothing. However, when the Lord directed them, they caught a multitude of fish.

The reason that they were obedient to the one on the shore was that often this was the method employed when fishing in shallow water. The one on the shore was able to see fish from his perspective that those on board the ship could not see. Therefore, the disciples assumed that Jesus could see what they could not see. When he said, “Cast your net on the right side and you will catch them,” they obeyed immediately.

21:7 - *“Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.”* Again it was

John the beloved disciple of the Lord who first recognised that the shoreline observer was none other than their lovely Lord, but it was the impetuous Peter who jumped out of the boat and swam to the shore to see Jesus.

21:8 - *“And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes.”* The disciples were in a small ship about 200 cubits from the shore. Two hundred speaks of the reward of faithful servants. Song of Solomon 8:12 says, “My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred.”

21:9 - *“As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread.”* While we cannot read too much into this, this homely little scene reveals how much the Lord cared for His disciples. He prepared a fire and a little snack for them because He knew they were very tired and weary.

The Lord loves to plan such lovely surprises for His people. I am reminded, as I am writing, of a lady in France. She washed laundry for a living. Every day she had to wash, iron, and fold large white sheets. It was a backbreaking task. One day she took a little rest after she had washed several sheets and hung them up to dry. When it was time to iron the sheets, she felt so tired that she asked the Lord for strength to complete her task. When she opened the door of her laundry room, she was overwhelmed with gratitude as she saw all her sheets

dried, ironed and folded. What an incentive for a time of praise, thanksgiving, and rejoicing as she recounted this miracle of God's goodness!

21:10 - *“Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught.”* These fish were not ordinary fish. They are a sign and instruction for all generations of believers.

21:11 - *“Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.”* The disciples caught 153 fish, but amazingly their net did not break. The number 153 represents the mature sons of God. This is a very significant number. It is also the number of times that “Zion” occurs in the Old Testament. Zion is the place of the mature sons of God.

21:12-13 - *“Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise.”* Jesus fed the disciples. He was always their Provider. And how precious is that “Come and dine.” We want to dine and sit at Jesus' feet to receive all that He has for us.

Also, in another sense, this is a type of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb when the Lord Himself will wait upon His loved ones, as we read in Luke 12:37, “Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself,

and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”

21:14 - *“This is now the third time that Jesus showed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead.”* The previous times were:

1. When they were gathered in the house (Jn. 20:19)
2. Eight days later when Thomas was with them (Jn. 20:26)

The Restoration of Peter (21:15-23)

In this portion of Scripture, the Lord publicly restored Peter to his apostolic office in the presence of the other ten disciples.

21:15 - *“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.”* This was a direct challenge to Peter’s boastful comments that he loved Jesus more than the other apostles.

In the Greek text Jesus used the word “agape” for love (meaning divine love), whereas Peter used “phileo,” which means “to love as a friend.” The Lord was asking Peter if he really loved Him. Upon Peter’s response of love for Him as a friend, Jesus re-commissioned Peter to look after His lambs or young converts—those who were babes in Christ. We should note for ourselves that it is our personal devotion to Jesus that will determine our responsibilities in the church.

21:16 - *“He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”* Peter said to the Lord, “You know that I love you.” Christ used “agape” again and Peter used “phileo.” This time Jesus commissioned Peter to take care of His sheep, which can be likened to the young men of 1 John 2:12-14—those who are strong and have overcome the wicked one.

21:17 - *“He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.”* Jesus now uses the Greek word “phileo” for love. At this time, shortly after his denial of the Lord, Peter could not tell the Lord that he loved Him with divine love, but only that he loved Him as a friend. Why did the Lord ask Peter three times if he loved Him? Because Peter denied Him three times. The Lord re-commissioned and publicly restored Peter. It had to be that way because Peter had failed publicly. He had to be restored in the eyes of his brethren.

The first time the Lord told Peter to feed His lambs, and then two times the Lord commissioned Peter to feed His sheep. The significance of this is that the Lord wanted Peter to minister to *Outer Court* Christians, *Holy Place* Christians, and *Holy of Holy* Christians. Mature Christians dwell in the Holy Place and in the Holy of Holies.

21:18-19 - *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.”*

When Peter was young, he was free to do what he wanted. However, as he aged he was no longer able to do as he pleased. Christ was referring to Peter’s crucifixion several years later. Church history tells us that when Peter was martyred he asked to be crucified upside down because he did not esteem himself worthy to die the same way Jesus died, because he had denied Him.

21:20-21 - *“Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do?”* Always inquisitive, Peter then asked the Lord about John’s future. As the recognised leader of the apostolic band, Peter wanted to know what John was going to do.

21:22 - *“Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me.”* The Lord gently rebuked Peter for being too curious. It was not Peter’s business to know what God had planned for his fellow disciples. Instead, Jesus told Peter to follow Him.

That is the hallmark of true discipleship, as Christ said in Matthew 16:24, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”

What Jesus has for someone else does not concern us. We should concentrate on God’s will and plan for our *own* lives, and not worry about what other people are going to do for the Lord. This is a very important truth. We must follow the Lord. He has a different plan for each one of us. That is why we cannot pattern ourselves after someone else. We must never take our eyes off the Lord, or desire to be like someone else, or become overly preoccupied with what they are doing.

21:23 - *“Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?”* Jesus was saying: “Suppose I do not want him to die? Suppose I want

him to wait until I come again? What is that to you?” In other words, Jesus was saying that it did not matter what John was going to do, the Lord had a specific plan for Peter’s life.

**We must
press into the
Lord to fulfil
His will for
our lives.**

I want to emphasise this. We must know our calling and press into the Lord to fulfil His will for our lives so that we will hear those words from His lips when we see Him, “Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Mt. 25:21).

Authentication (21:24)

These last two verses seem to have been the imprimatur of someone other than John. His name is not given, but he was probably very well-known to the church in his days.

21:24 - *“This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.”* The one who authenticated this Gospel must have known the beloved Apostle John very well. He is simply reminding the churches of the validity of John’s life and the truth of the facts that he recorded in his Gospel.

21:25 - *“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.”* This unknown man who concluded the Gospel is merely stating in closing that John did not record everything Jesus did. The Lord performed so many miracles and taught so many different things during His relatively short ministry that no one would be able to record everything.

CONCLUSION

The Gospel of John, written several years after the other three Gospels, completes the record of the life and ministry of Jesus. It has many intimate touches that the others seemingly lack. Above all else, John's Gospel helps develop our devotional life and our relationship with the Lord Jesus. As we have already seen in this brief commentary of this most beloved book, relationship is the key to revelation.

We commend this commentary to you with the prayer that it will give you, dear reader, a hunger and thirst to know Jesus in an ever-increasing measure so that you will feed on the hidden manna and the precious truths that are hidden in God's Word. May God richly bless you! Amen.

APPENDIX

Section I - The Public Ministry of Christ (ch. 1-12)

- 1 Prologue (1:1-18)
- 2 The Commencement of Jesus' Ministry (1:19-51)
- 3 Signs and Public Discourses of Christ (2:1-12:50)

Section II - The Upper Room Discourses of Christ (ch. 13-17)

- 4 Farewell Discourses (13:1-17:26)

Section III - The Passion and Resurrection of Christ (ch. 18-21)

- 5 The Crucifixion (18:1-19:42)
- 6 The Resurrection (20:1-29)
- 7 The Purpose of the Gospel of John (20:30-31)
- 8 The Epilogue (21:1-25)

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