

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Outline

- I. Introduction (John 1).
- II. The Lord's Miracles, Ministry, and Messages (John 2-16).
- III. The Lord's Prayer (John 17).
- IV. The Lord's Passion (John 18, 19).
- V. The Lord's Resurrection and Appearances (John 20, 21).

M - 1-4
T - 5-7
W - 8-10
T - 11-13
F - 14-17
S - 18-21

The writer: See John 21:23-25. Although the Apostle John is not mentioned as the writer, it seems evident that he described himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and so does indicate in these verses that he was the writer.

The Date: Very late in the first century after Christ, probably during the last ten years of the century. A. T. Robertson estimates it at about A.D. 90.

The Purpose: Clearly stated in John 20:30, 31.

The "signs" referred to here are our Lord's miracles, seven of those which are recorded took place before the Lord's death; one, after.

They are called "signs" because they are marks of identification by which our Lord is known, and by which He is distinguished from all others. They prove His Deity and His Messiahship. Other "signs" could have been chosen, but these were carefully selected by John for this particular purpose.

The Gospel of John was written primarily for those who already had believed in Christ for the confirmation of their faith, as well as for the continuation of their faith.

However, such a Book has been greatly used of God to bring people to faith in Christ. Therefore, we can say that it is for those who believe and for those who have not believed. So no one should stay away from this Book, but all should welcome the message which it holds. Sinners can be won to Christ through it, and the people of God will be edified.

This is a Book which the Apostle John wrote to tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ. He tells us that He was Deity Who became Man, and that He was sent by God the Father on an earthly mission to provide salvation through His death and resurrection for all who would believe in Him. And so the Lord Jesus Christ is the subject of this Gospel. John in his old age, possibly 60 years after the Lord lived on earth, writes with the strongest conviction that all that Christ did on earth absolutely confirmed every claim that He made about Himself and His reason for coming to the earth as a man.

The stated purpose of the Book helps us to see that which is absolutely vital for spiritual growth and maturity.

The Gospel of John (2)

(Read Griffith Thomas' statements in his book, The Apostle John, pp. 112d-113e.)

Therefore it is important for us to read it--and re-read it as many times as we possibly can.

Griffith Thomas wrote: "There is nothing to compare with a person impression resulting from a person study of the actual document" (The Apostle John, p. 103).

R. E. Nixon, in his little book, John, in the Scripture Union series, Understanding the New Testament, said, after recommending several commentaries, "But no books about the Bible can be a substitute for careful study for oneself of one of the greatest books of all time" (p. 4).

Since we have John's statement about the purpose of his Gospel, and the first "sign," or miracle is given to us at the beginning of chapter 2, it would seem right to consider chapter 1 as introductory.

That conviction is strengthened when we see the many titles and references to our Lord which are made in John 1. Let me read chapter 1 to you, and together let us make a list of all of the names and/or titles that are given to our Lord.

John 1: The Word -- (1, 18).
Creator -- (3, 10).
Life -- (4).
Light -- (4, 5, 7-9).
Humanity (14).
The only begotten of the Father (14).
Jesus Christ (17).
The only begotten Son (18).
The Lord (23).
The Lamb of God (29, 36).
A man (30).
The Son of God (34, 49).
Jesus (36, 37, 38, 42 [2x], 43, 47, 48, 50).
Rabbi, Master (38, 49).
The Messias, Messiah, the Christ (41).
Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (45).
The King of Israel (49).
The Son of man (51).

When we put all of this information together, what do we learn about our Lord?

— The detailed outline:

- I. Introduction (John 1:1-51).
 - A. The Lord identified (1:1-5).
 - B. The ministry of John the Baptist (1:6-37).
 - C. The Lord's ministry to: (1:38-51)
 - 1. Andrew and John (1:38, 39).
 - 2. Peter (1:40-42).
 - 3. Philip (1:43, 44).
 - 4. Nathanael (1:45-51).
- II. The Lord's Miracles, Ministry, and Messages (John 2-16).
 - A. Miracle #1: Water into wine (2:1-11).
 - B. Ministry at Capernaum (2:12) and Jerusalem (2:13-25).
The cleansing of the Temple and the prediction of His death and resurrection.
 - C. Ministry to Nicodemus (3:1-21).
 - D. Ministry of John the Baptist (3:22-36).
 - E. Ministry in Samaria (4:1-42).
 - F. Miracle #2: the healing of the nobleman's son at Cana in Galilee (4:43-54).
 - G. Miracle #3: the healing of the impotent man in Jerusalem at the pool, Bethesda (5:1-16).
 - H. MESSAGE: our Lord's Sonship (5:17-47).
 - I. Miracle #4: the feeding of the 5,000 (6:1-4).
 - J. Miracle #5: walking on the water (6:15-21).
 - K. MESSAGE: the Bread of Life (6:22-71).
 - L. Ministry and the growing opposition of the Jews (7:1-53).
 - M. Ministry to the woman caught in the act of adultery (8:1-11).
 - N. MESSAGE: the Light of the world (8:12-59). Jewish opposition continued and increased.
 - O. Miracle #6: sight give to the man born blind (9:1-41).
 - P. MESSAGE: the Door and the Good Shepherd (10:1-18).

- Q. Ministry to the Jews who opposed Him (10:19-42).
Many oppose, but many believe.
 - R. Miracle #7: the raising of Lazarus ((11:1-57).
 - 1. The miracle itself (11:1-44).
 - 2. The results (11:45-57).
The opposition grows stronger.
 - S. Ministry at Bethany at Lazarus' home (12:1-11).
 - T. Ministry in Jerusalem (12:12-50).
 - U. Ministry and MESSAGE in the Upper Room (13:1-14:31).
 - 1. Washing the disciples' feet (13:1-17).
 - 2. Judas' betrayal announced (13:18-30).
 - 3. MESSAGE to the disciples: the new commandment (13:31-35).
 - 4. Peter's denial predicted((13:36-38).
 - 5. MESSAGE: the work of the Trinity (14:1-31).
 - V. MESSAGE on the way to Gethsemane (15:1-16:33).
 - 1. The True Vine (15:1-7).
 - 2. The disciples and the world (15:18-27).
 - 3. The Lord's departure to the Father and the consequences for the disciples (16:1-33).
- III. The Lord's Prayer (John 17:1-26).
- IV. The Lord's Passion (John 18:1-19:42).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 1:1-14

(Read F. B. Meyer's comments in The Light and Life of Men, Volume 1 of his commentary on the Gospel of John, pp. 5-6c.)

I. Introduction (John 1:1-51).

Most commentators limit the introduction of John's Gospel to the first 18 verses of chapter 1, but it seems that the entire chapter is in preparation for the message of the Book, as stated in John 20:30, 31. Since "signs," or miracles, were that which upon John's message focused, it would seem that the recording of the first miracle, which we have in John 2:1-11, would mark the beginning of the message of the Book.

All through chapter 1 we have an emphasis upon the Person of Christ, with a lesser emphasis upon His Work in salvation. Obviously a recognition of Christ's Person is that which indicates how very important His Works are. It is important to note that John mentioned three major works of our Lord:

- 1) As the Final Revelation of the Father.
- 2) As the Creator of the universe.
- 3) As the Savior of those who believe in Him.

But beginning with the the record of John's ministry in verse 15, and continuing to the end of this introductory chapter we see our Lord recognized as the Messiah. See vv. 20, 23, 29, 34, 36, 41, 45, 49, 51. It is easy to see how this all ties in perfectly with the purpose of the Gospel as stated by John in John 20:30, 31.

A. Christ, the Word (John 1:1-14).

1:1 The fact that we have our Lord referred to as "the Word" in verse 1, and then it comes again in verse 18, seems to mark the first 14 verses as a unit. And the emphasis is upon Him as "the Word."

And the first thing we have is:

1. His unique character (John 1:1-5).

He is called here, "the Word." Why?

Perhaps the best answer to that question is found in Hebrews 1:1-3, which we need to read.

Christ the final, the perfect, the crowning revelation of God. Remember: the Bible is not only a revelation from God, but it is a revelation of God! Starting with Genesis 1 God began the revelation of Himself. That revelation continued throughout OT times, especially in the writing of the OT. But, gathering together all that the OT contains, our knowledge of God would be deficient without Christ. He came as the final, perfect, crowning revelation of God. And much in this chapter will deal with that truth.

So Christ is called "the Word" because God has spoken in Him. And God has spoken in Him as He has spoken in no other person, before or since. F. B. Meyer said in his book, The Light and Life of Men, "As words utter thought, so does Christ utter God."

What qualified the Lord for such a place in history? Let us look into

verses 1 through 5 for our answer.

"In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1a).

The Book of Genesis begins with these same three words. And the First Epistle of John also speaks of the One Who was "from the beginning." Cf. 1 John 1:1, 2. So it takes us back to the beginning of time, to creation itself. There, before there was any creation, "the Word" "was." He was not a created being, but as we shall learn in verse 3, He was the Creator of "all things."

"In the beginning was the Word" declares the eternity of the Word. He is without beginning and without end. The Apostle Paul wrote in his Epistle to the Colossians, "And he is before all things" (Col. 1:17a). There never was a time when our Lord Jesus Christ did not exist.

This prepares us for the statements which follow.

"And the Word was with God" (John 1:1m).

John taught by these words that our Lord Jesus Christ was a Person distinct from God, the Father. One writer has said that it was to our Lord that the Father said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26a).

The preposition "with" not only suggests that they were together, but that there was the closest possible relationship between them. Lit., the Father and the Son were always turned toward each other, i.e., they existed in uninterrupted fellowship and the closest possible oneness.

And again, the verb suggests that this has always been true of the Father and the Son.

"And the Word was God" (John 1:1).

Here is a clear statement of the Deity of our Lord.

And, as we have noted concerning the verb, "was," this indicates that our Lord has always been Deity. He never was anything else as we look back into eternity before there was any such thing as time and a created universe.

The nature of our Lord Jesus Christ was identical to that of the Father even though They were and are two distinct Persons.

1:2 This verse repeats what John said in the second statement of verse 1:

The same was in the beginning with God."

Bishop Ryle quoted in his commentary on John's Gospel (Vol. I, p. 10) a man by the name of Arrowsmith who had this to say about the repetition:

Repetitions have diverse uses in Scripture. In prayer they argue affection. In prophecy they note celerity (speed) and certainty. In threatenings they note unavoidableness and suddenness. In precepts they note the necessity of performing them. In truths, like that before us, they serve to show the necessity of believing and knowing them.

1:3 Here we have a fourth statement about our Lord as "the Word." He was the Creator. This does not mean that He created all things by Himself, and that the Father was not active in creation. But it does mean that nothing was created without the active participation of our Lord. He is rightly worshiped as the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Again, Paul in Colossians also taught this. Cf. Col. 1:16:

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.

The word "by" in verse 3 is the Greek word, through, suggesting that our Lord was the Agent, the Instrument Whom God used in creation. So it is true, as Paul said in Eph. 3:9, that "God . . . created all things by (the same preposition) Jesus Christ."

We actually have a repetition in this verse also--a parallelism. And this, too, would indicate, as we saw in connection with verse 2, the importance of knowing and believing this. IN FACT, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO OVEREMPHASIZE THE TRUTH THAT WE LIVE IN A CREATED UNIVERSE, CREATED BY THE COMBINED WISDOM AND EFFORTS OF GOD THE FATHER, CHRIST THE SON, AND GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT. The person who believes that Jesus Christ is God, that He was the Creator, the One through Whom all things have come into existence--that person will have no trouble with the miracles of John's Gospel, nor with the unique teachings that we will find in this Gospel. Evolution undermines the very foundation of man's relationship with God and his responsibility to God.

Read through the Scriptures some year noting all of the references to God as Creator. You will have a new appreciation of the importance of this doctrine.

1:4, 5 The last two verses of this first part of the introduction give us two other unique characteristics of our Lord. They are "life" and "light."

Let us think, first of all, of Christ as the "life."

The Apostle John was teaching that the Lord Jesus not only was the Creator of all things, but that He was the Sustainer of all things. Again I refer to Colossians where Paul wrote in 1:17,

And he is before (in time) all things,
and by him all things consist (are held together).

The writer of Hebrews spoke of our Lord as "upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb.1:3m). This is true of all natural life, but it is also true of all spiritual life, as we will learn from John's Gospel. The universe would be plunged into chaos and destruction if the Lord were not sustaining it, and giving life to all things, moment by moment.

The Psalmists declared this truth in Psalm 104, and again in Psalm 145. See Psalms 104:27-29; 145:15, 16.

John believed that our Lord's LIFE (what He was, what He did, what He said) was LIGHT. He believed that the very record of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ would bring "light," illumination, wisdom and

understanding to the hearts of men. King David wrote long before our Lord came to earth,

For with thee is the fountain of life:
in thy light shall we see light (Psa. 36:9).

The contrast between light and darkness is a theme that we will see throughout John's Gospel. That is probably why John introduced it at the very beginning of his Gospel. We live in a world of spiritual darkness. The natural heart of man is blinded to the truth. He needs light! And that light which he needs is to be found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is, as we shall see in John 8:12, "the light of the world."

"The light shineth in darkness." This is a good title for the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ. Light had been given before through the ministry of the servants of the Lord in the OT. They told about the light. But now the One Who is "the light" had come. He is the One, and the only One, Who can dispel the darkness from sinful hearts. And He is the One, and the only One, Who will some day dispel the darkness completely from this created universe.

But note the last expression of verse 5: "And the darkness comprehended it not."

Bishop Ryle pointed out the difference in tense between the two verbs of verse 5. The first is a present; the second is an aorist, speaking of the past. The light is shining right now, and it will continue to shine. But the light has never been comprehended by the darkness, the darkness. Paul told the Ephesian believers, "For ye were sometimes darkness" (Eph. 4:8a). To the Corinthian church he wrote, "For the natural man receiveth not . . ." (1 Cor. 2:14). Man, when left to himself, is totally incapable of understanding the truth of salvation. If anyone is to be saved, he must see the light in Christ, and it is only the Spirit of God who can give him eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand.

Remember the words of our Lord in John 3:19-21.

Jesus Christ not only stands alone in Scripture as being absolutely unique, but in all of history. There never has been one like He is, and there never will be. Man is darkness personified. We live in a world of spiritual darkness. Satan and his demonic forces are "the rulers of the darkness of this world" (Eph. 6:12m). If God had not given light to the world, culminating in the coming of the One Who is in Himself "the light of the world," we all would have perished in our sins. How we should praise God for the coming of our dear Savior, and for enabling us to see the light in Christ.

Bishop Ryle concluded his notes (twelve and a half pages) on these first five verses of chapter 1 with this comment:

I cannot close these notes on the opening verses of St. John's Gospel without expressing my deep sense of the utter inability of any human author to enter fully into the vast and sublime truths which the passage contains. I have laboured to throw a little light on the passage, and have not hesitated to exceed the average length of these notes on account of the immense importance of this part of Scripture. But after saying all that I have said, I feel as if I had only faintly touched the

surface of the passage. There is something here which nothing but the light of eternity will ever fully reveal (Vol. I, p. 13).

2. His witness, John the Baptist (John 1:6-8).

We have a brief reference here to John the Baptist. More will come beginning with verse 15, and still more in the latter part of chapter 3. But here the Apostle John, who was aware of the great popularity of John the Baptist, wanted his readers to know that, as great as John the Baptist was, his mission on earth was that of being a witness for Christ. He was not the Christ.

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We can see from the delegation of Jews who came from Jerusalem to question John the Baptist, that there were those who were inclined to believe that he was the Messiah, or, at least, that he claimed to be the Messiah. But, as we see in verse 20, he denied being the Messiah.

1:6 John came on a mission from God. God gave him to the world, especially to Israel, in a miraculous way. His mother had been barren, and at the time he was born both of his parents, Zacharias and Elisabeth, were "well stricken in years" (Luke 1:7b).

However, it would seem that one of the important things about this verse has to do with the word, "was." It is different from the "was" that we have three times in verses 1 and 2. In those verses the Apostle John used a word which means, always was. But the word used in verse 6, and translated was, means became. Our Lord had no beginning; but there was a time when John the Baptist became, that is, when he began to exist. So while our Lord was both God and man, John the Baptist was only a man.

1:7 Here we learn what the mission of John the Baptist was: "The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light. And we also learn of the purpose of that mission: "that all men through him might believe."

What is the task of one who is "a witness"?

It certainly is not for the witness to make a name for himself. Instead, his mission was to turn people to Christ--to tell them about Him, Who He was, and why He had come. He was to give testimony, not to hold it back! Essentially his mission was a preaching mission. He never did perform any miracles. It was by his preaching that he called sinners to repentance.

Our Lord is again called, "the Light."

Light is put in contrast with darkness. The purpose for light is to do away with the darkness. The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:5 that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." The same can be declared of our Lord because, as we learned in verse 1, He is God!

So this would mean that our Lord was totally righteous; there was no sin in Him. And coming into the world, He came that when people saw Him, or heard of Him, they would realize what righteousness is, and would see their own unrighteousness, and lack of preparedness to stand before a holy God.

The purpose of our John's mission was that "all men through him might believe." Dr. Griffith Thomas said that this word, found for the first time here, is used 98 times in John, while only 11 times in Matthew, 15 times in Mark, and 9 times in Luke. So there is no question but that this is one of the key words of John.

These words illustrate the truth that Paul expressed in 1 Cor. 1:21:
 For after that in the wisdom of God
 the world by wisdom knew not God,
 It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching
 to save them that believe.

We cannot explain this verse as meaning that it was God's purpose for everyone to believe because we know that not everyone believes in Christ. He could and would save everyone if that had been His plan. He is sovereign. No, the true meaning is, consistent with what has always been the case, that all kinds of men would believe.

John was not writing just for Jews, but for Gentiles as well. And he was writing to all classes of people in those two groups--which includes the whole human race in every generation.

But what does it mean to believe? What is required in order for a person to believe?

There are three requirements:

- 1) He has to have some information about "the Light." That is the primary purpose of preaching and teaching: to impart the truth.
 - 2) He has to accept the information as being true.
 - 3) He has to trust in the message as being sufficient for him.
- We will learn more about this as we get down into the next section where we learn more about the mission of Christ. Here we are talking about the mission of John the Baptist.

1:8 The Apostle John repeated for emphasis what he had just said in verse 6. These are two points that the reader of this Gospel, as well as the other three Gospels, must keep in mind.

- 1) John the Baptist was not the Light.
- 2) He was sent to bear testimony that Christ is the Light of the world.

If we understand these two facts, then we will be in a good position to profit from the ministry of both: John the Baptist, and our Lord.

Godet has this very interesting comment regarding the testimony:

This idea of testimony is one of the fundamental notions of our Gospel. It is correlative (mutually related) to and inseparable from faith. Testimony is given only with a view to faith, and faith is impossible except by means of testimony. The only faith worthy of the name is that which fastens itself upon a divine testimony given either in act or in word. Testimony resembles the vigorous trunk of the oak; faith, the slender twig (or vine) which embraces this trunk and makes it its support. But did the light need to be attested, pointed out? Does not the sun give its own proof of itself? Certainly, if the Word had appeared here below in the glory which belongs to Him (the form of God, Phil. ii. 6), the sending of a witness would not have been necessary. But He was obliged to appear enveloped in a thick veil (the flesh, v. 14); and, in the

condition of blindness into which sin had plunged man (ver. 5, the darkness), he could not recognize Him except with the help of a testimony. The evangelist adds: That all might believe through him; evidently: Believe on Christ through John . . . p. 257).

In the following passages in John's Gospel where we have the ministry of John the Baptist discussed, we will be better able to appreciate the witness which he gave to Christ.

At this point the Apostle John turned to write about Who is the Lord is, those to whom he came, and why.

3. His (our Lord's) mission in the world (John 1:9-14).

1:9 "That," following verse 8, refers to our Lord. He was not only "the Light," but he "was the true Light."

"True," according to Milligan (but mentioned in Godet's commentary, p. 259), is used 28 times in the NT, and of these 23 are in John's writings: 9 in John's Gospel, 4 in 1 John, and 10 in the Book of the Revelation.

The nine references in John are: here, 4:23, 37; 6:32; 7:28; 8:16; 15:1; 17:3; 19:35.

It means here in 1:9 that He is the true, the real, the genuine Light. We do not use natural light (or any other kind of light) to describe our Lord. We use our Lord to describe all other light. He is the true Light also as compared with false lights. All other lights in comparison with our Lord are "imperfect, incomplete, and transitory" (Westcott, p. 7).

But what does it mean that our Lord "lighteth every man that cometh into the world"?

This is a verse which has led to many different interpretations. They focus upon the meaning and extent of "lighteth," and of "every man." And a part of this is, does the coming into the world refer to our Lord, or does it refer to the coming of each person into the world?

This first chapter is dealing with the advent of our Lord into this world, and that seems the best way to take this expression: as referring to Him Who is the Light.

Perhaps the best way to take this verse is as a special revelation from God concerning the light which people have. It does not say that all have the same light, or that all even have enough light to lead them to salvation. But it says that all have some light.

This would parallel what Paul told the Roman church regarding the testimony of the existence of God that we have in creation. Many men will not admit that they have any light; the Word of God tells us that all have some light, and in many instances, even among unbelievers, they have much light. The problem is not that we are living in a world with no light, but, as Dr. Godet mentioned in the quotation above, man is spiritually blinded so that he cannot see.

So we have the condition described in verse 10.

1:10 Many feel that this verse has to do with the Lord's presence in the world prior to His incarnation. Although invisible, the evidence of His presence was apparent in His providential works, in those special theophanies, in His works with His people from the beginning of time. Universally men recognize that there is a God, or gods. But due to their blindness, due to the spiritual darkness of this world, although the world was made by Him, the world did not know Him.

1:11 This has to be the incarnation.

There is an interesting use of the Greek in this verse. We have "his own" twice. The first time it is neuter; the second time it is masculine. It could be translated, He came unto His own things, but His own people received Him not. He came to His land, His temple where His sacrifices were being offered. He entered into the observance of His days. But even then His own people received Him not. Again we encounter spiritual darkness even among the people of Israel.

Nothing is clearer in history than the rejection of Christ by the nation Israel. Individuals in the nation turned to Him, and trusted Him, but as a nation He was despised and rejected and crucified.

So has the light been extinguished. Was the mission of the Messiah a failure? No, absolutely not. But as Paul explained so carefully in Romans 11, the rejection of Christ by Israel led, according to the eternal purpose of God, to the opening of the door of salvation to the Gentiles.

And so we come to the important statements in verses 12 and 13 which give us our first statement of the Gospel in this Book. We all know, or should know these verses. They have become very familiar among Christians. But let us make sure that we really understand them, and that we are among those who are "the sons of God," lit., the children of God.

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1:12 The Lord's own people according to the flesh did not "receive" Him, i.e., welcome Him. "But as many as received him," as Ryle said, " . . . Pharisees, Sadducees, learned or unlearned, male or female, Jews or Gentiles, to them He gave the privilege of sonship to God" (Vol. I, p. 22).

Some might say that in verse 12 we have the human side of salvation, while in verse 13 we have the divine side. But we need to be careful about such a distinction lest we give the impression that salvation is both a divine work and a human work. Salvation is all a work of God. It is absolutely necessary that anyone who is saved be a believer in Christ. Quoting Ryle again:

There is no sonship to God without a living faith in Christ. Let this never be forgotten. To talk of God being men's Father, and men being God's children, while they do not believe on the Son of God, is contrary to Scripture. Those are not children of God who have not faith in Jesus.

But let us keep in mind that faith in Christ is not our contribution to salvation; it is evidence that we have been saved. This will be brought out in verse 13.

Here in verse 12 we need to see that receiving Christ and believing in Christ are one and the same. We cannot receive Him without believing in Him, and we cannot believe in Him (in the Biblical sense) without receiving Him.

What is this "power" about which we read here in verse 12?

Ryle says that this word occurs 102 times in the NT, and actually it means the authority, the right, or the privilege, in this case, of becoming a child of God. It does not mean that we have the strength to become the children of God. That, again, would actually make us our own Savior. No, faith in Christ gives us that right to become what we were not before: children of God. We are born ones.

One more question on this verse: What does it mean to "believe on his name"?

The "Name" of Christ refers to who He is, what He taught, and what He came to do. The "Name" of Christ binds together the main points that we have in Scripture about Him. His Name is the Lord Jesus Christ. His Name is Messiah. His Name is Savior. His Name is God. His Name is the Son of God. And we could go on and on.

So to believe on His Name means:

- 1) To believe that He is the Person He claimed to be: "the Son of God."
- 2) To believe that what He taught is true--absolute truth, ultimate truth, unchanging truth.
- 3) To believe that He, and He alone, is the Savior.

None of us can comprehend fully all about the Lord. Neither can any of us fully understand all that He taught. But the people who "believe on his name" will not reject, or even doubt, anything that the Scriptures teach about Him, nor anything that He taught. And true Christians believe that Christ is the only Savior, and that salvation is His work, not ours.

1:13 Here we see that salvation is a new birth, a spiritual birth.

And in order that we may understand what salvation is not, as well as what salvation is, John has told us what salvation is NOT first of all.

It is "not of blood." The word translated "blood" is actually in the plural--not of bloods. This means that salvation is not a question of natural descent, such as being a child of Abraham, or of thinking that you are a Christian because your parents are Christians. As it has been said, "God has no grandchildren."

It is not "of the will of the flesh." It would seem that this would be the equivalent of saying that it is not of works. Salvation is not the reward of any or all of the efforts a man can make by his old sinful nature.

It is not "of the will of man." This would differ from the preceding statement in that this would apply to the exercise of man's will, even making himself willing for the Lord to save him. Man's will is not free. It is in bondage as he is. Therefore, when we plead with others to receive Christ, we must understand that God must work in His heart, changing him, before he can believe.

"But of God." Salvation, from start to finish, is all of God. And the verb, "which were born," is an aorist passive, indicating as I suggested a moment ago that spiritual birth precedes faith, and thus faith, a gift from God, is the first evidence that God has done a work in the heart of a sinner who turns to Christ.

10/16/89

1:14 The Apostle John had introduced our Lord as "the Word" in verse 1 of his Gospel. We saw there that He was God's message to man, the final and complete revelation which God has given of Himself. He is the crowning culmination of all previous revelations. And our Lord was uniquely qualified to be "the Word" of the Father because He, too, is eternal; He was "with God," and He "was God"--and still is.

He is also the Life and the Light--shining in a world of darkness.

He came into the world, and was rejected by the people to whom He came. But as many of them who did receive Him, and all others as well (meaning Gentiles), "to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name."

And then in verse 13 we have seen that to become a child of God means being born into God's family. That miraculous birth is not something which man makes possible, but it is a sovereign work of God. True Christians are people who have been "born ... of God"!

This verse, verse 14, gives us some additional information about Christ as "the Word" which is very important for us to understand.

It is this: When our Lord became "flesh," speaking of His incarnation, He was still what He always had been: "the Word." So this statement, "And the Word became flesh" is a statement of the absolute Deity and real humanity of our Lord.

"Dwelt" means tabernacled. There seems to be a clear reference to the Tabernacle which the children of Israel built in the desert as they moved from Egypt to Canaan, in which God dwelt! The body of our Lord was temporary in the sense that it was not God's plan that His glory would always be veiled as it was during the time of His ministry here on earth. The glory was there (as John said in this verse), but it was not obvious to people who saw the Lord during the time of His humiliation.

But John the Apostle saw it. And so did Peter. And so did James. They saw the Lord's glory in the Mount of Transfiguration. And they saw something of His glory after His resurrection, before He ascended back to the Father. The Lord's glory is the revelation of His Person, i.e., Who He is.

Our Lord is "the only begotten of the Father." This does not mean there was a time when He was created, or when He was born. It means that He is uniquely the Son of God. There is no other in the Godhead Who is the Son. And, after speaking of us as being born into God's family as children, the Apostle John was saying that there will always be a great difference between our Lord and us. We will be "like Him," but we will never be Deity!

NOW--as the revelation of God, what were the outstanding characteristics about Christ by which He made the heavenly Father known? Here is our

answer: He was "full of grace and truth." How can we describe Christ? He is "full of grace and truth." How can we describe the Father? He is "full of grace and truth." What does this mean?

This God's glory. He is "full of grace and truth." His whole Being is permeated with "grace and truth." Whenever and however you and I look at God, or at Jesus Christ, we will see "grace and truth."

"Grace" includes that wonderful array of attributes which we love to hear about: God's love, God's mercy, God's goodness, God's longsuffering, God's tenderness and compassion. We refer to all of these and even more when we speak of God's grace.

And yet God is also "truth." He is righteous. He is holy. He will never deceive us, nor mislead us. In our Lord's prayer in John 17 our Lord told the Father, "Thy word is truth" (v. 17b). It is because God is "full of ... truth" that Paul said of Christ in Col. 2:3 that in Him "are hid all the treasure of wisdom and knowledge."

These are the outstanding traits of the divine nature. And they are never in conflict with each other. The Lord exercises His grace in truth, but His truth never overlooks His grace. And neither will ever change, nor be exhausted. Our Lord is "full" of them. It is in God, and in Christ, that we see the perfect revelation of what "grace" is, and what "truth" is. If we could understand all that these words mean, we would know God perfectly. Man is inclined to emphasize one or the other, but God is both! And let us never forget either one.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 1:15-34

What an introduction the Apostle John has given us thus far! There is truth here that we will never be able to exhaust, and yet truth which the youngest believer needs to know and believe.

We have been dwelling on the nature of Two Members of the Godhead: the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We have been learning about the Word, about the Life, about the Light. We have had a brief glimpse into the message of the Gospel. But so far the Apostle John has not mentioned our Lord by the Name we know the best, Jesus, nor have we seen the word, Gospel. We will come to the first mention of His Name in verse 17. But the word Gospel is not found any place in this Book. But both are here in the first 14 verses, and the Apostle John has indicated that our Lord and the reason for His coming into the world are to be the main themes of his message in this Book.

Now we come to:

B. The Ministry of John the Baptist: his witness concerning Christ
(John 1:15-34).

In John 1:6-8 we were simply told that there was a God-sent man whose ministry was to "bear witness of the Light," that as great and important as he was, "he was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light."

Now, in these verses (15-34) we are about to see what his witness was.

And the first witness that John the Apostle mentioned in these verses was of Christ:

1. As the Final Revelation of the Father (John 1:15-18).

If we were to use quotation marks to indicate what John the Baptist said about our Lord, we probably should include all four of these verses, i.e., a quotation mark before "This," in verse 15, concluding with a quotation mark at the end of verse 18.

We have in these verses four great truths regarding the Lord Jesus Christ:

- 1) Concerning John the Baptist and Christ.
- 2) Concerning Christ as the Supplier of all of the spiritual needs of His people.
- 3) Concerning the Law and the Gospel, and concerning Moses and Christ.
- 4) Concerning God and His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

1:15 This was quite evidently a very important part of John the Baptist's testimony of Christ because it is repeated in verses 27 and 30. It is probably a summation of what John preached regularly about our Lord Jesus Christ. John the Baptist never deviated from this message. "Cried" indicates that he publicly and boldly made this known about our Lord.

"This was he of whom I spake" informs us that John preached Christ even before Christ was made known to him. His understanding of Christ may have become clearer after John knew Who He was, but he always preached Christ.

Our Lord came "after" John the Baptist. John the Baptist was 6 months older, and began his ministry before our Lord did.

Then notice that we have the word "before" two times in this verse--two different words in the original Greek.

"Preferred" is a translation of the verb which means to become, the verb that the Apostle John used in verse 14 where it is translated "was made." And the first "before" means "before in place, position, or dignity" (Ryle, I, 39). Thus John the Baptist recognized the greater superiority of our Lord. He felt, as he said in verse 27, that he was not worthy to be a servant of the Lord, to take His sandals from His feet so as to wash them. There never has been, nor will there ever be, a person greater than our Lord. Isaiah recognized this when he saw the glory of the Lord (Isa. 6). John the Apostle also, when the Lord appeared to him on the Isle of Patmos. Cf. Rev. 1:17a.

The second "before" means before in time. Jesus was born later than John, but He existed before John--another statement of the pre-existence of our Lord. The Lord existed from all eternity because He is God!

1:16 John the Baptist was not speaking here of everyone in the world, but of all believers. Out of the fullness of all that Christ is, we have received salvation, but we also receive daily, from that same fullness, as Westcott has said, "as from a spring of divine life, whatever" we "severally require(d) according to" our "position and work" (p. 14).

This is the only time that the Apostle John used the word "fulness" in all of his writings, but Paul used it five times in his, three in Ephesians, and twice in Colossians. Cf. Eph. 1:23; 3:19; 4:13; Col. 1:19; 2:9.

It is perhaps correct to say that the first part of John 1:16 speaks of being saved; the second part speaks of that continual supply of "grace" that is available to every child of God from the inexhaustible supply that we have in Christ.

"Grace for grace" is described by F. B. Meyer as "wave on wave." It is like using the water from your water tank at home: the more you use, the more you have. Only "grace for grace" suggests that the more we use the grace of God, the greater and richer and fuller are the future provisions of grace. It means going from the present degree of grace to a higher degree of grace. As more grace is needed, more grace is given. And the supply of God's grace can never be exhausted.

Remember that grace means power. It is called grace because we do not deserve it. It is by the grace of God that we are what we are (1 Cor. 15:10). And it is by the grace of God that we are not what we might be. And it is only by God's grace that some day we will be what He intends for us to be: like Christ!

1:17 In the OT there certainly was none who held a greater place than Moses. In the NT there was none greater than John the Baptist. We have already been told by John the Baptist that the Lord was greater than he was. Now John tells us that the Lord was greater than Moses.

But John also tells us here that the Gospel is greater than the Law. Both are revelations from God. God gave the Law; God gave us the

Gospel. But we can see the difference between the two in Rom. 8:3, 4:
 For what the law could not do,
 in that it was weak through the flesh,
 God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,
 and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
 That the righteousness of the law
 might be fulfilled in us,
 who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

The writer of Hebrews taught us,
 For the law made nothing perfect,
 but the bringing in of a better hope did;
 by which we draw near to God (Heb. 7:19).
 The "better hope" is the Gospel.

The Law neither saves nor sanctifies. The Law tells us what to do, but does not help us. The Gospel transforms us, and guarantees our ultimate glorification. The Law says, "Do!" The Gospel says, "Done!" The Law is not opposed to the Gospel; the Law shows the need for the Gospel.

Remember Paul's words in Rom. 3:20-22a:
 Therefore by the deeds of the law
 there shall not flesh be justified in his sight:
 for by the law is the knowledge of sin.
 But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested,
 being witnessed by the law and the prophets,
 Even the righteousness of God which is
 by faith of (in) Jesus Christ
 unto all and upon all them that believe . . .

This 17th verse gives us the first time that John used our Lord's Name, "Jesus Christ." The Name speaks of both His humanity and His Deity, as well as indicating that He was the Messiah, the One Whom the people of God in the OT was waiting for. John the Baptist had a great name. Moses had a great name. But neither name could in any way compare with the Name, "Jesus Christ."

1:18 Here we come back to a theme which has been very prominent in John's Gospel--really a twofold theme:

- 1) The Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) Jesus Christ as the Final and Complete Revelation of God the Father.

The first statement of this verse is very strong. It means that no one ever, at any time, has seen God as God. (It is the adverb _____, not a double negative as I may have said before. But the emphasis is strong like a double negative would be.)

But what are we to think about the appearances of God in the OT?

In the light of the latter part of the verse we are to take those appearances as appearance of Christ rather than of God the Father. Jesus Christ has revealed the Father in the NT, and He is the same One Who revealed God in the OT.

But the verse also indicates that even Christ never revealed God in OT times like He did when He came to earth as a man. This is the greatest of all of the revelations of God. We do not see anything in Christ that contradicts what we have understood before, but there is a greater fulness because of Christ's coming in the flesh.

Some of the Greek MSS read here, the only begotten God, instead of "Son." Which ever is right, the meaning is the same in either case. No person who has ever lived has had the relationship to God that our Lord Jesus Christ has had. Not only is He God's only Son, but He "is in the bosom of the Father," suggesting a closeness and an intimacy with, as well as a knowledge of, the Father, which none of the prophets of the OT ever had.

Thus our Lord is qualified to reveal the Father not only because of His nature, being one with the Father, but because of His fellowship with the Father.

"He hath declared him." This is to make Him known.

The verb that John the Baptist used here is the verb from which we get our English word, exegesis. What is an exegesis? We talk about exegetical teaching? What do we mean?

An exegesis is an explanation, or interpretation, of Scripture. It is the exposition of Scripture where special attention is given to every detail of the Scriptures.

This is what our Lord did when He came to the earth. In Himself, i.e., in His Person, and in His teachings, as well as in His works, He was explaining, interpreting, if you please, God to man.

Therefore, that which was given before, true but incomplete, was completed in the incarnation, life, and work of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is a full exposition of God the Father. God has made Himself known in Christ.

If I were able to explain the verses that we have covered today so as not to omit a single detail of truth, that would give you some idea of what Christ did in revealing God while He was here on earth.

And so to summarize what we have in these four verses where we are actually introduced to the ministry of John the Baptist and his witness concerning Christ, we have four grand truths:

- 1) The eternity and superiority of Jesus Christ (v. 15).
 - 2) The sufficiency of Jesus Christ in salvation and for all of the spiritual needs His people will ever have (v. 16).
 - 3) The superiority of Christ over Moses, and the superiority of the Gospel over the Law (v.17).
 - 4) The fulness and finality of God's revelation of Himself in His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
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10/23/89

Thus in verses 15-18 we have John the Baptist's witness concerning Christ as the final revelation of the Father. Now as we turn to verses 19-28 we see his additional witness concerning the Deity of our Lord.

2. As Deity, "the Lord" (John 1:19-28).

The Deity of Christ is involved in all four points of this section, but the emphasis in each section is upon a different title, although there is the same emphasis in the first and the last on our Lord as the Son of God.

In this part John the Baptist referred to Christ as "the Lord" in the quotation from Isa. 40:3 which is given in verse 23.

Two things are very apparent here:

- 1) The humility of John the Baptist.
- 2) The superiority of our Lord over John the Baptist.

1:19 The Apostle John does not tell us about the great response that there was to the ministry of John the Baptist, but we see that in Matthew's account: Matt. 3:3:

Then went out to him (John the Baptist) Jerusalem,
and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,
And were baptized of him (John the Baptist) in Jordan,
confessing their sins.

Luke referred to a "multitude" in Luke 3:7 who had come to be baptized by John the Baptist. Israel had not seen for hundreds of years, if ever, such a response to the preaching of the Word of God.

This had attracted the attention, as this verse tells us, of "the Jews," a term which seems to mean, from its use in the Gospels, the Sanhedrin--the supreme council and tribunal of the Jews. There were 71 members, and they not only had religious jurisdiction over the people, but also civil and criminal jurisdiction. The Sanhedrin had sent a delegation of "priests and Levites" to find out what this popular preacher was saying about himself. Their question was, "Who art thou?" The "Who" is emphatic. The question is translated by Westcott like this: "As for thyself, who art thou?" They were exercising their authority, and demanding an answer from John the Baptist.

John the Baptist had attracted such great interest among the people that some were wondering if he were the Messiah. Luke in 3:15 has recorded that "all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not." This had gotten to the Sanhedrin, and so an official delegation was sent to talk to John personally.

1:20 "And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed" -- An expression which means that he had his answer ready for them, and left no doubt in their minds that he made no claim whatever to being the Messiah.

1:21 Next in order: Was he Elijah? Malachi (4:5) recorded the prophecy that Elijah would come just before "the great and dreadful day of the Lord." John the Baptist said, "No, he was not Elijah."

The third question: "Art thou that prophet?" This was a reference to the coming of the prophet which was predicted in Deut. 18:15, which we know was a prophecy of Christ, but which the Jews took to mean some special prophet whose coming would herald the advent of the Messiah. No, John the Baptist was not that prophet!

Westcott points out how John's answers get shorter each time (and this is true of the Greek as well as the English translation):

- 1) "I am not the Christ."

2) "I am not."

3) "No."

We do not know the reason for this unless it means that John was somewhat impatient at the suggestions that he might be far more than he knew himself to be.

1:22 Now the members of the delegation seem to be running out of patience. And so they, having exhausted their suggestions, wanted to know what John the Baptist said about himself.

This is a crucial question that every servant of the Lord answers for himself whether he verbalizes it or not.

1:23 What an illustration John the Baptist's answer was of that which Paul wrote to the Roman believers in Romans 12:3:

For I say, through the grace given unto me,
to every man that is among you,
not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think;
but to think soberly,
according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.

What was John's answer?

He did not give them his name. He did not give them his father's name. He simply quoted Isa. 40:3, and indicated that he was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord."

Matthew Henry said,

He gives his answer in the words of scripture, to show that the scripture was fulfilled in him, and that his office was supported by divine authority (Vol. V, p. 859).

He spoke in humility, as Matthew Henry also said, not to display his dignity, but to show his duty.

The words, "in the wilderness," can go with "crying," as they do in the KJV, or with "make straight." The meaning is essentially the same either way. But John the Baptist by his "crying," i.e., his preaching, was seeking to correct, or to straighten, in the minds of the people of Israel, their ideas about "the way of the Lord." The Lord's way had been made a way of legalism, of works, of ritualism, of sacrifices and feast days. The Lord's way of salvation was the way of repentance, of grace, of lives that were changed.

1:24 Here the Apostle John tells us that those "priests and Levites mentioned in verse 19 were "Pharisees."

They were what Godet called "the ultra conservatives." And from what follows we can see that they were disturbed as much by John's baptism as anything else. This did not fall within the scope of their accepted rituals, and the only reason that they could give for what John was doing was that he considered himself to be some special person, perhaps the Messiah, who then would be above the Jewish hierarchy.

1:25 And so they wanted to know "why" he was baptizing IF he were not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor that prophet.

1:26 We may not be able to determine all that John the Baptist meant by the first line of his reply, "I baptize with water," but by

contrasting it with what he went on to say, the meaning may get clearer.

Let us remember that the Pharisees were ritualists. They were strong on forms and ceremonies, such as, for example, Sabbath observance, circumcision, and the like. And clearly baptism fell into that category. It had no value in itself, as John the Baptist told the Pharisees according to Matt. 3:7-9:

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 for our father:
for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones
to raise up children unto Abraham.

Matthew 3:6 tells that that people "were baptized of him (John the Baptist) in Jordan, confessing their sins." That is not what the Pharisees and Sadducees had in mind. John said that his baptism was preparing people for the coming of One Who was far greater than He was. He was preparing the way of the Lord by preaching the necessity of a repentance from the heart and faith in the One Whom John knew, but the Pharisees and Sadducees did not know!

John the Baptist believed in the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth. He called Him "Lord" in verse 23. The Lord was coming on a mission of salvation. He was the important One. John was simply preparing people for His coming.

1:27 This is a repetition of what we had in verse 15. Some MSS omit the words, "is preferred before me," but in view of the fact that it is in verse 15, and appears again in verse 30, would make it appear that it belongs here also.

Remember that "preferred" is translated from the verb, to become. The Lord was born after John, and He began His ministry after John, but He held a place of higher authority and dignity than John would ever have because He was the Lord. John, by way of comparison, did not feel that he was worthy to be a household servant to the Lord, taking off the Lord's sandals, preparatory to washing His feet. John the Baptist never sought to share the limelight with his Lord, and ours. He always sought to glorify the Lord.

1:28 Notice where all of this took place: "In Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing." What John said was not heard just by the Pharisees and Sadducees, but by all of the people who were there.

"Bethabara" means house of passage, and is thought by some authorities to have been the place where the Israelites entered the land of Canaan, crossing the Jordan. It was some 20 miles from Jerusalem. John was there probably because that was a good place to baptize. And it is an indication of the hunger the people had for peace with God that they would go out there to confess their sins and to find peace with God.

10/30/89

We now come to the third part of John the Baptist's witness concerning Christ.

To review:

- 1) The first was, as the Final Revelation of the Father (John 1:15-18).
- 2) The second was, as Deity, "the Lord" (John 1:19-28). And, in view of all of the questioning, plus the fact that John the Baptist was quoting from a Messianic passage in Isaiah (40:3), we must recognize in this testimony the fact that John the Baptist was claiming that our Lord was the Messiah.

Now we come to the third--John's witness concerning our Lord:

3. As "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29-31).

If in the preceding section where John the Baptist quoted from Isa. 40:3 he was identifying Jesus Christ as "the Lord," and as the Messiah, here he was saying that our Lord was the Lamb of Isaiah 53, especially in verse 7. You may remember that it was this verse and the following verse that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Philip met him returning to Ethiopia after having been in Jerusalem to worship. And Philip began at that "same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 78:35b).

We are "like sheep," and so our Lord became "the Lamb of God" because it was upon Him that the Father "laid ... the iniquity of us all."

Shortly after John proclaimed this, we learn from John 2:13 that the Passover was "at hand," the time when many lambs were taken to Jerusalem to be sacrificed. Many have supposed that John the Baptist spoke these words even as people were making their way toward Jerusalem with their sacrifices. So such a proclamation would have been very appropriate.

The lamb was a proper type of our Lord because of its character as well as the purpose it had served in the spiritual life of Israel. It was gentle, meek, submissive. It was a sacrificial animal. It had been the animal that was sacrificed the night of the exodus from Egypt, marking the time of Israel's redemption from Egypt. And every Jew was well acquainted with the continual burnt offering, sacrificed daily, every morning and every evening. The spiritual life of Israel was characterized by sacrifices throughout every year. The writer of Hebrews has given us this information about Israel under the Law:

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood;
and without shedding of blood is no remission (Heb. 9:22).

All of the OT sacrifices pointing ahead to the one final, all-sufficient sacrifice of our Lord which John the Baptist announced for the people of Israel to hear.

"Behold" -- This was a command for the people to look at the Lord, to recognize who He was, and to trust in Him. It is a word designed to attract attention to something, or, in this case, Someone, very important, new, unexpected, which the people should not fail to "see."

But John called our Lord, "the Lamb of God."

This means that He was the Lamb God had provided, the Lamb which

belonged to God, and Who was the kind of a Lamb that was proper for such a One as God is. There is in that expression the idea that this Lamb was fully acceptable to God. He was as Peter wrote later, "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). It is no wonder that John the Baptist said, "Behold ..."

This is a good place to remind you that this is the title used the most for our Lord in the Book of the Revelation--some 27 times!

Here, and in John 1:36 are the only two times the Apostle John used this title of our Lord in his Gospel.

But notice an interesting point.

John the Baptist was speaking to Jewish people, preparing them for the coming of the Messiah (Who was there), but his message was,

Behold the Lamb of God,
which taketh away the **sin of the world**.

What is the thought in this?

It is that the Lord Jesus Christ did not just come to save the people of Israel, but He came as the Saviour of the Gentiles as well!

We had an indication of that in verse 9, and again in verses 11 and 12. But here it is stated very clearly.

Jesus Christ came to remedy the one problem that is common to both Jews and Gentiles: S-I-N! John the Baptist did not say sins, but "sin" (singular). The Lord Jesus came to die as the Lamb of God so as to settle once and for all the one great problem of S-I-N. Thus we have here the grand and glorious victory of our Lord declared just as He was beginning His public ministry. What a majestic and triumphant message John the Baptist had to declare! And he did not want anyone to miss it.

He "taketh away," the present tense.

Ryle mentioned in his commentary that the present tense

... is intended to show the completeness of Christ's satisfaction for sin, and the continual application of His once-made sacrifice. He is always taking away sin (I, 61).

1:30 Twice before in this chapter we have read this same message which John the Baptist was evidently preaching all of the time. But here it seems that it is given as proof of the trustworthiness of John the Baptist's message and ministry. He spoke very emphatically: "This ... I ... a man ... before me he was" (this last is the order of the words in the Greek text).

John the Baptist was a true prophet. The One Whom he announced had come, and John was still declaring both our Lord's humanity, and His Deity: "a man ... before me he was."

1:31 Here we see the faith of John the Baptist.

John said here, "And I knew him not," speaking of his knowledge of the Lord. It is certain that, if John knew Jesus, he did not know that he was the Messiah. But these words seem to suggest that he did not even know Him. Our Lord grew up in Nazareth; John grew up in the desert.

And Luke 1:80, after the record of Zacharias' song of praise, tells us about John the Baptist,

And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit,

and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel.

So this probably means that John did not actually know the Lord, even though they were related.

But John did know one thing, and he, as a prophet, knew this by divine revelation, that the Messiah had come, and that He would be manifested to Israel. Therefore, I believe I am right when I say that John the Baptist, in his ministry, was acting in faith upon what God had revealed to him. And so this is why he came baptizing: because it was in that situation that he would come to know who the Messiah was, and that the Messiah would first make Himself known as the Messiah.

So this verse reads like this:

And I knew him not,

but in order that he might be manifested to Israel,

on this account I came baptizing with water.

Remember that John's calling was to "make straight the way of the Lord." The religious leaders of the day had made it crooked. John was raised up to restore the true message of salvation through repentance and faith in the coming Messiah, Who would come, not to put down Rome and rule as King (that would come later), but to suffer and die for "sin," the sin of Israel, and the sin of the whole world.

But now let us go to the fourth part of John the Baptist's testimony concerning Jesus Christ.

4. As "the Son of God" (John 1:32-34).

John the Baptist has told us that as only begotten Son of the Father our Lord came as the Final and Complete Revelation of the Father. He has told us that He is the Lord. And we have just learned that He is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." Now we are to learn more clearly that He is "the Son of God."

The Apostle John did not give us the information that we have in all three of the other Gospels.

The situation was this: As we learn in John 1:33, John had been told by God that the one upon Whom he saw the Spirit descending would be the One Who would baptize with the Holy Spirit, i.e., the Messiah.

John, as a prophet of God, was given the spirit of discernment. He knew, for example, that when the Pharisees came to him to be baptized that they were being hypocritical. Cf. Matt.3:7-12 and Luke 3:7-18. In Luke's account John the Baptist's charges of hypocrisy were directed also against many of the people, some of the publicans, and even some of the soldiers.

But this same God-given spirit of discernment enabled John to realize when the Lord came to Him that the Lord did not need to be baptized, but that he should be baptized by the Lord. And remember that at this time he did not know who the Lord was. I am referring to what Matthew has recorded for us in Matt. 3:13-17. We still have to remember what John said as recorded here in John 1:33, that he knew Him not.

But now let us look at the text: John 1:32-34.

1:32 This happened after John had finished baptizing the Lord.

1:33 This is what John the Baptist had been told would happen.
By this sign the Messiah would be clearly identified.

1:34 How could John the Baptist say this from what He had seen?

John the Baptist did not relate here a fact which, by the time he wrote his Gospel, was well-known, i.e., that after the Holy Spirit had descended in the form of a dove, there was

... a voice from heaven, saying,
this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased
(Matt. 3:17).

Cf. also Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22 where you find the same record.

So John the Baptist knew this because he heard God the Father said it!
This is a clear confirmation that the incarnation of the Son of God did not in any way alter His Deity. And this fact is so important that we have the Holy Spirit and the Father uniting in their testimony to the perfect Sonship of Jesus of Nazareth. He had to be Man in order to die for men; He had to be God in order to be able to satisfy all of the righteous requirements of God. Any teaching regarding the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ will disqualify Him from being the Savior of all those who believe in Him.

John the Baptist understood from his parents and by the testimony of the Old Testament that a Redeemer was coming. God, in very special ways, enabled him to recognize the Messiah when He came. John, by faith, proclaimed the Gospel before he actually knew who the Lord was. BUT WE CAN SEE THROUGH ALL OF THIS THAT IT WAS GOD WHO WAS AT WORK WITH JOHN THE BAPTIST, BRINGING HIM TO THE FULL REALIZATION OF THE NATURE OF OUR LORD, AND HIS PURPOSE IN COMING INTO THE WORLD.

That understanding has come to each of us in different ways, but with all of us God has been involved, the Holy Spirit has been involved, our Lord has been involved. And they have made great use of the Scriptures with each one of us. There may have been some people who were instruments in God's hands: parents, SS teachers, pastors, friends, or possibly some stranger who told you about Christ.

But we have a marvelous picture in the life of John the Baptist of the way in which God works to bring us to His Son so that we can be saved. And this is the point, the purpose, the aim, the goal, the mission, the objective, of the Gospel of John, that we might believe "that Jesus is the Christ ..." (John 20:31).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 1:35-51

Thus far in chapter 1 of John's Gospel we have been introduced to:

- 1) Christ, the Word (John 1:1-14). We have seen His unique character, His primary witness: John the Baptist, and what His mission was in the world.
- 2) The ministry of John the Baptist which in 1:15-34 was centered upon identifying the Lord. We have seen that He was the final and complete Revelation of the Father, that He was both man and God, and that He properly carries the titles, Lord, the Lamb of God, and the Son of God--the only begotten Son.

Now we are going to be introduced to some of our Lord's first disciples, five in number:

- 1) Andrew.
- 2) The unnamed disciple we assume to be the Apostle John.
- 3) Simon Peter.
- 4) Philip.
- 5) Nathanael.

In the outline we will consider the first two together, and then the others separately.

The place of this section in the outline:

I. Introduction (John 1:1-52).

C. Some of Jesus' First Disciples (John 1:35-51).

We might even refer to this section as giving us the testimony concerning Christ of these first disciples.

1. Andrew and (we assume) John, the writer of this Gospel (John 1:35-40).

Note the time sequence here.

The section having to do with the ministry of John is concerned with just two days:

- 1) The first day was the day that John the Baptist was confronted by the delegation from Jerusalem, men who had come to inquire about John's ministry.
- 2) "The next day," in verse 29, was not the first time that John had seen Jesus because he had already baptized Him. But this was the time when John the Baptist preached, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." And on this same day John testified that Jesus was "the Son of God" (v. 34).
- 3) As this section begins in verse 35, we are told that "the next day" after John the Baptist did the preaching mentioned above, he again preached, "Behold the Lamb of God," and this time two of his own disciples became followers of the Lord.

1:35-37 I do not think that we can say that this was the time when Andrew (mentioned for the first time in verse 40) and, supposedly, John the Apostle, were first saved, because it is very doubtful that they would have been disciples of John the Baptist if they had not really trusted in the Lord before they ever saw Him on earth. But this does show the great importance of preaching Christ. It is when Christ is preached that we can expect believers to follow Him.

What a proof this was that John the Baptist was determined to be only the forerunner of the Messiah, and no more! This very well may have been the last time that John the Baptist saw the Lord on earth. It is apparent that John was not out to make a name for himself, but his great burden was to get people not only to repent and believe on Christ, but to follow Him!

1:38 How many people were around, we do not know. But it is encouraging to see that the Lord noticed them. He knew their hearts. He was working in them. But He asked the question, as Westcott suggests, partly to encourage them by noticing them, and partly to make them examine their own hearts as to why they wanted to become His disciples.

What did they seek? Did they seek a King who would deliver them and all of the people of Israel? Did they seek a high position in the Kingdom? What did they seek?

It is interesting to see that they really turned the "what" of that question into a whom? They were only seeking the Lord Himself. They called him, "Rabbi" (and it is interpreted for the apostle John's Gentile readers): "Master." The word "Master" is the Greek word for a teacher. So a Rabbi was a teacher. The title indicates that, although they had learned much from their first Rabbi, they wanted to learn more from the Lord. And this is what a disciple is, a learner. A disciple in those days not only learned doctrine from their Rabbis, but sought to imitate the lives of those who were their teachers.

So the question, "Where dwellest thou?", was an appeal to have time with the Lord, personal time, private time, where they could learn whatever the Lord wanted to teach them.

1:39 If the Lord's question to them in verse 38 had been encouraging to them, how much more the Lord's invitation: "Come and see."

They accepted the Lord's invitation, and "came and saw where he dwelt." And they stayed with Him that day.

There is a question regarding the meaning of "the tenth hour." Some feel that this is Roman time, which apparently, like our time, began at midnight. This would make "the ten hour" equal to our 10 a.m. But others feel that this was Jewish time, the day beginning at 6 a.m., making this 4 p.m. We probably can't solve the problem, but the verse seems to indicate that they stayed with the Lord because it was "the tenth hour," which would argue for the later time, Jewish time, 4 p.m.

But this is not the main point. The point is that these two men spent time with the Lord, and that the Lord taught them. What He told them, is not recorded. But we certainly have a clear suggestion in what Andrew did afterwards, as we will see in verses 40-42.

1:40 At this point we learn that one of these two disciples was "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother." This must mean that Peter was the better known of the two brothers. The other is not identified, but it has been thought that this must have been John, the brother of James, who, out of modesty, does not mention himself.

2. Simon Peter (John 1:42, 43).

1:41 It is interesting to note the two occurrences of the verb find which we have in this verse. Andrew immediately went looking for Peter until he found him, and then he told Peter that he had found the Messiah, the Christ.

The verb find suggests that just as Andrew had been looking for his brother, so he had been looking for the Messiah. He looked until he found the Lord, and then he went looking for his brother to bring him to the Lord.

Here we have a positive suggestion as to what the Lord had taught Andrew and John during the time that they were with Him. They came away with no doubts in their minds but that the Lord Jesus was really the Messiah. Think of how the Lord must have taken them over the prophecies of the OT which were concerned with His first coming, and how each one, as Matthew especially has told us, was fulfilled to the letter!

And here is another point: Andrew and John first believed that the Lord was the Messiah because John the Baptist had told them that He was. But now they knew because the Lord Himself had ministered to them.

There is an important lesson here, and it is illustrated by the men of Samaria in John 4. You will remember that the Samaritan woman went, after the Lord had spoken to her, to tell the men of the city that she had met the Messiah. The men then went where the Lord was, and personally heard Him. And the Lord stayed with them for two days. And it is said at first that "many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman" (John 4:39). But after the Lord had spent time with them, teaching them, then the men said to the Samaritan 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 (John 4:42).

What is the application?

There are many, too many, who believe simply because someone has told them about Christ, but they have never gone to the Word for themselves to learn from the Lord Himself! There is no question but that people can be, and are, saved through the testimony of others, but probably one reason that so many who profess to believe never make much progress spiritually, is because they have never sought the Lord for themselves.

Andrew had learned the importance of this because he not only went to tell his brother about Christ, but ...

1:42 " ... he brought him to Jesus." Andrew told Peter about Christ, and then Andrew brought Peter to Christ.

It is said of the Jews in Berea,
These were more noble than those in Thessalonica,
in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,
and searched the scriptures daily,
whether those things were so.
Therefore many of them believed;
also of honorable women which were Greeks,
and of men, not a few (Acts 17:11, 12).

It is important for us to tell people about the Lord--our children, and to tell everyone else who will listen to us. But it is equally important that we bring them to Christ so that they can learn from Him themselves. This means for us, getting them into the Word, so that the Spirit of God will convince them just as certainly as the Lord convinced John and Andrew, and as the Lord convinced the men of Samaria.

There was no way that Andrew could have known the plans and purposes of God for his brother, Simon. We can see that the Lord was working when John the Baptist preached so that Andrew hear and followed the Lord, and that after spending that time with the Lord he immediately went looking, that very day, for his brother. These things did not just happen. The hand of a sovereign God can be seen as we trace the work of the Lord from one person to another.

When Andrew's brother was born, he was named "Simon." As a result of being born again, his name was Peter. (The Aramaic form is Cephas.) The new name suggests what the Lord would make him: a rock. He is not the Rock. That is Christ (Petra). Simon is a part of that Rock (as the name Petros suggests).

Very little is known about Andrew; much is known of Peter. But we must never forget who it was that the Lord used to bring Simon to Himself. Many know the name of D. L. Moody, but who knows the name of the Sunday School teacher who brought him to Christ?

And how interesting it is, even in John's Gospel, to see what the Lord did, and how much He had to do to make Simon into a Petros. The fact that the Lord said that Simon would be called Peter was evidence that others would recognize that that is just what God made him--a rock!

3. Philip (John 1:43, 44).

Some people are brought to the Lord through the instrumentality of other people. But sometimes the Lord works directly with people, as He did in the case of Saul of Tarsus. And as He did here in the case of Philip. As Westcott remarked (p. 25), "This is the beginning of Christ's work."

1:43 He found Philip. (Here is our word again. Cf. v. 41 where it is used twice.) This means that the Lord was looking specifically for him. And the Lord not only found him, but won him to Himself. The Lord's work is not haphazard, but a careful fulfillment of His eternal plan.

Granted, much more went on between Philip and the Lord than is recorded here. But whatever it was, it all culminated in the Lord saying, "Follow me." And the implication is that that is exactly what Philip did. He became a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:44 Linking Philip with Andrew and Peter may suggest that Andrew and Peter had had some influence upon Philip. We do not know. But the three men undoubtedly knew each other long before they knew the Lord. But the providence of God appears in the information given to us in this verse.

4. Nathanael (John 1:45-51).

1:45 We come to the fourth and fifth occurrences of the verb find. After Philip came to the Lord, he went looking for Nathanael--and

he found him. And then he said, "We have found him ...". Andrew told Peter that he had found the Messiah. Now Philip was telling Nathanael the same thing. It is clear that there were people in Israel at this time who were looking for the Messiah to come imminently. They were looking for Him, expecting Him. Only the Lord could have put such an expectation in their hearts after all of the years when there had been no new revelation from God.

Philip believed that Moses and the OT prophets had predicted the coming of the Messiah. And he also believed that He had come in the form of a real man, "Jesus of Nazareth, the (legal) son of Joseph."

1:46 And then we see a repetition of what we have seen before in the winning and calling of the disciples. When Nathanael raised a question about Someone like the Lord coming from a place like Nazareth, which was in Galilee, and which did not have a good reputation at all, Philip's answer to Nathanael was, "Come and see." It is only when people come themselves to the Lord, and deal with Him personally, that all questions are answered and all doubts are dispelled.

1:47 From what the Lord said here to Nathanael we can see further evidence of the omniscience of the Lord, and that the contacts that were being made were according to a plan, His plan.

"An Israelite" -- Did our Lord here mean that Nathanael was a spiritual descendant of Israel (Jacob)? It would seem so. And the Lord knew what kind of a person Nathanael was by grace: "no guile." He did not pretend to be somebody other than he was. He was true, genuine, sincere. It would be difficult to think of a higher honor that the Lord could have bestowed upon him. By the grace of God he was an outstanding example of what a child of God should be. Notice that the Lord did not say this directly to Nathanael, but **"of him."**

Again we have evidence that the Lord had divine insight into the hearts of men. Cf. 2:24, 25. He knows the bad, but He also knows the good. This is further proof of His Deity.

1:48 It is plain that Nathanael had not met the Lord before, even though he must have been a believer at this time.

Here is further evidence of our Lord's Deity. When Nathanael was nowhere near the Lord, the Lord saw him. It is thought that Nathanael may have been meditating under the fig tree, perhaps meditating upon some of the Messianic passages of the OT. The Lord "saw" him then, and knew him, and was expecting him to come.

1:49 This was enough for Nathanael. He perceived that He was Deity. And he recognized Him as the Messiah, "the King of Israel."

When a person comes to the Lord, he will be convinced of some of the most important and most profound truths that it is possible for man to know. That is why it is so important for people to realize the importance and the need to come to the Lord for themselves. The convictions that the Lord gives us can never be erased from our minds and hearts.

1:50 The Lord knew that the word that had gotten to Nathanael was the Lord's statement that He had seen him even before Philip called him. Believing what the Lord tells us, leads to greater revelations of

the truth of His Word. How important it is that we treat the words of our Lord as the Word of God, and that we believe His words with all of our hearts.

1:51 Here we have the first of twenty-five times in John's Gospel that we have our Lord saying, "Verily, verily, ..." The Lord is the only One Who uses these words. They always come at the beginning of some statement of great importance to which the Lord was drawing special attention. John is the only Gospel writer who gives the double use of the word.

The word "verily" is a translation of the Greek word, _____. It is transliterated in to English with our word, Amen. It has what Thayer calls, "the force of a superlative, most assuredly (p. 32). We could translate it, Truly, truly.

And when it is followed with, "I say unto you," that statement is equivalent to that expression found many times in the OT, "Thus saith the Lord." And so with this statement our Lord was claiming to be One whose word was the Word of God!

But what important statement did the Lord introduce with "verily, verily" here?

It is not an easy verse to explain. It has been interpreted as being only figurative, as applying to some special revelation that was given to Nathanael, as a reference to His transfiguration (but Nathanael was not there).

The best interpretation, it seems to me, is that this is a reference to the second coming of our Lord when He will appear as "the Son of God" and as "the King of Israel." While the Lord was speaking to Nathanael, the verb, "ye shall see," is plural, indicating that this will be something not only that Nathanael will see, but all of His people will see. The Lord did not come the first time in glory, as the King of Israel, as as the King of kings, and Lord of lords. But that day will come. Three things will be seen:

- 1) Heaven opened.
- 2) Angels ascending and descending.
- 3) The Lord Jesus as "the Son of man." This is a title by which He completed the many revelations which we have of Him in this first chapter of John's Gospel. The other titles in this chapter were given to Him by others; this is the one that He gave to Himself. Nathanael called Him "the Son of God"; He called Himself "the Son of man." Stephen is the only person in the NT who called the Lord "the Son of man." Cf. Acts 7:56. Every other time it is the Lord Who was using it of Himself.

The title, "Son of man," certainly indicates that He was a man, a true human being. However, it also has implications of His Deity: He is The Son of God who became a man, was human-born.

There also has to be a connection with Dan. 7:13, 14 where we read that Daniel wrote,

I saw in the night visions, and, behold,
one like the (a) Son of man came in the clouds of heaven,
and came to the Ancient of days,
and they brought him near before him.
And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,

that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him:
 his dominion is an everlasting dominion,
 which shall not pass away,
 and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This would seem to confirm the Messianic and future nature of the promise that was made to Nathanael. The hope of Israel will not be disappointed. He will come as King. And when He does, heaven will be seen as open, angels, unseen now, will be seen then, and, best of all, Nathanael and all of us will see the Lord coming as the Son of man in power and great glory!

Concl: What are we to learn from this tremendous chapter?

Well, there is no doubt but that the Apostle John has given us a marvelous introduction to our Lord Jesus Christ. This Gospel is about Him. Through this Gospel we will learn more about Him so that we will know Him better. We will see His glory again and again. We will be convinced that He is the Greatest Teacher there ever has been, or ever will be. And we will adore Him as our Savior and as our Lord.

Bishop Ryle in his commentary has quoted an old timer by the name of Aretius who has summarized the names or epithets that are given to the Lord in this Gospel. Cf. Vol. I, p. 89. There could be no better way to conclude our study of this chapter than to list them once again. In several cases the titles mean the same, but they are all worthy of noticing separately. There are twenty-one of them:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1) The Word. | 11) The Lamb of God. |
| 2) God. | 12) Jesus. |
| 3) Life. | 13) A Man. |
| 4) Light. | 14) The Son of God. |
| 5) The true Light. | 15) Rabbi. |
| 6) The only begotten of the Father. | 16) Master. |
| 7) Full of grace and truth. | 17) Messiah. |
| 8) Jesus Christ. | 18) Christ. |
| 9) The only begotten of the Father. | 19) The Son of Joseph. |
| 10) The Lord. | 20) The King of Israel. |
| | 21) The Son of man. |

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Aretius neglected to say that our Lord is:

- 1) The Eternal One.
- 2) The Creator.
- 3) The One Who is greater than John the Baptist.

And since the Lord is all of this, and even more, He is far greater than we are, and sufficient to be our Saviour, and to meet any and every need that we will ever have! Therefore, let us trust Him, and worship Him, and seek by His grace to be and to do that which is most pleasing to Him.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 2:1-11

We come now to the second main division of the Gospel of John:

II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2-12).

And this can be divided into three sections with regard to the ministry of our Lord:

- A. The period of acceptance (John 2-4).
- B. The period of opposition (John 5-11).
- C. The period of our Lord's last public appearances (John 12).

In John's Gospel, the turning point in our Lord's ministry, i.e., when the opposition against Him began to build up, was with the healing of the man who had been unable to walk for thirty-eight years. Prior to that, the Lord seems to have enjoyed a time of acceptance from all quarters. John speaks of several areas:

- 1) Cana, with the first miracle which John recorded.
- 2) Nicodemus.
- 3) The Samaritans.
- 4) The nobleman at Cana whose son was sick at Capernaum.

In this period of acceptance, the first event which John recorded was the miracle of changing the water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

1. Miracle #1: the Lord changed water into wine (2:1-11).

John called this miracle, a sign, the literal translation of the word in John 2:11. It is that which distinguishes a person from everybody else. It is an mark of identification. As it is used in relation to Christ, it speaks of some outstanding or unusual mark or token that He was the Person He professed to be, and the Person others claimed Him to be.

All through chapter 1 we have seen names and titles used for our Lord (over 20 of them). We have seen that there were many who gave testimony that He was the Christ, the Son of God. This would include John the Apostle, John the Baptist, Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael--and even the testimonies of the Father and the Holy Spirit. And our Lord accepted these testimonies when they were given to Him. According to Scripture, it takes only two or three witnesses to establish a fact. We have much more than that.

In addition to all of these witnesses, we have the works of the Lord which were His signs--miraculous events or works which, as verse 11 indicates, "manifested his glory."

So the reason for this miracle, more important than meeting an urgent need at a wedding, was to show the glory of Christ, i.e., to give additional proof that He really was the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, the Lamb of God Who had come to take away the sin of the world.

But let us go back to 2:1.

2:1 Thus far it seems that John the Apostle has been taking us a day at a time. Cf. 1:28, 35, 43; and now 2:1--only this is three days later. So this wedding took place shortly after the events recorded in chapter 1. Our Lord's mother was there. The fact that Joseph is not

mentioned is taken by many to indicate that he had died.

2:2 The Lord had been "called," i.e., invited, and so were His disciples--evidently the men who are mentioned in chapter 1.

Although we cannot say for sure, it seems reasonable to assume that this was the marriage of some relatives of our Lord and His mother.

2:3 We are not told about the wedding (which, in those days, often took a week). We are simply told about a crisis which arose over the fact that they had run out of wine. While this was not a life and death matter, yet it would have been a major embarrassment to the bride and groom, and to those who had planned the marriage. It may be that many more came than were expected to come.

Various explanations have been given as to why the Lord's mother told Him about the need, but it seems clear from our Lord's answer in verse 3 that Mary was thinking of some way in which the identity of the Lord could be made known to an even wider circle of people.

I would agree with Bishop Ryle who said that Mary remembered what had been told her about her Son before His birth, that she knew what had transpired under the ministry of John the Baptist, especially when he baptized the Lord. As far as we know, the Lord had not performed any miracles up to this point. But here He was, 30 years old. She had been waiting for Him to manifest Himself, and felt that this was the right time and place for Him to do it. She would not have known how the Lord could have provided the wine, but she knew that He could do it somehow.

This seems to be the correct interpretation of her appeal to the Lord in the light of what the Lord said in response in verse 4.

2:4 The Lord was not showing any disrespect for His mother when He called her, "Woman."

This is what He called His mother when He spoke to her from the Cross, and said giving her in to the care of the Apostle John, "Woman, behold thy son" (John 19:26).

When the Lord spoke to the Samaritan woman, He said,
 Woman, believe me, the hour cometh,
 when ye shall neither in this mountain,
 nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father (John 4:21).

He was not speaking disrespectfully, but with great tenderness, as He brought her to trust in Him.

So it was with His mother. She was not trying to dominate Him. She was appealing for help, hoping that at the same time He would begin to show to the world Who He was!

Again the statement, "What have I to do with thee?" was not disrespectful, as though He did not want His mother to tell Him what He should do. Lit. the question ought to be translated, "What to me and to thee?" In other words He was saying, What is that to us? Cf. Robertson, V, 34. And then He added, "Mine hour is not yet come."

This is the first of many times that we are going to run across statements in John's Gospel that are similar to that. Cf. 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1. And in this we are introduced to a statement which

indicates two things:

- 1) The sovereignty of God over the affairs of His life here on earth.
- 2) The complement of that: that the affairs of His life were not to be directed by His mother, nor anyone else, not even by Himself! We are going to see many statements to the effect that He had come to do the Father's will. And He would do it in the Father's time--not in His own, not in His mother's, not in His enemies, nor even of His disciples.

So, contrary to what is often said, the Lord did not do this because His mother asked Him to do it. He did it because it was the will of the Father for Him to do it. His mother, being a very godly woman, had been led by the Father to speak of this. The Father was the One Who put in her heart the desire to see her Son and her Lord and Savior do something to show forth His glory.

2:5 And so she said to the servants, "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do (it)."

We see our Lord acting in submission to His heavenly Father as His mother had expressed in words what the Father had brought His Son to the wedding to do. That is why we are not told about the Bride and Groom. They would have had no idea when they planned their wedding that it would be there that the Lord would begin to make known through miraculous events that He was the Son of God, the Messiah, the Lord of creation.

2:6 The Apostle John wanted his readers to know (and it is explained for Gentile readers) that it was customary for a large amount of water to be present at such occasions because of "the manner of the purifying of the Jews." But the water had been used up! There were six water pots there, and each one could hold "two or three firkins."

We do not know exactly how much that would be, but probably 20 to 25 gallons in each pot.

2:7 The Lord told the servants to fill the pots with water. And they filled them full.

2:8 Then he told them to take some out and give it to the governor of the wedding feast who undoubtedly would have been greatly disturbed by the situation when the wine was all gone.

The governor of the marriage feast was probably like our present-day coordinator. He was the one who was in charge of all of the arrangements, responsible to make sure that everything was carried out as planned.

2:9 He tasted it, but did not know where it had come from. But the servants knew. The governor immediately got in touch with the bridegroom.

2:10 He reminded the bridegroom that the usual way of doing things at a wedding was to serve the good wine first, and then that which is not as good, later. But he recognized that the wine that the Lord had made was better than the best that they had had before.

Perhaps some are thinking: What are we supposed to think with regard to drinking wine today? Is it justified in the light of Scripture?

We are talking about "the fruit of the vine." And, to be sure, it can become fermented. But you have so many warnings in Scripture against drinking and drunkenness that it surely seems incredible to me that the Lord would ever provide a drink for a wedding that could send them home drunk. Let us read what Solomon said in Prov. 23:20-35.

I agree with A. T. Robertson who said in his commentary on John that we are talking about wine here in this passage, "but this fact does not mean that today Jesus would approve the modern liquor trade with its damnable influences" (V, 37). Intoxicating drinks have become the curse of our time, and probably ruins as many people as drugs do. It is a disgrace, and brings reproach upon the Name of the Lord, that people will try to use the Bible to justify that which is ruining so many lives and which contributes in a large measure to many other sins.

But let me get back to our miracle, and its meaning.

2:11 This was just the first of many other signs which our Lord performed. And in this one, as in all of the rest, He "manifested forth his glory."

"Manifested forth" -- Thayer says that this means to make visible that which previously had been unknown and hidden (p. 648). John had referred to this manifestation of God's glory by His words in 1:14. He saw it in the mount of transfiguration, but he also saw the glory of God in Jesus Christ every time a miracle was performed! The miracles of Moses and of Elijah and of Elisha in the OT, and of the Apostles in the NT, glorified God. They were merely human instruments through whom God was working. But the miracles of the Lord Jesus were different. They manifested His power, His wisdom, His glory. The Lord is seen here as the Creator. The best wine that men can make is not to be compared with the wine our Lord made out of water.

Is this not a testimony that God is compassionate upon us even in providing that which is not absolutely essential for our well-being? Can we not say that our Lord's presence at this wedding indicated His approval of what was going on when He met this need?

"And his disciples believed on him." This was not when they first believed. This means that they continued to believe, that their faith was strengthened when they saw what the Lord had done.

And this tells us also how our faith can be strengthened: It is when we look at Jesus, when we see His mighty works. Is it any wonder that the people of God in the OT were encouraged to talk of all the wondrous works of God? This was for the strengthening of their faith, so they would trust the Lord more and more, and turn to Him first in every time of need, just as Mary did in this instance.

But there is one curious thing that impresses me as I read that eleventh verse. It is this: We are told that the disciples believed. And we know that Mary believed because from a human point-of-view she initiated this whole thing. But what about the governor? The bridegroom and the bride? What about the servants? What about the other guests?

The amazing thing about the miracles of our Lord, beginning with this one, is that ALL people did not believe on Him. What a testimony to the hardness and blindness and sinfulness of the human heart? Have you seen His glory? No one ever believes in the Lord, really believes,

until they see His glory. Where can His glory be seen today? It is seen in the Word. And it is to be seen in the lives of those who know the Lord, and love Him, and live for Him. Cf. 2 Cor. 3:18; 4:3-7.

What does it mean that we see His glory? Are we looking for some kind of a bright light? No. It means that we see Who He is, we see Him as He is, we recognize that He could be no other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Savior of all who believe.

Make sure before we go any farther in our study that you have seen His glory and that you are number among those who believe in Him.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 2:12-25

We are considering what we have called, the period of the Lord's acceptance, which takes us from the beginning of chapter 2 to the end of chapter 4. In chapter 5 we see the rise of opposition against the Lord and His ministry, and this opposition continued and increased in intensity until after the Lord's death.

In John 2, verses 12 through 25, we have four significant things which took place:

- 1) The Lord in Capernaum (John 2:12).
- 2) The cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem (John 2:13-17).
- 3) The prediction concerning His death and resurrection (John 2:18-22).
- 4) The favorable response of the people in Jerusalem to our Lord's ministry, but His refusal to trust them because He knew their hearts (John 2:23-25).

But let us notice where this comes in our outline:

- I. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2-12).
 - A. The period of acceptance (John 2-4).
 1. Miracle #1 (John 2:1-11).
 2. The Lord at Capernaum (John 2:12).

Capernaum was a very important place in the life of our Lord after He began His public ministry. However, it is only mentioned four other times in John's Gospel: John 4:46; 6:17, 24, 59. But it appears from the combined testimony of the four Gospels that our Lord made His home in Capernaum after He began His public ministry. Bishop Ryle said that "at no place does He seem to have worked so many miracles" as at Capernaum. It was located on the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 9:1 tells us,

And he entered into a ship, and passed over,
and came into his own city.

Most commentators take this as a reference to Capernaum--which would give added support that Capernaum was His residence during the years of His ministry on earth.

And so it would seem that verse 12 simply tells us that, after the marriage at Cana, our Lord, His mothers, and His brothers, along with those who were His disciples at the time, went down to Capernaum.

Matthew 4:13 tells us that "leaving Nazareth, he (our Lord) came and dwelt in Capernaum." John tells us that from Cana "he went down to Capernaum." Cana was in the hill country of Galilee; Capernaum was "down" by the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

After this brief reference to Capernaum, we next have:

3. Our Lord's first ministry at Jerusalem (John 2:13-25).
- And this is where we have the last three of the four points mentioned previously.

The first of these is:

- a. The cleansing of the Temple (John 2:13-17).

2:13 We see why the Lord did not remain at Capernaum on this occasion. It was because of "the Jews' passover."

This feast commemorated the deliverance of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. It was, and still is, rich in its typology. We read in John 1 that John the Baptist preached that our Lord was "the Lamb of

God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The Lord wanted to be there. And He was faithful in keeping the Law as long as the nation was under the Law. He was faithful!

The Passover is mentioned again in verse 23, then in 6:4; 11:55 (2x); 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14.

But it is interesting to note that John called it, "the Jews' passover." Origen declared in his writings that this was an expression to show that it was different from the Lord's passover, i.e., the Passover as the Lord had commanded that it be observed, that it had been corrupted by "the Jews." This did not keep the Lord away from Jerusalem on that occasion. He sought to be faithful to the Lord, and perhaps to exert a correcting influence upon a feast that carried the greatest possible significance.

In the same way, the observance of the Lord's Supper has been corrupted. It had been corrupted in Corinth, as one example, even before the NT was completed. But Paul did not abandon it. Instead he issued a solemn warning, and sought to lead the Corinthian church out of their error.

2:14 The first problem that the Lord found in connection with the Passover was the sale of sacrificial animals. All three of the other Gospel writers mentioned this problem which grieved the Lord so deeply, but they speak of a second and later time that the Lord did this same thing. Cf. Matt. 21:12-16; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47.

The Law provided for such sales, but certainly not in the Temple. Cf. Deut. 14:23-26. Making merchandise of that which has to do with the Lord's work is a major sin in the Lord's sight. These men were making money on the worship of the people. This is a case of doing the right thing in the wrong way, and at the wrong place. Matthew Henry pointed out in his commentary that great corruptions in the Lord's work have often originated from a love of money. Cf. 1 Tim. 6:5-10.

And then the Lord did a very bold thing.

2:15 How out-of-character this seems to be for our Lord! But this is a solemn reminder that our Lord is not only loving and gracious (as was seen at the marriage in Cana), but He is holy and righteous, and, where He is confronted with sin, angry and wrathful. Those who reject the final judgment of God need to consider this event very carefully. It should have been a solemn warning to all who were in Temple that God does not close His eyes to the sins of men, and that terrible judgments await those who remain in their sins.

The Lord made a scourge, drove the money-changers and their animals out, overthrew the tables, and scattered the money.

And then He spoke.

2:16 We have gotten acquainted with many of the names and titles of our Lord in chapter 1. John the Baptist called Him, "the Son of God" (1:34). And so did Nathanael. Cf. 1:49. Here the Lord made that same claim for Himself, saying that the temple was "my Father's house." It is a declaration of His Sonship. He, therefore, was jealous for the will of His Father, and for the glory of His Father.

The Lord was warning those money-changers not to make His Father's house

something that the Father never intended it to be.

Bishop Ryle has a very interesting comment on this event. Cf. I, 113:

The fact that the profane custom which our Lord here reprobated was resumed by the Jews, and that two or three years afterward our Lord found the same things going on again in the temple, and again cast out the buyers and sellers, ought not to be overlooked. It is a striking proof of the desperate wickedness and fallen condition of the priests and rulers of the temple. They were deaf to all counsel and reproof, and given over to a reprobate mind.--The difference between our Lord's first language at the second visit and that used at the first ought also to be noticed. At the first visit He says only, "Make not my Father's house a house of merchandise": a place of buying and selling. At the second visit He says, "Ye have made it a den of thieves." (Matt. 21:13.) The more wicked and hardened men are, the louder must be our protest, and the sharper our rebukes.

This ought to awaken us to some of the present-day practices that are going on in the church. The Word teaches that the Lord's people should give, and that the Lord's servants are to be supported by the Lord's people. BUT THE WORD NOWHERE GIVES THE LORD'S SERVANTS THE RIGHT TO CHARGE FOR THEIR SERVICES. And we can be sure that this practice, which has such wide acceptance, is just as vile in the sight of God as were the moneychangers in the Temple in our Lord's day.

And let us remember that those who bought were as guilty as those who sold. Matthew 21:12 tells us that our Lord at that time "cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple ..." It behooves the people of God to know what pleases and displeases the Lord just as much as the leaders are responsible to know and do God's will!

But now I want to ask you a question.

WHY WAS IT THAT NO ONE WAS ABLE TO STOP THE LORD, NOR DID ANYONE APPARENTLY EVEN TRY? WHY? How can we account for that!

I think that there is only one answer: WE ARE LOOKING AT THE ACTION OF A SOVEREIGN SAVIOUR. This, too, was a manifestation of His glory. Men were powerless to hinder Him, to lay even a hand upon Him, until His hour came! Here is the Lord from heaven. And all that those Jews could do, as we see in verse 18, was to ask a question.

If the Lord had been just an ordinary man, He would never have survived this incident. He would have been killed on the spot. But no one did anything to Him! What an evidence of His great power and glorious majesty.

Link this with what happened when that large band of men did who came to arrest the Lord. They were armed; He had nothing. When they told Him that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth, and He said lit., I am, the Apostle John recorded in John 18:6,

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am (he),
they went backward, and fell to the ground.

Let us get our hearts full of the truth that our Lord Jesus Christ is God manifested in human flesh, the Sovereign Lord of the universe. When

He acts, unless He wills otherwise, the most that men can do is just to ask questions.

2:17 Suddenly an OT passage became clear to them for the first time. It was found in Psa. 69:9.

Charles Simeon (XIII, 237) brought out in his sermon on this verse that we are often inclined to feel that time spent in the Word, reading it, or hearing it preached, is of no benefit to us unless we are conscious of some profound effect at the time. The disciples had heard Psalm 69 read many times, perhaps had even discussed the meaning of this verse. But suddenly they "remembered," not because they were trying to remember it, but because the Holy Spirit brought it to their remembrance. And it became clear. They knew what it meant. In this instance, prophecy was being fulfilled before their eyes.

What is zeal?

As used here, it is the equivalent of being jealous. Our Lord was jealous for the Name of God. He was jealous for the glory of God. He was jealous for the Word of God. He was jealous for the worship of God. He was jealous for the blessing of God upon His people. He was jealous for righteousness, and was manifesting His hatred of sin, religious sin.

And it consumed Him! Emotionally and physically our Lord was completely exhausted by what He saw. It is impossible for any of us to know the depth of His feelings.

The Apostle Paul must have experienced something very similar when in Athens "his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry" (Acts 17:16). The word "stirred" means stirred to anger, provoked, irritated. What exasperated him? What "consumed" him? It was the sight of the whole city "given to idolatry." They were worshipping heathen gods, idols, robbing the true God of the glory that rightfully belongs to Him.

Perhaps we are to learn from these passages that we are not going to be very zealous for the salvation of sinners until we get angry because God is being robbed every day of that which rightfully belongs only to Him.

Listen to these words from Charles Simeon:

God is greatly dishonoured by men on every side: his name is blasphemed, his word despised, his authority rejected. Does it become his people to behold these things with indifference? Should they not resemble Paul when he beheld the idolaters at Athens? Should they not imitate John (the Baptist when in Mark 6:18 he told Herod that it was wrong for him to take his brother's wife), and adopt the words of Jeremiah (the weeping prophet)? Should they not reprove sin in others as well as abstain from it themselves? But how miserably defective are even good people in this particular! How often do fear or shame restrain them from bearing their testimony for God! Alas! what a sad contrast does our conduct form with that of our Lord! Have we not reason then to be ashamed, and mourn for our neglect? But many, so far from rebuking sin in others, indulge in it themselves: even in the very house of God they harbour worldly and carnal thoughts; nor are at all concerned to have their hearts purified from vile affections. Surely this cannot

but be most offensive to the heart-searching God.

We certainly do not have the authority that our Lord had, but we surely need to be indignant with sin wherever we see it: in ourselves, in the church, in the lives of people in the world, as well as in the lives of our fellow-Christians. If there were a greater hatred for sin in the hearts those of us who are the Lord's people, there would be far more holiness that people could see in our lives.

Perhaps one reason the disciples had thought about that verse in Psalm 69 was because already their hearts were being stirred for the work that the Lord was calling them to do. Surely no prophet of the OT would have been able to perform his work faithfully if he had not known something of the "zeal" that our Lord manifested.

Repeatedly the Lord told the children of Israel in Exodus, Deuteronomy, and Joshua, words like we find in Exodus 20:3-7:

3 Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth:

5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: **for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God**, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;

6 And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

7 Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

When the Apostle Paul was warning the Corinthian church about their sin at the Lord's table, he said,

Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?

are we stronger than he? (1 Cor. 10:22).

There is much for us to learn about this aspect of our Lord's nature, and it is significant that the record of such an event and of such words appears at the beginning of this Gospel written by the Apostle John. This feeling of jealousy for the Lord may be misused at times, as it was with James and John when they wanted to call fire down from heaven upon the Samaritans (cf. Luke 9:51-56), and we need to be aware of that danger. But we must not set it aside completely as being unbecoming to God or to His people.

But let us look at the event which followed.

b. The prediction of our Lord's death and resurrection
(John 2:18-22).

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2:18 It is "the Jews" who respond to the Lord's actions, but in a much more subdued way than they probably would have wanted to react. These leaders of the Judaism of the day, although they greatly outnumbered the Lord and His disciples, were powerless in the presence of Omnipotence.

They asked for a "sign." "The Jews require a sign" (1 Cor. 1:22a). This is the same word that is translated "miracles" in John 2:11. They were

asking for His credentials. They were asking for some visible evidence that He had the right to do what He had done, the present tense ("shewest") seeming to indicate, according to Westcott, that there were continuing consequences to what the Lord had done.

This word "shewest" also contains the idea of showing by words, or teaching. "The Jews" must have meant the first; our Lord, the latter.

2:19 Although some take this expression as meaning that the Lord was commanding the Jews to kill Him, we know that that was not what the Lord was saying. He was pointing to the greatest evidence of all that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Cf. Rom. 1:3, 4. There is no "sign," no miracle, that can be compared with the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the sign of all signs, the credential of all credentials.

The Lord Jesus was speaking prophetically. But He spoke in a parable, and Matthew 13:10-17 tells us why. What is said about the disciples in John 2:22 would indicate that, although the Jews had asked the question, the Lord had His disciples in mind when He gave His answer.

Note the Lord's words, "And in three days I will raise it up." This was confirmed by our Lord in John 10:17, 18. And so here we have another evidence of the sovereignty, the omnipotence, of our Lord--i.e., His Deity.

2:20 What an illustration of 1 Cor. 2:14! They did not understand what the Lord had said, and it seemed like a lot of foolishness to them.

Josephus tells us in his history that this "forty and six years" was the period in which the Temple was being repaired, that it was done at great expense, and that it took approximately 18,000 workmen to complete the task (which may not have been entirely finished when our Lord spoke these words).

"Thou" is emphatic in their question. It was like they were saying, "Will someone like you dare to claim that you could do such a thing?" They were scorning the Lord for saying such a thing. They were amazed that He would give such an answer. And, of course, they did not in any way believe Him. (See Ryle, I, 117, who made these points.)

2:21 The Apostle John wrote this long after the death and resurrection of our Lord by way of explanation for his Gentile readers.

"He" is emphatic. The Lord foresaw that which His disciples did not yet understand--another evidence of His Deity.

2:22 The fact that this incident was more for the benefit of His disciples than for the Jews, is borne out by this verse. And it is the second case of the disciples remembering. See John 2:17. It was not that the disciples had such great memories, but that the Holy Spirit would not let them forget the words of our Lord. Cf. John 14:26:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit,
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.

This verse, like verse 17, should encourage us not to be discouraged when we come across passages of Scripture which we do not understand. In the Lord's time we will understand. Our knowledge of the Word of God is in His hands. He tells the Holy Spirit what He wants us to know, and then the Holy Spirit tells us. Cf. John 16:13-15.

But note also that not only did they remember and understand, but "they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said."

There are three possibilities as far as John's use of the words, "the scripture," is concerned:

- 1) That there was one specific passage that the Lord and the disciples had in mind. This seems very unlikely.
- 2) That the words represent the general teaching of the OT with regard to the death and resurrection of the Messiah. This is very likely the meaning.
- 3) But it is also possible that John was identifying our Lord's words as "scripture."

Whatever may be the true interpretation, we certainly have an illustration here of the truth of Rom. 10:17, that "faith cometh ..."

And so we have further evidence in these verses in the latter half of John 2 that our Lord is indeed God in human flesh.

But now we come to the last point in the chapter:

c. Our Lord's knowledge of man (John 2:23-25).

We have called this the period of our Lord's acceptance. And verse 23 confirms this. "Many believed in his name." Cf. John 1:12; 8:30. This means that they accepted His claim, and the testimony of others, that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. Cf. John 20:30, 31. And they believed because "they saw the miracles which he did," which, of course, was the reason for the miracles. The word for "miracles" is again the same word in the original Greek: signs.

However, we have in the following verse the idea that there can be mental agreement with what is being said, or done, without that kind of faith which saves, which transforms the heart.

2:24 We have an interesting use of words here in the original text.

The word "commit" is a translation of the Greek verb, to believe. What John was saying was that the people, many of them, at least outwardly, believed, seeming to give evidence that they were committing themselves to the Lord, but He did not commit Himself to them. He was not deceived by their acceptance of Him. He knew each and every heart.

And this gives us a very important glimpse into the meaning of the verb, to believe. It not only means mental assent to the truth, but it means a committal to, a trusting in, the person we say we believe. So to believe in the Name of the Lord, is to believe that He is the Son of God, that He is the Anointed One of God, that He came to be our Savior, but it also means that we are trusting Him, that we have committed ourselves to Him as our only hope that our sins are forgiven and that some day we will be in heaven.

2:25 From the beginning of this Gospel we have had various testimonies concerning our Lord. What wonderful testimonies they have been! They have all shown our Lord to be God manifest in human flesh, the Lord

Himself, the Messiah, the King of Israel, the Word of God, the Light of the world, Life, the Lamb of God Who came to take away the sins of the world. And His words and His actions have likewise witnessed to the truth of the other testimonies.

But what would have been the testimony concerning man?

How different it would have been! And the Lord did not need such a testimony. "He knew what was in man." He knew that man is a sinner by nature, and a sinner by choice. He knew that man was a deceiver, and also deceived. He knew that it was impossible for man to understand the truth of God unless God Himself enabled him to understand it. He knew that man is fickle--that one moment he can appear as a devoted follower, and the next moment be ready to put the Lord to death. He knew, as we will learn in chapter 2, that men can be religious without being the children of God.

The Lord knew all of this, and much more. The Lord is omniscient. He not only has all power, but He has all knowledge. And so He was never deceived by those signs of popularity with the people. And for that reason He did not, and does not, reveal Himself in an equal way to all people.

Bishop Ryle says in concluding his comments on this chapter,

In leaving the whole passage, I cannot help remarking what a faithful picture of human nature it exhibits, and how many are the ways in which human corruption and infirmity show themselves. Within the space of a few verses we find some openly profaning God's temple for the sake of gain,--some angrily demanding a sign of Him who shows zeal for purity,--some professing a false faith,--and some few only believing, but even these believing with a weak, unintelligent faith. It is the state of things which exists everywhere and always (I, 119).

It behooves us to examine our our hearts. Do we really know the Lord? Do I not only believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, but am I personally trusting Him right now as my Savior? What does the Lord see when He looks into our hearts. We can deceive ourselves without even trying to do it. Cf. Jer. 17:9. We can deceive others. But we cannot deceive Him. Cf. Jer. 17:10.

May each of us come to this place in John's Gospel thankful not only that we know the Gospel, but rejoicing that we know that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly our Savior and our Lord.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 3:1-21

The outline:

- I. THE INTRODUCTION (John 1).
- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2-12).
 - A. The period of acceptance (John 2-4).
 - 1. Miracle #1: Water into wine (John 2:1-11).
 - 2. At Capernaum (2:12).
 - 3. At Jerusalem (2:13-25).
 - 4. With Nicodemus (3:1-21).

Very few Christians, if any, would disagree with the statement that John 3, especially the first twenty-one verses, is one of the most important chapters in all of the Bible. It is a passage which any Bible teacher dealing with the doctrine of regeneration would have to consider. The new birth is regeneration. Regeneration is a major part of salvation. In fact, there can be no salvation without regeneration. Even our secular dictionaries define regeneration as meaning to be spiritually reborn. So we are learning in this passage about the new birth from the lips of our Lord Himself.

But what is the connection between the end of chapter 2 and the account of our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus in chapter 3 (the first part)?

Chapter 2 ended with John the Apostle's statement concerning the Lord and man. He did not commit Himself to the "many" who "believed in his name" in Jerusalem during the Passover. And the reason given for His action was that "he knew what was in man."

Nicodemus appears in chapter 3 by way of a contrast in the Lord's response to Him. The Lord did "commit" Himself to Nicodemus, not because he was a Pharisee, nor because he was any different spiritually from the other people in Jerusalem, but because the Lord knew that something different was going on in the heart of Nicodemus. And that difference was that the Lord was dealing with him!

Later on in John's Gospel we read this:

No man can come to me

except the Father which hath sent me draw him ... (John 6:44a).

We have further evidence here of the omniscience of the Lord, which, in turn, is an evidence of His Deity--and that is what the Apostle John wanted us to see: that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

3:1 Nicodemus is only mentioned three times in the NT, and all three references are in John's Gospel. Cf. here in chapter 3, verses 1, 4, 9; 9:50-52; 19:38-42.

He was "a ruler of the Jews." This made him one of the group which we have already identified as "the Jews." He was a member of the Sanhedrin. This title, "a ruler of the Jews," probably meant that he was a very important member of the Sanhedrin.

3:2 John tells us that he "came to Jesus by night." And this is repeated each time John mentioned him in this Gospel (although some MSS omit it in John 7:50). In John 19 where he is mentioned along with

Joseph of Arimathaea, it is said that Joseph was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly **for fear of the Jews,**" i.e., of the Sanhedrin, it seems that we are right in thinking that Nicodemus was the same. And so the fact that he came to our Lord "by night" probably means that he was afraid to come by day because he did not want the Sanhedrin to know that he was interested in the Lord.

He called the Lord, "Rabbi."

Now this is defined in John 1:38 as meaning, "Master," or Teacher. And it would seem that we are right in giving that meaning to it here. It was not just a title of respect, in other words, but Nicodemus indicated that the miracles that the Lord had performed (and again we have the Greek word signs) had caused Nicodemus to become interested in our Lord's teachings! In other words, he did not come to see a miracle, but he came to hear what the Lord would teach him. Dr. Johnson would say that Nicodemus came to the Lord to learn some theology!

Alexander Whyte, in his two-volume set called, Bible Characters, expressed his conviction that this was not the first time that Nicodemus and our Lord had met. He made the suggestion that Nicodemus was the head of the delegation that went up to question John the Baptist, and that he may have even been present at the baptism of our Lord. That is, of course, pure speculation, but it is a possibility, and interesting to consider. The way their conversation began does seem to indicate that they may have met before, but then the Lord's approach to people was often much this same way.

However, what we do know is that God had evidently enabled Nicodemus to see that the Lord's miracles indicated that our Lord had "come from God" (that is as far as he had gotten at this time), then surely He must be a prophet with a message from God.

By this phrase, "come from God," Nicodemus was not saying that our Lord was the Lord, that He was Deity. He was only saying that He was a prophet, a miracle-working prophet.

Remember that the meaning of the word "sign," which John used for the miracles, is a word which indicates that the miracle itself pointed to something greater about the miracle worker, who, in this case, was our Lord. And when Nicodemus used that OT phrase, "with him," at the end of verse 2, he was expressing his belief that our Lord as a man had to have the blessing and help of Almighty God in order to do the miraculous things that He had done.

3:3 Jesus responded to Nicodemus with some teaching, the most important teaching that Nicodemus or anyone else could ever hear. And He began with, "Verily, verily."

This is the second "verily, verily" in John's Gospel (see 1:51), but there are two more to follow in our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus. See verses 5 and 11. The Lord was again bearing witness to the trustworthiness of His message. We learn from Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's two dreams, which both meant the same thing, that such a repetition indicates that "the thing is established by God" (Gen. 41:32). The Lord could have used one "verily," or none, and His statements would have been true. But He did this to encourage the faith of those to whom He was speaking when He said, "Verily, verily." How intent He was on reaching Nicodemus for Him to use this double "verily,"

verily" three times while speaking to him!

Now let us consider the Lord's first words to Nicodemus: "Except a man (the Greek is τις, meaning anyone: man, woman, Jew, Gentile, religious, or irreligious) be born (a passive) again (from above), he cannot (is not able) to see the kingdom of God."

The Lord did not commend Nicodemus for being a Pharisee, nor for being a member of the Sanhedrin. He was striking at all systems of religion when he narrowed salvation down to being born again, born from above, obviously an act of God, not something that man does for himself.

A person can be very religious, but not in the kingdom of God. A person can be very zealous in serving God, so to speak, but that is not the way of salvation. A person can be very generous with his or her money, but salvation is not for sale. Salvation is an inner change, a work of God, not man, and it comes by faith (as the following verses will show), not by human works. Salvation brings us new life just as our first birth brought us physical life. But the new birth we become "partakers of the divine nature" (1 Pet. 1:4), or, as Paul stated it in 2 Cor. 5:17,

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature
(or it is a new creation): old things are passed away;
behold, all things are become new.

Man tries by religion or by self-reformation to change himself from the outside in. God works from the inside out. This is impossible for man to do. That is why the Lord said "cannot." Only God can make us new by giving us divine life from above!

Seeing "the kingdom of God is equal to entering "the kingdom of God."

We have the word "see" used in Luke 2:26 where Simeon was told that "he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ." There "see" means to experience death, or to die. So seeing "the kingdom of God" is experiencing, or entering into, "the kingdom of God."

This expression is used in John only here in John 3:3, 5. But cf. John 18:36. The term is used of an actual kingdom of God on earth. Cf. Rev. 11:15. But it is used here of the rule of God in the hearts of His people. As Paul said in Col. 1:13 when he was praising God for his salvation, that God "hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Those who are born again are even now in "the kingdom of God." We are under His dominion and authority. Some day His kingdom will become visible, extending throughout the whole earth. He will come to set up His own kingdom, and it will extend for 1,000 years, according to Rev. 20.

3:4 We have to assume that Nicodemus was sincere in coming to the Lord. But we also see that he was struggling with the meaning of what he was hearing.

Perhaps his question reflects the fact that he knew that he had received his natural life from God. And so it would seem that he was saying that the only way he could ever be saved would be to start all over again: "Can he enter a second time ... ?"

It is common for people who do not know the Lord to put a natural interpretation upon the truth of God. The Samaritan woman did this in John 4:11. And so it behooves us to make ourselves clear when we are talking to people about salvation.

"When he is old" may suggest that Nicodemus was advanced in years, that if he needed to be re-born physically in order to have eternal life, he had a lifetime of going the wrong way which he could not now remedy.

3:5 Note the graciousness of the Lord as seen in His words in this verse. He gave Nicodemus the same teaching, but changed the wording a little to make the meaning clearer to him.

Note: We are going to see in this verse that the work of salvation is a of the Holy Spirit, and yet our Lord sought to present the Gospel in the simplest way to help Nicodemus to understand.

Obviously verse 5 is a repetition of verse 3 as far as the meaning is concerned, but, instead of repeating the words, "born again," or born from above, the Lord said, " ... born of water and of the Spirit ..."

What does it mean to be "born of water and of the Spirit"?

Some take the "water" to mean water baptism. Whyte seems to like it with John the Baptist's baptism, and makes it symbolic of repentance. Others say that it is baptismal regeneration. But you have many places in Scripture where salvation is mentioned, but baptism is not mentioned. And add to that the fact that baptism is something that we do, and that the work of Christ alone is not sufficient if we have to add any work, regardless of what it may be.

I personally feel that the Lord was using "water" here of the Word of God. And this would be in harmony with what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:23 where he wrote,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed,
but of incorruptible, by the word of God,
which liveth and abideth for ever.

Also Ephesians 5:26 speaks of the fact that the Lord gave Himself for the Church,

That he might sanctify and cleanse it
with the washing of water by the word.

According to John 16:8-11 it is the Holy Spirit Who convicts us of our need of Christ. And according to John 3:5 it is the Holy Spirit Who, using the Word of God, causes us to be born from above. Charles Hodge says in his Systematic Theology (III, 33-35) that regeneration is a new birth, a new life, a new nature, a new heart. For the present we still have our old, sinful nature. But when we are with the Lord, the old will be taken away, and we will be perfect because we will only have our new nature.

3:6 The Lord was dealing with these two natures here in this verse:

- 1) "That which is born of the flesh."
- 2) "That which is born of the Spirit."

"The flesh" will never be anything but "the flesh." "The spirit" will never be anything but "the Spirit." So man's need is not met by reformation, but by regeneration! We cannot change our old nature, nor can we give ourselves a new nature. God gives us the new nature. He has provided for our victory over the old, and eventually the old will be gone completely.

3:7 If we "marvel" at the necessity of the new birth, it is because we do not understand the depravity and the unchangeable character of

our old nature. When we do understand it, then we will cease trying to re-make ourselves, and look to God for a new nature.

The Lord did not say here, "We must be born again," including Himself. But with special emphasis he said, "**YE** must be born again." There is a strong contrast in the verse between the "I" and the "ye." As Brown commented (JFB, V, 363) the Lord meant to keep Himself as "separate from sinners." Cf. Heb. 7:26.

Notice the word, "must."

This is the first of nine times that it is used in the Gospel of John. It speaks of that which is absolutely necessary because of divine appointment. So said Thayer, p. 126. The word is found in the following verses in John. Those marked with an (*) apply.

- * John 3:7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye **must** be born again.
- * John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so **must** the Son of man be lifted up.
- * John 3:30 He **must** increase, but I (must) decrease.
- * John 4:4 And he **must needs** go through Samaria.
- John 4:20 Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.
- * John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him **must** worship him in spirit and in truth.
- * John 9:4 I **must** work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.
- * John 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.
- * John 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?
- * John 20:9 For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he **must** rise again from the dead.

The Lord was assuredly emphasizing His divine authority and Deity when He said, "Marvel not that I **said unto you**, Ye **must** be born again.

Not only did this mean that Nicodemus **must** be born again if he would enter into the kingdom of God, but we can see from the following references to Nicodemus in John's Gospel that the Lord was telling him that he **must** be born again. It was in the plan of God that Nicodemus would be saved, and therefore it was inevitable that he would be born again. The fact that this is the teaching of verse 7 is established by the way in which this word "must" is used in the other passages: A DIVINE APPOINTMENT.

3:8 Our Lord here was not only speaking here of the fact that we can never fully understand this great truth of regeneration, but He was

teaching the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation.

The Lord was engaging here in a play on words, or using the same word to in two ways to bring out the meaning of what He wanted Nicodemus to understand.

The word is πνεῦμα. It is the Greek word for wind as well as for spirit. It can refer to the human spirit, or to the Holy Spirit. It can be translated breath. In the Greek text of verse 8 this word πνεῦμα appears at the beginning of the verse, and again at the end of the verse. And it is correctly translated "wind" at the beginning, and "Spirit" at the end. What the Lord was saying was that the work of the Spirit is comparable to the blowing of the wind. We could translate the first part of the verse like this: The wind blows where it wills."

We do not know where it comes from, nor where it is going. It goes where it wills to go. Neither can we anticipate when and where the Holy Spirit is going to come to us, nor where He is going next. He works as He wills to work.

Such is the work of salvation. It is in the hands of the Lord. The Spirit was obviously "blowing" upon Nicodemus. God was dealing with this man. He was appointed for salvation.

Verse 8 ought to be high on our list when we are seeking to understand the work of evangelism--and yet I do not know that I have ever heard it used. Our salvation was not in our hands, nor is the salvation of others. Certainly it is important for us to pray for those who are without Christ, and the Lord does hear our prayers. But our prayers must be in harmony with God's eternal plan. GOD is the One Who has ordained our salvation, and He has His elect people who "must" be reached, and will be saved. So when the Lord uses us to win someone to Christ, it is we who are working with Him, not He Who fits into our plans.

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3:9 The truth of the Gospel still was not clear to Nicodemus. It seems here that he was questioning the possibility of what the Lord was teaching. While he had admitted that the Lord was "a teacher come from God" (v. 2), yet his heart was unwilling to believe that which he could not reason out. Perhaps the example of Nicodemus was singled out by the Spirit of God so that we would see that even religious men can be totally blinded to the truth of God.

Bishop Ryle made a good point here. He wrote that the Lord had done four things

- 1) He had stated the necessity of the new birth in v. 3.
- 2) He repeated that truth in a more expanded way in v. 5.
- 3) He showed the need for the new birth by citing the unchangeable character of the flesh in vv. 6, 7.
- 4) He illustrated the doctrine of the new birth by referring to the wind.

And so Bishop Ryle concluded that "we should make up our minds to expect to find spiritual darkness the rule, and spiritual light the exception" (Vol. I, p. 143).

This question contains the last words which Nicodemus spoke to our Lord on this occasion. From this point on to the end of verse 21 it would

seem that we have the words of our Lord, answering Nicodemus.

3:10 How patient the Lord was with Nicodemus! This ought to be an example to us. Let us not forget how slow we were to grasp the truth of the Gospel.

The word for "master" here is the same word that Nicodemus had used for the Lord in v. 2. So this was one Teacher speaking to another teacher.

What the Lord said was a mild rebuke, and His comment is very interesting because it indicates that the doctrine of the new birth did not originate in the NT, but it was an OT doctrine which carries over into the NT. If Nicodemus had really known the OT, of which he professed to be a teacher, he would not have been surprised with the teaching of our Lord.

However, there is a thought in the original language that the Lord used in addressing Nicodemus, that we must not overlook. Literally what the Lord said was, "Are you THE teacher of Israel, and you do not know these things?" Some have translated this statement, "the well-known, the illustrious teacher of Israel." Nicodemus was not looked upon as a run-of-the-mill teacher; he was THE teacher, the teacher of teachers, one whom the people looked to as their authority! If HE did not know the Gospel, what could be expected of those whom he taught?

We have many illustrations of this very thing in the ministry today. There are many preachers whose very position gives them a place of authority in the minds of people with respect to the Word of God, but their teaching shows that they have never really understood what the Gospel is, and how it is that God meets the needs of sinful men.

Where in the OT do we read about the new birth?

What about the promise in Ezek. 11:19 (which is repeated in 36:26)? And Ezek. 18:31, 32. Cf. the context of Isa. 1:18, and 25, 26. Isa. 55:1-3, esp. v.3. Cf. Deut. 30:6. Is this not the thought in Isa. 66:7-9? Also Jer. 31:33; 32:37-42. See also the summation of OT truth which Paul gave in Rom. 2:28, 29.

The thought in these passages is that even the people of Israel needed to be changed in heart, and that only the Lord could make that change. It certainly is clearer in the NT, but the doctrine of salvation goes all of the way back to Genesis 3, and is developed throughout the OT Scriptures. The common idea about salvation in Israel at the time of our Lord was that it was the result of what people did in their attempt to please God, not that it was a sovereign work of God, utterly out of reach for man if he is left to himself.

Nicodemus was struggling with the idea that salvation was a work of God, just as out of man's hands as his own physical birth had been.

3:11 In verses 11 through 13 we have the Lord speaking about His witness. But be sure to note the plural ("we") in verse 11, but the singular ("I") in verse 12.

The "verily, verily" vouches for the absolute truthfulness and trustworthiness of what the Lord was about to say. His words need no proof; it ought to be enough for us that HE is the One Who has said it.

The "we" of verse 11 evidently refers to the Lord and His disciples. The disciples and the Lord were united concerning their knowledge of the Lord and His mission in the world. They said what He said, and He said what they said. They spoke what they knew and what they had "seen," things which had been revealed to them. But their witness had not been received.

The personal knowledge that believers have, even though it cannot be proven to the satisfaction of sinners, neither can it be discounted. We bear witness from the conviction in our hearts that we have the truth. Cf. what John said about the Lord in v. 32. The word "ye" may indicate that there were others listening to this conversation, companions of Nicodemus, or the Lord may have been speaking to Nicodemus as representing "the Jews" who were opposed to Him (the Lord).

3:12 But here the Lord spoke in the singular. But the "ye" continues to be in the plural.

"Earthly things" here would have been such as:

- 1) "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." Nicodemus surely had ample opportunities to have been convinced of this. It is only a further indication of the spiritual blindness of the human heart that, with all of the illustration of such, men still cannot see this.
- 2) The illustration of the wind in verse 8. Nicodemus knew that there are things about nature which we cannot understand, nor can we control them. If this is the case, then why should we need to understand all about the new birth before we can believe that there is such a thing?

Therefore, if man is closed to "earthly things," what possibility would there be if he were told about "heavenly things." If Nicodemus could not see the obvious around him, there was no hope that he could understand the greater and higher "heavenly things."

We ourselves ought to see from the record of this conversation what we are up against in taking the Gospel to the people of the world, even though they might have a reputation for being outstanding religious leaders and teachers like Nicodemus was.

3:13 Then the Lord added another thought.

If man is to have the truth about "heavenly things," then either somebody would have to go to heaven to get it and bring it back, or someone in heaven would have to come to earth to bring such information to us.

Now it was impossible then, and it is still impossible, for anyone here to go up there to learn about "heavenly things," and then come back to tell us. It is still true that "no man hath ascended up to heaven."

However, there is One Who came from heaven who was fully qualified to tell us about "heavenly things." Our Lord Jesus Christ "came down from heaven." As we learned from the first verse of this Gospel, He whose Name is "the Word" was "with God" before He "was made flesh" (v. 14).

So you and I ought to be able to see from this how important it is to understand the pre-existence of Christ, as well as the true humanity of Christ. As God, He could speak as God. As Man, He could speak to man

in terms that man could understand. If we are to learn about "heavenly things," we must listen to the One Who has come from heaven. He is "the Son of man."

Why "the Son of man"?

Remember that this was Daniel's title for the Messiah. Cf. Dan. 7:13, 14. Nicodemus probably understood this much. And so when the Lord claimed this title for Himself, He was claiming Messiahship, and, along with that, the fact that His mission to the earth was not something that He had undertaken by Himself (although He would have had that authority), but He is anointed to come, He was commissioned, He was sent by the Father to bring the truth of the Father to the hearts of men upon the earth. This should have impressed upon Nicodemus' heart even more the authority and truthfulness of what the Lord was saying to him.

There have been questions raised about this last statement of verse 13 because it does not appear in some of the oldest MSS. But many good scholars of the Greek text believe that it does belong. It is in other Greek texts. This would fall into the category of one of those "heavenly things" that our Lord had been speaking about. How could our Lord be on earth and in heaven at the same time?

The question is complicated even more when we consider what the Lord apparently meant when He said,

And no man hath ascended up to heaven,
but he that came down from heaven ...

This speaks of the fact that the Lord had ascended already after He came down from heaven, confirming the last statement that "the Son of man" was at that moment "in heaven." In other words, He came down, and He went back. What did our Lord mean by all of this that seems to make no sense to us who are not very well acquainted with "heavenly things"?

Obviously we are looking in on one of the wonders of Deity. It was actually possible for the Lord to be speaking to Nicodemus on the earth, and yet at the same time to be with the Father in heaven. He was not in heaven in His body as He was to be after His resurrection, but He was there in His Person--REALLY THERE! The incarnation did not limit the omnipresence of our Lord. Nicodemus was having his eyes and ears and heart exposed to the glory of the Son of God, Who was also the Son of man. And as such, our Lord is, as Godet has well remarked, "the sole revealer of divine things" (p. 391).

Let us ask the Lord to enable us to take in these wonderful truths concerning the Person of our Lord. Once we know Who He is, then we will no longer be inclined to question anything that He has said.

But there was more that the Lord had to tell Nicodemus. And it is important to note that Nicodemus seems to have been caught up with the glory of what the Lord was saying because, in spite of how amazing our Lord's words were, we have no question from Nicodemus! And a question would have been in order if he had desired to ask one.

3:14 The Apostle John did not mention what I am about to say, but it is very likely that Nicodemus was like most of the devout Jews of his day: He was waiting for the coming of the kingdom of God on earth! Our Lord had presented to him the necessity of the new birth, both from God's standpoint, and from man's. He had shown Nicodemus something of its incomprehensible character, that it was a work of God, not of man.

But now he was going on to show what had to be done in order for the new birth to be a possibility. And to do this, He took Nicodemus back to a story which Nicodemus has probably taught many times without seeing the real significance of this OT event which we are about to consider. AND SO WE MOVE WITH NICODEMUS FROM A CONSIDERATION OF THE PERSON OF OUR LORD, TO A CONSIDERATION OF HIS WORK. Why did He come to the earth? Was it just to be another teacher? Was it to overthrow Rome, and to establish a kingdom on earth? No, IT WAS TO DIE! IT WAS TO BE, NOT A KING (at least for the present), BUT TO BE A SAVIOR!

The event referred to by our Lord takes us back to Numbers 21:4-9. It seems certain that Nicodemus had never seen the Gospel in that event which took place during the years that Israel was wandering in the desert under the judgment of God. (Read the passage.)

Now read verse 14 again. And let us notice the details.

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." Why did Moses lift up the serpent? Not on his own. Not even primarily because the snakes were biting the people. That was the need that was being met. But the main reason that He lifted up the serpent was because God told him to do it!

Jesus Christ was to be lifted up on the Cross to die because this was the will of the Father. Moses was being obedient in what he did; our Lord was being obedient to God in what He did. God provided the remedy for His people in the desert; He provided the remedy for sinners through the sacrifice of His Son.

Notice the word, "must." This is the same word that our Lord used in verse 7 when He said, "Ye **must** be born again." If Nicodemus "must be born again," then "even so **must** the Son of man be lifted up." If the Master of Israel is to be saved, then the Messiah of Israel had to die. It all speaks of that which, according to the eternal plan of God, had to take place.

But why would the Lord Jesus Christ be represented by a serpent? Why not a lamb? The serpent reminds us of Satan. That is how he appeared to Eve in the Garden of Eden. And we read in the last Book of the Bible about "the great dragon ..., that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan ..." Cf. Rev. 12:9.

Because, as we learn from Numbers 21, the people of God were under a curse, and the brazen serpent on the pole pictured our Lord in His death taking our curse upon Himself that we might be delivered from the judgment of God which we are under because of our sin. Gal. 3:13 says,
 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,
 being made a curse for us: for it is written,
 Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

Illus: At the present time I am reading a book written by a professor at Oxford University, Dr. Alister McGrath, who also happens to be my son-in-law's supervisor in the graduate work that he is doing over there in England. The book is entitled, Understanding Jesus. I have found it very interesting for many reasons. But one point that Dr. McGrath made is to distinguish between the recognition of an historical event as compared with the meaning of the event. And He expressed it this way with reference to the death of Christ. He said that when we say,

"Christ died," this is an event. But when we say, "Christ died for our sins," we are interpreting the event. There we have the meaning. We are not only recognizing that He died, but we are telling why He died.

When the God of Israel told Moses to raise up a serpent, He was not only giving us a type of the death of Christ, but He was also giving us the meaning. Christ did not just die; He died for our sins; He died as our Substitute. He became a curse for us that we might be delivered from the curse of eternal punishment. As Isaiah explained it so long ago,

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried out sorrows:
yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.
But he was wounded for our transgressions,
he was bruised for our iniquities:
the chastisement of our peace was upon him;
and with his stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep ... (Isa. 53:4-6).

Thus here in verse 14 the Lord was speaking of the will of the Father, and of His mission here in the world.

But were people delivered from the deadly bite of the serpent just because Moses put that brazen serpent on the pole? No, they had to look at it. This is what they were told to do, and by looking they were manifesting their faith in the promise that Moses had given them from the Lord.

And so we have the application and interpretation in verse 15. As the serpent was "lifted up" by Moses, so "must the Son of man be lifted up." Why?

3:15 This is the Gospel. It is open to all, available to all. But only those who look in faith, those who believe in Christ, those who trust Him to deliver them by His death, will receive life instead of perishing in their sins and because of their sins.

But why would God do such a thing to His Son? Why would God make Him, as Paul said, Who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him? Cf. 2 Cor. 5:21.

There was just one reason, and we are told what that is in verse 16.

3:16 It was because of His love.

It was not because we deserved it. We surely had not earned it. We deserved death (as did the Israelites), but God has provided salvation for us. He not only "loved" us, "and gave Himself for" us, but He "so loved" us.

And this love of God was not limited to the Jews; it included Gentiles as well. Whoever believes will have life, and the life that Christ gives is eternal life. There is no possibility of losing it after we once have it. He did not give it to us because of what we have done, nor will He take it away because of what we might do. It is ours as a gift from God because of what Christ has done for us. And it is ours eternally!

This is what Nicodemus needed to know, and this is what he did not know.

This is salvation. This is regeneration. To have eternal life is what it means to be born from above. It is to be changed in heart. It is to be forgiven of our sins. It is the same salvation that Abraham enjoyed, and Moses, and David, and Jeremiah, and Daniel, and John the Apostle, and John the Baptist, and the Samaritan woman, and Peter, and Paul. It is the same salvation that Augustine had, that Calvin had, that the Wesleys had, that you and I have. Christ's death is sufficient for all, but it is efficient only for those who believe.

Are you trusting in Christ? Do you understand these "heavenly things"? If you did not before you came to the Class today, perhaps you do now. It may be that the Lord is opening your eyes to the Gospel as He surely did with Nicodemus. And it may also be that before I call upon you to receive Christ, you have already trusted Him this morning as your Savior. May it please the Lord that none of us will turn away from Christ, but that we will go from this place today with our hearts open to "heavenly things," and our souls redeemed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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3:17 This is also a part of those "heavenly things" to which the Lord referred in v. 12.

The Lord's first mission into the world was not a mission of judgment, but of salvation. God sent Him "that the world through him might be saved. The lifting up of the serpent which the Lord spoke of in v. 14 was a prophecy of the Lord's death. To say that the Lord came to save is equal to saying that He came to die.

But notice the last expression of this verse: "...but that the world through him might be saved."

This raises some interesting questions:

- 1) Did the Lord come expecting the whole world would eventually be saved? Was this His purpose in dying on the Cross? If so, then we have to say that the Lord's purpose is not being fulfilled because there are countless multitudes of people in every generation who are not saved.
- 2) Must we conclude, then, that the Lord cannot do what He intended to do? Is man stronger than God? Or is it possible that God has surrendered His authority in this one work which is the greatest of all of God's works, the work that He has been concerned with from before creation itself?
- 3) Or, can we conclude that with regard to salvation things are going just as the Lord had planned? If so, then how do we explain the Lord's use of the word "world"?

First let me say that God never relinquishes His sovereignty in anything. To do so would mean that He would cease to be God, He would lose control of everything. If we start with the sovereignty of God in salvation, as well as in everything else, then we are going to be in a good position to understand this doctrine of salvation. God is sovereign, always sovereign. He rules and He overrules. There may be times when man seems to be in control, but that is never the case. Eph. 1:11 tells us, speaking of Christ,

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,
being predestinated **according to the purpose of him**
who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

The first thing that we need to realize about this word "world" is that it means that God's salvation is designed for people, human beings, not angels (who are above us), nor for the animals (who are below us), but for people, those who were originally made in the likeness of God Himself.

But, having said that, it is important for us to realize also that we must not interpret "the world" here as meaning every person who has ever lived, or who will ever live. It means that Christ died for people throughout the world, Gentiles as well as Jews. This agrees with what is taking place.

This means two things in particular:

- 1) That there is only one Gospel for all people. The message of salvation is the same for every nation. If black people are to be saved, it is by the same Gospel as white people. If we go to Japan, we preach the same Gospel that we do in Portland. The Jew and the Moslem can only be saved by this one Gospel. A child and an adult can only be saved by Christ. This makes a lot of people angry, to say this, but it is true.

Christ for the world we sing;

The world to Christ we bring with loving zeal...

But this means another thing:

- 2) It means that there will be people from every nation, and I believe, from every generation in every nation, when we get to heaven.

Look at what it said about one of the angels in Rev. 14:6:

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven,
having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them
that dwell on the earth, **and to every nation,
and kindred, and tongue, and people.**

Angels can preach this message, but angels are not saved by it. The Gospel is for people, and not that all people will be saved, but that people from all nations will be saved.

I hope you understand this. God is not failing. God is not sitting in heaven in great distress because more people are not being saved. Let us remember that God is God, and whatever God wants to do, He does it! We have a sovereign God. We have a sovereign Savior. And we have a sovereign Holy Spirit.

If you think that God has relinquished His sovereignty where the Gospel is concerned, then you have no assurance that God can help you when you are in trouble. If He is not sovereign over all at all times, then He is not sovereign at all!

So our Lord did not come to execute judgment as His main purpose (although there were instances when He did judge). He came to save. He came to die for the salvation of all people throughout the whole world who would believe in Him.

But let us go on.

3:18 The only way that any person can escape the judgment of God is by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. Note the present tense in this statement at the beginning of this verse. Cf. John 5:24.

But the opposite is also true. If a person has not believed in Christ, he is under the condemnation of God right now!

And the only reason that he is under the judgment of God is because he has "not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

When we look back at the expressions used in verses 16 and 17, not to be condemned is to have eternal life, it is to be saved--"saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5:9b).

Here we have the fourth and last time in John's Gospel that our Lord is spoken of as "the only begotten." Cf. also John 1:14, 18; 3:16, and here. In the last three He is called "the only begotten Son."

What does this mean?

It means that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God in the sense that Christ is His Son. He is uniquely God's Son. God has no other like He is.

We are called "the sons of God" in Scripture. Cf. Rom. 8:14. But we will never be "sons" like He is. Throughout eternity Jesus Christ will be "the only begotten Son." As such He was sent on a twofold mission (as the verses in John's Gospel bring out):

- 1) To reveal the Father.
- 2) To provide salvation for the people of the world.

So the use of this term would indicate that in no one else do we have the full revelation of the Father, nor do we have in anyone else God's provision for salvation. Jesus Christ is uniquely the Son of God in His Person, but He is also unique in the twofold work that the Father sent Him to do.

3:19 Now when we talk about the sovereignty of God in salvation there are always those who feel that God has not been fair IF INDEED this is the truth of the Gospel. And so here our Lord speaks of the process, the trial leading to a verdict, which has marked man out for divine judgment. We see that man deserves divine judgment whether we look at it from God's point-of-view, or from man's.

It is an abiding truth of Scripture "that light is come into the world." We learned that in John 1:5 and 9. God has never left men in darkness. From the beginning of time we can see that God has given men light, if not the light of the Word, yet the light of conscience, and the light that is evident in creation. And finally He sent His Son Who is, as we have learned in John 1, is "the Light."

So the light has come. No man will be able to appeal to God in the day of judgment that he had no light! People know that there is a God (even though some like to deny it). They know that there is a right and wrong (although they cannot always explain why they feel that certain things are right, and others wrong). But even with the light, "they loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil."

The natural man, when confronted with the light and the darkness, if left to himself, will always choose the darkness! They LOVE the darkness. They prefer their sin. "Their deeds" are "evil."

The Lord Jesus was giving Nicodemus a lesson in Anthropology, not from the standpoint of human science, but from God's perspective. Man, by his response to the light, proves that he is not only a sinner by nature, but also a sinner by choice. And so man condemns himself. Man

is content to remain in his sin even though he is warned to flee from the wrath to come.

And verse 20 tells us more.

3:20 This verse, and verse 21, give us the conclusion of all that our Lord had been saying to Nicodemus. Here in v. 20 we see the man without Christ; in v. 21 we see the one who believes in Christ.

Not only does the natural man love the darkness, but he hates the light. And he will not come to the light, he will not come to Christ, "lest his deeds should be reprov'd." As Leon Morris says in his commentary on John (and we need to remember this): "There is a moral basis behind much unbelief" (p. 234).

Our Lord used love and hate to show the bitterness and hardness of man's attitude toward Christ and the Gospel.

This is why the Bible is not a popular Book with sinners. This explains why the people of the world do not want to go to church to listen to the teaching of the Scriptures. This explains why, when a person becomes a Christian, his unsaved friends will no longer want to be his friend.

But what a difference we have in v.21!

3:21 Notice how the Lord describes one who believes in the Light. He is one who "doeth truth." He had been speaking in v. 20 about the one who "doeth evil"; now he speaks of the one who "doeth truth."

The truth is not only something to believe, but it is something to behave. It is an easy thing for anybody to say that they believe in Christ, but the proof is that they are doing the truth, living according to the truth, bringing their lives into conformity with the Word of God.

When the Apostle John wrote his first Epistle, he wrote these words:

If we say that we have fellowship with him,
and walk in darkness, **we lie, and do not the truth.**
But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light,
we have fellowship with one another,
and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son
cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:6, 7).

So we know a child of God, we know that a person is born again, if he or she "doeth truth," lives the truth, walks in the light of the Word of God.

What is true of the person who "doeth truth"?

He comes, and comes, and keeps coming "to the light"--to the Word, reading it, hearing it taught; He comes as a way of life to the Lord and to the Word of the Lord, "that his deeds may be made manifest."

No longer does he stay away from the light. No longer does he hate it. No, he loves it! And comes to it. "His deeds" are different now. There is nothing to hide. But he knows that "his deeds" now are not the result of his doing, but "that they are wrought in God."

How can we account for the fact that some turn from the truth, and others turn toward the truth? There is only one explanation: IT IS THE

WORK OF GOD! If man is left to himself, he will never come to Christ. He hates the truth. He hides from the Light. He does not want to hear about Christ and salvation and the forgiveness of sins. But when God is at work in a person's life, that person is altogether different. It is not for us to say why God deals with people differently--why He draws some, but does not work in the hearts of all in the same way.

Why did Nicodemus seek the Lord out by night when he was the only Pharisee who did so? Why did the Lord call to Zacchaeus and tell him, "...today I must abide at thy house." Why did Zacchaeus "receive him joyfully"? Cf. Luke 19:5, 6. There is only one explanation: We see God at work.

I don't think that we can really appreciate what was really taking place in chapter 1 of John's Gospel as we see Andrew and John coming to the Lord, then Peter, then Philip, then Nathanael; or in chapter 3 when we see Nicodemus coming to the Lord; or in chapter 4 when the Samaritan woman and all of the other Samaritans who came to the Lord; UNLESS WE UNDERSTAND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD IN SALVATION.

Let me close our consideration of this part of John 3 with some very wonderful words found in 2 Thess. 2:13, 14. Please turn to them, and think about them as I read them to you. Look at the context leading up to this verse, and then see what Paul wrote:

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you,
brethren beloved of the Lord,
because God from the beginning hath chosen you to salvation
through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:
Whereunto he called you by our gospel
to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You may say, "But does not call all men to repent?" And my answer to you is, "Yes, He does! That is why we preach the Gospel." But there is a general call that goes out to all sinners, but there are also those times when the general call becomes effectual, and the result is that you see some sinners, hearing the call, and making their way, not just down some aisle, but making their way to Christ. When Christ calls us, we come. That is why Nicodemus came, and that is why each one of us who is saved, has come.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 3:22-36

(Review the outline.)

We are in that section of John's Gospel which describes our Lord's ministry to the world. The first part (2-4) was a quiet and fruitful period of acceptance. After performing His first miracle in Galilee, our Lord went to Capernaum, and then to Jerusalem. At Jerusalem He drove out the money changers, and then had a most amazing contact with one of the leading Pharisees of the day, Nicodemus. John did not dwell on Nicodemus' response, but mainly upon what the Lord told him.

At John 3:22 we see that the Lord again changed the place of His ministry, and the emphasis here is upon the time when John the Baptist and our Lord were both ministering. But it clearly was the closing days of John's ministry. This passage (down to verse 36) contains nothing that our Lord said, and little that He did. From verse 27 on to the end of the chapter we have some very important things that John the Baptist said.

3:22 It seems that nothing very significant happened in Jerusalem after our Lord's conversation with Nicodemus, and soon the Lord moved out of the city of Jerusalem into the rural areas of Judea. One purpose seems to have been that He wanted to spend more time with His disciples, but the fact that they were baptizing (see 4:1b, 2) is an indication that they were preaching, that they were working with people, and that the people were responding. Matthew Henry seems to be right when he wrote that the Lord did not move out of the city for greater privacy, but for greater usefulness.

3:23 John the Baptist was also continuing his ministry, and did so
3:24 until he was imprisoned by Herod, and later beheaded. We do not know where "Aenon near to Salim" was, but it could have been somewhere near the Jordan River. The place is not important, but what was going on was important. John evidently was continuing both to preach and to baptize.

So, when we place the ministry of our Lord (v. 22) along side of the ministry of John the Baptist (vv. 23, 24), it is evident that God was blessing, people were repenting, and being baptized.

It seems that the reference to "much water" in v. 23 is a support for baptism by immersion.

One important lesson from these three verses is to be seen in the way that both our Lord and John the Baptist were very diligent in their ministry. And it was a fruitful time.

3:25 How long the ministries of John the Baptist and our Lord were being carried on at the same time, we do not know. But some Jews, possibly members of the Sanhedrin, raised questions "about purifying" with John's disciples. And it would seem from what John's disciples said to him in the next verse, that "the Jews" were comparing John's baptism with our Lord's baptism, i.e., perhaps indicating that if Jesus were the Person that John said he was, then John's baptism was insignificant, and should be stopped.

Thus we see, as is often the case, (1) that men will often confused the

symbol with the truth that it represents, and (2) that wherever the blessing of God is to be seen, the Devil will be at work. And one of the greatest weapons that the Devil uses against the servants of the Lord is jealousy!

JOHN THE BAPTIST TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES.

3:26 The "they" referred to here are John's disciples, jealous for their Teacher, and jealous for their own ministry with him (although it seems that, contrary to what our Lord did, John was the main baptizer, and perhaps the only one in his group). It did not seem fair to them that the Lord (through His disciples) would begin to do the same thing that John had been doing, and that more people were going to the Lord than were going to John when John had been the original baptizer. It may also have been that there had been a conflict between the people who had been baptized by John and those who had been baptized by the disciples of our Lord.

This undoubtedly was perhaps the main reason that our Lord did not baptize, and why Paul was glad that he had not baptized more people than he had in Corinth. Cf. 1 Cor. 1:10-17. It is so easy for the people who administer an ordinance to become more important than the truth which it pictures, just as it is for the ordinance itself to be more prominent in people's minds than the truth it represents.

So we have a twofold problem here:

- 1) Jesus' disciples were doing what John was doing, and what John had done with such great success.
- 2) More people were going to Jesus than were coming to John. This was a very significant change to John's disciples.

Some feel that the question of the manner in which the Jews taught purification, may have entered into the discussion that the Jews had with John's disciples, but this 26th verse seems to indicate that it was a question of comparing John's baptism with our Lord's baptism.

How we need to guard our hearts against this tendency which we all have, the tendency to be jealous for ourselves, or for the ministry of those we love, and thus contribute to divisions among the people of God!

THE RESPONSE THAT JOHN GAVE TO HIS DISCIPLES CONTAINS SOME INVALUABLE LESSONS FOR ALL WHO ARE TEMPTED WITH JEALOUSY WHEN THE BLESSING OF GOD SEEMS TO BE UPON ANOTHER SERVANT OF THE LORD MORE THAN UPON ONE'S OWN MINISTRY.

3:27 Humility must always be the position that a true servant of the Lord takes. This is the teaching of Phil. 2:5-7. We saw in John 1 that this was a prominent part of John the Baptist's character, and he was not about to become anything else at this point in his ministry. The very thing that he expressed here must have been a truth which kept his feet on the ground when his ministry had such great acceptance among the Jews: "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from above." John saw the hand of God in all of this, and indicated here that he firmly believed in the sovereignty of God.

If God blesses us, to God belongs the glory. If God blesses and uses others, again, to God belongs the glory. God is free to use whomever He chooses, and we need to rejoice that He is at work. The ministry of John teaches us that God may use His servant more at one time than at another. But all of this is in the hand of God.

Remember what happened to Miriam when she and Aaron were critical of

Moses. Cf. Num. 12. Remember also what happened to Korah, and Dathan and Abiram, and On, with the 250 princes when they rebelled against the leadership of Moses. Cf. Num. 16. Remember how Adonijah tried to take the throne of Israel when God had said that Solomon would be the king. Cf. 1 Kings 1.

Jeremiah did not believe that he could be a prophet, but the Lord called him--and that settled it! We may not have chosen Peter for the place he had, but it was given to him by the Lord. Paul felt that he was not worthy to be called an apostle, but over and over again he was led to write that he was an apostle by the will of God.

It is a solemn thing for us to be critical of those whom the Lord has called and given a place of ministry! And John the Baptist was not about to make that mistake, especially with his Lord.

This does not mean that every person who is in a prominent place of service has been placed there by the Lord. Nor does it mean that a true servant of the Lord always does what he ought to do. But it does mean that we must recognize the hand of God in the work of the Lord, and rejoice in all that the Lord is doing. John the Baptist did not feel that he and the Lord were competitors; they were fellow-workers in the kingdom of God. John believed that he would only receive what God gave him, and if at that period in his life God was not giving like He had given before, that was the doing of the Lord, and he would be satisfied with the will of God.

3:28 This is the second point that John made with his disciples.

John was faithful to the message he had preached before. He had told all men that he was not the Messiah when men were thinking that he was. Now he was being tested on that very point. His ministry had been ordained of God to precede the Lord, and to prepare the way for Him. And now it is clear that John was satisfied with God's appointment for him, even though it meant less prominence, and less popularity, and less success.

Peter and John were like this in Acts 3:12.

Paul was like this in 1 Cor. 3:5-7.

3:29 John uses the illustration here of a marriage. The Lord was the bridegroom. The people who believed on Him were the bride. He was the friend of the bridegroom. And because he was able to see the bridegroom and the bride getting together, nothing could please him more because he was the bridegroom's friend. And so he said, "This my joy therefore is fulfilled."

It is a good test of our relationship with the Lord when we can say that nothing gives us greater joy than to see others coming to Christ, loving Him, wanting to be with Him, and even forgetting what part we may have had in bringing them to the Lord. In John 1:35-37, when Andrew and John (the Apostle) left John the Baptist to become disciples of the Lord, John the Baptist did not try to discourage them, nor did he try to get them back. Nothing could have made him happier!

3:30 This is one of the best-known statements of John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease." Notice the word "must." This is the word the Lord used with Nicodemus when He said, "Ye **must** be

born again." And our Lord used it again when He said, "Even so **must** the Son for man be lifted up." It speaks of that which is a necessity because it has been ordained of God.

Those seven words really could be an abbreviated form of John the Baptist's life story, his biography. And the same should be true of us. Be sure to notice the order. It is only as Christ increases that we will decrease. This is something that takes place progressively throughout our lives: the Lord ~~g~~^greats greater and more important to us and to our work. We, on the other hand, see ourselves to be nothing and to have accomplished nothing apart from the power and grace of God.

3:31 From this point on John the Baptist speaks of the uniqueness and greatness of the Lord.

He must increase because He "cometh from above" and "is above all." Twice in this verse John mentioned that the Lord is "above all."

John was expressing his belief in the Deity of our Lord.

To say that He was "above all" meant at least three things:

- 1) That as the Son of God He was greater in His Person, His dignity and His majesty.
- 2) He was "above all" in His power, His sovereignty.
- 3) He was "above all" in His position. He was from heaven. All other men, regardless of how great they might be, can only be said to be "earthly."

On this last point John was, of course, speaking primarily of himself, seeking to show how vastly superior the Lord was to himself.

3:32 In this verse and in vv. 33, 34 John was emphasizing the message that the Lord had come to give.

No man could go up to heaven to receive the message of God for men. But our Lord came down to reveal what "he hath seen and heard" of the Father, and from the Father.

"No man receiveth his testimony." The Lord had said essentially this same thing to Nicodemus in 3:11.

The Lord could have meant two things (and probably did mean to include both of the following):

- 1) That the believers were comparatively few.
- 2) That no man by himself had either the desire or the capacity to receive the truth. And Westcott explained in his commentary that the word that John used for "receiveth" is the Greek word which means not only to take, but to keep. See p. 61 of his commentary on John.

Apparently even in those days there were many who outwardly professed to receive, but, as time went on, it was clear that they had not retained it, meaning that they had not really believed.

3:33 Since the Lord has come "from above," and has come with a message from the Father, the reception of His message is an acknowledgment that "God is true." This means that the true believer finds that God has been faithful to His promises regarding Christ and salvation. And also this expression seems to indicate that the believer in Christ

accepts the testimony of Christ as the very Word of God--which, of course, it is!

The Apostle John wrote later,

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself:
he that believeth not God hath made him a liar;
because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son.
And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life,
and this life is in his Son.
He that hath the Son hath life;
and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life
(1 John 5:10-12).

3:34 Here John was speaking especially of the Lord. He was "sent" by God, and His message, in every detail and in its entirety, consists of "the words of God." Of this we can always be certain, with no exceptions. And the Spirit of God within the Lord assures this. The Spirit is never given to us in the same fullness that He was given to our Lord. (The words "in him" are not in the original, but there is little doubt but that John was speaking of Christ.)

3:35 Just as no man ever has enjoyed the same relationship to the Holy Spirit that our Lord had, it is equally true that no one has experienced the love of God to the extent that the Son has. And that love has been expressed in the fact that the Father "hath given all things into his hands," i.e., the hand of Christ. This is one of the major reasons that John the Baptist could only rejoice as the Lord increased! The absolute sovereignty of the Lord in salvation was what John was declaring here. And the Lord is working that every divine purpose in salvation will eventually be completely fulfilled--and the Lord Himself will see to that!

3:36 That which John the Baptist declared here is what the Lord declared to Nicodemus in 3:18. Our Lord has declared, and declared from the Father with the full support of the Holy Spirit, that only those who believe in Him (Christ) will have "everlasting life."

The opposite is equally true. The person who does not believe, who does not trust, who does not place all of his hopes for salvation, in Christ, will not "see life," or enter into life (cf. 3:3, 5), "but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The only One Who can deliver us from the wrath to come is Christ! Hell is the final destiny of all who do not believe. There are not many ways to escape the judgment--only ONE! It was because these truths were so clear to John the Baptist that he was not even tempted to compete with the Lord, but sought with all of His heart, and with great joy, to see the Lord be magnified before men.

Let us make sure that we know Him.

And let us make sure also that we are not standing in the way of what He is doing, but joyfully see Him exalted, and His purposes fulfilled, regardless of what it may mean to us!

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 4:1-26

Intro: We are in that period in the ministry of our Lord which I have chosen to call, the period of acceptance (John 2-4). We had a most amazing incident in chapter 3 concerning Nicodemus. The power of God was clearly evident in the fact that one of the outstanding Jewish leaders of the day would seek the Lord out to hear more of His teaching.

Chapter 4 gives us another incident, just as amazing. It is the account of our Lord's conversation with a Samaritan woman. Two things made this unusual:

- 1) The fact that a Jew would speak with a Samaritan.
- 2) And the fact that the Jew was a man, and the Samaritan was a woman. And then a third detail makes it very extraordinary. That is the result which followed. It would have to be considered as one of the greatest of all the responses that the Lord saw while He was here on earth.

And so we have a ministry of the Lord in which He overstepped the bounds of the Jewish people, and introduced the Gospel to the despised Samaritans.

Who were the Samaritans?

Originally the term Samaritan stood for all of the people over which Jeroboam was made king during the revolt from Rehoboam. But at the time of the Assyrian captivity the people of Israel were taken into Assyria, and they were replaced by various groups from Assyria, as we learn from 2 Kings 17:24. This was in the 8th century before Christ.

Through the years certain renegade Jews intermarried with those people we could call Assyrians. And so at the time of Christ they were a mixed blood, Gentile and Jewish, claiming to be descendants of Abraham, but despised by the main part of the nation of Israel. What the woman said to the Lord to express her surprise that He would ask her for a drink, shows how the Jews felt about the Samaritans. (See verse 9.)

And yet we read in verse 4 that the Lord "must needs go through Samaria." The most direct way from Judea to Galilee was through Samaria, but most Jews would go around Samaria rather than go through it. Therefore, the "must needs" has to indicate the providential way in which our Lord was being led by God. Reaching the Samaritans in the city of Sychar was a part of the redemptive plan of God.

We have had that word "must" several times before. It means that it was binding upon Him to go that way, it was necessary, it was inevitable. It was a trip that the Lord had to take! There were people who, according to the will of God, had to be reached!

But not, with that word of introduction, let us get to the account that John has given to us.

Chapter 4 has two parts to it. The first 42 verses tell about our Lord's ministry in Samaria. The rest of the chapter tells us of our Lord's second miracle in Cana of Galilee: the healing of the nobleman's son.

In the first part which deals with our Lord's ministry in Samaria we

have 5 divisions:

- 1) The journey from Judea to the city of Sychar in Samaria (John 4:1-6).
- 2) The Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria (John 4:7-26).
- 3) The Samaritan woman's mission to the men of Sychar (John 4:27-30).
- 4) The Lord's ministry to His disciples about the work of the Lord (John 4:31-38).
- 5) The Lord's ministry to the men of Samaria (John 4:39-42).

This part of chapter 4 is very instructive as to the way in which the Lord dealt with people, and shows us much truth regarding the work of the Lord even down to the day in which we live.

The Outline:

II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2:1-12:50).

A. The period of acceptance (John 2:1-4:54).

6. With the Samaritans (John 4:1-42).

a. The journey from Judea to the city of Sychar in Samaria (John 4:1-6).

4:1-3 For the Lord (through His disciples) to have "baptized more disciples than John," meant that the Lord posed a greater threat to the power of Pharisees than John did. So, to avoid a conflict with them before His time had come, He left Judea to return to Galilee.

Notice that Jesus is called "the Lord" here. It probably is an indication that the Pharisees were trying to hide the information that they had so that they might take action against Jesus. But nothing can be hidden from "the Lord."

In these days when baptism has become so important in almost all churches, it is important for us to remember that the Lord did not baptize. Thus, baptism is not the most important part of the work of the Lord. It has its place, but its place is not first. First place belongs to the preaching of the Gospel and of all of the Word of God.

4:4 Things that seem to be interruptions in the life of the Lord, or in our lives, as His people, always are the work of the Lord carrying out His own plans for us and the work that He has given us to do. And so we have the word which I have commented on before: "must."

4:5 There has been much discussion as to the location of Sychar. Most feel that it is ancient Shechem; others feel that it is the present day city of Aschar.

The historical background of this is in Gen. 33:18-20 and Gen. 48:21, 22. So there was sacred history connected with the place to which the Lord had come, but how different things were from the days that the patriarchs held the land and what it was when the Samaritans held it. Just because a place has had the truth is not proof that it will always have the truth. The Lord was bringing the truth back.

4:6 Here we see evidence of the Lord's humanity, in His weariness.

Matthew Henry points out three things from the weariness of the Lord.

- 1) As I have mentioned, He was a true man.
- 2) He was a poor man. If not, He would have ridden on some animal or

in a cart of some kind.

- 3) He must not have been a strong man. He was weary, and it was only noon. The disciples had the energy to go on into the city to get food. This is confirmation of the fact that He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb.4:15). He was tested as we are when our strength is gone. What a contrast this is with what Isaiah had to say about the Lord in Isa. 40:28a:

Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard,
that the everlasting God, the Lord,
the Creator of the ends of the earth,
fainteth not, neither is weary?

This was a part of our Lord's humiliation. And yet we need also to note that, in spite of His weariness, the Lord did not hold back in His ministry.

b. The Lord's conversation with the woman of Samaria
(John 4:7-26).

4:7 We would certainly be blind not to see the evidence of the hand of

God in the coming of this woman at this time. It should remind us of the coming of Rebekah when the Abraham's servant was looking for a bride for Isaac, and of the coming of Rachel when Jacob was looking for his relatives. What a difference it would make in our lives if we were to look for the hand of the Lord in everything!

When the Lord said, "Give me to drink," He was crossing racial lines, and, speaking to a woman, He was rejecting the sexual prejudice of the day. The woman herself recognized the first of these in verse 9; the disciples recognized the second in verse 27.

The point is very clear: foreigners need the Gospel, and both sexes need the Gospel. It is for "every creature."

4:8 This verse seems to indicate that the Lord asked her because the disciples had gone, and, as she recognized in verse 11, He had no way of drawing water for Himself. Imagine the Lord of creation, Who owns not only the cattle on a thousand hills, but the whole universe, is humbled as a beggar seeking a drink of water for His own refreshment!

There is no evidence in the chapter that the Lord ever got the drink that He had asked for, but, even at that, there was no word of rebuke for her. His heart was set on greater things.

4:9 To say that she was startled by what the Lord had said, would be putting it mildly. Her words brought out the problem. He was a Jew; she was a Samaritan. He was a man; she was a woman--and "woman" seems to be emphatic.

There was a long history of hatred between these two peoples. It was deep and bitter. Her question, "How is it...?," seems to suggest that she thought the Lord had some other motive.

Some MSS omit the last statement of this verse, but most modern scholars seem to take it as being genuine. If so, it may be the Apostle John's comment rather than what the woman said. A note in the NIV mentions that one meaning of this statement is the Jews would not use dishes that a Samaritan had used. And this also was probably another reason that the Samaritan woman was so surprised. Most Jews would rather be thirsty than to ask a Samaritan for such a favor.

Thus it was the gentleness and kindness of the Lord that attracted the special attention of the Samaritan woman.

4:10 The Lord did not respond to her comment which could have led to a very unprofitable argument. How important it is to avoid issues that can keep us away from the thing that is the most important!

Like all people who do not know the Lord, her problem was ignorance! That is why the Lord said, "If thou knewest...." People can be so concerned about earthly things that heavenly things are not even in their thoughts.

What was she ignorant of? Two things:

- 1) "The gift of God."
- 2) The identification of the One Who was speaking to her.

What is "the gift of God"? Can it be anything but the Gospel? Cf. Eph. 2:8, 9.

Most people do not know that there is such a thing as salvation, and, if they do, they do not know what it is. It is so easy to interpret it in terms of earthly things: social injustice, race prejudice, women's liberation (so-called), poverty, war, drugs, disease, etc. The only way the hearts of people can be changed is by "the gift of God." The solution that we need comes from God, not man. And it is not something that is to be bought, nor is it to be earned. It is a gift, "the gift of God."

Furthermore, people do not know Who Christ is. This woman knew that He was a Jew, but that is all that she knew. She considered Him an Enemy, not knowing that she could never have such a Friend as the Lord Jesus Christ. She did not know that she needed something from Him far more than He needed that drink of water from her! He had asked for a drink from her, but the Lord wanted her to see that she should have been asking for a different kind of a drink from Him!

And if she had asked Him, He would not have done as she had done. He would have given her "living water"--a term which she probably had never heard!

The Jews of the Lord's day were not much better off or different from the Samaritans. They should have known about living waters. Jeremiah spoke about such waters when he wrote those familiar words of Jer. 2:13,
 For my people have committed two evils;
 they have forsaken me **the fountain of living waters,**
 and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns,
 that can hold no water.

And in Zech. 14:8, speaking of the day of the Lord, we read,
 And it shall be in that day,
 that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem;
 half of them toward the former sea,
 and half of them toward the hinder sea:
 in summer and in winter shall it be.

The "living water" gives life, not physical life, but eternal life! And the Lord Jesus Christ is the only One from Whom we can get this "living water." It is free for the asking.

4:11 We need to be ready for this. She did exactly what Nicodemus did when the Lord spoke to him about being born again. He sought to

put an earthly meaning on spiritual truth. People will always do this. Their minds have never soared, are incapable of soaring, into the heights of divine revelation. We were the same way before the Lord gave us spiritual sight. But she seems to have understood that He was speaking about some different kind of water because He had nothing with which to draw water, and the well was too deep to get it any other way. So she wanted to know where He would get "that living water."

4:12 The Samaritans claimed to be the descendants through Abraham of Ephraim and Manasseh. Jacob had given them a well that had supplied them with water for nineteen centuries! That water supply had only taken care of his immediate family, but for all of the thousands of his descendants from that day until the time that the Lord was speaking to her. And not only that but they had given water to the thousands of animals that they had had down through the centuries. Her question was, COULD THE LORD DO SOMETHING THAT WAS GREATER THAN THAT? After all, that was really some record. How could this Jew who was speaking to her do better? Her question was worded in such a way that it anticipated a negative answer.

She was to learn that the One speaking to her was INFINITELY GREATER THAN JACOB. He was Jacob's Lord and Jacob's Savior. Jacob knew all about that "living water." And she was about to learn of it, too.

4:13 The Lord stated an undeniable truth. A person could drink of Jacob's well, but he would have to drink again many times before the day was over.

4:14 That was not the case with the Lord's "living water." The "I" in this verse is emphatic. Only He can give it, and He does give it.

"Shall never thirst" in the Greek is the strongest possible negative, a double negative. Lit. translated it means that there was not the slightest possibility that the person who drinks of the living water would ever thirst again.

This does not mean that we do not constantly draw water out of the well of salvation, but it means that we will find our spiritual thirst satisfied to such an extent that we will never need, nor be inclined, to turn to anyone else, or anything else, for our soul's satisfaction.

The Lord seems to be indicating that every person has a hunger for inner satisfaction, but he does not know how to satisfy it. So he keeps trying first one thing and then another.

But look at the last part of this verse:

... but the water that I shall give him
shall be in him a well of water
springing up into everlasting life.

What does this mean?

It is impossible to separate this "living water" from Christ. He is the "living water." And when we drink of Him, He comes to abide in our hearts. And He is the continual source of spiritual nourishment within us. Therefore we do not need to seek our satisfaction in what this world supplies when we have Christ in our hearts. And the more we drink of Him, of His grace, of His love, of His mercy, of His wisdom, and of all of His glorious attributes, the greater our satisfaction will be.

The person without Christ will never be satisfied.

I cannot conclude this part of the chapter without referring to the invitation that is given in Rev. 22:17:

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.

And let him that heareth say, Come.

And let him that is athirst come.

And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.

The ministry that the Lord was conducting with this Samaritan woman is the ministry that the Spirit of God has committed to us. We have the joy and the responsibility of offering to sinners the eternally satisfying "water of life" as a free gift from God.

1/22/90

The first "I" in verse 14 is emphatic, and stands in contrast with Jacob. If the Samaritans drank of Jacob's well, the water that Jacob gave to them, they would thirst again. But whoever drinks of the water which the Lord Jesus gives, will never thirst.

4:15 With this verse the first part of our Lord's conversation with the Samaritan woman is concluded (Godet, p. 425).

Much has been written about the sincerity, or lack of sincerity, in the woman's words found in this verse. Godet felt that for her to address the Lord as "Sir" showed respect and interest in what He had been telling her. Obviously she did not have a clear understanding of what the Lord had said because the last words of this verse, "neither come hither to draw," would seem to indicate that she had the idea that "the living water" would replace natural water, the water from the well.

But Bishop Ryle has given us some very wise words as we try to understand where the Samaritan woman was spiritually at this point. He said,

Enough for us to know that she asked and received, she sought and found. Our great aim must be to persuade sinners to apply to Jesus, and to say to Him, "Give me to drink." If we forbid them to ask anything until they can prove that they ask in a perfect spirit, we should do no good at all. It would be as foolish to scrutinize the grammatical construction of an infant's cries, as to analyze the precise motives of a soul's first breathings after God. If it breathes at all and says, "Give," we ought to be thankful (I, 218).

4:16 It seems that the Lord had a twofold purpose in telling the Samaritan woman to call her husband:

- 1) To awaken in her a consciousness of sin.
- 2) To begin to reveal to her His own Messianic role.

He knew that she did not have a husband at that time, but she did not know that He knew.

4:17 Her honesty, before she knew who the Lord was, is further evidence of her sincerity. The Lord commended her for her honesty.

4:18 The Lord knew that she had been married five times, and that she was not married to the man she was living with at that time. She had sought happiness in the flesh, had failed five times, and, like so

many people today, she apparently had decided not to go through the marriage ceremony again so that it would be easier to break the present relationship if it did not work out. This is an assumption on my part. Bishop Ryle believed that the middle statement of this verse indicates that she had lost her fifth husband because of adultery. Whatever the circumstances may have been, she was guilty of adultery by living with a man to whom she was not married.

How important it is to note the gentle manner in which the Lord dealt with this woman. He knew what her life had been like. He knew that before He ever asked her for a drink of water in the beginning. Yet He commended twice (once in verse 17, and again in verse 18) because she told Him the truth. And He did not deal harshly with her as He might have in pointing out her sin.

I think that we can assume that this Samaritan woman was a very unhappy person. The Lord knew this. She sought happiness, but had not been able to find it because she was looking in the wrong place. She was seeking it with men in the most intimate of human relationships, but happiness and peace and satisfaction are only to be found in the Lord. He knew that He was dealing with a soul who had been wounded again and again.

4:19 The light concerning the identity of the One Who was speaking to her was beginning to dawn on her soul.

The word "perceive" is an interesting word, and it is important for us to understand it if we are to appreciate more fully what was going on in this woman's heart. It means that she had been observing carefully all that the Lord had been telling her, and that she had come to a conclusion in her own heart. And His last comment seemed to confirm the impression that was being made upon her. It would seem that several things were used by the Lord to cause her to see that our Lord was not just another man; such things as,

- 1) The fact that He, a man and a Jew, would speak to her.
- 2) His gracious manner.
- 3) The theme of their conversation: "living water."
- 4) His unusual knowledge of her.

A prophet is one who speaks on behalf of God. She was not yet ready to say that He was the Messiah (as she did with the men of Sychar in verse 29), but she saw evidence enough to convince her that Jesus was a prophet.

We should remember that it was a similar display of knowledge that convinced Nathanael in chapter 1, verses 47 through 49, that our Lord was the Messiah, "the Son of God...the King of Israel."

It is important for us to tell people that the Lord knows who they are, where they live, what they have done, and what their desires and disappointments have been. Nothing is hidden from Him. Cf. what the Lord said to Nicodemus in John 3:19. A well-known brewery has as their slogan, "The night belongs to Michelob." No, it doesn't! The night belongs to God. Sin has always been associated with the night, but the light and the darkness are both alike to the Lord. Cf. Psa. 14:16.

David said in Psalm 139,

If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me;
even the night shall be light about me.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee;
 but the night shineth as the day:
 the darkness and the light are both alike unto thee (vv. 11, 12).

4:20 Again we come to a verse which has been given many different interpretations. Some feel that this woman was trying to change the subject away from her life toward one of the major differences that existed between the Jews and the Samaritans. But it seems more likely that she, finding herself in the presence of a prophet, was seeking to get his opinion regarding the problem of where to worship.

In speaking of "this mountain," she undoubtedly had in mind Mt. Gerizim. This was the sacred place of the Samaritans, and apparently it still is. This is where they observe the Passover. A temple was built there in Nehemiah's time, and destroyed a little over a hundred years before Christ was born. So the question was, Jerusalem vs. Gerizim--which was the right place to worship.

Perhaps she had been troubled about this in her own mind. Those who are legalistic and ritualistic in their religion are often in doubt as to whether or not they are doing the right thing, and whether or not they are doing it in the right place. She evidently felt that the Lord could give her the answer that she needed.

It is often true that people who are awakened enough to be concerned about God and their relationship to Him, are inclined to get sidetracked on secondary or lesser issues. "Ought" is our (by now) familiar word and friend, must. The Jews were as demanding about Jerusalem as the Samaritans were about Gerizim. Which was right? One or the other was to be the center for worship for the whole world. A prophet should know the answer, and so the woman was waiting to hear what the Lord would say. The attitude of the "fathers" would carry a great deal of weight. For the woman to ask the Lord shows how convinced she was the Lord was a prophet.

4:21 It seems that this is the only time during the earthly ministry of our Lord that it is recorded that He said, "Believe me."

Understanding of spiritual truth begins with faith, especially faith in the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. His word carries with it the ultimate authority. What He says is not to be debated, but to be believed.

"The hour cometh" shows, as Westcott has observed, that "there is a divine order in accordance with which every part of the whole scheme of salvation is duly fulfilled" (p. 72).

We know that Jerusalem in OT times was the place where the Lord chose to place His Name. But, as the Lord spoke, that was soon to change. The work of the Lord which had, for the most part, been confined to the natural descendants of Abraham, was to be extended to include all of the nations of the earth. Therefore, the place of worship would no longer have the emphasis. We know that today God can be worshipped anywhere--even in a school building!

Notice that when the woman spoke of worship in verse 20, she did not mention the One Who was being worshipped--just the place of worship. Our Lord brought things back to their true perspective when He spoke of worshipping "the Father."

Calvin pointed out the contrast between "our fathers" in verse 20, and "the Father" in verse 21. Their fathers worshipped; the Father does not worship, but is worshipped.

4:22 The Lord did not hold back from speaking the truth.

Here the Lord drew a sharp contrast between the worshipping of the Samaritans as compared with the worshipping of the Jews. We know from other passages in the Gospels that the worship of the Jews was very corrupt, and far from being what God intended for it to be. But here He was speaking of the authority behind the Samaritans as compared with the authority behind the Jews. The Samaritans had no Scriptural authority for their claim that God was to be worshipped in Mt. Gerizim. The Jews, on the other hand, did have authority in Scripture for their worship. And the reason given for the difference is to be seen in that statement, "For salvation is of the Jews."

God had chosen the Jewish nation. The Jews have given us our Scriptures in which the prophets wrote of salvation. And the Savior Himself was a Jew! "Salvation is of the Jews." The sentence in the Greek NT reads, For the salvation is out of the Jews. Many feel that the salvation is used for the Savior, Christ Jesus the Lord.

4:23 Again we come to the expression, "the hour cometh." We are moving another step ahead in the divine plan.

Not only would the place be unimportant, but the ceremonies also. As Ryle said, "The external part of the worship would be of no value compared to the internal state of the worshippers" (I,224).

"True worshippers" are the genuine, the real worshippers, those who are worshipping in an acceptable way--acceptable to God.

"In spirit and in truth." This would not mean that no one ever worshipped "in spirit and in truth" before (because they did, even though it was rare). But in the new dispensation of God's dealings with His people, this was to be, more than ever, the emphasis in worship. Ryle quoted one writer who said that "in spirit" strikes at hypocrisy; "in truth," at idolatry. "In spirit" means that instead of the place or the form being the main thing, the important part of worship will be that it will be genuine, coming from the heart. "In truth"--"truth" being an OT expression for faithfulness. If this is the true meaning, then it would mean that the Father was seeking those who would worship Him from the heart consistently, wherever they were, whatever might be the nature of their circumstances, they would be devoted to the worship of God.

There may be many facets to the meaning of what the Lord said here, "In spirit and...truth" (which is what the Greek says). The big question seems to be on the meaning of "truth." Westcott is inclined to believe that it points to a true and proper understanding of Who God is. He may be right. Worship to be acceptable to God must not only be sincere, but it must be sincere and right! If a person's heart is right, and he knows the truth about God, it will follow that His worship will be acceptable--whether the worshiper be a Jew, or a Samaritan, or a Gentile, or any other contrast that we might like to make.

"The Father seeketh such to worship him." This is another way of describing a child of God. He is one who worships God, and who worships

Christ. God does not wait for worshippers to come; He seeks them. This would mean that one thing that the Lord will always be seeking to teach us is how to worship. He delights in our worship--PROVIDING we worship Him "in spirit and...truth." Since this is what God wants, this is what we ought to seek to do--by His grace!

4:24 "God is a Spirit," or lit., God is Spirit. This is a glorious description of the nature of God. It is probably true that no one can fully appreciate its meaning. But it is clear that it means several things:

- 1) God is not a physical being, such as we are.
- 2) He is invisible.
- 3) He is immortal and unchanging.
- 4) He is omnipresent. It can never be said of God that He is absent from one place while He is present at another (Ryle, I, 226).

If we do not worship God "in spirit and in truth," we are not worshipping Him! Note our word "must" again.

Let us make it our aim to worshippers of God in the true meaning of the expression, worshipping Him from our hearts, worshipping Him as He deserves to be worshipped, and as He wants to be worshipped. And let us remember that, if worship is not limited to certain places, neither is it limited to certain times. While we can set aside certain times to worship God, we need to remember that God seeks those who live worshipful lives!

4:25 Can we not see that at this point the Samaritan woman had moved beyond the idea that the One speaking to her was only a prophet; she now seems to be entertaining the idea that He was the Messiah.

It is quite amazing that this woman, who had lived such a tragic and perhaps unhappy life, should not only know of the Messiah, but be looking for Him! She expected the Messiah to be a teacher. "He will tell us all things." In her eyes the Lord more and more was being seen in her eyes as One Who was qualified to be the Messiah. He had taught her about "living water." He had shown that He knew her, and was familiar with her life. He had clarified for her the meaning of true worship which she could see was true. She had no argument with Him. She looked forward to knowing more.

All of our questions will be answered when our Lord comes. We see all things through a glass darkly now, but then the mist will be removed. What a wonderful day that will be, and it is surprising that this Samaritan woman knew as much as she did.

4:26 Then it was that the Lord brought her to the heart of all truth when He said to her, "I that speak unto thee am he?"

The Lord had led this Samaritan woman step by step through their conversation together, turning her thoughts from the temporal to the eternal, revealing her need, answering her question, and finally identifying Himself.

This ought to remind us of what the Lord did with those two disciples at Emmaus. Luke 24:31 tells us that after the Lord had taught them, then "their eyes were opened, and they knew him." It is the entrance of God's Word, Christ's Word, that gives light. It is by the written Word that we see the Living Word, and when we see the Living Word, that which

have not known becomes clear. How important it is that we use the Word of God, and focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ, in our dealing with people about salvation!

Concl: This ought to be a passage of real encouragement for you ladies.

The Bible does not give ladies the chief place of authority in human relationships, but it does give them the place of honor. And how could womanhood have been honored any more than for the Lord, a Jew, to speak to a woman of the despised Samaritans. The Lord could have chosen to work through a man, but He chose to work with a woman, and through a woman to reach a city with the Gospel.

Ladies, always be assured that the Lord has time for you, that the Lord is concerned about you, that the Lord wants to answer your questions, and that the Lord has a place for you in His service.

We can all learn much about witnessing to people from this account in John 4. How patient He was, and gracious! How wise! How thoughtful when dealing with a woman whose life had been torn to shreds! And yet He did not turn aside from the truth--either the truth of God, nor the truth about the woman. What a contrast there was between Him and her, and yet He won her heart, and changed her life!

Ryle said in commenting on this passage, "We must never despair of any soul, after reading this passage. If this woman was converted, any one can be converted" (I, 228). It should make all of us reflect upon the way God in His grace has been pleased to save us.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 4:27-42

Intro: The Lord's conversation with the Samaritan woman ended with the disclosure to her that He was the Messiah!

Perhaps she left because the disciples returned. Or, as verses 28 and 29 seem to indicate, she left to tell the men of the city the great discovery that she had made. It may have been a combination of both of these things.

4:27 The Apostle John recorded here that "his disciples... marvelled that he talked with the woman."

This is the second time that this word has appeared in John's Gospel. Cf. John 3:7 where the Lord Himself used the word in speaking to Nicodemus. It speaks of being amazed at something, even of being astonished--perhaps even confounded and confused. And the feeling seems to have been common to all of them. They could not understand why the Lord would do this. I have already explained to you how the Jews felt about the Samaritans, and vice versa. The attitude of the disciples certainly was an indication that they had a lot to learn about the preaching of the Gospel.

The Greek does not say "the woman," but simply a woman. They were surprised that He was talking to a woman, regardless of who she was. We can be sure that it did not help that she was a Samaritan. At this point they would not have had any idea as to the kind of a woman she was, nor of the life she had lived.

Certain sayings of the Rabbis of the time may help us to understand their reaction. They were taught that women were inferior to men. It was thought that religion and education were primarily for men, not women. Several writers have quoted the Rabbinical writers, giving certain statements that they made about women. Here is a sampling found in Ryle's commentary (I, 234):

- 1) "He who instructs his daughter in the law plays the fool."
- 2) "Do not multiply discourses with a woman."
- 3) "Let no man talk with a woman in the street, no not with his own wife." Another version of this was "'that a man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife'" (Westcott, 74).

Bishop Westcott recorded the saying of the Rabbis "that it was 'better that the words of the law should be burnt than delivered to women'" (p. 74). And he added this:

One of the thanksgivings in the daily service of the Synagogue is: "Blessed are Thou, O Lord... Who has not made me a woman" (Ibid.).

Undoubtedly the disciples had been trained in these ideas, and so this helps us to understand why they felt the way they did. This does not mean that the OT taught these things, but it indicates how corrupted Judaism had become in our Lord's day.

As Isa. 55:8, 9 teach us, God's thoughts and God's ways are not only different from ours, but they are higher and better! Women are never given a higher place of honor than they are in the Christian faith. This incident was a very important lesson in the preparation of the disciples for the work of the ministry--but it shocked them at the time.

Their questions (which they did not express audibly) were:

- 1) What were you talking about?
- 2) Why were you talking to her?

But they were all thinking the same thing.

What are the answers?

- 1) He was talking to her about the Gospel.
- 2) The reason that He was talking to her was because He wanted to save her.

Before John continued to tell us about what the Lord had to say to His disciples, we have three verses in which we are permitted to follow the woman into the city of Sychar, and we learn what she did there.

4:28 We learn, first of all, that she "left her water pot."

The Apostle John did not, in writing this account, tell us specifically when this woman actually believed in the Lord. Nor did He tell us at what moment Nicodemus became a believer. Many have been the discussions as to when the Apostle Paul was saved. The desire to pinpoint the exact moment of salvation seems to be something that is fairly recent in origin. It probably has come about as a result of looking upon salvation as something that is finally consummated by man, instead of seeing that our faith is only possible after God has already done a work in our hearts. It is very likely that none of us actually knows the exact time when we were saved. We know, possibly, when we declared our faith in Christ by something that we did, but the work of the Lord in our souls, and when it first took place, are probably things which are known only to God. Let us keep this in mind as we observe the way in which the Lord dealt with people.

But one thing that we can see in these verses is that this woman was so anxious to get back to tell her people about her conversation with the Lord that she "left her waterpot."

And note that she went "to the men" of the city. The Samaritans probably felt the same way about women that the Jews did. This woman knew that, if she were to make any impact on the people of the city that she must get the men involved.

But there is another thing in these three verses that we need to notice when we think of people coming to the Lord. We have an illustration here of the fact that one of the first evidences of God's work in the soul is that there will be a desire, often a strong desire, to tell others about the Lord. Nobody told her to do this; but neither could anyone keep her from it.

4:29 Origen, one of the early Greek Fathers of the Church, who was born in the second century after Christ, called this Samaritan woman, "the Apostle of the Samaritans." She was the one who took the Gospel in a very, very simple way to the city of Sychar.

Let us notice a point here.

What our Lord did in speaking to this woman teaches us that we should never minimize the importance of speaking to even one person, even though that person may have little or no important contacts with others. It may even have been that this woman was in great disrepute in her own city. Nevertheless, she was the instrument in God's hand by which many

in that city not only heard the Gospel, BUT WHO BELIEVED IN CHRIST AS SAVIOR! What an illustration of 1 Cor. 1:26-29! Let me read that passage to you:

For ye see your calling, brethren,
 how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many might,
 not many noble, are called:
 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world
 to confound the wise;
 and God hath chosen the weak things of the world
 to confound the things which are mighty;
 And base things of the world, and things which are despised,
 hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not,
 to bring to nought the things that are:
 That no flesh should glory in his presence.

Her testimony was very simple. And it was very brief. In a few words she told what the Lord had done for her, and the conclusion that she had come to.

We must not feel that we have to be theologians in order to tell others about the Lord Jesus Christ. All she did was to ask them to come and see for themselves. John the Baptist's message also was very simple: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The important thing is that we tell people about the Lord, and then encourage them to look at Him for themselves. We can do that by encouraging them to read this Gospel of John and to learn for themselves what John had to say about the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. Griffith Thomas, in his book, The Apostle John, wrote,

...in bringing a soul to Christ we carry the work to a certain point, and then stand back for the soul to have its own private and personal interview with the Master (p. 26).

We cannot save anyone. It is our place to tell other about the Lord, and trust the Lord to work as He sees fit.

Bishop Westcott says that a better translation of her question, "Is not this the Christ?", would be, "Can this be the Christ?" The form of the Greek anticipated a negative answer, as though she had said, "He is not the Christ, is He?" But Bishop Westcott went on to add that "hope bursts through it" (p. 74). She probably did not want to appear to the men as a teacher, saying that she had found the Messiah, but they would have been able to detect the conviction that was in her heart as she simply conveyed the news to them.

We can tell people, but it is only as they come and see and hear for themselves, that they will be saved.

4:30 God was at work. There is no question about that. A little later in John's Gospel we are going to come to those very important words spoken by our Lord, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..."

From the wording of verse 30 it seems that the men did not delay, nor did they stop until they had come to Him!

4:31 From this verse down to verse 38 we have what the Lord said as He ministered to His disciples.

But first, they were concerned that He eat. "Prayed" is one of the Greek words for ask, but it suggests an insistent kind of asking. It

showed that they were deeply concerned about Him. They knew that He was weary when they left Him, and rightly assumed that He still had not had anything to eat.

4:32 The Lord never wasted His words. Here He was taking advantage of the circumstances to teach them an important lesson. He was speaking of the strength, even the physical strength, that had come to Him through the work that He had done with the Samaritan woman. The disciples would learn later what the Lord meant, but they did not understand it at the time. But when we do the will of God, and see the blessing of God, there is strength ministered by God to our souls which, at least for the time being, raises us up and beyond the need for food. Even with our Lord, nothing brought Him greater joy and satisfaction than to minister to others and to see them turning to Him.

4:33 Again the disciples were bewildered--first because He was talking to the woman, and now because He was not interested in the food that they had brought to Him. Their immediate thought was that somebody else had given Him something to eat.

We see again, even with the disciples, how quick we are to put a natural meaning on language which conveys to us spiritual truth.

THEN THE LORD BEGAN TO TEACH THEM. We have His words from verse 34 down through verse 38.

4:34 Here the Lord explained His words which we read in verse 32. And we also have the answer to the disciples question, "Why were You speaking to that woman?" He did it because it was the will of God! And our Lord's language here indicated that it was not just doing and doing the will of the Father that brought Him joy, but it was also working toward doing it completely, finishing the work that the Father had sent Him to do.

This throws light on John's statement in verse 4 of this chapter, that "he [our Lord] must needs go through Samaria." This was foreordained by God. It was a part of the work that the Father had sent Him to do. It was not a chance meeting, but a divine appointment. Nothing gave the Lord greater joy, nor did anything give Him greater strength, than to do the will of God.

Let us notice this when we are inclined to fear the will of God, or to question the will of God. We all have to learn this because it is so foreign to the way we think. But it is true for us, as it was true for our Lord: DOING THE WILL OF GOD IS WHAT WILL BRING US THE GREATEST JOY, AND IT IS DOING THE WILL OF GOD THAT WE ARE STRENGTHENED TO GO ON SERVING HIM!

4:35 As we read this verse, we should be reminded that it is a common thing for us to take human wisdom to teach us spiritual truth, and to govern us in how the work of the Lord is to be done.

The words, "There are yet four months, and then cometh the harvest," probably was a proverb well-known to the disciples. It seems to mean that seed is planted, and then in approximately four months the crop can be harvested.

Now it is easy to take that and apply it to the work of the Lord, that there is a time of sowing, and a time of reaping, but you never expect

to reap right after you have sown the seed. That is true in sowing wheat or corn or many other crops. But, if you go on that basis in the Lord's work, we will be sadly mistaken and not be prepared to expect a harvest when God is ready to give it to us. Sometimes in the Lord's work sowing and reaping go right together--not always, but sometimes! And such was the case with the Samaritans. There was a great harvest right before the disciples, but they did not see it. They were so concerned about food for their bodies that they could not see what the Lord wanted them to see.

And so the Lord sought to awaken them. "Lift up your eyes" is what the Lord said to Abraham in Gen. 13:14, 15. It may have been that the Lord was thinking of Isa. 49:18a where we read that the Lord said,

Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold:

all these gather themselves together, and come to thee.

How important it is for us to learn to look at people, and to see them as the Lord sees them! We often get disgusted by what we see. We often are repulsed by sinners--and they are not very lovely. Or we may be like the disciples, so busy with other things that we forget the main reason that we are here on earth.

This is not a period in history in which we are seeing great numbers of people being saved--at least not in our country. But there may be a greater harvest out there than we realize. The work of the Lord certainly is not coming to a standstill. Let us lift up our eyes and pray that the Lord will give us 20/20 spiritual vision!

This is a very important lesson that we all need to learn. But there was more for the disciples to learn, as we see in verse 36.

4:36 This verse brings out three truths:

- 1) That there are rewards for those who serve the Lord, working in His harvest field. Evidently it was true that there was better pay for those who harvested the crops than for those who planted the crops. Several commentators (referred to by Ryle, I, 247) take this as meaning that the greatest rewards will be given to those win people to the Savior. But whatever the meaning may be, rewards are promised.
- 2) The superiority of the work of harvesting souls is to be seen in the fact that we are not just working for time, but for eternity. This is the same idea that Paul was making when he compared physical exercise with exercises in godliness. He said that godliness was more important because it "promise of the life that now is, **and of that which is to come**" (1 Tim. 4:8b).
- 3) There is no competition in the work of the Lord. One may sow, and another reap, but both now and in heaven we will be able to rejoice together over what God has done.

Each one of these lessons was important for the disciples to learn. There may be some similarities between sowing seed in the ground, and sowing the seed of the Word in the hearts of men, but there are also distinctive differences which we need to know. And, to be sure, the work of the Lord is by far the most important work that is taking place in the whole world, regardless of the period in history in which we may be living.

4:37 This, again, must have been a proverb.

Bishop Ryle wrote this in his commentary on John:

The frequent use of proverbial sayings in the New Testament deserves notice. It shows the value of proverbs, and the importance of teach them to children and young people. A pointed proverb is often remembered when a long moral lesson is forgotten (I, 248).

What does it mean?

There are several truths here:

- 1) Sowing has to precede reaping.
- 2) Sowing always ends in reaping. This does not mean that we always see people saved who hear the Word, but it does mean that God's Word does not return to Him void; it accomplishes what He intends for it to accomplish. Cf. Isa. 55:11, 12.
- 3) There is a great partnership in the work of the Gospel. No one person does it all. There may be times when a person is saved the first time he hears the Gospel (as it seems to have been with the Samaritan woman), but the next verse gives us further insight into the work of the Lord in Samaria which is important for us to know. One of the tragedies in the Lord's work is the spirit of competition which so often exists. When the Lord's work is done in the Lord's way, there is no competition. All of us are "labourers together with God" (1 Cor. 3:9).

4:38 This gives us our final lessons in this message given by the Lord to His disciples:

- 1) The Lord is the Lord of the harvest: "I sent you...." It is our joy to go where He sends us, and to do what He wants us to do.
- 2) The need for humility. We are not alone in this work. Others had labored in Samaria. Who they were, and when they were there, we do not know. But they had been there, and they had labored in the Gospel. So often, perhaps most often, it is the case, that when we reap a harvest, we are entering into the labors of those who have sown the seed before we came along.
- 3) "I sent you to reap...." The Lord does not waste our time. The work of the Lord will not fail. Again quoting from Bishop Ryle, he said,
 When He [the Lord] undertakes a thing, it may be regarded as done and finished, because in his counsels it is certain to be finished (I, 249).
- 4) The usual way that the Lord works is through His people. The "I" and the three times the Lord used the word "you" ("ye") are all emphatic in the Greek.

How important it is that we get back to the Word of God to learn how the Lord wants His work to be done! When you learn from Scripture about the work of the Lord, you begin to realize how many things we do today claiming to serve the Lord which have no foundation at all in the Word of God. The Lord does not send us out to do His work any way we want to. We are sent to do His work in His way for His glory trusting Him to supply all of our needs.

There is a good lesson given to us in the account of our Lord's transfiguration before Peter and James and John "in the holy mount," which is what Peter called it in 2 Pet. 1:18. When Peter saw Moses and Elijah, he decided that it would be good to build three tabernacles, or booths--one for the Lord, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. But at that very moment they were overshadowed with a bright cloud, and the

Father spoke from heaven saying these words:

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;

HEAR YE HIM.

It was not for Peter to say what they should do. He needed to listen to the Lord, and then do what the Lord told him to do. If this were our policy in the Lord's work today, we would not only see more real blessing, but there would be much greater joy for us in serving the Lord. The Lord came to do the Father's will, and in that He has set the pattern for us. We may think that we have a lot of good ideas, but it is God's will that we need to be concerned about.

2/5/90

4:39 At this point the Apostle John returned in his record to the Samaritans. This verse has to do with the effect of the woman's testimony to the men of the city before any of them had heard the Lord for themselves. It is a repetition of what we have already learned from verses 28 and 29. What a rebuke this must have been to the disciples when they learned about it. This woman, an unlikely instrument, did not know much about the Savior, but what she knew she told, and the Lord used it for the salvation of "many of the Samaritans."

The Greek which is here translated, "believed on," is the same Greek which we have in John 3:16, where it is translated, "believeth in." And so it leaves no doubt but that this was a genuine work of God.

4:40 One sure proof that those Samaritans were really saved is to be seen in the fact that they came to the Lord, apparently to hear more about what He had to say. And after they heard Him, they refused to let Him go, pleading with Him to stay with them to teach them (for this seems to be indicated by what is stated in the next verse.

Here is a very important point for us to notice in working with people concerning the Gospel. We are not going to have to coax people to hear the Word if they are genuinely saved. In fact, as this incident teaches us, they will seek it for themselves, and it will be difficult to give them as much as they want. "Besought" is the same verb which is translated "prayed" in verse 31. It is an insistent kind of asking, the strong request which refuses to take "no" for an answer. The Lord could not turn them down, and so He stayed with them for two days.

4:41 We do not know what the Lord taught them during those two days, but we do know that "many more believed." These were evidently people who came along, perhaps out of curiosity, with those who believed because of the woman's testimony. So the work that the Lord did with one woman continued to grow. The original believers were strengthened in their faith, and "many more" trusted in Christ for salvation. The Apostle John continued to emphasize that salvation is by faith in Christ, and by faith alone.

We see here some significant things concerning the sovereign working of the Lord. Some people were reached by the woman. Others were reached by the Lord. In this instance "many" were saved. But this was not always the case even with our Lord. God uses instruments, but not always the same instrument. Sometimes God blesses in a great way; at other times the results may be small, or none at all. It is our responsibility to spread the Word; it is God's work to use that Word as He pleases, and according to His eternal plan. We must not always expect the Lord to work in the same way and to the same extent.

4:42 It does not seem that these words were spoken by those who believed only after they had heard the Lord as a rebuke to the woman, but perhaps even as an encouragement to her. She had been intent on seeing all of them believe. Some did; others did not. But when those believed the Lord's word who had not believed her word, they wanted her to know that they had believed so that she would rejoice in their faith.

Note the steps to faith. They heard, they knew (were convinced of the truth), and they believed. We need to give the Word, make it clear so that people will understand it, and then rejoice to see them believe. What a good illustration this is that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Many MSS leave out the words, "the Christ." So that the last part of the verse would read, "this is indeed (truly) the Saviour of the world." Christ came to the Jews, and for the Jews, but not only for the Jews. He came to save Gentiles as well. And it is remarkable that it was Samaritans who, during the ministry of our Lord, were the first to realize this.

The declaration of faith on the part of the Samaritans clearly shows that salvation was the theme of the Lord's ministry among them.

Concl: Many have recognized that this work of God was done in Samaria without a single miracle being performed. This shows two things:

- 1) The sufficiency of the grace of God using only the Word of God.
- 2) The fact that great movements of the Spirit of God are not dependent upon miraculous and sensational events. God works where He chooses to work, and great things can be accomplished with weak instruments so that the glory will go to God, and not to the instruments God uses.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 4:43-54

Intro: We come in this section to the final part of the period of acceptance in our Lord's public ministry. The outline is as follows:

II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2:1-12:50).

A. The period of acceptance (John 2:1-4:54).

And now we come to:

7. Miracle #2: the healing of the nobleman's son
(John 4:43-54).

4:43 At this point the Lord left Samaria and returned to Galilee.

4:44 Bishop Ryle raises some questions, which others also have been concerned with, about this proverb, which perhaps was originated by the Lord Himself. Why was it used here when the Lord was preparing to go into Galilee? Why was it used here when it is also stated that "the Galileans received him"? And why was it used here when it was a fact that His disciples were all, or nearly all, Galileans?

We can see the answer to this problem is we turn to Luke 4:24 where we find the Lord referring to this proverb on another occasion, probably earlier than the one now before us. The "country" that the Lord was talking about in Luke 4 was the city of Nazareth. And it seems that in the Gospels where the word "country" is used, it is always used of Nazareth--not just the area around the city, but the city itself. The only passage where that is not clear is here in John 4:44. But, since all of the other uses of this word "country" in the Gospels, do refer to Nazareth, it seems that we are on good ground here to say that the Lord was referring to Nazareth. So He did not go to Nazareth, but He returned to Cana.

The proverb expresses the truth that God expects His servants to be honored. They are to be honored because they come with the Word of God. Here the Lord was claiming to be a prophet, and we see what a solemn thing it is for a city, or an individual, to turn away from the servant of the Lord. And it can be very discouraging to the Lord's servant, too. The Lord was honored by the Samaritans of Sychar, but not by the Jews in Nazareth.

4:45 When we consider what John wrote in John 1:11-13 where he spoke of those who received the Lord, it would seem that the "received" in this verse would be the equivalent of believing! And the particular Galileans to whom John was referring were those who had been to Jerusalem for the Passover and who had "seen all the things that he (our Lord) did at Jerusalem at the feast." This has to be a reference to the miracles of our Lord.

Here we need to remember what John wrote in John 20:30, 31. The miracles were those special works that the Lord did, one of which we are about to consider--works that showed that our Lord was "the Christ, the Son of God," so that "believing they might have life through His Name."

4:46 The Lord returned to the city of Cana where He had performed the

miracle recorded in John 2:1-11. It was typical of John's writings to identify places with something outstanding that had taken place there, or people with something unusual that had happened to them. Cf. John 7:50 and 19:39 regarding Nicodemus. Concerning the Apostle John himself, cf. John 13:23, 25 and 21:20.

And so it was there at Cana where our Lord had performed His first miracle that He met the nobleman who is the subject of the second miracle which follows. This nobleman had a son who was sick at Capernaum.

We do not know what the exact meaning of "nobleman" is. The Greek word suggests that he had something to do with the king, probably Herod. He was a member of the king's government in some way about which we cannot be specific. But it is clear that he was a very important, an official person. He was very likely a man of means. But, as Ryle has pointed out, this teaches us

...that the rich have afflictions as well as the poor. We read of a nobleman in deep anxiety because his son was sick. We need not doubt that every means of restoration was used that money could procure. But money is not almighty. The sickness increased, and the nobleman's son lay at the point of death (I, 253).

4:47 Somehow this nobleman had heard about the Lord Jesus, and the miracles that He had performed. And so when he heard that the Lord was in 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."

"Besought" -- Here again we have the verb that was used in verses 31 and 40. It amounts to insisting that the Lord come. This man evidently was accustomed to giving orders, and having others obey him. And so he came to the Lord determined to get help from Him.

4:48 The Lord knew his heart. He knew that the nobleman was not aware at all of his own need, his spiritual need. He was only interested in the Lord because of the serious physical condition of his son. Our Lord's rebuke in this verse indicates that the nobleman would not have come to the Lord if it had not been for the critical condition of his son.

Cf. John 2:18. Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 1:22 that "the Jews require a sign." How different the Jews were from the Samaritans who came to the Lord, not because of any miracle that the Lord had performed, but because of His words to the woman of Samaria! In Samaria the Lord had been recognized as "the Saviour of the world"; in Galilee He was only recognized as One Who could heal bodies. Notice the change in this verse from the singular to the plural. The Lord spoke "unto him." But they He said,

Except ye [pl.] see signs and wonders,
ye [pl.] will not believe.

The Lord's words were designed to awaken the nobleman to his greater need, and the greater need of the nobleman's son. And so they were strong words.

Notice the two words, "signs and wonders." Godet said about these two words,

The first designates the miracle as related to the fact of the invisible world which it manifests; the second characterizes it

as related to external nature, whose laws it sets at defiance (p. 445).

Westcott expressed the same distinction in these words by saying that the word "signs" represented the spiritual aspect of the miracle, while the word "wonders" represented the natural aspect of the miracle. The first would suggest that there was a deeper meaning to what the Lord was doing; the second word points to that which would make men wonder because of the strange, unusual, miraculous nature externally of the way in which the miracle would appear to the eyes of men. Most men wondered at the miracles of the Lord, but did not see them as "signs."

"Ye will not believe." This is a double negative in the Greek. The Lord meant that the Jews would not at all believe unless there were miracles. Again, the difference between the Jews and the Samaritans was ever so clear to the Lord because of the ministry He had just had in Samaria.

The Jews would not believe unless they could see first. God's plan is for us to believe first, and then we will see. The nobleman walked by sight, not by faith. However, he was in the Lord's hand, and we will see what the outcome was.

4:49 The nobleman did not seem to hear what the Lord had said, and so he repeated his request, with even more urgency. This time he used the Greek word which means "little son," not indicating that his son was only an infant or a small child, but that he was dearly loved by his father.

The nobleman had two requests:

- 1) He wanted the Lord to come to his home in Capernaum. (If Capernaum were not his home, at least it was where his son was at that time.)
- 2) He wanted the Lord to heal his son.

He was not like the centurion in Matthew 8:5-13 who came to the Lord about his servant who was sick of the palsy. The Lord offered to go with him to heal the servant, but the centurion said,

I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof:
but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.

And then the centurion added,

For I am a man under authority,
having soldiers under me:
And I say to this man, Go, and he goeth;
and to another, Come, and he cometh;
and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it
(Matt. 8:8, 9).

The Lord told those who were with Him at the time that He had not found that kind of great faith in Israel.

The nobleman, in contrast with the centurion, felt that the Lord had to be with his son in order to heal him. But we should notice that the nobleman did believe that the Lord could heal his son. The urgency of his request shows that he had not progressed to the point of believing that, if his son died, the Lord could even raise him from the dead. But it is important to see that wherever the Lord finds even small faith, He works in such a way to make it stronger.

And so the Lord granted one of the two requests, but not both of them.

4:50 And so the Lord said to the nobleman, "Go thy way; thy son

liveth." The Lord was testing this nobleman's faith by giving him this word which meant that his "son" would not die.

How did the nobleman respond? Did he continue with his pleading? No. Again we have an example of Rom. 10:17. (Quote.) The nobleman believed, "and went his way."

4:51 Was it foolish for him to believe the words of the Lord? No. There were two things to confirm and strengthen his faith: one in this verse, and a second in the next two verses.

The first was that his servants met him with the good news: "Thy son liveth."

4:52 The second was that, as he inquired when his son began to get better, he learned that the fever had left his son at the seventh hour.

4:53 The nobleman realized immediately that it was at the very time that the Lord had spoken those words, "Thy son liveth."

What was the result? The nobleman believed, and everyone in his house (which probably means not only his wife and children, but also his servants). It is important to note that the members of his family and his servants were not saved because he believed, but the Apostle John made it clear that each one believed.

This ought to be helpful for our families. Two things stand out:

- 1) The importance of fathers being saved. The father needs to lead the way.
- 2) That it is generally true that, if God saves the father, it is an indication of His purpose to save the entire family. We have the example of Zacchaeus to whom the Lord said, "This day is salvation come to **this house**, forso much as he also is a son of Abraham" (Luke 19:9). And the same emphasis was made in the case of the Philippian jailer to whom Paul said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, **and thy house**" (Acts 16:31). In the verses which follow we have this truth emphasized. Notice the references to the jailer's house in verses 32-34:

And they spake unto him the word of the Lord,
and to all that were in his house.
 And he took them the same hour of the night,
 and washed their stripes;
 and was baptized, **he and all his**, straightway.
 And when he had brought them into his house,
 he set meat before them, and rejoiced,
believing in the Lord with all his house.

We can also see in this account that the serious illness of the nobleman's son was the providential work of God in getting the nobleman to Christ so that not only he, but his whole house could be saved.

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Twice in this passage it is stated that the nobleman believed. Cf. vv. 50, 53. In the second verse the members of his household are included as well. How are we to understand this? When was the nobleman saved? Was it when he left the Lord at Cana, or was it after he got home and learned that his son had been healed? Why would it be stated

twice that he believed? This account differs from the passages dealing with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman where we noticed that it is really impossible for us to tell at what point either was saved. In the case of Nicodemus it may have been that he was not saved until later.

There are two possibilities as far as the nobleman was concerned:

- 1) Either the first expression of his faith was merely a willingness to do what the Lord said, and that the second statement tells when he actually trusted Christ as his Savior, or
- 2) He trusted the Lord as his Saviour in v. 50, and was strengthened in his faith in v. 53.

We really cannot tell which it was. But we can learn some important lessons from this:

- 1) It is not for us to be able to tell exactly when people are saved. That is even true with us. The actual moment of salvation is something that is known only to God. We are to look for the outward evidences that a change has taken place in the heart.
- 2) Since we do not know when people are saved, it is important that we continue to deal with them, and to help them. People can agree outwardly to the truth of the Word, and even appear to be acting in obedience to the Word without actually being saved. So we persevere, trusting the Lord to do the work that needs to be done.
- 3) The fact that this man believed, and then believed again, is evidence that a true child of God continues to believe, and that, in continuing to believe, his faith is strengthened. We are saved by faith, and then we grow in our faith. True faith always needs to be strengthened. This is what the Lord is doing in all of our lives. We trust the Lord for salvation, and then continue to trust Him day by day and to trust Him more and more as our faith grows.

4:54 It seems that by this statement the Apostle John was indicating that he was concluding the part of our Lord's ministry that he had introduced with the first marriage at Cana. See 2:11. In this second miracle we have seen that the nobleman's faith was strengthened. In the first it was the disciples who had their faith strengthened. In the first the Lord "manifested forth his glory." And the same is true of the second. The evidence builds up that Jesus of Nazareth was more than a man; He was "the Christ, the Son of God," and that simply by believing in Him those who believe have everlasting life.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 5:1-18

Intro: At this point in John's Gospel we come to the period of opposition in the public ministry of our Lord. And this extends to the end of chapter 11.

The outline:

- I. THE INTRODUCTION (John 1).
- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2-12).
 - A. The Period of Acceptance (John 2-4).
 - B. The Period of Opposition (John 5-11).
 - The first incident in this period had to do with the third miracle recorded by the Apostle John.
 - 1. Miracle #3: the healing of the impotent man in Jerusalem, with its consequences.
 - a. The miracle itself (John 5:1-9).

5:1 There are several things about the setting of this miracle which we cannot make any positive statement. Expositors dating far back into the history of the Church have wished that John had mentioned which feast this was. It is important to them because it would help to determine how long the public ministry of our Lord was. If this were the Passover, then John has mentioned four Passovers: 2:13; this one; 6:4; and the final Passover that the Lord observed with His disciples. This would make the ministry of the Lord about three and one-half years. If this were not the Passover, then the Lord's ministry could have been a year shorter.

All of that might be of interest to scholars, but it must not have been very important to John, or to the Holy Spirit, or it would have been mentioned. I am afraid that many times we can major in things of minor importance and miss the main message that we need to get.

But this was a miracle performed in Jerusalem. It seems that most of our Lord's miracles were performed in Galilee.

And this shows also that the Lord was living in accord with the Law.

5:2 A second problem is the location of the pool which was called "Bethesda" (which means house of mercy). If you have been in Israel you know that there has been an attempt to identify the places that are mentioned in Scripture. In most cases you will find a Catholic church.

But the fact is that we do not know where the pool was located. Neither does it matter. We know that there was such "a pool" when the Lord was there, and that it was near the sheep market, or sheep gate. Again the location is not important as far as understanding the event is concerned. The "five porches" were very likely passageways supported by pillars where the sick could be protected from the heat of the sun.

5:3 This gives us an idea of the people who filled "the porches." John described them as "a great multitude." Even in our day disease is still a great problem, but it is impossible for us to imagine what it

was like in our Lord's day. It must have been a tragic sight to see the people who were there near the pool. Undoubtedly many of them had traveled very far, and had been there very long. Although discouragement must have been a prevailing attitude, yet the people had no other hope for recovery. And so they would stay.

They were "impotent" -- the same word is used of the man for whom the Lord performed this miracle. See v. 7. It means that they were so sick that they did not have the strength to move around. Or, if they did, they moved so slowly that it took them a long time to get anywhere.

Some were "blind." Others were "halt" -- crippled. And still others were "withered" -- a condition where the flesh on arms and/or legs was without life, or practically so.

Note: The remainder of verse 3 and all of verse 4 are not in many of the better MSS. However, they do not include anything that is contrary to the whole account. Therefore it seems that we can, and should, consider them.

"Waiting..." This phrase states all that these people had to live for.

5:4 This tells us what caused the waters to be moved. We do not know how often it happened--once a week, once a day, or many times during the day. Probably it was impossible to tell when the water would be troubled, but the first one to go into the pool after it was troubled, was healed.

Obviously this was a merciful provision that the Lord had made to meet the needs of many of those who were hopelessly ill. Some feel that it was intended, as in the case of the miracles of our Lord, to herald the coming of the Messiah. Whatever it meant, it was not some kind of magic, nor was it some strange mystical power. The fact that an angel was involved shows that this was a work of God.

5:5 Here is an unusual thing. With all of the sick people who were there, the Lord paid special attention to this man. Our Lord is sovereign in His dealings with people. He had the right to do as He saw fit, and we cannot condemn Him because He did not heal everyone who was there. We do not know how old this sick man was, nor do we know how long he had been there by the pool. We do not know who he was, nor where he was from. All we know is that he had been sick for "thirty and eight years"--a long, long time.

5:6 The Lord "saw" him where he was. The Lord knew how long He had been sick. And He asked the man a question that would seem very strange: "Wilt thou be made whole?"

Trench (Notes on the Miracles of our Lord, p. 272) suggested that this man had really given up hope of ever being healed. The Lord's question actually means, "Do you have a will to be healed?" (See also Ryle, I, 274.) The question seems to indicate that this man, although he stayed by the pool, may have given up hope that he would ever be healed. The Lord was seeking to restore that hope. The man would not have known who the Lord was at that point. From what we read in the next verse it looks like he had come to the place in his thinking where he realized that the only way he could ever be healed would be to find someone to help him. He could not do for himself what he needed to do. His infirmity would not permit him to move fast enough after the water was

troubled.

5:7 This man was not only hopeless, but he was friendless. He had tried to help himself, but had failed. He had looked for someone else to help him, but there was no one who would do it. Little did he know that the Man standing before him would not only help him, but that he did not need to put him in the pool in order to heal him.

It is interesting that when people begin to realize that they cannot help themselves, they start to look for some man who can help them. Today people look for a psychiatrist or a psychologist. We worship at the shrine of psychology when psychology is nothing more than human wisdom which is foolishness with God, and comes to nothing! The only way a man can help us is by telling us about the Lord Jesus Christ. The drunkard does not need AA or any other human organization; he needs Christ. The same is true of the dope fiend, and the thief, and the crooked business man. Christ is the answer, the Man Christ Jesus.

5:8 He was to be healed simply by the word of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord told him to do three things that he could not do:

- 1) "Rise."
- 2) "Take up thy bed." How could he carry his bed if he could not even get himself up?
- 3) "And walk."

He was not healed because he got up. He was healed before he got up, or he never could have gotten up. His getting up, picking up his bed, and walking, were three evidences that he had been healed, miraculously healed, instantaneously healed!

We need to see this as a picture of salvation. We, too, are impotent because of our sin. We cannot help ourselves. In fact, our spiritual condition before we were saved was far worse than the physical condition of this man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. The Lord tells us to believe. But we cannot even do that until He has healed us of our sins. We believe, we are changed, we are able to walk so as to please God, only after the Lord has given us life, has raised us from spiritual death. And salvation is not a process which takes place; salvation is an instantaneous work of God upon our souls.

5:9 This verse confirms what I have just said about the man's healing. He was healed "immediately." Then he took up his bed, and then he was able to walk (and the walking in itself was a miracle).

You and I have never seen anything like this. It is usually true that if a man has been impotent that long, he will never get better. But that is not the case where the Lord is concerned. The spiritual significance of this miracle would indicate that people can still be saved even though they have long been held by their sins.

The last words of this verse, "and on the same day was the sabbath," sound an ominous note. They tell us that trouble was ahead. This was one of the major accusations with which the Jews were to charge Him: Sabbath breaking.

b. The opposition of the Jews (John 5:10-18).

5:10 It should have been a time for great rejoicing. Everyone should

have praised and glorified the Lord for what had taken place. But instead, the Jews (the men who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the people of Israel) saw him carrying his bed on the Sabbath Day and rebuked him for carrying his bed.

It is remarkable that it is not mentioned that they saw him when he was in need, lying by the pool, but when he started to carry his bed, they noticed him right away. Religion can make men's hearts hard. They care more about their rules than they do about the blessing of the people.

5:11 It is very probable that the man in his excitement and joy because he had been healed, had overlooked what he knew a violation of the Jews' laws. And so he told the Jews that the one who had healed him had told him to pick up his bed and walk.

5:12 The Jews still did not pay attention to the fact that they were standing in the presence of a man who had been healed after thirty-eight years of infirmity. They wanted to know who had told this man to do such a thing.

5:13 The man did not know. The Lord Jesus had suddenly come without any fanfare of any kind, and He had disappeared in the crowd, among the people, just as He had come. The Lord was gone before the man noticed that He was gone, and it seems that the people who were around did not see Him go, and so no one tried to stop Him nor to watch where He went. He apparently did not heal anyone else.

This was a spectacular event. And yet the Lord quite evidently was not interested in making it into something sensation for the sake of attracting the people. Making the most out of this situation would have been what men would do, but the Lord was not dependent upon such things for the purpose of attracting people. It may have been that the Lord spoke so quietly to the man that no one else heard what He said. How different are the ways of the Lord from the ways of men.

We can see in Naaman the Syrian's attitude toward Elisha what man's way is. Cf. 2 Kings 5. He was angry when Elisha did not come out and make a big public display of his healing. And even as far as washing in the Jordan, he could not see why some of the rivers of Syria would be even better than the Jordan. God's ways and our ways are always different.

5:14 Later, how much later we do not know, but later the Lord found him. This means that He was looking for him. At the first (v. 6) the Lord "saw" him; here the Lord "findeth him."

Notice where the Lord found him: "in the temple." This was a feast time, and he was there in the temple. Perhaps he went there to thank God for what had happened to him. It is interesting to see that when he could walk and go any place that he wanted to go, he chose to go to "the temple," the house of God.

The significance of this as a picture of salvation is clear.

But notice what the Lord said to him:

- 1) He told him that he was well. He had been healed. This was not just a temporary thing that had happened to him. He was going to continue to walk, and he would not have to go back to that pool again.
- 2) He told the man not to sin any more. This meant that his infirmity

had, in this instance, been a judgment from God. Again, what his sin was, we do not know. Perhaps it had been many sins. The only thing that could bring him into a worse condition than he had been for the thirty-eight years would be if he continued to sin.

Not all sickness is due to sin. But some is! Perhaps more sickness is due to sin than we realize. Aids is certainly a disease which is the result of sin. All sickness is ultimately traceable to sin, but the Lord was speaking here about specific sins. Whether or not he was a true believer before this time, we cannot say. But it seems that for the Lord to say something like this to him was an indication that not only had the Lord healed him physically, but the Lord had healed him spiritually.

Remember what the Lord told the Corinthians about their sinful behavior at the Lord's table. The Apostle John, in his First Epistle, taught that there is a sin unto death. You and I need to be very careful about sin. God does not tolerate sin in the lives of His people, and He has brought judgment upon cities (Sodom and Gomorrah) and whole nations (Egypt and Babylon) when they have refused to recognize the restraints that He had put upon them.

When we get to John 8, and the story of the woman taken in the act of committing adultery, we find that the Lord said the same thing to her: "Go, and sin no more."

These words must be a warning to us.

5:15 We, I think, can be sure that this man was not aware that he would be causing trouble for the Lord by what he did. He just hurried off to tell the Jews who is was who had healed him.

5:16 The first charge that was laid against the Lord, according to John's Gospel, was the fact that He was a Sabbath-breaker! But let us remember that the Lord never did break the Sabbath. He broke the laws that the Jews had set up for the Sabbath, but they were not the laws of God. It is important for us to distinguish between the laws that men have set up as compared with the Word of God. Man in their dedication to their own laws will violate the Word of God. The commandments of God are frequently set aside for the commandments of men which they will teach as though they are the laws of God.

They still did not rejoice in what had happened to the man. Nor did the miracle make they wonder who Jesus was. They were not like Nicodemus who believed that the Lord was a teacher who had come from God because He was able to perform such a miracle. They were so blinded by their own rules, and so hardened in their own unbelief, that they had MURDER in their hearts. And we know that they were not going to be satisfied until they finally did what they wanted to do here at this point in our Lord's public ministry.

5:17 Here the Lord said something which infuriated the Jews even more. He declared His Deity--and they realized that this was what He was doing. He indicated that what He did was also a work of the Father. Therefore, they could not oppose His work without opposing the work of God Whom they would claim that they were serving. If the Father saw fit to heal a man on the Sabbath Day, and to tell him to take up his bed and walk, then they would be critical of God by saying it should not have been done. They were setting their word above the work of God and of

Christ.

These Jews were being exposed to a great deal of spiritual light. Not only should they have been awakened by the miracle the Lord performed, but now they have His word. But men who are spiritually blind cannot understand spiritual truth. Remember that just because a man is a religious leader, he is necessarily a man of God.

5:18 Now the Jews felt that they had two charges to bring against the Lord:

- 1) He had broken the Sabbath.
- 2) He claimed to be Deity.

Either one of these, if true, could be punished by death. The first charge was saying that the Lord had violated of the fourth commandment. The second charge was saying that the Lord had violated the first commandment. But if they were neither justified, that is, if the Lord had not broken the Sabbath, and if He really were the Son of God, then the Lord could not be condemned on either count.

Those who say that the Lord never claimed to be Deity should look very closely at this passage. The Jews understood what the Lord was saying, but they did not believe Him and were ready to kill Him. Godet felt that if the Lord had said, "Our Father," the Jews would not have objected. But when He said, "My Father," they knew that He was claiming a unique relationship with the Father which they did not have, and which is certainly above that which even the true children of God have. We are sons; He is the Son of God! We will be like Him some day, but there will always be a great difference between our Lord and us. We will never be Deity.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 5:19-30

Intro: From verse 19 of John 5 to the end of the chapter we have:

- c. The Lord's defense of His Sonship (John 5:19-47).

This all comes under:

- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE WORLD (John 2:2-12).
- A. The Period of Acceptance (John 2-4).
 - B. The Period of Opposition (John 5-11).
 - 1. Miracle #3: the healing of the impotent man in Jerusalem, with its consequences (John 5:1-47).
 - a. The miracle itself (John 5:1-9).
 - b. The opposition of the Jews (John 5:10-18).

And so now we come to:

- c. The Lord's defense of His Sonship (John 5:19-47).

Verse 18 at the end of the preceding section tells us that the Jews wanted to kill the Lord for two reasons:

- 1) They believed that He had broken the Sabbath.
- 2) He had claimed that He was the Son of God, making Himself equal with God.

This is the longest message given by our Lord up to this point which has been recorded by the Apostle John. The first was His message to Nicodemus (in John 3). The second, to the woman of Samaria (in John 4). The third, to the disciples (also in John 4). This is the fourth. The message has three parts:

- 1) The relationship between the Father and Christ, the Son (John 5:19-30).
- 2) The fivefold testimony concerning Christ (John 5:31-39).
 - a) His own testimony (John 5:31). He had been giving His testimony from verse 17 on to this point.
 - b) The testimony of John the Baptist (John 5:32-35).
 - c) The testimony of His works (John 5:36).
 - d) The testimony of the Father (John 5:37, 38).
 - e) The testimony of the Scriptures (John 5:39).
- 3) The Lord's accusation of the Jews (John 5:40-47).

As we consider the relationship between the Father and Christ, we need to keep in mind what John said about His purpose in writing this Gospel. See John 20:30, 31. Therefore, this message in which the Lord was teaching that He was the Son of God, is very basic to the whole purpose of John's Gospel.

Again let me mention that those people who say that Jesus Christ never claimed Deity, have obviously not read John 5. If the things that the Lord said as recorded here were not true, then He would indeed have been guilty of the greatest blasphemy. However, they are true! He is the Son of God. These words would be the greatest blasphemy if claimed by anyone except our Lord.

Let us notice what He said.

- (1) The relationship between the Father and Christ, the

Son (John 5:19-30).

This part of our Lord's message is divided by the three times that He used the words, "Verily, verily." See verses 19, 24, 25. So this would give us these three divisions:

- 1) John 5:19-23.
- 2) John 5:24.
- 3) John 5:25-30.

It is only in the Gospel of John that we have the double, "Verily, verily." The other Gospels use just the "Verily." And our Lord is the only One who used this expression. It speaks both of the absolute truthfulness of what He was saying, and of its authority--therefore, its importance. Notice that each time these words are followed with, "I say unto you." Knowing that He was claiming Deity here, this is the equivalent of the OT, "Thus saith the Lord." So this was also a part of His claim to Deity.

In these first five verses we have:

- (a) The uniqueness of Christ's relationship with the Father (John 5:19-23).

5:19 The Lord Jesus was declaring here that, because He is the Son of the Father, having the same Nature as the Father, it was impossible for Him even while He was in the flesh to do anything but what the Father does. The Lord not only would not, but could not, act independently of the Father. We never have any conflict of thought or action between the Father and the Son. It is impossible for them to be different in their nature, or in their works.

And so our Lord was saying here that the Father was equally responsible for the miracle that had just been performed, and that they could not bring their accusations against Him without also bringing charges against the God of heaven!

We can follow this thought right up to the Cross. Paul taught in 2 Cor. 5:19 that when Christ died on the Cross, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

Verse 30 of this chapter is very similar in thought to verse 19.

This is truth which we need to remember when we speak of the doctrines of grace--the doctrines of salvation. God has chosen certain people for salvation. When Christ died on the Cross would do die for more, for less, or for the same people that the Father had chosen? Since there never has been, never will be, never can be, any conflict between the Father and the Son, we have to say that whatever was the Father's plan in salvation, was also the Son's purpose in His death.

5:20 No mere man could possibly say what the Lord Jesus said here.

We are continually forced to say, "I don't really know what the Lord's will is," or "I can't understand what the Lord is doing." We have to acknowledge all of the time that we can only see as through a dark glass. Our knowledge, at its best, is very, very limited.

But did it ever occur to you that the Lord is never confused. He always knows what the Father is doing because the Father shows Him, and tells Him. The Lord Jesus wasn't surprised that He brought the impotent man back to health and strength. And if you really want to know why the

Lord singled out that particular man for healing, it was because that is what the Father told Him to do.

And at that very moment the Lord knew that greater miracles were coming. They had marveled at this miracle; they would marvel even more at the miracles that were yet to be performed!

When the Lord said that "the Father loveth the Son," He did not use the verb ἀγαπάω, but He used the verb φιλέω. And Bishop Westcott described φιλέω as meaning "personal affection based upon a special relation" (p. 85). This is the verb that Mary and Martha used when they sent to the Lord to tell Him about Lazarus. They said, "he whom thou lovest is sick" (John 11:3). And when "Jesus wept" at the grave of Lazarus, the Jews used this same verb, φιλέω, when they said, "Behold how he [our Lord] loved him [Lazarus]" (John 11:36). Bishop Ryle said that this "is meant to show us the unspeakable unity of heart and affection...which eternally existed and exists between the Father and the Son" (I, 287).

This was not the love of a superior for an inferior, nor does it indicate that the Father knew things that the Son did not know. Rather it shows the perfect union between the Father and the Son, and the perfect knowledge which the One had of the Other, and of all that They had ordained to be done.

In the light of what we have in this verse alone, we can see that it is a great blasphemy to speak of God and yet to ignore Christ. We will come to that in a moment.

5:21 This most likely was one of those "greater works" that the Lord had referred to in verse 20. The Father and the Son cannot only restore strength to an impotent man, but They can raise the dead. The latter is the greater work. We see here the mighty power of God. They Who created the earth, can restore that which has been claimed by death. We will see more about this in a moment, too.

The difference (if any) between raising up and quickening is not clear. But it may mean that the Members of the Godhead have the power not only to raise back to life, but to cause that person to continue in life. Or He raises them up, and then gives them life.

But notice that this, too, is selective: "whom he will." In the miracles we do not see an arbitrary of our Lord, acting upon a sudden impulse or whim, but we see the working out of the sovereign will of God and of Christ. Since the Father and the Son never act independently nor contrary to Each Other, for the Son to will a thing is to indicate that the Father willed the same thing.

It is very important to keep these ideas in mind as we study the miracles of our Lord.

5:22, 23 These two verses go together.

/ Verses 20, 21, and 22 are explanatory, it seems, of what is stated in
/ verse 19. Notice that they all begin with the word, "For."

/ And in verses 22, 23 we see that the explanation that is given in verse
/ 22 was "That," or in order that, the purpose in verse 23 might be
/ accomplished.

This statement is most interesting when we think of the circumstances that the Lord was facing at this time. The Jews were sitting in judgment upon Him. But the Father had not committed that right to them. The Lord Jesus was their Judge. He it is Who will occupy "the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). The two words that are used for judgment here indicate that He is the One before Whom all men will stand trial, and He is the One Who will pronounce the judgment. Verse 24, with its use of the word "condemnation," or judgment, would indicate that the Lord had in mind here THE FINAL JUDGMENT. Our Lord is claiming here that He is the Messiah, the Judge, the Lord. And by the Jews rejection of Christ they were sealing their own doom. Their very salvation rested in the hands of the One Whom they were condemning.

Going back over the verses we have just covered, we can see that salvation was in the Lord's thoughts as He spoke these words. The work that He and the Father were doing was a saving work. They were the Ones Who would quicken even into eternal life those whom they willed to save. And they were the Ones Who would determine who would be in heaven, and who would be in hell. The miracle that had just been performed was sovereignly designed and performed to awaken them to the identification of the One Who stood before them, and was speaking to them.

But going on to verse 23, let us see the connection.

The performing of this miracle, and the performing of all future miracles, was ultimately to show the Jews what Nicodemus had seen, that "no man can do the miracles that thou doest, except God be with Him" (John 3:2b). Nicodemus may not have been ready when he came to the Lord to declare that Jesus was God, but he knew that Jesus was at least on God's side, and that no one could possibly do what the Lord was doing if God were not on His side.

Our Lord stated it very clearly here in verse 23.

Instead of condemning our Lord because He had performed the miracle on the Sabbath Day, and had told the man to take up his bed and walk on the Sabbath day, they should have honored the Lord, glorifying Him, worshipping Him, as their Messiah, their God, and their Savior.

Furthermore, these men who claimed to be servants of God needed to know that they could not honor God unless they honored the One Who was standing before them. Why was Jesus Christ there in human flesh, doing the works that He had done, and saying the words that He was saying to them? Because the Father had sent Him. Therefore, to oppose Jesus was to oppose God.

The greatest of all blasphemies is to claim to know God, and yet to deny and reject the Lord Jesus Christ. This is exactly what those Jews were doing. To condemn Christ was to condemn God--and it still is! If we are going to love God, we must love Christ whom the Father loves.

The Lord was giving those Jews the greatest lesson in theology that they had ever had. Let us make sure that we are learning what they needed to learn about the Lord Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the second point in the first part of our Lord's message. Remember we are speaking about

- (1) The relationship between the Father and Christ, the Son (John 5:19-30).

And we have just concluded the first part:

- (a) The uniqueness of Christ's relationship with the Father and the Son (John 5:19-23).

Now we are ready for:

- (b) The oneness of the Father and Christ in salvation (John 5:24).

Remember that, according to John 20:30, 31, the reason we need to know that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God, is in order that we might then believe on Him unto eternal life. This is the point that the Lord made here in verse 24.

Let me ask all of you a question: **HOW MANY OF YOU HAVE EVER NOTICED THAT THE LORD SAID HERE THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO BELIEVE IN GOD IN ORDER TO BE SAVED?**

Read the verse carefully. Most verses on salvation say that we have to believe in Christ; this one says that we have to believe on God, the Father. He is the One Who sent the Lord Jesus. How can we explain this?

There should be no question in our minds after what we have seen in verses 19 through 23. With the unique relationship which exists between the Father and the Son, you cannot believe in One, really believe, without believing in the Other. In verses 19-23 we see how the Father honored the Son; now in verse 24 we are seeing how the Son honored the Father. It is just as right to speak of God as our Savior as it is to speak of Christ as our Savior AS LONG AS WE INCLUDE CHRIST! In fact, all three Persons of the Godhead are involved in our salvation, and are entitled to be called, Savior.

1 John 5:9-12

I hope you get the emphasis that the Lord was making.

Notice that the Lord, not only with His "verily, verily," and His "I say unto you," but also with His "he that heareth my word," was placing a tremendously strong emphasis upon His own message. Pay close attention to the words of the Lord Jesus.

And then He went on to indicate that His words lead to faith in the Father. Cf. Rom. 10:17.

The Lord actually said that the one who hears and hears and continues to hear, and who believes and believes and continues to believe, not shall have, but "hath" (present tense, right now) eternal life." Salvation is not something that we will get some time in the future. We have it right now, or we do not have it at all.

And if you have it now, you have it forever because the promise is that you will NOT come into "condemnation" (the judgment that we were speaking about in verse 22) because you have passed from death unto life."

This means that if you do not want to face the Lord Jesus as the Judge Who has the authority to condemn you eternally in hell, you must turn to God and to Christ, and seek from them the forgiveness of your sins.

And here is an added word of comfort and assurance.

When the Lord said that those who believe in God "shall not come into condemnation," He was using the word for a trial. He meant that your case and mine will never again be brought up for review. We will never face a new trial on the basis of some new evidence that has been discovered. All of the punishment that should have been ours was placed on Christ. Therefore, to be trusting in Him and to be trusting in God is not just a way, but the only way for us to have eternal life with its absolute, irrevocable guarantee of heaven.

What a marvelous salvation God has provided for us in His Son!

2/26/90

The last part of this first division in our Lord's message in which He was defending His Sonship is this:

(c) The Father's appointment of Christ as the Final Judge (John 5:25-30).

The word "condemnation" in verse 24 refers to judgment, the final judgment. Only those who have eternal life will escape the eternal judgment of God. Up to this point the various revelations concerning the judgments to come had not been given. We have those in the Epistles, and in the book of the Revelation. What we are concerned about in this passage is the fact that there will be a judgment for all men, and that the Lord Jesus Christ will be the Judge. This is further evidence of the Deity of our Lord since the One we are all ultimately responsible to is God. Judgment has not been committed to any man, nor to any angel, but to Christ alone.

5:25 The third "verily, verily" in this discourse marks the third division of what the Lord had to say in this division. The other two are in verses 19 and 24. These words, as we have seen, emphasize the certainty, the absolute truthfulness, of what the Lord was saying.

Since this part begins with a continuing emphasis upon salvation, we can see that the Lord was making a connection between those who were saved, i.e., who had eternal life, and the judgment to come.

The expression, "the hour is coming, and now is," was used by our Lord in John 4:23. See also John 4:21. It indicates that a new order, a new dispensation of God's working was coming, and that even at that time the changes could already be observed.

Salvation has always been a work of God, and in the hands of God. Salvation is not an arbitrary work, but one very carefully planned by the members of the Godhead from all eternity. And Christ has always had a vital part in the salvation of sinners throughout Old Testament times. But following His advent into the world, and especially after His death and resurrection, it was going to be increasingly apparent that when any person is saved, his salvation was initiated and consummated, not by him, but by the Lord.

"The dead" are those who are spiritually dead. The Lord was not saying that all who are spiritually dead hear His voice. But He was saying that those who hear "the voice of the Son of God...shall live."

Those of us who are saved can probably remember very vividly when the truth of the Gospel was first impressed upon our hearts, which finally led to our salvation. And it is often the case that people will say that they never heard the Gospel until the time that they were saved. They may have heard it over and over again, but this did not hear until the Lord caused them to hear His voice. And when they heard, they lived, and they believed in Christ.

Theologians have for a long time distinguished between the general call and the effectual, or effective call. In the former, the call is given in the preaching of the Gospel that whoever believes will be saved. We all know that countless numbers of times that call has been issued, but most people do not hear it. On the other hand, there are times when the general call becomes an effectual, an effective call. That is when a person realizes that the Lord is calling him, and he is saved.

The Lord Jesus was saying here that no one is saved until he hears the voice of the Son of God. This is not an audible voice. This is not some sensational event in a person's life where others are aware that something very unusual is taking place. This is when a person realizes in his heart that God is dealing with him, and he finds himself drawn to the Savior.

Illus: Lucille and I have a niece in Japan. Some of you have met her. Her name is Chris L'Heureux. Yesterday we got a letter from her that was a great blessing to us. Chris has been seeing the Lord work in the lives of many Japanese ladies. But the thing that thrilled us about her letter was the way she spoke of what was going on. She did not tell us all that she was doing to get them saved; she told about what the Lord was doing. This is a part of what she said:

Is thee any greater joy (besides our own personal joy of fellowship with God) than to see God draw someone to Himself, bring them to faith in the work of Christ on the Cross and delight them with His love?

And then she spoke of "what He's done to bring this one to Himself, how He's been working in her life, and how He's given her new life."

So often when we tell about how the Lord has used us to win someone to Christ, we may talk about all we have done, the various times we have talked to them, etc. And I am sure that that was true of Chris. But when she spoke of how Mrs. Atsuko Ishihara was saved, Christ spoke of what God did. That was what the Lord was speaking about here, only He was referring it all to Himself as the Son of God.

When you and I pray for people to be saved, before we pray that they will believe, we need to pray that they will hear!

And, as I have indicated before, something has to happen to a spiritually dead person before they can hear. To state it as simply as I can, there has to be a regeneration, a giving of life, to those who are dead in their sins, before they are able to believe.

5:26 Eternal life is divine life; it is God's life. When we are saved

we received the very life of God. At this point the Lord claimed that just as the Father has this life which He sovereignly bestows upon men, so He, the Father, has given "the Son" incarnate that same right. He has it, not because He came in human flesh, but He has it because He is the Son of God and has the very same nature that God has.

5:27 Not only does the Lord Jesus Christ have the authority to give eternal life, but He also has God-given "authority to execute judgment also." So the Lord Jesus has not only been appointed as the Savior of sinners, but He has been appointed the Judge of the living and the dead--those who are spiritually alive, and those who are spiritually dead.

And He has this right because "He is the Son of man."

This is the fourth time in John's Gospel that the Lord used this title of Himself. Cf. 1:51 with Nathanael; 3:13, 14 with Nicodemus.

In John 5:25 the Lord called Himself, "the Son of God." Here, "the Son of man." (Actually the Greek is anarthrous--without the article. And apparently this is the only place in the Gospels where that is true. Every other time the article is used.) This must mean that our Lord was speaking especially of His humanity.

The Jews did not believe that he was God because He was a man. The Lord indicated in His teaching that it was necessary for Him to be both God and man to be the Savior; it was necessary for Him to be both man and God in order to be the Judge.

These were profound truths as the Lord was dealing with the greatest issues concerning God and man--man's need for salvation, and man's future judgment. The eternal destiny of every man has been placed in the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

5:28 The Lord had spoken of marveling before in verse 20. Evidently the Lord's words were causing some amazement with the Jews. They probably had taken His reference to "the dead" in verse 25 as meaning those who were physically dead. (We have seen how both Nicodemus and the woman of Samaria sought to put a human, earthly meaning upon the words of the Lord. The Jews were evidently doing the same here.)

But the Lord went on to point out that even if they were thinking of physical death, that was no problem as far as judgment were concerned. Everyone who has ever died will be brought back to life. If people do not hear the Lord's voice for salvation, they surely will hear His voice in resurrection, calling them to judgment!

Notice that the Lord said again, "the hour is coming," but he did not go on to say, "and now is." The day of resurrection has not yet come neither for the saved, nor for the unsaved. But it is coming! "Hour" refers to a time, and would not even mean that the resurrection of the two groups would take place at the same time. We know now that they will be at different times, but both are unto judgment.

5:29 "And they shall come forth." This is resurrection, the resurrection of the body.

In the first, we have a resurrection to life; in the second, a resurrection to damnation--the final judgment.

But how can we account for the words: "they that have done good...they that have done evil...."

Two things need to be said:

- 1) Both judgments will be judgments of works. There will rewards given to the righteous for their good works. There will be degrees of punishments for those who have "done evil."
- 2) The Lord was not saying that salvation is based upon works. But it seems that He was indicating that works are the evidence of salvation. The reason that some do good is because they have life. Those who "do evil" are those who do not have life; this is the reason that they are incapable of doing good, that which is good in the sight of God and of Christ.

5:30 "This verse forms a transition from the first section of the discourse to the second" (Westcott, p. 88).

Again the Lord was declaring what He said at the beginning of His message in verse 19. Because He and the Father were one, it was impossible for Him to act independently of the Father.

Notice that the Lord is no longer speaking of Himself in the third person, but in the first person: "I."

The Lord's judgment of men is based upon the perfect knowledge and wisdom of God. The One He hears is the Father. The Lord's judgment is "just," i.e., righteous. It has to be because it is also the Father's judgment. He did not seek to do His own will as though it were different from the Father's will, but He was in perfect harmony with the Father Who had sent Him into the world both as Savior now, and someday as the Judge.

It is impossible for us to understand completely the oneness of the Father and the Son, and this as a confirmation of our Lord's Deity. But this has been the subject of our Lord's words in this discourse up to this point (and in what follows). But let us receive and believe what we can understand. Then we will be able to enter into the comfort, the assurance, and the blessings which such truths bring to our souls.

Now we come to:

(2) The fivefold testimony concerning Christ
(John 5:31-39).

Up to this point we have been dealing with the testimony of Christ concerning His Deity; in the verses of this section we are to see that, although the testimony of Christ is valid, yet, by the Lord's own statement, it does not stand alone. The Lord, in a very real sense, was on trial before the Jews, and so He was presenting the evidence that His claim to Deity was justified.

(The notes for this section are in JOHN 5C, which will complete John 5.)

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 5:31-47

Intro: We are still in the section of John 5 where the Lord was defending His Sonship, that is, that He was the Son of God. He had just spoken of the unique relationship that He had with the Father; now He was prepared to point out the fivefold testimony which He was able to produce confirming His Sonship. As we examine the evidence we can see that the evidence was overwhelming.

A testimony like the Lord was giving has to be received on the basis of that principle established in the OT under the Law, but carried over into the NT as well. This is it:

In the mouth of two or three witnesses
shall every word be established (2 Cor. 13:2;
cf. also Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16).

When we consider what the Lord would say in John 5:45-47 about Moses, although Moses' writings were a part of "the scriptures" mentioned in verse 39, yet this really added a sixth testimony!

So the evidence was (and is) truly overwhelming. A person has to be intellectually dishonest to deny the Deity of Christ.

Let us examine the testimonies. This comes in that part of John 5 where we have recorded:

- c. The Lord's defense of His Sonship (John 5:19-47).
 - 1) His relationship with the Father (John 5:19-30).
 - 2) The fivefold testimony concerning the Deity of Christ (John 5:31-39).
 - a) The Lord's testimony (v. 31).

Actually, verses 19 through 30 give us the Lord's testimony. And for those of us who know the Lord, this is sufficient. The Lord would not have had to go any further to satisfy us. But He was dealing with unbelieving Jews. His testimony was not enough for them.

5:31 What did the Lord mean by this? Surely He did not mean that He had just told them a lot of lies!

No, He did not mean that. The "I" is emphatic, meaning, If I by Myself without any support from any other source, make such a claim, my testimony is not to be accepted. The Lord was referring to that divine principle that things are not decided upon the testimony of just one person. It takes at least two, and, even better, three.

Note in this an evidence of the great humility, or rather, the humiliation of the Lord, that He, the Lord of glory, by whose word the universe was brought into being, condescending before mere men in saying that they had a right to expect more witnesses than just His own.

And then He proceeded to bring forth other witnesses.

- b) The testimony of John the Baptist (vv. 32-35).

5:32 Some feel that the Lord was referring to the Father's testimony here, but it seems clear to me that He was speaking of John the

Baptist. He would refer to the Father's testimony in vv. 37, 38.

One reason that some think this was referring to the Father is because of the present tense of the verb, "beareth witness. Since John may have been, and probably was, dead at this time, their argument was that he no longer was witnessing. But what about the statement that is made about Abel's testimony in Heb. 11:4. Abel lived at the beginning of time, and the writer of Hebrews said that "he being dead yet speaketh."

Granted that John the Baptist had been beheaded by this time. Yet He had left behind a powerful testimony of the Deity of Christ. And there was not a man among the Jews who did not know what that testimony was.

Cf. John 1:15-18, 23, 27, 29, 30, 34, 36.

5:33 Here the Lord reminded them of the fact that they had sent to John and had heard his testimony. The word "ye" is emphatic. Ryle suggested that it should be translated, you yourselves. Cf. John 1:19-24.

John "bare witness unto the truth." Cf. John 3:27-36.

So the Lord was not declaring something to them which they had not heard before. They had heard John's testimony, and the Lord knew that it was still bearing witness in their hearts--and would through all eternity.

5:34 Here is evidence of how different the ways of God are. If we had been in the Lord's place, we would have gathered all of the witnesses that we possibly could to establish our identity. If we had been raised from the dead, we would have wanted everyone, believer and unbeliever, to see us. But the Lord's ways are different. The testimony of men is important only if it is confirmed by God and His Word. Men can be wrong. Even prophets can at times be wrong. The fact that they speak by divine inspiration sometimes does not mean that they always speak by divine revelation. Every false prophet has had his witnesses who were ready to worship him.

So, even though John's testimony was strong, and very convincing, resulting in the salvation of more than we know about, yet just as the Lord would not have them take His own testimony alone, neither would He have them take the testimony of John IF JOHN THE BAPTIST WERE THE ONLY WITNESS HE HAD!

Why, then, did the Lord mention John the Baptist. The last part of this verse tells us: "that ye might be saved." These Jews were religious leaders, teachers of the Law, professing to know God, but, by the Lord's own word, THEY WERE NOT SAVED! The One Who was to be their Judge stood before them seeking to be their Savior! It is interesting that, even in controversy, the Lord did not forget the reason for which He had come to the earth.

5:35 Many have pointed out that the word the Lord used for "light" here is different from the one that is used of Himself in John 1:7-9. There it is the Greek word _____; here, the Greek word _____. The Lord Jesus was the first; John the Baptist was the second. The Lord Jesus is "the true Light" (John 1:8), the Light that never needed to be kindled, the eternal Light of the world. John the Baptist, on the other hand, was a lamp who had been lighted, had been kindled, by the Light of the world. The Lord Jesus has a glory all His own; John the Baptist was

like the moon, shining by reflection from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Nevertheless, while he is not to be compared with the Lord, yet he was "a burning and shining light," or lamp. People took notice of him. He was the Lord's forerunner and witness. People flocked to hear him, and hundreds were baptized by him. Even Herod was afraid to do anything to him because the people "counted him as a prophet" (Matt. 14:5). In a world of darkness, and when Judaism was a lamp extinguished, the light of truth, the light of the Gospel, the light of God, was clearly shining in John the Baptist.

"And ye were willing...." Matt. 3:7 tells us that "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees" came "to his baptism." They may have felt initially that the Messiah had come, and that He would deliver the Jewish people from the power of Rome.

Whatever impressions were made upon them, they did not last very long: "for a season." Many people are like this. They hear the Word, and are impressed at the moment, but it soon wears off. And yet it is significant that the Lord still sought their salvation. They were certainly without excuse!

As powerful, and as effective, as the testimony of John was, even moving the hearts of the Jews themselves for a time, the Lord would not let John be His greatest witness. The Lord as much as said in verse 34 that, if the testimony of John were all He had, that would not be enough. We are in a position, therefore, to see how extremely powerful are the three remaining witness that the Lord was going to mention.

The first of these was:

c) The testimony of the Lord's works (John 5:36).

5:36 As great as the testimony of John the Baptist was, the works that the Lord did were an even greater testimony.

Bishop Westcott said in his commentary on John that this expression, the works, "describe the whole outward manifestation of Christ's activity" (p. 90), His whole life. However, we have to recognize that the miracles of our Lord were primarily in His thoughts when He made this statement. We have had three of them so far.

But let us notice what the Lord said about His works:

- 1) They, in their entirety, had been given to Him by the Father. The Lord knew what miracles He was going to perform before He came to the earth.
- 2) He was going to complete them all. The Father had given them to Him to "finish." Cf. John 4:34.
- 3) Their purpose: Not primarily to meet human need, but to provide evidence that the Father had sent Him. This is what Nicodemus had realized. Cf. John 3:2. See also John 9:16, 33.

Others before and after the Lord were given power to perform miracles, but no one, before nor since, has ever performed the miracles on such a large scale, nor of such a nature, as our Lord did when He was here on earth. Only One Who was the Son of God, sent of God, could possibly have done what our Lord did.

It is no wonder that those who scoff at the Scriptures do everything

that they can do to explain away the miracles of our Lord. In them we have some of the greatest evidence of His Deity.

You can see from our Lord's statement in this verse that He was again involving the Father in the miracle that He had performed on the impotent man. We can say that the Members of the Godhead determined the miracles that would be performed, when they would be performed, where they would be performed, and upon whom they would be performed. The sovereignty of God is clearly evident in this statement.

d) The testimony of the Father (John 5:37, 38).

5:37 Cf. John 8:18.

What witness did the Lord have in mind?

We certainly would include those times when the Lord spoke from heaven while the Lord was here on earth:

- 1) When the Lord was baptized -- Matt. 3:17.
- 2) On the mount of transfiguration -- Matt. 17:5.

Others feel that the Lord was leading up to what He said in verse 39, and that He was speaking of the testimony of God the Father in the OT Scriptures as to the Deity of His Son. And this is also true.

But the reference to the fact that those Jews had not heard His voice, nor seen His shape (speaking of God) makes me wonder if that which the Lord Jesus had in mind was not His incarnation. Cf. Heb. 1:1-3.

Does this not also take us back to John 1:18?

The Jews claimed to know God, and to be the servants of God, but our Lord was saying here that God had witnessed to them repeatedly in and through His Son, most of all when He became Man. If they rejected the truth that Christ was His Son, sent by the Father, then their knowledge of God was woefully deficient!

5:38 Had they really understood the OT Scriptures, they would not have been blinded to the identity of Christ when He came. It is through the Word that the hearts of men are opened to recognize that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Cf. what happened to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24.

The Jews were misusing the Scriptures. They were so concerned about the Sabbath that they did not recognize the Son of God when He came even though there was great evidence all around them.

e. The testimony of the Scriptures (John 5:39).

5:39 It is impossible to separate the testimony of the Father from the testimony of Scripture. We have already been talking about the Word of God. But in this verse it is undeniable that our Lord was speaking of the OT Scriptures.

It would have been impossible for the Lord to state any more clearly that He is the Key to the Scriptures, the main subject of all of the Word of God. He is not only in the NT, but He is all through the OT -- in prophecy, in types, in theophanies (appearances of Christ), in the doctrines of the OT. Take Christ out of the OT and you have nothing

left. And it is in seeing Him in the OT that we can come to understand that the Messiah to come would be God in human flesh. They do speak of eternal life, not by man's obedience to the old Mosaic Law, but, as it is in the NT: through faith in Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. The person who reads the OT, but does not see Christ, has missed the main message of those thirty-nine books.

At this point the Lord's defense was actually concluded. We have five powerful and unanswerable testimonies that Christ is Deity, the Son of God, the Messiah, the Savior of all who will believe.

This gives us an excellent lesson in how to deal with people, even religious people, who need to know Christ. The issue in salvation is Christ. Once people realize Who He is, then it necessarily follow that they will have to answer the question that Pilate posed so long ago: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matt. 27:22). He made a fatal mistake in letting others make that decision for him. Let us make sure that we know Who He is, why it was that He came, and that we listen to His words that we may know Him Who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Now let us turn to the last section of this important chapter:

3) The Lord's charges against the Jews (John 5:40-47).

This has two divisions:

- a) His own charges (vv. 40-44).
- b) His charges on behalf of Moses (vv. 45-47).

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Let us proceed then, and take up:

a) The Lord's own charges (John 5:40-44).

5:40 This verse is really transitional. Some expositors place it with the verses which go before; it seems to me that it is the first verse of the Lord's charge.

Our Lord taught the sovereignty of His Father's will, and His own agreement with His Father's will, but here we see that the Lord charged these Jews with resisting the truth, refusing to come to Him that they might have eternal life. Man is responsible to God for his reaction to the truth. With all of the evidence, the witnesses, that the Lord was able to bring up, they still would not come.

When we get to John 6:44 we will see those words of the Lord in which He said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him...." The presentation of the Gospel is not to make people feel that they hold their own destiny in their hands, but to cause them to seek the mercy and grace of God to save them. We must not think of faith as our contribution which makes the work of salvation complete, but it is trusting God that He will, in infinite grace, bestow His salvation upon us. One reason that these men would not come to Christ was that they did not believe that salvation was a divine work!

This helps us to see that men can have overwhelming evidence concerning Christ before them, and still they will not come to Christ. They are blinded, in bondage, and dead in their trespasses and sins. But men are responsible. And the presentation of the truth makes them even more responsible.

5:41 In verse 34 the Lord had said to them, "But I receive not testimony from man...." Here He said, "I receive not honour from men."

The Lord had the testimony of John the Baptist, but He would not have been at any disadvantage without it. Men are to honor the Son (v. 23), but it was not for Himself that the Lord came. He did not come to gather a large following, and so to exalt Himself. It was for sinners that He came. He came for their benefit and blessing, not so they could contribute something to Him. The Jews did not understand this.

This is why He would often tell people NOT to let others know what He had done for them. He did not perform His miracles to attract a following. He performed them, as we learn from John 20:30, 31, in order that people might realize through the miracles that He was the Son of God, and so they would trust Him in order to have eternal life.

5:42 The Apostle John told us in John 2:24, 25,
 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.

He knew that they did not really love God. If they had loved God, they would have loved our Lord. It is impossible to love One and not the Other. So their unbelief was not due to any lack of evidence concerning Christ, but because they did not really love God.

So we have a twofold charge against the Jews:

- 1) That with all of the evidence they still would not come to Christ.
- 2) That not only did they reject Christ, but they were showing that they did not actually love God!

A third charge follows in verse 43.

5:43 To come in His Father's Name meant:

- 1) To come representing Him.
- 2) To come revealing Him.
- 3) To come to do His Father's will.

In spite of this, they did not receive Him. Cf. 1:10, 11. The "I" in this verse is emphatic.

We have abundant evidence from history to show that the last part of verse 43 is true. An immoral impostor like the Bhagwan can come, and thousands will follow Him. He was his own authority. But the same is true of many who use the Word of God, but are false teachers.

This ties in with what the Lord told Nicodemus in John 3:19.

The sinfulness of man's heart is shown by his preference for error instead of the truth. This should teach us that the numbers and enthusiasm of a man's followers are no proof that he is genuine. In fact, it may be just the opposite. In this world false teachers need no

credentials; true teachers do, but even then they probably will be rejected.

Our Lord was probably speaking here of the future appearance of the Antichrist who will be the Master Deceiver. But it is a fact of history that within 100 years after our Lord's time here on earth there were at least 64 men who claimed to be the Messiah--AND EVERY ONE OF THEM HAD A FOLLOWING, SOME MORE THAN OTHERS!

5:44 In John 12:42, 43 we have a very significant statement which applies to this verse. This is what it says:

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.**

People are not really going to believe in Christ as long as they are mainly concerned about the praise of man. It is not until the praise of the only God is more important to us than anything else, that we can exercise true faith. Believers want God's approval far more than man's approval. The person who is primarily concerned about man's approval cannot be, by our Lord's own words, a true child of God.

It is very interesting that these men who held such a tight hand on the lives of the Jewish people, were themselves the slaves of public opinion. There were many times when they wanted to arrest the Lord, and kill Him, but they were afraid to do so because of the people. This was even true of King Herod in his dilemma over John the Baptist.

"How can ye believe....?" It is impossible!

So, to this point the Lord brought four charges against the Jews:

- 1) They would not come to Him.
- 2) They did not really love God.
- 3) They would receive a false teacher before they would receive Him.
- 4) They were more interested in man's approval than God's.

Now we come to the last point in this chapter.

- b) The Lord's charges on behalf of Moses (John 5: 45-47).

There were two men from OT times who were especially important to the Jews: one was Abraham; the other was Moses. David also occupied an important place, but not like Abraham and Moses.

Abraham was important because he was the father of the nation Israel. Moses was important because it was through him that God gave the Law to Israel.

In John 9 we have the story of the man who was born blind, and who was miraculously healed by the Lord. Like the miracle the Lord performed on the impotent man in this chapter (John 5), it was done on the Sabbath Day. The Pharisees claimed that the Lord could not be "of God" because He had given sight to the blind man on the Sabbath Day.

Later when they were quizzing the man upon whom the miracle had been performed, he said to the Pharisees, "...would ye also be his disciples?" (John 9:27b). This infuriated the Pharisees. Then John recorded that:

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
 (John 9:28, 29).

This explains why the Lord would bring up Moses to the Jews.

5:45 This is the final charge that the Lord brought against them on this particular occasion. They did not really believe the words of Moses, i.e., ALL of them!

The rejection of Christ, of course, was the greater sin. But the Lord said that those Jews would have enough to condemn them by the very fact that they did not believe Moses' writings. Moses would accuse them. "In whom ye trust" lit. is, "on whom ye have set your hope" (Westcott, p. 92).

They were zealous for the Sabbath because Moses had told them to "remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). But the Lord then went on to tell them that Moses had given them teaching that was of greater importance than the Law. (See v. 46.)

5:46 This is a most important verse to keep in mind when we are reading the books of Moses. Here the Lord told them that they were not really Moses' disciples or "ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me."

Cf. John 1:45. See also John 3:14, 15. And what about the message of John the Baptist in John 1:29? Cf. John 8:56. The books of Moses are full of Christ--in appearances, in types, in ceremonies and feast days, in prophecies. When the Lord was with the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we read in Luke 24:27,

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets,
 he (our Lord) expounded unto them in all the scriptures
 the things concerning himself.

And later with His disciples, our Lord said,
 These are the words which I spake unto you,
 while I was yet with you,
 that all things must be fulfilled,
which were written in the law of Moses,
 and in the prophets, and in the psalms,
concerning me (Luke 24:44).

The Lord established a truth here: No one can really believe the writings of Moses, and reject Christ. Take Christ out of the first five books of the Bible, and the books are ruined. He is the Theme of the Pentateuch, as He is of every book of the Bible!

This ought to help us with our reading of the books of Moses, and of all of the OT.

Bishop Ryle has this to say for those of us to whom this truth is not new. This is his comment:

There is probably a depth of meaning in the Pentateuch that has

never yet been fully fathomed. We shall probably find at the last day that Christ was in many a chapter and many a verse, and yet we knew it not. There is a fullness in all Scripture far beyond our conception (Vol. I, p. 324).

5:47 In the final verse of this chapter it seems that the Lord may be have been suggesting that the writings of Moses were preparatory for the coming of Christ, that the Mosaic Law with all of its sacrifices and ceremonies was never intended to be the final revelation from God. A suggestion of this was made in John 1:17,

For the law was given by Moses,
but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

The Jews' failure to recognize the difference between the Law and the Gospel was, in part, that which caused them to reject our Lord and His teachings.

Also, they had failed to see the difference between the promise which was given to Abraham, and the Law that was given to Moses. The Gospel goes back to the promise made to Abraham; the Law was given as a means of restraining the people of Israel in their tendency to commit transgressions. As Paul said in Gal. 3:19,

Wherefore then serveth the law?
It was added because of transgressions,
till the seed should come to whom the promises were made;
and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

And then Paul added later in that same chapter,
Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,
that we might be justified by faith.
But after that faith is come,
we are no longer under a schoolmaster (Gal. 3:24, 25).

So, not only did the Jews fail to recognize the place of Christ in the OT, but they failed to see that Moses, with all that he taught, anticipated the coming of the One through Whom the promises of salvation would be fulfilled. They were blinded to the difference between the Law of God and the grace of God.

John concluded this marvelous discourse by our Lord without telling us what effect it had upon the Jews. From what followed we can perhaps conclude that He did not convince them, but He did silence them for the time being. What judgment must await those who not only were given the Word of God as we have it in this chapter, but given it by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

Let us make sure that we profit from it by praying that the Lord will enable us to believe it, and then act accordingly. The Jews thought that they knew more than they actually did know. That is the danger and the possibility for all of us. How tragic that is when eternal matters are involved.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 6:1-21

Intro: We continue on in the period of opposition, which began in chapter 5 and continues through chapter 11.

Thus far we have had three miracles: one in chapter 2; the second in chapter 4; the third in chapter 5. They were:

- 1) The Lord changed water into wine (2:1-11).
- 2) The healing of the nobleman's son (4:46-54).
- 3) The restoration of strength to the man who had had an infirmity for 38 years.

In this chapter we come to two more miracles:

- 1) Miracle #4: the feeding of the 5,000 men (plus women and children) (6:1-15).
- 2) Miracle #5: The Lord Jesus walked on the sea (6:16-21).

(Miracle #6 is recorded in chapter 9; Miracle #7, in chapter 11.)

Following the two miracles here in chapter 6, there are three more divisions:

- 3) Our Lord's ministry to the people (6:22-40).
- 4) The opposition from the Jews (6:41-59).
- 5) The trouble with the disciples (6:60-71)

THESE FIVE POINTS GIVE US THE MAJOR DIVISIONS OF CHAPTER SIX.

In our outline so far we have:

- I. THE INTRODUCTION (1).
- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE WORLD (2-12).
 - A. The period of acceptance (2-4).
 - B. The period of opposition (5-11).
 1. Miracle #3 (5).

And now we come to:

2. Miracle #4 (6:1-15).

This is the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000 men plus women and children. So the crowd could well be double the 5,000 that are mentioned. This and the following miracle are the only miracles in John that are recorded also in the other Gospels. This one is found in all three of the other Gospels as well as here in John's Gospel. Cf. Matt. 14:13-21; Mark 6:32-44; Luke 9:10-17.

In addition, Bishop Ryle mentioned in his commentary that "these verses describe one of our Lord's most remarkable miracles. Of all the great works that He did, none was done so publicly as this, and before so many witnesses" (I, p. 326).

The fact that this miracle is in all four Gospels is an indication of its great importance. This is probably due to the fact that, as John's Gospel indicates, it led to our Lord's major discourse about Himself as THE BREAD OF LIFE.

6:1 The scene has shifted from Jerusalem in chapter 5 to the Sea of Galilee here in chapter 6. So the Lord was back in the general area where His first two miracles had been performed.

John did not tell us what the Lord was doing in Galilee, but Matthew indicates that He had just heard about the death of John the Baptist, and that He sought to get away. Mark indicates that the apostles had just returned from their mission, and that the Lord had taken them with Him for a time of rest. Luke indicated the same. Both Mark and Luke reported that the crowd had followed the Lord, that He had had compassion on them, and had performed many miracles of healing.

6:2 John said here that the people followed him because they saw the miracles which He performed on those who were diseased. So there is no doubt but that the Lord was very tired, as were His disciples.

I am not going to deal with the different things that the other Gospel writers reported, but will confine myself to what John wrote here.

6:3 It is evident from this verse that the Lord really wanted to spend some time alone with His disciples, but the crowd made that impossible.

6:4 It is very doubtful if the mention of the Passover was to explain why the crowd was there. It probably is to date the particular period in our Lord's ministry when He fed the 5,000.

6:5 Perhaps I should mention that we know from the other Gospels that the disciples wanted to send the people away, but it was the Lord Who felt that the people should be fed before they were sent away. John tells us that the Lord asked Philip where they could buy bread to feed such a large crowd. John 1:44 tells us that Philip was from Bethsaida, which was on the Sea of Galilee, and this probably explains why the Lord asked him. He knew the area.

6:6 But it obviously was not the Lord's purpose to get information. John said, "And this he said to prove him...." "Prove" means to test him.

The Lord often puts us in difficult, and even impossible, situations, for us to contemplate what we would do, and even how we would do it. Do we think merely on a human level, or do we take into consideration the wisdom and power of God when we face a great need?

The Lord "himself knew what he would do." So He did not lack the wisdom. And this statement indicates that He could do what He intended to do. This miracle was to be one of the greatest displays of our Lord's power of any of His miracles. Philip, one of the apostles, needed to learn about the wisdom and power of the Lord Jesus Christ--just as we do! It is good to be reminded that when we do not know what to do, He knows! And when we cannot do what needs to be done, He can!

Let us keep in mind, as Bishop Ryle reminded us, that, lit., the Lord knew "what he was about to do." And then Ryle added,

Our Lord's foreknowledge of the miracle He was about to perform should be noted. The words He used in the last chapter should be remembered. They were not works which were done by chance and accidentally, in consequence of unforeseen circumstances,

but foreseen and pre-determined. They were "the works which the Father had given Him to finish." (John v. 36.)

In Philip we can see ourselves; in the Lord we see the One we need to see.

6:7 Philip failed the test. He was thinking, it would seem, of their combined resources instead of the resources that they had in the Lord.

Philip should have thought of the question recorded in Psalms 78:19 which was expressive of the unbelief of Israel in their wilderness wanderings. They asked, "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" He should have remembered the manna, and the quail, and the times when the Lord brought water out of a rock. Those things were written for our learning, to help us when we face impossible situations. How prone we are to look at ourselves, and at what we have, and perhaps what others have, and then to conclude that a certain thing cannot be done.

For us here at Trinity Bible Church, what are our thoughts when we think of a building? If we look at ourselves, and our resources, it is clearly impossible. Are we saying, "Can God?" Or is He in our thoughts? When the Psalmist, probably David, said with reference to the wicked, that "God is not in all his thoughts," he meant, among other things, that the man who does not know God never takes God into consideration when he faces his troubles. Philip needed to take God into his thoughts. Perhaps he was having trouble thinking about our Lord as any more than a man. Remember that the purpose that John had in recording these miracles was that we might "know that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God...." God often tests us that we may know that He is GOD!

Philip was really telling the Lord that it doesn't make any difference if you know where you can buy food IF you do not have the money that it will take to purchase it! And he was right! BUT THE LORD WANTED PHILIP TO RECOGNIZE THAT THAT WAS NOT THE ONLY POSSIBILITY OF MEETING THE GREAT NEED OF THOSE HUNGRY PEOPLE. Perhaps John (and the other writers) have told us how many men there were so that we would see what a great problem this was. Even if they spent all that they had it was not enough for every one to have even "a little."

The Lord was showing them their insufficiency before He demonstrated before their eyes, His sufficiency.

6:8, 9 Andrew clearly was listening, and thinking. He had not only been thinking about what they, the disciples, had, but how much they might be able to get from the crowd. But that was not very much either. After he mentioned the boy's lunch, he seems to have felt that it was ridiculous to mention it, and so he added, "...but what are these among so many?" As Adam Clarke said, "...one loaf to every thousand men...." (V, 557).

So Andrew's words were no better than Philip's. Andrew was thinking about what this young man had, not about the Lord and what the Lord was able to do. We can see that the full impact of the truth that Jesus Christ was the Son of God had not yet fully gotten into the hearts of the apostles.

6:10 The test had gone on long enough; it was time for the Lord to act.

The Greek does not say, "And Jesus said"; it abruptly records only, "Jesus said"! It was time for the apostles to see what the Lord could do and would do to meet the need for food which the people had.

The Lord had them all sit down. Later Paul would write,
 For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace,
 as in all the churches of the saints (1 Cor. 14:33).
 And then a few verses later added,

Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).
 This, too, was a part of what the Lord was teaching His disciples. In this way the people could be fed the quickest, the apostles could tell when all had been served, and the people, who were tired and hungry, were able to wait in comfort while the apostles were serving them.

6:11 This verse is full of meaning.

The Lord, first of all, took what they had. Although as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, He could have started with nothing, He took what they had, and used the lad's lunch.

Do you remember that, when Moses was presenting his objections to the Lord as to why he could not go back to Egypt to lead the people of Israel out, one of his complaints was that the people would not "believe me, nor hearken to my voice" (Ex. 4:1). What did the Lord say? He said, "What is that in thine hand?" Moses said, "A rod." It was his shepherd's staff. The Lord told him to cast it down, and it became a snake. Then the Lord told him to take it by the tail, and when he did it became his staff again. And then the Lord said,

That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers,
 the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,
 hath appeared unto thee (Ex. 4:5).

ALL MOSES NEEDED WAS WHAT HE ALREADY HAD. THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR GOD! The staff alone in Moses' hand would never have been enough, but with God it was a mighty proof that God had sent him, and was with him.

What about Gideon when he faced the Midianites? Did he need 32,000 men? Did he need 10,000 men? God reduced him to 300 men, and they did not even need swords! Each of the 300 had a torch, a trumpet, a message, and GOD! They shouted, "The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon" (Judges 7:20).

When David went out to face Goliath, did he need Saul's armor? No! He took his sling and "five smooth stones," and he only needed one of them! Cf. 1 Sam. 17:38-51. And what did David say to Goliath?

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear,
 and with a shield:
 but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts,
 the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.
 This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand;
 and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee...
 that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel
 (1 Sam. 17:45, 46).

Who was David? Just a weak, insignificant shepherd boy. But he had a great God, and he knew it! As someone once said, "One man and God are a majority in any situation."

What did Jonathan tell his armorbearer when they were preparing to attack the Philistines? He said,

Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised:

it may be that the Lord will work for us:
for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few
(1 Sam. 14:6).

And what did God do? He defeated the Philistines using only Jonathan and his armorbearer.

Oh, that you and I would only realize the greatness of our God--His wisdom, His power, His love, His purposes. Situations change drastically, and always for the good, the moment the Lord is brought in.

The Lord "took" what they had, and that is what He used.

But, secondly, notice what He did after He took it. He gave thanks! He brought the Father into the situation. The boy would not have been there with his lunch if it had not been for God. He gives us what we have, or we would have nothing. Let us remember that.

And our Lord gave God thanks because He had planned this whole thing for the glory of His Son.

And the Lord gave God thanks because He was also going to be working in the performance of this miracle. The Lord did nothing but what His Father did it also. Don't forget John 5 in interpreting John 6.

The third thing that the Lord did was to give to the disciples, and then the disciples gave to the people. All the disciples had to give was what the Lord gave to them. That is always the way it is. This is a basic truth in the ministry of the Word. I have nothing to give you but what the Lord has given to me. So if your soul is being fed this morning, don't thank me, thank the Lord. I would only waste your time if the Lord were not giving me something to give to you.

And then the last of verse 11 and the first of verse 12 tells us that everyone ate as much as they wanted to eat, and that they were all filled. NO ONE WENT AWAY HUNGRY!

What a Savior we have! And what a God we have! He has not changed in any way from that day to this. What He has done, He still can do. Let us always be careful to look at every problem, every need, in the light of the greatness of our God.

6:12, 13 Every apostle was left with a basket of food. And the Lord was very careful to make sure that nothing was wasted. Can you imagine who Andrew shared his basket of food with?

Here is an excellent illustration of Eph. 3:20, 21.

6:14 Long ago Moses had predicted,
The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet
from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me;
unto him ye shall hearken (Deut. 18:15).

That prophecy was fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah. It was an expectation of the Jews that, just as Moses had given the people of Israel manna, so the Messiah would give them bread. Here He had done it. Little did they realize that He Himself was the living bread who had come down from heaven, of whom if a man would eat, he would live forever.

We do not know how many really realized why the Lord was there, but we can see that there had been a profound effect upon them. John expressed it as though he meant to indicate that this was the general consensus among those who were fed.

6:15 The Lord Who before seemed unable to get away from the people, now departed from them to keep them from doing that which was premature and not at all the reason for the Lord's first coming into the world. He must "endure the cross" before He would be worshiped as King of kings and Lord of lords.

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There are several things that stand out in this verse concerning our Lord Jesus Christ which we should note. Let me mention three.

There were many ways in which our Lord emptied Himself when He became a man. He did not give up any of His divine attributes. He was just as fully God after He became man as He had been before His incarnation. But His glory was veiled except for certain isolated instances, such as His transfiguration.

Here, however, we see evidence of His infinite wisdom, His omniscience. He knew what was in the minds of the people. He "perceived" their intention. No one had said anything to Him, but He knew their hearts. The Apostle John had already mentioned this. Cf. John 2:24, 25. So we have this evidence of His Deity.

Secondly, have you ever considered that this would have been a temptation to the Lord, much the same, only on a smaller scale, as the temptation which the Devil presented to the Lord when he said to the Lord when they were on a high mountain, and had shown Him "all of the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" (Matt. 4:8),

All these things will I give thee,

if thou wilt fall down and worship me (Matt. 4:9)

Very few of us would have been able to resist such an opportunity. In fact, we often seek such an opportunity as the Lord had here.

And this brings me to the third thing: We see here evidence of the great humility of our Lord. He not only humbled Himself by becoming a man, but He was continually humbling Himself throughout His life on earth--the final and greatest act of humility being His death on the Cross. He not only humbled Himself before men, but He humbled Himself before His Father, continually making the will of the Father His only concern. As I have mentioned, He did not come the first time to reign as a King, but to die as the Savior!

The last thing that is stated in verse 15, that "he departed into a mountain himself alone," was characteristic of our Lord. He felt it necessary to get off by Himself to spend time in prayer with the Father. Matthew and Mark both tell us in their accounts of this departure of the Lord that He went off by Himself to pray. Cf. Matt. 14:23; Mark 6:46.

There is a great deal of truth in this miracle. Let us pray that the Lord will make the miracle a continuing influence for great blessing in each of our lives.

3. Miracle #5 (6:16-21).

This is the miracle of Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee. It is recorded also in Matt. 14:22-33 and Mark 6:45-53.

6:16 Both Matthew and Mark tell us that the Lord "constrained" His disciples to get into the ship to cross the Sea of Galilee. He compelled to get into the ship. They had no choice. Bishop Ryle suggested that it may have been that the disciples would have joined with the crowd in seeking to make the Lord their King. They were not sufficiently grounded in the truth themselves, and so Bishop Ryle may have been right.

But there is another point here.

Often, in the Lord's dealings with us, great blessings are followed with further testings. Testings sometimes prepare the way for blessing; at other times they follow the blessings. It must have been a very exciting thing for the disciples to see how the Lord cared for the crowd. Undoubtedly their faith in Him had been greatly strengthened, but it needed to be strengthened even more. Gradually their understanding was being opened to the real nature of their Lord.

6:17 The day had been long. Their strength was spent. Now it was dark. And the Lord was not there with them.

If you have read the writings of the Puritans, you perhaps have noticed that they speak of the Lord's desertions! These are times in our lives when we have no consciousness of the Lord's presence, no evidence that He is hearing our prayers, or that He knows our needs. This, in addition to trying circumstances, is very difficult for us as His people to take and to understand. It often seems that when we need the Lord the most, He is not there. There is probably no greater trial for any of us.

6:18 Suddenly a storm arose. This can happen very quickly over there. Even experienced often get caught in those storms. Sometimes the waves will be 20 feet high. No one would deliberately go out on the Sea of Galilee if he knew that a storm was coming.

6:19 The Apostle John did not give all of the details that we find in Matthew and Mark's accounts, but we have enough here to get some very important lessons.

Will you notice that they did not pray? They did like we so often do, they did everything that they could do for themselves, only to find that it was not enough. We do not know exactly how far "twenty or thirty furlongs" was, but it was probably 4, 5, or 6 miles. We are talking about several hours of hard work that the disciples did after the already long day they had been through.

In our Sunday evening services recently we have been looking into the letters to the seven churches in Rev. 2, 3. Perhaps you remember how the Lord would say to the churches, "I know thy works...." He was mindful of the trouble that the disciples were having, of their fears, of their exhaustion. He knew the hearts of the men who wanted to make Him King, and He surely knew what His disciples were going through.

And suddenly He appeared! It was not in answer to prayer because we have no evidence that anyone was praying. He just came. How gracious and wonderful the Lord is. He does not wait for us to ask Him to come,

He comes when He knows we have had enough. Both Matthew and Mark said that it was about the fourth watch of the night. That begins at 3 a.m. It is not surprising that the disciples were afraid. They had never seen anyone walking on water before, and it was even more awesome for the Lord to be walking on the water in a storm.

6:20 How interesting it is that we have the disciples' fear mentioned at the end of verse 19, followed immediately by the words of the Lord Jesus in this verse. It is by the Word of Christ that our fears are dispelled. Cf. Col. 3:15, 16 where you have "the peace of God" and "the word of Christ." What precious words these are: "It is I; be not afraid."

George Hutcheson, one of the great Scottish preachers of the past, wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John which was first published in 1657. Spurgeon used to tell his students that, whenever they found a commentary written by Hutcheson, they should buy it. He represents the marvelous Bible teaching that was characteristic of the Puritan Age. You will see why his work has been so appreciated by godly men when I give you the following quotation from his commentary on John. Listen to this:

The sovereign remedy against fear in troubles, and the only right sight of troubles, is to see Christ in them, whose presence and manifestation of himself takes away all cause of slavish fear, and who being seen to have the chief hand in his people's trials, it doth warrant them to expect no hurt by them; for this is the sovereign remedy of fear--"It is I, be not afraid" (p. 105).

The disciples were where they were by the will of their Lord. He had sent them into the storm to show them:

- 1) How quickly troubles can arise even when we are doing God's will.
- 2) How insufficient we are to take care of ourselves.
- 3) That He will not leave us alone in our trials.
- 4) That our trials have both a purpose, and an end.
- 5) It is always His purpose to strengthen our faith, not to destroy it.

Every trial which the disciples had was especially designed by the Lord to provide greater preparation for the work to which the Lord had called them.

6:21 If we consult Matthew and Mark we find that when the Lord got in the ship, the storm ceased. That was a miracle. Matthew tells us that before the Lord got in the boat, while the storm was still at its worst, Peter walked out to meet the Lord. That also was a miracle. But John tells us that, when the Lord got into the boat, "immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." That was another miracle.

We should learn from this that we should never hesitate to obey the Lord. We do not escape the storms by doing His will, but we see His sufficiency, we learn more about our need of Him, and we see that He ultimately brings us through to the other side.

It is no wonder that Matthew concluded his report of this incident by saying,

Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying,
Of a truth thou art the Son of God.

May that conviction be our, too--in the depths of our souls!

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 6:22-40

Intro: In the first part of John 6 we read of two miracles which our Lord performed:

- 1) The feeding of the 5,000 (vv. 1-15)--which is the fourth miracle recorded in John's Gospel, and
- 2) Jesus walking on the water of the Sea of Galilee (vv. 16-21)--which was the fifth miracle recorded by John.

This is followed with three discussions:

- 1) Our Lord's discussion with "the people" (vv. 22-40).
- 2) Our Lord's discussion with "the Jews" (vv. 41-59).
- 3) Our Lord's discussion with "his disciples" (vv. 60-71).

Verses 24 and 59 tell us that the setting of these discussions was in Capernaum which was located on the shore of the sea of Galilee.

While we can distinguish between the groups that were primarily involved in each discussion, yet there is a theme which runs through discussion. It is Christ's claim to be:

- 1) "The true bread from heaven" (v. 32), and "the bread which cometh down from heaven (v.50), "the living bread which came down from heaven" (v. 51), and "that bread which came down from heaven" (v. 58).
 - 2) "The bread of God" (v. 33).
 - 3) "The bread of life" (vv. 35, 48).
- Cf. v. 41.

And then see what the Lord said in John 6:53-58, concluding with "that bread which came down from heaven" (v. 58)--which is mentioned under 1) above.

This claim, therefore, and these discussions, arose out of the feeding of the 5,000 in verses 1-14.

In our outline this all comes under:

- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE WORLD (John 2-12).
- A. The period of acceptance (John 2-4).
 - B. The period of opposition (John 5-11).
 1. Miracle #3 (John 5).
 2. Miracle #4 (John 6:1-15).
 3. Miracle #5 (John 6:16-21).
 4. The discussions on the Bread of Life (John 6:22-71).
 - a. The discussion with "the people" (John 6:22-40).
 - b. The discussion with "the Jews" (John 6:41-59).
 - c. The discussion with "the disciples" (John 6:60-71).
-

We are now ready for:

- a. The discussion with "the people" (John 6:22-40).

These were "the people" who had been fed with the five barley loaves and the two fish, the people who were prepared to take the Lord "by force" (v. 15) "to make him a king."

6:22 Verses 22-25 tell us of the diligent search which the people made

to find the Lord, and their success. Presumably they still had their intention to make Him their King.

The day after the feeding of the 5,000, and of Jesus walking on the water, there were still people who had remained on the side of the sea near where the 5,000 had been fed. There was just one small boat there. They knew that our Lord had not gone into the boat which the disciples had used, but that they had gone by themselves.

6:23 Other boats came from Tiberias to the place where the Lord had fed the 5,000. It would seem that no one really knew what had happened to the Lord.

6:24 Assured that Jesus was no longer in that vicinity, they took boats and went to Capernaum, hoping to find our Lord there. Westcott said that "the force of the word ("they also") is that they also did what they had found that the disciples had done" (p. 100). Their idea seems to have been that, if they could find the disciples, they would find the Lord.

6:25 Implied in their question is the idea that they had wanted to find the Lord as quickly as possible, and they were interested to know if, as they had sought Him on the other side of the sea, He was already in Capernaum.

6:26 The Lord recognized that they had been very anxious to find Him, but indicated why they were seeking Him--not because the "saw the miracles," but because He had provided them with food.

Since the feeding of the 5,000 was a miracle, how can we distinguish between the first and last parts of our Lord's words in this verse?

Seeing the miracles means not only seeing what the Lord did, but understanding the meaning of the miracle. They were concerned about what it meant to them, and not in what it revealed about the Lord. Their interest was physical and material, not in the spiritual. George Hutcheson in his commentary called them "hollow-hearted men." They did not understand that the miracle showed that He was the Son of God!

Here again, as in verse 15, we see that the Lord could read the people like we would read a book. He was not fooled by their interest in Him. We are not as wise as He was (and is), and so we need always to seek His guidance to determine when people show an interest in the Lord, what the nature of their interest really is.

6:27 This is a very important verse, full of a lot of truth which we need to apply to ourselves.

Most people are interested only in this life, and do not even want to hear about eternity. The word that the Lord used here for "labour" is a word which suggests working for pay. He was not saying that they should not work for a living. Nor was He suggesting that salvation is by works. But was thinking of the time and energy and thought that people will put into making a living in this life; they needed to give comparable thought and time and energy to seeking salvation.

Thus He was trying to get them to see that the miracle which they saw was not to focus their attention on an easier way to get food, but to see in it a higher and more important message.

We could well say that the attitude of the people was that day's version of the prosperity Gospel--that if we trust in the Lord, and do His will, we will have health, wealth, and happiness. It is the pursuit of these things which keeps many from pursuing God and the salvation that He has provided for sinners in Christ.

The Lord Jesus had given them food for their bodies, but He also gives "everlasting life." He gives us every blessing that we have. But it is possible to have a full bank account, a lovely home, tremendous health, and yet be without "everlasting life."

"For him hath God the Father sealed" -- People then, as now, tried to separate God from Jesus of Nazareth. Here again the Lord Jesus was showing the harmony that exists between Him and God, the Father.

The idea of the Lord Jesus being "sealed" by the Father probably indicates two things:

- 1) That He had been appointed by the Father to give salvation to all who would come to Him. This was His commission from eternity past.
- 2) That the Father had placed this appointment beyond any doubt. It was by our Lord's miracles that His commission was assured, confirmed. The Lord did not perform His miracles "on His own." He was doing the works of the Father--those works which the Father had determined would be done, those works in which the Father was working with Him (as we learned in chapter 5).

Bishop Ryle said about the next verse and those that follow:

These verses form the beginning of one of the most remarkable passages in the Gospels. None, perhaps, of our Lord's discourses has occasioned more controversy, and been more misunderstood, than that which we find in the sixth chapter of John (I, pp. 357,358).

6:28 Many commentators have been critical of the people for asking this question. But it seems to me that they were asking what they had to do, what did God require that they do, in order to have eternal life. It was like the Philippian jailer who asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). To "work the works of God" means "the works that please God, that are agreeable to God's mind, and in accordance with God's will" (Ryle, I, 362).

6:29 The Lord answered their question. And it means: This is what God requires, that you put your trust in the One Whom He has sent, the One Who has been sealed by the Father for this very purpose.

Our Lord was not saying that believing is a work. He was saying that this is what God requires--AND THIS ALONE! Believing is not doing a work; believing is trusting in the work of another--in this case, the work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:23, "And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ...."

This is what the Lord taught in John 3:14-16, and in John 5:24. Salvation is by faith in Christ--nothing more, nothing less, nothing else! It is not by the work of Christ plus our work. It certainly is not by our work alone. Christ died on the Cross to save all who would believe on Him. We work from salvation, not to salvation!

6:30 This shows how deeply rooted they were in their unbelief. They asked for a "sign" just like they would have asked if the Lord had not performed the miracle of feeding the 5,000. None of us have ever realized how deeply ingrained unbelief is in the hearts of men.

The healing of Naaman the Syrian in 2 Kings 5 gives us a good illustration of this. When Elisha did not come out to see Naaman, but told him to go to wash in the Jordan River seven times, and he would be healed, it infuriated Naaman. But his servants were able to put some sense in his head when they said to him,

My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it?

how much more then, when he saith to thee,

Wash, and be clean? (2 Kings 5:13).

More people would probably be interested in salvation if they had something to do, or some money to pay. But they stumble over the simplicity of the Gospel when they are told that they only need to believe in Christ. It is humbling to have to believe in Him, acknowledging when we do that salvation is not within our reach!

Even as the people of God, we are more inclined to do than to believe. It is against our nature to trust the Lord. The Apostle Thomas, after all that He had seen the Lord do, and after all that the Lord had taught him, said, when he was told that the Lord was alive,

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**

(John 20:25b).

6:31 It was commonly thought among the Jews that just as Moses had given the people manna, so "that prophet" mentioned in 6:14 would perform the same miracle, or one like it (cf. Westcott, p. 101).

The quotation in the latter part of this verse is from Neh. 9:15. We have a similar reference in Psa. 78:24.

We should note three things about this verse:

- 1) These Jews believed in the historical reality of the manna as the miraculous way in which God fed His people in the desert.
- 2) The Jews supported with Scripture the knowledge that they had.
- 3) It is possible for unregenerate people to have some knowledge of the Bible, and to believe that it is true. But this alone does not mean that they are saved.

6:32 The Lord Himself confirmed the account of manna in the desert under the leadership of Moses.

And, it is true that the feeding of the 5,000 was not as great a display of power as the feeding of the children of Israel, perhaps 1,500,000 strong. One was for one day only; the other was for 40 years. Although the Lord said that it was NOT Moses who gave them that bread from heaven.

However, both were types of the greatest miracle of all: the coming of Him Who was (and is) "the true bread from heaven." He Himself was "the true bread from heaven." The manna was real bread. So was the bread that the Lord gave to the 5,000. But Christ as the Bread is that bread from which all others get their names. What they do temporally, He does eternally. The manna and the bread given to the 5,000 were types;

Christ is the antitype. God had given them the manna, and God was the One Who was giving them "the true bread from heaven."

The Lord was saying these things to religious, but unregenerate, Jews. And it is important to see here that the Lord was dealing with the free offer of the Gospel. If He did this, then we should do the same.

6:33 A better translation of this verse would make it read, "For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven."

Westcott (p. 102) suggests that "the bread of God" means "the bread which the Father gives directly," not by the hands of His servants. Our Lord was looking at the ultimate source.

And "the bread of God" was not just for the entire nation of Israel in their wilderness wanderings, nor for just the 5,000+ whom the Lord fed, but for the world!

6:34 The response of the people here is reminiscent of what the Samaritan woman said in John 4:15. But we do not know how many, if any, were actually saved. Verse 36 seems to indicate that none of them did. But we cannot say for sure. But it does seem that if any were saved, they were few in number.

We learn from this not to be taken too much with what people say. We look for evidence in their lives that they have really come to the Lord.

6:35 However, the Lord Who knows the hearts of all men, continued to minister to "the people."

Here He clearly identified Himself as "the bread of life." This is the first of the I am's of John's Gospel. They are:

- 1) "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48, 51).
- 2) "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5).
- 3) "I am the door" (John 10:7, 9).
- 4) "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14).
- 5) "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).
- 6) "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
- 7) "I am the true vine" (John 15:1, 5).

In each case we have "I am." These should be related to John 8:58:
 Verily, verily, I say unto you,
 Before Abraham was, I **am**.

Those who remember Ex. 3:14 will remember that God said to Moses when He appeared to him in the burning bush, "I AM THAT IS AM." This is the root of the the Lord's Name, JEHOVAH.

So the I am's of John's Gospel identify our Lord Jesus Christ with the Jehovah of the OT. And it pictures the Lord as the ever-living, unchanging, covenant-keeping God. What He has been, He is now, and will be forever. Our Lord did not begin to be any of these when He came to the earth; He always has been each of them (the bread of life, the light of the world, etc.), and He always will be each one of them.

Notice also in this verse that "cometh" and "believeth" are used here as synonyms. (Cf. also receiving and believing in John 1:12.)

Bishop Ryle raised and answered the question,

What does "coming" mean? It means that movement of the soul which takes place when a man, feeling his sins, and finding out that he cannot save himself, hears of Christ, applies to Christ, trusts in Christ, lays hold on Christ, and leans all his weight on Christ for salvation. When this happens, a man is said in Scripture language, to come to Christ" (I, 371).

A very similar statement can be made of believing in the Lord. We believe in the Lord when, forsaking every other hope, we trust only in Christ for our salvation.

But what did the Lord mean by the expressions, "shall never hunger," and "shall never thirst"?

In both of these expressions in the Greek we have a double negative. A double negative in English turns a statement into a positive statement. For example, we may say of a very energetic person, "He cannot just do nothing." This means that he is the kind of a person "who must do something." But a double negative in Greek intensifies the negative so as to require the use in English of such a word as "never." It means that when a person comes to Christ, there is never the slightest possibility that he will ever hunger or thirst again!

Does this mean that once a person is saved he will never again have to come to Christ for help, or for comfort--that he will never feel any needs in his life? Of course not! It means at least two things:

- 1) The one who comes to Christ, who believes in Christ, will never have to go to anyone else for satisfaction, nor for the supply of his or her needs. He or she finds complete sufficiency in Christ.
- 2) The one who comes to Christ, who believes in Christ, has found an eternal source of spiritual blessing and sufficiency.

Talk about assurance! Here it is in full measure. Christ is not just a temporary Savior, nor a Savior Who will ever be insufficient. He is abundantly able to meet every need we have before God, and able to keep us through all of the trials and testings of our lives.

6:36 Here is a word of rebuke from our Lord. They had seen Him. They had seen the miracles which He performed, especially when they were fed with the crowd the preceding day. And they had heard Him as He taught. But to this point they had not come to Him. They were not trusting in Him. They were not saved.

They had had the light, but they were still in darkness and sin. In spite of the promises given in verse 35, and in spite of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ had been with them personally, that they had seen Him and heard Him, yet having seen Him, they did not and would not believe.

This is a clear picture of the human heart. Man left to himself will never come to Christ. He is not only unwilling, but unable. And the situation here is all the more remarkable because of the number of people who were involved. No one believed.

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6:37 In verse 36 we have looked at the human scene; here in verse 37 we are looking at salvation from God's point-of-view. If left to themselves, people will not come to Christ. But there are people who

have been given by the Father to the Son. They will come. All of them will come. And those who come will never be cast out!

The Lord was speaking here of the elect. And I want you to notice that He was speaking to a crowd of unregenerate people. It is important for us to see this because we hear it said very often that election should never be discussed with non-Christians. That is not true, and we can point to our Lord as proof not only that we can, but also that we should. People will never understand the true nature of salvation until they see that salvation is of God, and that salvation is always initiated by God, NEVER BY MAN!

Look at that expression, "All that the Father giveth me...."

Cf. John 10:27-29, esp. v. 29a. Cf. also John 17:2, 6-8, 9, 11b, 12, 24.

It is hard for us to accept these truths because they have been almost completely set aside by today's Bible teachers and pastors. In fact, many consider such teaching as heresy. But let me appeal to you to accept our Lord's teaching as it is. If He said it, why should we try to explain it away just because it does not fit in with the way we think salvation ought to be. One of the most important statements in all of the Bible is found 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.

Men continually talk about their free will. But man's will is not free. We are to preach that "whosoever will may come," but we need to know that no man will ever come unless God enables him to come. That is what we are going to see when we get down to verse 44 of John 6.

Why was the Gospel hated so much in NT times? I can give you two reasons:

- 1) Because people do not like to be told that they are sinners, and that they need to be saved.
- 2) Because they do not like to be told that there is nothing that they can contribute to their salvation.

There are two good verses in 2 Timothy that we all should know by heart. They are found in 1:8, 9, and this is what they tell us.

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord,
nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker
of the affliction of the gospel
according to the power of God;
Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling,
not according to our works,
but according to his own purpose and grace,
which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

In Romans 9 Paul told the Roman church that God had chosen ("loved") Jacob, but "hated" (rejected) Esau. And then he raised the question: "Is there unrighteousness with God?" That is, wasn't it wrong for God to reject Esau, and choose Jacob?

Paul's answer was a resounding, "NO!" And then he explained:

For he saith to Moses,
 I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy,
 and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.
 So then it is not of him that willeth,
 nor of him that runneth,
 but of God that sheweth mercy (Rom. 9:15, 16).

So, although at this point no one had come to Christ, yet perhaps eventually some of them would come. But whether they would or not, we know that ALL whom the Father gave to His Son would come, 100% of them. And that was the only reason they would come. That is the reason that you and I have come to Christ. We are God's gift to His Son!

But let us go on with our verse. The last part of it says, "And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

It is interesting to see how some people try to get God "off the hook" when it comes to the subject of election. They cannot deny that the Bible teaches it, but they are concerned about the non-elect.

I have a set of books in my library containing the expository sermon outlines of Charles Simeon. He is credited with having started the Inter-Varsity Fellowship in England. He was a very godly man, and I have gotten many rich blessings from his sermons. But I have to part company with him on his explanation of this verse. He said that the first part of this verse has to do with election, and that it was necessary for God to do this because, if He did not, in Simeon's words, "it might eventually happen, that none might come to Him; and consequently that He might shed His blood in vain." I agree with that part. But then he went on to say that the latter part of the verse was God's provision for the non-elect. He was saying that the salvation of the elect is guaranteed, but there is the possibility that the Lord might pick up some of the non-elect along the way. It is with this I disagree.

What does this do to the knowledge of God? Is it possible that the Lord does not really know all who are going to be saved? And if He knows that they will be saved, is it not true that they must be saved? And does that not make their salvation certain?

Such a view also minimizes the sovereignty of God, and indicates that it is possible for sinful man to throw off his bondage and of his own will to come to Christ.

No, as much as I respect Mr. Simeon, I can't follow him on his explanation of the last part of verse 37. I do not believe that our Lord was speaking of two different groups; I believe He was speaking of the same people in the last part of the verse about whom He had spoken in the first part of the verse. All that the Father has given to the Son will come (and they are the only ones who will come), and they come knowing that the Lord will never cast them out. This is our security in Christ. This is the ground of our assurance.

This is another of those verses where the Lord used a double negative. The translators of the KJV have tried to convey the idea by using the words, "in no wise." There is no way that anyone who was given by God to Christ in eternity past will fail to get to heaven for all of the ages to come.

How could the Lord make such a statement? He said it because He personally has committed Himself to keep us. We may have our ups and downs in salvation, but we do not have our ins and outs. Cf. Jude 24, 25. Also Rom. 8, esp. vv. 18-39. And John 10:27-30.

4/10/90

6:38 The subject of salvation continued to be the theme of the Lord's words, especially in connection with "the Father's will." If people were concerned about the Father's will in salvation, rather than their own will, more would understand the glory of this great truth.

In verse 37, for the Father to give some people to His Son, was an expression of "the Father's will."

Notice how the Father's will was the subject of our Lord's words in this verse (38) and the next two verses (39, 40), the words which concluded our Lord's message to the people.

When the Lord spoke of His own will, He had reference to some purpose that was different from the Father's will. It is impossible for the Father to determine that one thing should be done, and then for Christ to seek to do something different from the Father. LET THIS APPLY TO THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION. Did Christ die to save everyone, hoping therefore that more would eventually be saved that the Father had decreed should be saved? Do we have such a conflict between the Members of the Godhead? IT IS IMPOSSIBLE! The Lord Jesus had one purpose in coming to the earth, and that was to do the will of the Father. We learn that in Gethsemane. We see that in our Lord's refusal to let anything stand in the way of His work on the Cross. This is why He did not come down from the Cross.

Let these words really grip your heart. In salvation we are concerned with the will of the Father, not with the will of man. And we can be so thankful for that. If salvation were dependent upon our wills, all of us would take ourselves right into hell! It is happening every day. When you and I were saved, when anyone is saved, it is because God has intervened in our lives, has turned our hearts toward Himself and toward Christ, so that we, in the words of v. 37, would come to Christ.

After all, when you thank God for your salvation, do you thank Him for all of it, or for just a part? If we all could only understand these truths, no Christian would have any doubts about his salvation.

Why the Members of the Godhead did not decide to save everyone (which They could have done), we must leave in Their hands.

Illus: Remember what the Lord said in the parable of the laborers who had worked in the vineyard throughout the day, some working the whole day, others working one hour. Those who had worked the whole day complained when they were paid the same as those who had worked one hour. Cf. Matt. 20:13-15. The last verse in the Matthew passage reads,
Is it not lawful for me to do what I will
with mine own?

The householder had the right to do his own will--AND SO DOES GOD!

6:39 Here the Lord stated what the Father's will is--in this verse, from the divine perspective; in verse 40, from our perspective.

We do not know who the elect are until they are saved, but the Lord knows each one. There may have been some among "the people" who were eventually saved. But one thing we can be sure of: None of the elect will ever be lost! The Lord was teaching here the final perseverance of the saints: "And I will raise him up at the last day." This is the resurrection of the saints. This is the truth of 1 Cor. 15. This is what Paul was speaking about in Phil. 3:20, 21. People come, and people go, in the church today, but any who are truly saved will not stay gone! (If that is not good English, it is good doctrine.)

Notice that in this verse and in vv. 40 and 44, it is the Lord Jesus Christ Who will do the work of resurrection. Cf. John 11:25, 26.

6:40 This is the Father's will regarding the conditions that are necessary in salvation--two things:

- 1) Seeing the Son.
- 2) Believing in Him.

These were the two purposes of John's Gospel. Cf. John 20:30, 31.

For this reason we need to be primarily concerned, not about a person's "decision" (that is in the Father's hand), but about helping them to see, to understand, Who the Lord Jesus Christ is, and why He came into the world. When people really see the Lord, then everything that He did takes on new meaning.

Before we go on to the next part of this chapter, make sure that you understand the Lord's words here. He will not mislead us. If there is any person whose words we can accept without question, that person is the Lord. When you understand the divine nature of salvation, it will fill your heart with greater joy than ever before, your heart will continually be lifted up in praise to God for what He has done for you in Christ, you will have a greater burden than ever to see people coming to Christ, and your assurance and your perseverance will become two of the distinguishing characteristics of your life.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 6:41-59

Intro: We have completed the Lord's discourse, or discussion, with the people; now we are ready to proceed with:

b. The discussion with "the Jews" (John 6:41-59).

This will be followed by our Lord's discussion with the disciples (John 6:60-71). All three of the discussions come under the heading of "The discussions on the Bread of Life" (John 6:22-71).

6:41 The murmuring of the Jewish leaders suggests that they were objecting among themselves to the things that the Lord had been saying, in particular, that He was "the bread which came down from heaven." Verse 43 confirms this, and also shows that the Lord knew the attitude of their hearts.

In reading through the discussion that the Lord had with the Jews, we can see that there were two things that bothered the Jews:

- 1) That He claimed to be the bread which came down from heaven. We see this in verses 41, 42.
- 2) That He spoke to them about eating His flesh. Cf. v. 52.

6:42 The humanity of Jesus Christ has been a stumbling block in the minds of countless numbers of people, a hurdle they have not been able to get over. That was the problem with these Jews. They knew who was supposed to be our Lord's father. They knew His mother. How, then, could it possibly have been true that He had had a previous existence, and that He had come down from heaven? And how could He, only a man in their eyes, be capable of the great things that He had claimed for Himself?

Bishop Ryle made a very interesting comment on this verse. This is what he said:

The annunciation by the angel Gabriel, the miraculous conception, the miraculous birth of our Lord, are matters of which the Jews apparently had not any knowledge. Throughout the whole of our Lord's ministry we never find them mentioned. For some wise reason a total silence was observed about them until after our Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension (I, 386).

This is very interesting. Even in the Gospel of John we have no record of the birth of Christ. The best explanation of this fact, especially in John's Gospel where it was his purpose to prove the Deity of Christ, is that people were to be convinced of His Deity by the unusual nature of His works, and not by the details of His birth! But even with the miracles it took divine illumination before people could understand this vital truth of the virgin birth of Christ.

6:43 The Lord rebuked them and told them not to murmur. They were faced with a question they could not answer, a problem they could not solve. However, He went on to tell them what they needed. In so many words the Lord would tell them that coming to the Father was not in their hands.

6:44 Again quoting Bishop Ryle:

Truths of the weightiest importance follow each other in rapid succession in the chapter we are now reading. There are probably very few parts of the Bible which contain so many "deep things" as the sixth chapter of St. John (I, 382--italics mine).

4/17/90

This verse teaches the total inability of man to come to Christ. It is repeated to the disciples in verse 65. Salvation is always initiated by God, not by man. In order to have a true understanding of salvation, we must begin with God and His will, not with man and his will. When the Lord was speaking with the Jews in chapter 5, He said to them in verse 40,

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.

There it was that they "will not"; here, that they cannot not.

And so we can see that if we are to understand salvation, we must not only begin with God, and have some understanding of the sovereignty of God, but we must also have some understanding of man and the damage that has been done to him by sin.

This is why we need to praise God for the doctrine of election, and for the way in which God draws people to Christ. If it were not for the effectual grace of God, no one would be, or could be, saved.

Now let me point out some things which I have mentioned many times here in my ministry at Trinity, things which I trust will be helpful to all of us in understanding this great doctrine of salvation.

First of all, we need to understand that God did not have to do anything about our salvation. He would have been perfectly righteous if He and the other Members of the Godhead had decided to let all of us go to hell. When we say that we are saved by grace, we are saying that we do not deserve this salvation. In fact, we are saying more than that; we are saying that God has given us the opposite of what we deserve. So if you believe that salvation is by grace, you are saying that God did not have to do anything about your salvation. But, thank God, He did do something! But it is not because He had to.

Secondly, if the Lord decided to provide salvation, He was not obligated to save everyone, nor was He even obligated to treat everyone in the same way.

It appears that the Lord had at least three alternatives regarding our salvation:

- 1) As I have already pointed out, He could have decided to save no one.
- 2) Or, He could have decided to save everyone. And the Lord could have saved everyone if that had been His will. He is God. No man can withstand God. Look at what Nebuchadnezzar said about God in Dan. 4:34, 35. Cf. also Isa. 46:9-11.
- 3) The third alternative is equally true: The Lord had the right to save some, but not to save all. God is not under any obligation to deal with everyone in the same way. He does not deal with us physically in the same way. He does not deal with us financially and socially in the same way. He does not deal with us politically in the same way. He did not deal with all people in Noah's day in the same way. Was He unrighteous because He did not deal with all

nations the same way He was pleased to deal with Israel in the OT?

In salvation we are dealing with a sovereign God. It is true that we preach a "whosoever will" Gospel. And it is true that anyone who believes on Christ will be saved. But what we need to know is this: What does it require for a person to believe? Is it a problem between us and them--that it is up to us to present such convincing arguments that sinners will be unable to resist the Gospel. Or do we witness to people trusting God to use His Word as He sees fit in the salvation of the lost?

Do you remember the parable of the Lord in which He told of two men who went into the temple to pray? One was a Pharisee; the other was a despised publican, a tax collector. Their prayers were just as different as they could possibly be. The Pharisee's prayer reeked with pride. But the publican, having been convicted of his sin, could not even look up into heaven. And this was his now famous prayer:

God be merciful to me a sinner (Luke 18:13b).

He knew that he deserved hell. He also knew that, if we were to be forgiven, it could only be because of the mercy of God. Is this not what Tit. 3:5 teaches us? "Not by works of righteousness...."

With these words of John 6:44 the Lord was seeking to make the Jews realize that salvation was not based upon a merit system of some kind, but upon the mercy and grace of God. Therefore, instead of murmuring against the truth, they needed to seek the mercy of God for their salvation.

So, in seeking to understand salvation, look at God first. Then look at man as he is by nature, ruined by sin, at enmity with God, dead in his sins, unable to save himself, and unwilling to be saved. When we see God as He is, and man as he is, then we see what it was (and is) necessary for God to do in order to save anyone.

Now let us think of what it means that the Father draws people to Christ.

This is what we call the irresistible grace of God.

Years ago someone (and we really do not know who it was) expressed the doctrine of salvation in an acrostic using the word TULIP:

T -- Total Depravity
U -- Unconditional Election
L -- Limited Atonement
I -- Irresistible Grace
P -- Perseverance of the Saints

Probably each one of these terms could have been expressed in a different and better way, but they do sum up the main features of salvation. (Explain.)

This 44th verse of John 6 is an expression of the sovereignty of God in salvation. It teaches the total depravity of man, his total inability to come to the Savior. But it also teaches the irresistible grace of God. God draws; sinners come. He does not draw us against our will, but He changes our will so that we want to be saved, and come to Christ

believing in Him.

The last phrase of this verse speaks of the perseverance of the saints. This is the third time that we have seen this expression in this chapters. (See vv. 39, 40.) See also v. 37.

Contrary to what many people say, these doctrines do not kill evangelism; THEY ENCOURAGE EVANGELISM. They do not lessen our burden to see people come to Christ; THEY INCREASE THE BURDEN. Understanding the doctrines of grace will cause us to trust in God in the work of preaching the Gospel, not in the latest methods which men have devised for getting people to "make a decision."

Let me plead with you not to get angry with this teaching. We are dealing with the words of the Lord Jesus Himself--words which were believed and taught by the writers of the NT. These are words that show us that salvation was planned for the glory of God. We can be sure that teaching which exalts God and humbles man is teaching which conveys the message of the Scriptures. Once you see these truths, you will see them all over your Bible--some have said, "on every page."

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"And I will raise him up at the last day." This is the third time that that the Lord made this statement. See vv. 39, 40. It speaks of the certainty of salvation for all those whom the Father has given to His Son. The will of God includes not only who will be saved, and how they will be saved, but the completion of their salvation in the resurrection of the last day. All of these, and none but these, will be raised in glory at the last day.

But let us go on to:

6:45 This verse explains how the elect are drawn. It is clearly taught in the prophets (meaning, the OT). This seems to be a reference to Isa. 54:13 where we read,

And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord;
and great shall be the peace of thy children.

This verse helps us with the interpretation of John 6:45. The Lord was not saying that "all" people universally would be "taught of God," but He was referring to those who had been given by the Father to Christ, and who had been drawn by the Father to Christ. They were the ones who would be taught of God.

In passing we should note the connection between OT salvation and NT salvation. They are not different, but one and the same!

Our Lord was indicating that when the Father draws, He draws through the Word of God. The Father may use circumstances of various kinds, but they are incidental to the Word. Let us never forget this. The Word of God is always instrumental in the salvation of the elect. It is as Peter said in 1 Pet. 1:23,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Then our Lord indicated in the latter part of this verse that all of those who hear and learn from the Father, come to Christ. This is true without exception! When the Father draws, those whom He draws, come! This is why we speak of God's grace as "irresistible." It is not that

people are saved against their will, but it means that God by His grace overwhelms those whom He is teaching so that they cannot and will not stay away from Christ.

Bishop Ryle quotes a man by the name of Rollock who once said that

...there is often a great fight and struggle when the drawing grace of God first begins to work on the soul, and the consequence is great distress and depression. But when grace once begins, it always wins the victory at last (I, 391).

We will learn when we get to John 14, 15, and 16 that the Holy Spirit always exalts Christ in His teaching; here in John 6:45 we learn the same thing about the Father's teaching. It is not enough to come to God. Only those who come to God through Christ are truly saved.

6:46 The Father never has appeared in a visible or physical form so that He could be seen by men. We learned that in John 1:18. He has been pleased to reveal Himself through His Son. Here the Lord was indicating that His own teaching was from the Father. So if they were to learn what the Father wanted them to know, they would have to listen to the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus has "seen the Father." He is the only Man Who is "of God," meaning from God. And it is for this reason that our Lord was pre-eminently qualified to proclaim the truth of God.

And with this the Lord came back to the truth He had declared in v. 35.

6:47 And so again we have, "Verily, verily, I say unto you...."

Remember that I have said many times that this is the equivalent of the OT, "Thus saith the Lord...." The Lord Jesus, a Man Who was before them, Whom they could see, was claiming absolute, divine authority for what He was saying: "He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Notice that "everlasting life" is a present possession. It is received by faith, faith in Christ, and not in any other. This is a simple and clear statement of the Gospel.

6:48 This is the truth the Lord had declared in verses 33-35.

F. B. Meyer pointed out in his commentary on John that bread contains in itself all of the elements that are necessary for good nutrition--that is, if those natural elements have not been destroyed or removed in some way in the process of preparing it. In a much higher sense that is true of our Lord Jesus Christ with regard to spiritual life. It is as the Apostle Peter said in 2 Pet. 1:2, 3:

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you
through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,
According as his divine power hath given unto us
all things that pertain unto life and godliness,
through the knowledge of him that hath called us
to glory and virtue.

So it is with our Lord Jesus Christ. All of the elements which go together to make up eternal life, are to be found in Christ. We have in Him all that we will ever need to sustain us in this life, and to keep us for all eternity! This is the main theme of the Gospel of John, and really, of the ministry of the Apostle John: Jesus Christ is life,

eternal life. Think of these verses: John 1:4, "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Cf. John 11:25, 26, "I am the resurrection and the life, he that believeth in me...." Cf. John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life...."

Just as death means separation, life means union. Spiritually by nature we are dead in our trespasses and sins; by grace, united by faith to our Lord Jesus Christ, we have life, and we shall never die!

6:49 Here the Lord made it clear that He was not speaking of physical life and physical death, nor of some kind of natural bread. He was speaking of something greater than the manna of the OT. Their fathers were "dead," physically dead, all of them!

6:50 The Lord continued to emphasize the fact that He had come down from heaven. He came down from heaven to provide a life which the manna of the OT could never give. The bread the Lord came to give was a bread which people could eat, and never die.

6:51 The living bread, the bread capable of giving them eternal life, was not to be found on the earth. That is, it was not in religious forms and ceremonies, not in the philosophies of men, but in Him Who "came down from heaven." Salvation is a divine work made possible by a divine Person. The result is eternal life.

In this verse we have references both to the Deity of Christ, and to His humanity. He came down from heaven; He had a body of flesh. He would give His flesh for the life of the world. Here we have a suggestion of His death--giving His flesh. His flesh represented His whole Being: the human and the divine. The provision of eternal life for people throughout the whole world could only become a reality through the sacrificial death of the Son of God.

6:52 This was more than "the Jews" could understand. The word "strove" means that a real fight broke out among the Jews. This means that some of them were inclined to believe the Lord, while others were not. A work may have started in the hearts of some who were listening to the Lord.

"How can...?" This was the question that Nicodemus asked. Cf. John 3:4. The woman of Samaria implied the same thing in her comment in John 4:11,

Sir thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep:
from whence then hast thou that living water?

People always have trouble understanding spiritual truth and teaching. The tendency is to put a natural meaning on the Lord's words.

However, this did not make the Lord change His approach. In fact, in the next verse He added words which He had not used before, about drinking His blood.

6:53 Verse 47 was the last verse in which the Lord had spoken of faith, of believing on Him. From that time on He had spoken of eating the bread. At this point He added another: drinking His blood. How are we to understand all of this?

Well, let it be said right here that eating and drinking have to be synonymous with believing. And remember that believing involves three

things:

- 1) Knowledge.
- 2) Belief.
- 3) Trust.

Remember the illustration of the elevator.

So, what are we to know, believe, and trust with regard to our Lord's "flesh" and "blood" of our Lord Jesus Christ? Well, it means, to begin with, that we must know what the Lord was speaking about when He referred to His flesh and to His blood.

Let me suggest what I believe the Lord meant; you be the judges as to whether I am right or wrong.

I believe that the Lord, by His reference to His flesh, was speaking of His Person. And, secondly, I believe that the Lord, by His reference to His blood was speaking of His coming sacrifice.

Let us take "the flesh," the Person of Christ, first. What is it that we must believe about the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, as a Person, if we are to be able to believe in Him, to eat of His flesh?

We must believe what the Lord had been declaring over and over again in the verses we have already covered: that He was the Son of God Who had come down from heaven, and that He had come to become a true, a genuine human being. It is important for us to believe that although He was a man, He continue to be God, and that although He was God, He was genuinely a human being. He had to be God or He could never have satisfied God; He had to be a man or He could never have died for human beings like we are.

These are truths we should have learned back in chapter 1, verses 1 and 14.

If Jesus Christ were both God and man, then we must recognize that He had to be perfect, absolutely without sin of any kind. He was never guilty of any sin; He did not even have a sin nature like you and I do. If He had had any sin in Him, then He would have needed a Savior, too.

I have been speaking about the first point in true faith: knowledge. DO YOU BELIEVE THIS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST? That is a question every one of us has to answer. What is your answer?

Now let us go on to the second point here in verse 53: "His blood."

The blood speaks of the death of Christ.

Jesus Christ was perfect, absolutely without sin, as both God and man. But He could not have saved us by the example of His life. He was a wonderful Teacher--the greatest Teacher by far Who ever lived. But trying to live according to His teachings would not have saved anyone. Jesus Christ had to die. The wages of our sin was death. If the Lord were to save us, He had to pay our debt. This He did by the shedding of His blood when He died on the Cross.

You know about the death of Christ; is that what you believe about it--that He died "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit"? (You will find that in 1 Pet. 3:18.) Is this what you believe about the

death of Christ? Do you believe that He not only died, but that He rose again, having finished His work to the complete satisfaction of His Father Who is a holy and righteous God, as well as a God of love?

I know that most of you are saying in your hearts, "Yes, I know these truths, and I believe them. I believe that Jesus Christ was both God and man, and that He died on the Cross to provide salvation for all who would ever believe on Him."

If you can answer the first two questions in the affirmative, that is wonderful. But that is not enough to show that you are a true child of God. You must also be able to say yes to this question: ARE YOU TRUSTING IN THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST FOR YOUR SALVATION?

4/24/90

6:54 Our Lord used one word for eat in v. 53 (); He used another in this verse (). However, grammarians do not make a distinction between the two verbs as far as their meaning is concerned. The word in this verse is the older of the two.

The thing that is important is the difference in tense between the two words. The verb "eat" in v. 53 is an aorist; both of the verbs, "eateth" and "drinketh" in v. 54 are in the present tense. V. 53 would emphasize the time when we first trust in Christ; v.54, the continual eating, feeding on Christ, that is characteristic of one who has really trusted in the Lord.

Our Lord was saying that it is not just the person who initially claims to be trusting in Christ, who is saved, but the person who continually, day by day, feeds upon Christ.

And then for the fourth time we have, "And I will raise him up at the last day." Cf. vv. 39, 40, 44. A person's assurance concerning the final resurrection is dependent upon his daily need for Christ.

We are dealing here with spiritual truth. There is no question but that the Lord's Supper pictures what we have in these verses, but to say that the Lord was speaking of the Lord's Supper here would be to say that the Lord's Supper has saving merit. That, of course, is not true. No one is saved because he partakes of the Lord's Supper. But if he is saved, he will bear witness to his faith in Christ by observing the Lord's Supper.

We are dealing with spiritual truth, as I have said. Salvation is a matter of the heart, faith in Christ. But there is a physical aspect to the truth of salvation as well, and that is to be seen in the resurrection. There are certain outward evidences that we look for in the life of a person who claims to be a Christian. And yet it is possible for hypocrites to be in the church. The situation will be cleared up at the resurrection. Only those who are truly the Lord's will be raised up "at the last day."

6:55 The key word in this verse is the word "indeed"--used by our Lord twice. It means the true, the real. The bread and the cup of the communion table are not the real; they are types of the real. Christ's flesh and His blood are the real, carrying with them all of the significance that they do! The person who has come to Christ has no

need to look farther for salvation. We find the answer to our salvation in the Person of Christ (the Son of God Who became a man), and in His work on the Cross.

6:56 This verse begins with the same words as are found at the beginning of v. 54. But it presents truth in addition to what we have in v. 54.

Eating and drinking speaks of that which goes into us, and becomes a part of us--like the food we eat, and the liquids we drink.

So it is spiritually (although actually, in reality) with the person who feeds on Christ. He has been brought into such a close relationship with Christ that it can be said in all truth that he dwells in Christ, and Christ dwells in him. We may not be able to comprehend this truth as much as we wish we could, but we can believe it, and we can enjoy it, and profit from it. This is a truth that is at the very foundation of all Christian living: Christ lives in us, and we in Him. Abiding in Him is that which enables us to profit day by day from this relationship with Christ.

6:57 Here the Lord takes us even deeper into the truth. The new and continuing relationship between Christ and believers is likened to that which exists between the Father and the Son.

At this point it would be very profitable for all of us to go back over what we have learned in John 5 and 6 about the relationship that the Father and the Son have with each other. Christ was fully committed to do the Father's will. He and the Father worked in perfect harmony with each other, always seeking the same objectives. The Son on earth trusted the Father completely and continually, and looked to the Father for His help and guidance.

So it should be with us. What a lot of truth is bound up in those words of our Lord, "Even he shall live by me." We feed on Christ that we might be strengthened by Christ. We seek to do His will, and look to Him wisdom and guidance as to how His will can be done in His way for His glory! He is our life, and we, therefore, "live by" Him.

With these words our Lord was anticipating His teaching which we will see in John 15. We live in Christ, and by Christ. He lives in us, giving us life, strength, guidance, comfort, and all that we will ever need to life lives that are pleasing to Him here on earth.

6:58 This is OUR LORD'S SUMMARY of all that He had said to the people, and then to "the Jews."

He had told them three things:

- 1) That He was the true Bread from heaven.
- 2) That the manna was not the true Bread. The bread that they needed was not bread like the Lord had given to the 5,000. Man's greatest need is not physical, but spiritual. The physical is temporal; the spiritual is the real, and the eternal.
- 3) That the one who eats of the Bread who came down from heaven "shall live for ever."

6:59 And so our our Lord's discourse to the people and to the Jews was completed. We can be sure that those who wee in the synagogue in Capernaum had never heard teaching like they had just heard.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 6:60-71

Intro: In this passage we come to the third of our Lord's discourses which developed out of His miracle of the feeding of the 5,000. The first was with "the people" (John 6:22-40). The second was with "the Jews" (John 6:41-59). The third is with "the disciples."

c. The discussion with "his disciples" (John 6:59-71).

6:60 It is not surprising that "the Jews" had trouble with the Lord's teaching, but it is surprising that "his disciples," our Lord's disciples, had trouble with it. They said that His teaching was "an hard saying." They were offended by it. They could not accept it.

Note the word "many." The Lord had become very popular with the people, but "many" of them obviously were not genuinely saved. This is proven by what the Lord said at the beginning of verse 64. (Read.) What was it that was so offensive to them?

It is interesting to consider why people follow Christ, and why many of them eventually fall away. We see it happening all of the time. Let me suggest three reasons which we can draw out of this incident.

One: They were disappointed with the Lord. They expected more from Him. They had not conceived of the idea that the Messiah was going to die! They were looking for a King! They were not concerned as much about eternal life as they were an improvement of the present life.

Two: They were disappointed with our Lord's teaching. As they said, it was offensive to them, and they had a hard time standing around and listening to what He had to say. Perhaps they wanted action, not teaching. There are countless numbers of religious people who will not come to a Bible class.

This would have been especially true about our Lord's references to the need to eat His flesh and to drink His blood. The theology of the blood has been a stumbling block to many who have professed to be Christians from that day until this. They feel that they understand, but actually they do not.

The question "Who can hear it?" meant Who can believe it? It seemed ridiculous to them that anyone would accept such teaching.

6:61 Again we see evidence of the Lord's omniscience. He knew what they were thinking and what they were saying to each other. And so He said, "Doth this offend you?"

Godet wrote in his commentary,

The word offend, is to be taken here in the gravest sense, as in Luke vii. 23: to cause to stumble with respect to faith (p. 603).

Luke 7:23 was a part of the message that the Lord sent back to John the Baptist: "And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."

But then He asked a question which is recorded in verse 62.

6:62 The meaning of the question is this: If they stumbled over the Lord's teaching regarding eating His flesh, and drinking His blood, what will they think if they should see the Lord ascending in His

body back to heaven? That would be a stumbling block to them, too, because then they would realize that they had not really understood what they had heard the Lord say about eating and drinking His blood!

And the words, "where he was before," is a clear testimony of our Lord's pre-existence. He had said that He had come down from heaven. He had said that He was going to die, giving His flesh and His blood "for the life of the world" (v. 51b). Now He was speaking of going back to heaven where He was before. Such teaching makes no sense to the natural mind of man! Consequently it is a stumbling block, a hurdle that man cannot get over, an offense.

The Lord was seeking to get His disciples to see that if they were to understand His teaching, help would have to be given to them from God Himself.

6:63 That help would come, would have to come, from the Holy Spirit!
 "The spirit" at the beginning of this verse should be capitalized.

Our Lord was speaking of the two instruments God uses in bring eternal life to people. One is the Spirit of God; the other is the Word of God. And it is the Spirit of God Who uses the Word of God. Eternal life comes when the Spirit of God opens our eyes to the truth of the Word of God so that we believe it!

The flesh, and all that belongs to the flesh (man's natural mind, his will, etc.) are absolutely worthless where salvation is concerned. Unless the Spirit of God is at work, no man or woman or boy or girl can understand the truth of the Lord's words.

And when the Lord said, "...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life," He was indicating, as Westcott has pointed out, the Word of God is of such a nature that His words alone "are capable of conveying that which they essentially are" (p. 110). As I have said many, many times, no person is ever saved apart from the instrumentality of the Word of God.

What effect was this designed to have upon the disciples?

The Lord was seeking to make the disciples realize that these disciples were mistaken about what they perceived to be the meaning of His words. He wanted them to trust, not in themselves, but in the Spirit of God. And He wanted them to realize that His words were not "hard" words; they were true words, powerful words, words capable to taking them out of spiritual darkness and bringing them into spiritual life and light.

This is important for us to remember when we are talking to unbelievers about Christ. We need to give them the truth, but we need to warn them that their first impressions about the Gospel are wrong (unless the Spirit of God is already dealing with them). They even need to be told to depend upon the Lord to be able to understand the true message of the Gospel.

6:64 Here in this verse we have even greater evidence of the great wisdom and knowledge of our Lord, greater than what we had in v.

61.

The Lord knew that such questions as were coming from some of the disciples, could only mean one thing: Those who were offended at His

words were not saved. It is possible for us to detect this much. The claims of people are suspect who say that they are Christians, and yet they do not believe the Scriptures.

BUT, only the Lord knows who will not believe, and who will believe. And He has known this "from the beginning," i.e., from eternity past.

Could He possibly be wrong? If not, then what He knows is equal to being decreed by Him. We wait and wonder who will be saved. But our Lord knows. And He knows what will happen as far as each person is concerned. We know after people are saved; our Lord has had full knowledge "from the beginning" of all who will be saved.

6:65 At this point the Lord repeated the truth that He had just stated to the Jews in v. 44. Salvation is of the Lord. We need to seek our understanding from Him, and to trust Him to draw us to Himself so that we can be saved.

6:66 Several years ago I heard Dr. Johnson point out, with reference to Romans 9, that we can tell that we are preaching what Paul preached when people ask us the questions that people asked Paul.

In connection with this verse let it be said that when we teach what our Lord taught, some people, not all, will leave us like they left Him. This is certainly one of the greatest sorrows of the pastor--to see people turning away from the truth, and from the Lord, walking no more with Him.

These were not people who had been saved, and then lost it. These were people who had never been saved. They professed to belong to the Lord. They had even followed the Lord in His journeys, had listened intently to His teaching. But the truth of God had never changed their lives. They knew nothing of the transforming power of Christ. And, tragically, the point that John made at the end of this verse would indicate that those who went away NEVER CAME BACK! They turned from the Light of the world, and walked into the blackness of darkness for ever and ever!

Cf. 2 Peter 2:20-22. Also, 1 John 2:19.

6:67 At this point the Lord turned toward the twelve. And He asked them a question: "Will ye also go away?"

Was the Lord asking for information which He did not have? Was John right in saying, as He did, that the Lord even knew "who should betray him"?

The question is asked in such a way that a negative answer is expected. But why would the Lord ask such a question?

Questions are always designed to make us think. Judas needed to do some very serious thinking. But the others needed to reflect on the reason why they would stay when others would go.

6:68 Peter gave one answer, a good one. IF THEY WERE TO LEAVE CHRIST WHERE WOULD THEY GO TO FIND WHAT THEY HAVE IN CHRIST? Peter answered a question with a question.

Do we understand how and why we came to Christ? Do we understand why we have stayed with Him while others have turned away? Ask yourself the

question today: WILL YOU GO AWAY? Is the Word of God "hard" to you, or can you say what Jeremiah said in Jer. 15:16? "Thy words were found, and I did eat them...."?

6:69 A. T. Robertson (V, 69) said that the first part of this verse could and should be translated,
 We have come to believe, and still believe,
 and we have come to know, and still know,
 that thou art the Holy One of God.

Once a person believes, truly believes, he always believes. His faith may falter at times, and be weak, but it never goes out. And true faith carries with it a lasting assurance. They knew, they were assured, they were certain about Christ.

6:70 What Peter said was true of eleven of them, but not of all twelve. And yet Peter believed that it was. The Lord had said in v. 64 that He knew who would betray Him--and He did!

6:71 Why did the Lord choose Judas as one of the twelve, knowing what he would do?

I will just give two answers. Undoubtedly there are many more.

- 1) He was to be the instrument God would use to turn our Lord over to His enemies.
- 2) In the light of our Lord's conversation with the disciples who went away (and Judas, too, would go away), this would serve as a warning to all future believers to examine their own heart to make sure that they really belong to the Lord.

John 6 has to be one of the great chapters of the Bible. It contains two of our Lord's greatest miracles, and, taken as a whole, the three discourses combine to give us some of the greatest teaching that our Lord ever did. If there have been things which the Lord said which you do not understand, don't cast the chapter aside. Remember that our Lord's words are always true. If we have difficulty with them, the problem is with us, not with the Word of God. Therefore, let us seek more light from the Spirit of God upon the Word of God that we may rejoice in the truth of God even when we may not be able to understand it all.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

Intro: We are seeing the build-up of opposition again our Lord Jesus Christ. Chapter 6 told us not only of the opposition of the Jews, but also of the departure of "many" of our Lord's disciples.

The scene shifts in John 7. The events of John 6 took place in Galilee. In John 7 we see how the Lord went down to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. And the whole chapter deals with what took place there: the Lord's teaching, and then the reaction that various groups displayed toward Him.

In the first nine verses of the chapter we have an opportunity to see the Lord with "his brethren," i.e., His half-brothers. They went ahead of the Lord to Jerusalem, but He followed them later. Judea, and especially Jerusalem, had become a dangerous area for the Lord because "the Jews" were intent on killing the Lord.

This is where we are in our outline:

- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE WORLD (John 2-12).
 - A. The period of acceptance (John 2-4).
 - B. The period of opposition (John 5-11).

In this section (John 5, 6) John recorded three miracles:

- 1) The healing of the impotent man in Jerusalem (John 5).
- 2) The feeding of the 5,000 (John 6).
- 3) Jesus walking on the water (John 6).

No more miracles are recorded until we get to John 9. There we see how the Lord gave sight to the man who was born blind.

But in chapters 7 and 8 we see how intense the opposition against our Lord was becoming, and yet through it all He continued to minister. In chapter 7 we are told of the Lord's move from Galilee back into Judea.

5. Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:1-53).

The first part of this chapter tells about the pressure that the our Lord's brothers put Him under to go back to Jerusalem.

a. The Lord and His brothers (John 7:1-9).

The events in this chapter probably followed the events in chapter 6 by at least six months (Ryle, I, 430). This is calculated from the fact that 6:4 mentions the Passover, and we have in chapter 7 the Feast of Tabernacles--two feasts separated in time by about six months.

7:1 This verse gives us a good illustration the importance of our use of discretion and caution in the work of the Lord. The Lord knew that the time appointed for His death had been set by God. He knew that His enemies could not fulfill their fiendish desires one minute ahead of God's schedule. And yet He deliberately stayed out of danger, away from Jerusalem, because He knew that the leaders of the Jews were intent on killing Him.

"Jewry" in the original Greek is the same word as "Judaea" in verse 3. Probably the translators of the KJV used that word to show that Judea was the headquarters of the Jews religion.

In John 6:15 we saw how the Lord went away from the people who wanted to make Him King; here in John 7 He avoided the people who were anxious to kill Him.

This is a good lesson for us. Divine sovereignty does not replace human responsibility, even in this case involving our Lord. Let us remember that. We see that in the time of our Lord's temptation when Satan told Him to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple. He did not do it.

7:2 The events of this chapter are timed.

7:3 In this Gospel we were first introduced to our Lord's brothers in John 2:12. Here we see them again. Their advice for the Lord is given in this verse and the next.

Verse 5 tells us that His brothers did not believe on Him. Therefore, there wisdom was human wisdom. They showed no understanding of the ways of God. It is very likely that His brothers realized the seriousness of the situation that was developing against our Lord, and so His brothers wanted Him to do something to turn the tide in His favor. They felt that He was making a mistake by not going to Judea. They felt that if He would perform some miracles down there, the leaders and the people would accept Him as the Messiah and the opposition would cease.

This is always man's way: Do the spectacular, and people will listen to what you have to say! God used miracles. John wrote his Gospel believing that the miracles were an instrument in the hands of God by which people would be convinced of the Deity and Messiahship of our Lord. But that was not the only issue that the Lord was concerned about. We will see in a moment what the Lord's concern was.

7:4 Our Lord's brothers said that anyone who wants to be accepted publicly cannot continue to work in secret. This is the way man thinks about gaining popularity and pulling people over to our side. But the ways of God are different.

7:5 (This verse has been commented upon.)

7:6 The main difference that the Lord had with His brothers was that of the timing. When men see that something needs to be done they also believe that the sooner, the better. The right time is extremely important to the Lord. Even of believers it can often be said, "Your time is always ready." At the same time the Lord will say, "My time is not yet come."

Here is another important lesson for us. God is not only interested in what is done, but He is just as interested in when it is done. We are always ready for God to work long before He is ready. When we do not see Him work when we think He should, we are inclined to believe that He is not going to work. WHAT WE NEED TO DO IS GIVE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO THE TIMING! Moses was ready for the children of Israel to leave Egypt long before the Lord was ready. We are like the Psalmist in Psalms 119:126 who said,

It is time for thee, Lord, to work:
for they have made void thy law.

George Mueller of Bristol used to say, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and the stops are too! God has lessons to teach us by making us wait which cannot be learned in any other way. And it is a

sad thing to see a child of God trying to move ahead when the Lord has applied the brakes.

7:7 In this verse the Lord was seeking to help His brothers understand why there was so much and such strong opposition against Him. It was not His claim to be the Son of God. Nor was it His claim to be the Messiah. Those were excuses that the Jews were using. But the real reason for the world's hatred against our Lord was that He was testifying against their sins!

Back in John 3:19 we read these words of our Lord:

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,
and men loved darkness rather than light,
because their deeds were evil.

Why did Cain kill Abel? "Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3:12b).

Why did Herod imprison and later kill John the Baptist? Because John had told him, when he took his brother's wife as his wife, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matt. 14:4b).

Preach a prosperity Gospel, and people will flock to hear you. Preach the Gospel of the grace of God for guilty, hell-bound sinners, and you will get into plenty of trouble. Talk about Jesus as a great Teacher, and people will listen to you. Talk about Jesus as a great Savior, and people will leave you.

What does the world need to hear today with all of the crime, the immorality, the drugs, the terrible abuse of children, and all of the other things that are destroying our society? The world needs to hear that the problem is in the hearts of men, that it is called S-I-N, and that Christ is the only answer.

7:8 The Lord refused to submit to their pressure. He told them to go ahead; He would go when His time, the time appointed by the Father, had come.

Here is a good lesson for us in thinking of family members and friends who need to be saved. The Lord would have had the same concern for His brothers. Some would be inclined to say that the Lord should have done what His brothers wanted Him to do, that that would have been a good way to reach them. But the Lord did not act on that basis. He showed us here that we can have a greater impact upon people by pleasing God than by pleasing them if pleasing them means disobeying God.

7:9 So the brothers went, but the Lord stayed.

b. The Lord in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles
(John 7:10-53).

7:10 There probably was not much of a delay in the Lord's departure after His brothers had gone. The relationship between our Lord and His brothers was a case of light and darkness. It would appear from the context that the Lord did not go with them because He did not want to be made the subject of attention by His brothers.

We need to note that our Lord's brothers, though not believers, were very prompt in their religious observances. Matthew Henry observed, "It

is not, Who comes first?...but, Who comes fittest?" (V, 964).

When the Apostle John recorded that the Lord did not go to Jerusalem "openly, but as it were in secret," it means that He made no attempt to attract attention to Himself (which is what His brothers wanted Him to do). The Lord never did what He did in order to please men, but to please the Father. He was acting in harmony with His own teaching in the Sermon on the Mount where He taught His disciples not to do things to be seen of men, but to do them in secret, trusting the Lord to add His blessing in any way that He would choose. Again, quoting Matthew Henry, "Provided the work of God be done effectually, it is best done when done with least noise" (V, 964).

7:11 In verses 11-13 we see the dangerous situation into which the Lord was entering. It is important to see that the Lord did not let personal danger keep Him from obeying God. The Jews knew of His devotion to God, and that He would most certainly be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. And so they sought Him, not to hear Him, nor to worship Him, but because they wanted to arrest Him, and kill Him! And so they were apparently asking everyone if they had seen Him.

7:12 It should be noted that even though the Lord had not publicized His coming, yet He was the One about Whom people were talking. "Murmuring" here does not mean that they were complaining, but that they were seeking to hide their interest in our Lord, as the next verse tells us, "for fear of the Jews," i.e., for fear of the religious leaders. Even though no public mention was being made of the Lord, yet He was the subject of conversation as the people talked among themselves.

But notice that the people were not agreed in their attitude toward our Lord. From the two comments that are recorded here it would seem that very few, if any, recognized that He was Deity. The people were divided about the kind of a man our Lord was. Some said that He was "good"; others called Him a deceiver.

Remember that it is not enough to call the Lord "a good man," or a good Teacher, or a good Example. He could have been all of that without being the Son of God, and our Savior. They were right in as far as they had gone in their understanding, but they needed to go farther to have the full truth.

7:13 The fear of the people seems to have been that, if their interest in the Lord were known, they might be put out of the synagogue, which, to their understanding, would have meant the loss of their salvation. Cf. John 9:22.

7:14 From this verse down through verse 39 we have our Lord's public ministry in the temple where He was teaching.

Our Lord's brothers wanted "works" (cf. 7:3), but to the Lord teaching was what He desired to do.

7:15 "The Jews" marveled at our Lord's teaching because they knew somehow that He had not been trained in the schools under the Rabbis. Bishop Ryle quoted a man named Tholuck who said that "it was a rule of the Talmud, 'that no man could appear as a teacher who had not for some years been a colleague of a Rabbi'" (I, 446). In spite of this, the Jews were forced to admit that our Lord was an outstanding Teacher. This does not show that the Lord was condemning formal

training in the schools, but it certainly shows that it is not necessary to be trained in the schools in order to know the truth of God. The men who were taught by the Rabbis finished their training as spiritually blind as their teachers were.

Note what the officers of the Jews said about the Lord's teaching in John 7:46.

7:16 At this point the Apostle John recorded what the Lord was saying in His teaching.

First, He did not take the glory to Himself for what He was teaching. He gave it to the Father.

Secondly, He was claiming divine authority for His teaching. The Lord was speaking here as a man when He said, "My doctrine is not mine...." He meant that what He taught was not of human origin. It was the Word of God, the Word which the Father had "sent" Him to proclaim.

So the Lord was claiming here that not only was His message of God, but also His mission was of God.

7:17 This is a very important verse for the Christian as well as for the non-Christian.

The Lord was stressing two things as prerequisites for understanding the Word of God:

- 1) Submission to God's will.
- 2) A readiness to do it.

Those who study the Scriptures merely as literature, never really understand what it means. When we approach the Scriptures, we are not to approach them in a critical, suspicious frame of mind. We need to be like the Thessalonians about whom the Apostle Paul said,

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing,
because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us,
ye received it not as the word of men,
but as it is in truth, the word of God,
which effectually worketh also in you that believe
(1 Thess. 2:13).

We do not have authority over the Word of God; the Word of God has full authority over us. When we approach the Word in this attitude, then we will see that it truly is from God.

For the Christian, it is important that we seek the will of God in the Word of God, and that we be committed to obey it even before we know what it says. The person who wants to know the will of God with the idea that then he will decide whether or not he will do it, is the person who never finds out what the will of God is.

7:18 Here the Lord gave some important guidelines regarding true and false teachers. The Lord probably spoke these words for those people mentioned in verse 12 who thought of Him as a deceiver.

A great deal depends upon whether or not a teacher is seeking to exalt himself, or seeking to honor and glorify God. This is the big issue. The teacher who claims that his message is peculiarly his own, is neither true nor righteous. Matthew Henry said, "Those who speak from

God will speak for God, and for His own glory" (V, 967).

7:19 In referring to Moses our Lord was referring to one who spoke from God, and for God. The Jews would have agreed with this. However, the Lord went on to show that while the Jews accepted and honored Moses, yet they did not obey Him. They were prepared to murder the Lord even though the sixth commandment said, "Thou shalt not kill" (Ex. 20:13).

Those who are hypocrites not only reject the truth, but fail to live up to teachings which they claim to be true.

7:20 This teaching by our Lord brought out strong denials from the people that they were seeking to do what the Lord said they were doing.

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7:21 The "one work" that the Lord had done was the healing of the impotent man in John 5, and it still had the people upset. In verse 23 our Lord would tell them that they were "angry" at Him.

7:22 Moses had enjoined upon them the rite of circumcision. It did not actually originate in Moses' day, but in the time for the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob--specifically in Abraham's day). Coming from the patriarchs would give it even greater authority than if it had come only from Moses. They did not hesitate to perform circumcision on the Sabbath Day. In fact, instead of being one like the Lord's miracle, they had done it over and over again.

7:23 Then the Lord presented His argument.

Circumcision was only a ceremony. But it had great spiritual significance. And, if necessary, the people would perform the rite of circumcision on the Sabbath in order to keep from breaking the Law. If that were the case, then was the Lord not justified in healing a man physically and spiritually although He did it on the Sabbath? The expression, "every whit whole," would seem to imply spiritual healing as well as physical healing. And the man's salvation also seems to be indicated by the fact that the Lord told him, "...sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee" (John 5:14b).

7:24 What should that miracle have told those people? Not that He was an offender for because He had healed on the Sabbath Day, but that He was the Son of God because He was able to do such a great work of healing--both physically and spiritually.

"Righteous judgment" in the Greek has the definite article: the righteous judgment. Westcott said that this means, "the one true and complete decision of which the case admits" (p. 120). The Lord was appealing to them not to judge superficially, but to look behind and beyond the appearance to see the real meaning of that miracle.

This is a common fault of spiritually blinded people. They see the outward event, but miss the spiritual significance.

7:25 This, and the next two verses tell us what some of the people had to say in response to the Lord's words.

The opposition of the leaders against our Lord was known at this time,

even their intent to kill Him. These people, however, were surprised that their leaders would want to kill the Lord because they saw nothing more in Him than humanity. It seems that they had been totally unimpressed by what the Lord had been saying.

7:26 The people recognized that the Lord had become very overt in what He was doing, and yet the rulers had not arrested Him. Why was that the case? Had they changed their mind so that now they believed that He was the Messiah?

7:27 The leaders might feel that way, the people indicated, but they themselves could never come to that conclusion for just one main reason: They knew where Jesus was from (His father, His mother, His birthplace, etc.), but the parentage of the Messiah was not known. Therefore, the Lord could not be the Messiah.

Two different words for know are used in this verse. The first one speaks of a conclusion that is complete and unchanging; the second, of that which a person knows little by little through observation. They claimed perfect knowledge of the first, but ignorance of the second. Therefore, on this basis alone they were willing to deny that Jesus was the Messiah.

7:28 At this point the Lord became very outspoken. He "raised His voice to a high pitch" (Ryle, I, 461).

He admitted that they knew Him, and where He was from. The Lord was speaking here of His humanity. The Lord by this time was a well-known Teacher. They knew that He was from Nazareth, and they knew His family. They even knew that He claimed to have been sent by God because He had said that many times. But they did not know God, the One Who had sent Him, and what His relationship was with that God. Therefore, the Lord was charging them as being without salvation. No person can have eternal life who does not know God, and we cannot know God unless we also know the Lord Jesus Christ, trusting Him for our salvation.

Remember what the Lord said about eternal life in His high priestly prayer in John 17:3,

And this is life eternal,
that they might know thee the only true God,
and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

7:29 The Lord Jesus claimed to have a knowledge of God which no one else had. This is because our Lord was "from Him." This is how the Gospel of John began. Cf. John 1:1, 2. And the Lord had come especially commissioned by the Father.

In saying what He did in these two verses, the Lord had dealt a death blow to the claims and hopes of the Jews. Therefore it should come as no surprise that they wanted to take Him (in order to kill Him).

This is truth which usually does make people mad, sometimes very angry. They do not like to be told that it is only through Christ that it is possible for us to know God.

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7:30 In this verse and the next we see two ways in which the sovereign hand of God can be seen.

As the Lord had told His brothers in v. 6,
 My time is not yet come:
 but your time is always ready.

The time that the people wanted to take the Lord was "ready." But it was not the Father's time. And so the people were powerless to lay a hand upon the Lord.

This is truth full of comfort for us as the people of God. The world and the Devil are both formidable enemies, but their vicious deeds are limited by the sovereign hand of God. Bishop Ryle made this statement about this verse:

To realize that nothing happens in this world except by the eternal counsels of our Father, and according to His eternal plans, is one grand secret of living a calm, peaceful, and contented life (I, 464).

Martin Luther had this to say about the Lord's timing:

God has appointed a nice, easy hour for everything; and that hour has the whole world for its enemy: it must attack it. The devil shoots and throws at the poor clock-hand, but in vain: for all depends on the hour. Till the hour comes, and the hand has run its course, the devil and the world shall accomplish nothing (Quoted from Besser by Ryle, I, 464).

This is the first way at this time that the sovereignty of God was evident. The second is in verse 31.

7:31 Here we see that, while the attitude of most of the people was animosity toward our Lord, there were some who believed. They had seen the point of the Lord's miracles--that they were signs of His Deity and Messiahship. They had been especially impressed by the number of our Lord's miracles.

This is another example when the people's time was "ready." They seem to be prepared, or close to it, to acclaim that the Lord was their King. But just as it was not time for the Lord to be taken by His enemies, neither was it time for Him to be exalted as King by His friends. How easy it is to look at an earthly scene and to feel that everything is in man's hands. The Word of God would teach us that it is always the Lord Who is in control.

Bishop Lightfoot indicated in his commentary that at this point the scene changes again.

7:32 The Pharisees heard what some of the people were saying, and they did not like it. More than that, they were out to stop it. But, as the following verses show, they were just as restrained by God as the people had been. It makes no difference how much authority men may have with men, their authority is always limited by the authority of God. But they did not know this, and so they tried to take the Lord by sending officers to arrest the Lord.

7:33 This, and the following verse, give us a grand statement of the sovereignty of our Lord.

"Yet a little while" -- probably about six months. "And then I go" -- speaking of the time when His work on the Cross would have been

completed, and He, raised from the dead. The Lord indicated that at that point He would take Himself out of this world to return to the Father. The Lord was conscious of the fact that He was on a divine mission, that that mission would be completed, and that He would return to the Father. And He knew that God's ultimate purpose for His present ministry was not to become Israel's King. That would come, but not yet!

"I go unto him that sent me" -- This not only implied that His mission would be accomplished, but that His work would be accepted by the Father.

Cf. Heb. 1:3, "Who being the brightness of his glory...."

7:34 Matthew Henry said that our Lord's words in these two verses have a bright side, and a dark side. The bright side is seen in verse 33, and it has to do with the Lord. The day would come when His sufferings would be over, and He would be back with the Father, at His right hand. The dark side is seen in this verse, and it has to do with the Jews who stood before the Lord, having come to arrest Him.

They had sought Him for one purpose here: to arrest Him. The day would come when they would seek Him for another reason: to be saved. They had found Him on this occasion. They would not be able to find Him on that future occasion, and, consequently, they would never be able to be where He was--with the Father!

The Lord was very evidently seeking to warn those officers as to what a serious thing it is to be confronted by the Lord, and to be exposed to the truth of God. We do not choose our own time for salvation. That, too, is in the hands of the Lord. Evidently the Lord knew that the day would come in the lives of these officers when their attitude toward Him would change, but then it would be too late!

7:35 They did not understand what the Lord had said to them.

7:36 A contemptuous attitude was displayed by the officers. It is indicated by the use of the word "this" in connection with the word, "saying." In today's way of speaking they would have said, "Who does this man think that He is that He could make a statement like this?"

They discussed this "among themselves" (v. 35). What a tragedy that they did not ask the Lord Himself!

And then we come to the final scene, or section, of the chapter.

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7:37 Nehemiah 8 tells us that when the people went back to Jerusalem after the captivity they learned through the reading of the Law that in the seventh month they were to observe the Feast of Tabernacles, or we might also call it the Feast of Booths. It was to begin on the fifteenth day of the month, a sabbath, and continue until the next sabbath. During this time the people moved out of their homes and lived in booths constructed with "the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick [or leafy] trees, and willows of the brook" (Lev. 23:40). The purpose of the Feast was to keep the children of Israel reminded of their pilgrimage through the desert as they moved from Egypt to Canaan. And, in turn, their pilgrimage was to remind them

of the many ways the Lord had provided for them through those years. One of the chief provisions was water, water out of rocks (on more than one occasion). We know not that that was a type of Christ, our Rock, and the water was a picture of salvation.

Previously in John's Gospel we have been reminded of the Exodus journey by the reference to the brazen serpent in John 3, the water in John 4, and the manna in John 6. Now we come back to the water again.

Alexander Maclaren, in his sermon on John 7:37, 38, gives this interesting account of what probably happened on this occasion which we are reading about in John 7. He said this:

Part of that ceremonial was that on each morning of the seven, and possibly on the eighth, 'the last day of the Feast' a procession of white-robed priests wound down the rocky footpath from the Temple to Siloam (the pool), and there in a golden vase drew water from the spring, chanting, as they ascended and re-entered the Temple gates where they poured out the water as a libation, the words of the prophet, 'with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.'

Picture the scene to yourselves--the white-robed priests toiling up the pathway, the crowd in the court, the sparkling water poured out with choral song. And then, as the priests stood with their empty vases, there was a little stir in the crowd, and a Man who had been standing watching, lifted up a loud voice and cried, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.' Strange words to say, anywhere and anywhen, daring words to say there in the Temple court! for there and then they could mean nothing less than Christ's laying His hand on that old miracle, which was pointed to by the rite, when the rock yielded water, and asserting that all which it did and typified was repeated, fulfilled, and transcended in Himself, and that not for a handful of nomads in the wilderness, but for all the world, in all its generations.

The Apostle used the word "cried" again, the word he had used to describe how the Lord's words in verse 28 were spoken. He lifted up His voice so as to be heard by the greatest number of people. The Lord was preaching the Gospel! He was appealing for all who were thirsty to come to Him, and to drink.

There is a sense in which all men are thirsty, i.e., all are dissatisfied and seeking that which will satisfy. Some look for satisfaction in education, some in political power, some in money, some in pleasure, and others in many other things. Sometimes men seek a combination of things. Long ago the Lord said this about His own people:

For my people have committed two evils;
they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters,
and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns,
that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13).

It is always tragic when people seek satisfaction in those things which can never satisfy, but especially so when people who have had the truth do the same thing. The Psalmist was on the right track when he said,

As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God (Psa. 42:1, 2).

The Lord was asking the people why they were there. Had them come because they truly were spiritually thirsty? Or had them come just to observe an annual ritual? If they were thirsty, they should come to Him. He was claiming here to be the One, and the only One, Who could provide salvation for them. They should drink, which, by going on to read verse 38, means to believe.

It is usually through the Word, or through a combination of the Word and the Lord's providential circumstances, that we are made thirsty for the Lord. Think of the reaction of the people in Acts 2 to the preaching of the Apostle Peter. They were "pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, **Men and brethren, what shall we do**" (Acts 2:37). Then Peter told them what to do.

Or think of the Philippian jailer who said, **"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"** (Acts 16:30). Then Paul and Silas told him.

How wonderful it is to see a person who has become hungry for God and for Christ and for salvation! It was while the Lord was speaking to the woman at the well that she became thirsty for the living water about which the Lord had been speaking to her. If you are not thirsty, ask God to make you thirsty!

Only Christ can satisfy spiritual thirst.

The Lord indicated in the words of this verse that salvation means that each thirsty person has to come to Christ for Himself. It is good to go to church, but you can go to church without going to Christ. Christ is the Savior, not the church. Christ is the Savior, not the Apostles. Christ is the Savior, not your Christian parents. Christ is the Savior, not some Christian friend that you might have. Christ is the Savior, and so you and I need to come to Him.

Verse 37, an invitation, is followed by a tremendous promise in verse 38.

7:38 The "belly" is used often in Scripture to speak of a person's inner being, not his stomach. The Lord was indicating here that peace and satisfaction are not to be found in things outside of us, but within us. Then we can have peace regardless of what our outward circumstances are. Salvation is a work of God in the heart.

Remember the words which the Lord spoke to the woman of Samaria, which we find in John 4:13, 14. (Read.)

In verse 37 the Lord spoke of coming to Him; here He spoke of believing on Him. They are not two different things, but one and the same! The Lord was speaking in verse 37 of coming in faith, and indicating in verse 38 that believing involves coming to Christ. One verb helps to explain the other. Being saved involves both. We do not pay for it. We do not work for it. We do not even deserve it. It is a free gift, available to all. When we come to Christ, our sins are forgiven. We are made acceptable to God, and brought into fellowship with Him. Our souls are satisfied with Christ and in Christ. Cf. Rom. 5:1 ff.

Verse 37 speaks of coming to Christ; verse 38 tells what happens to us afterwards. "He that believeth on me" could be translated, He who believes and continues to believe. Faith is not a one-time act, but it is what a true child of God continues to do. If there is no continuing

faith, then there is no salvation.

But what is true of one who really believes? Two things:

- 1) He is immediately satisfied in Christ.
- 2) He becomes an instrument for carrying the message of salvation to others.

"Rivers of living water" speak of abundant satisfaction. Christ not only meets our need, but He meets it abundantly. The fact that the living waters flow out from our innermost being, is an indication that once we have drunk of the living water, we become vessels through whom the living water is taken to others.

"As the scriptures have said" is not a reference to any particular passage of Scripture, but to the promise of God given in various places throughout the Word of God. Bishop Westcott suggested such passages as Isa. 55:11, "...and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not." Zech. 14:8 tells us that "living waters shall go out from Jerusalem." The same is true of passages which refer to the Holy Spirit, such as Joel 2:28.

So we have two evidences of true faith:

- 1) Continuing faith.
- 2) A concern for the spiritual needs of others.

7:39 "This verse is one of those explanatory comments which are so common in St. John's Gospel" (Ryle, I, 479).

Drinking in the living water is faith in Christ; the outflowing of the living water has reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Since the glorification of Christ there has been an inseparable connection between faith in Christ and receiving the Holy Ghost. If any man has faith he has the Spirit. If any man has not the Spirit he has no saving faith in Christ. The effectual work of the Second and Third Persons in the Trinity is never divided (Ryle, I, 479).

The Holy Spirit certainly ministered before the glorification of Christ, but His relationship to the people of God would be different after the ascension of Christ from what it had been before. Cf. John 14:16, 17. We are, therefore, justified in speaking of this age in which we are living as the Dispensation of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not replace the Father, nor the Son, but this is the period in human history when the work of the Spirit is more prominent than it ever has been before. The book of Acts and the epistles of the New Testament make that abundantly clear, as do our Lord's words in John 14, 15, 16.

"Because that Jesus was not yet glorified" -- This is the first reference to the glorification of our Lord in John's Gospel. John spoke of seeing his glory in John 1:14, but that was the display of His Deity. This is a reference to the completion of His work, and His ascension back to the Father in heaven.

The glorification of Christ was certainly implied in verses 33 and 34, but this is the first time John has specifically used that term. The Lord was to tell His disciples later,

...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 (John 16:7b).
And then the Lord went on to tell them what the Holy Spirit would do through them for the world as well as for believers themselves.

The statement in John 7:37, 38, and explained by John in verse 39, is of tremendous importance with respect to the outworking of God's purposes in the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

THE REST OF THE CHAPTER IS DEVOTED TO THE REACTION WHICH VARIOUS PEOPLE DEMONSTRATED TOWARD THE LORD. WAS HE THE MESSIAH, OR NOT?

First of all, we have the reaction of the people in verses 40-44.

7:40 Cf. John 6:14 and Deut. 18:15.

Between the close of the OT and the appearance of John the Baptist, who was a prophet, there had been no prophets. The Jews were divided as to what the Deuteronomy passage meant. Some felt that it was some special prophet who would come before the Messiah; others believed that it was the Messiah. The latter is the correct interpretation.

It seems that the reaction that John recorded in verse 40 was of those who distinguished between the Prophet and the Messiah. But, at any rate, they attached great importance to the Lord in calling Him a prophet.

7:41 A second group believed that He was the Messiah.

Those who questioned it showed their ignorance of the birthplace of the Lord. Their words continued in verse 42.

7:42 They knew Micah 5:2 and other passages which spoke of the Messiah as being of the family of David.

7:43 Wherever Christ is presented, there will always be a division. We had that back in 6:52. We will see it again in 9:16. And then again in 1):19-21. In some respects, this was a healthy sign. Spurgeon pointed out that often church people will be divided over doctrine, or over the form of church government we ought to have, or the ordinances of the church, but Christ is the One Who is of the greatest importance. What do we think of Him? Ryle said,

It will always be so as long as the world stands. So long as human nature is corrupt Christ will be a cause of division and difference among men. To some He is the savour of life, and to others of death. Grace and nature never will agree any more than oil and water, acid and alkali (I, p. 487).

7:44 We can see that the feeling of those who were against Christ was very strong. Godet said that they "already wished to proceed to violent measures" (p. 640). But even though the opposition was growing, our Lord's enemies were powerless to take Him. This verse can only be explained in terms to the sovereignty of God. Men were not in control; God was!

Next we move on to the chief priests, Pharisees, and officers who had

been sent, as we read in verse 32, to arrest the Lord.

7:45 When the officers returned, they did not have the Lord. The chief priests and Pharisees demanded an explanation.

Their answer:

7:46 "Never man spake as this man."

Two things bothered our Lord's enemies:

- 1) His miracles.
- 2) His teaching.

When the officers said what they did, they were not speaking of our Lord's oratorical powers. It would have been inappropriate for our Lord to have come with "excellency of speech" when His servant, the Apostle Paul deliberately avoided oratory. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:1. No, it was not how our Lord said what He said; it was what He said, and the power and authority with which He spoke.

In Matthew 7:28, 29 we read about our Lord as He spoke on another occasion:

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (Matt. 7:28, 29).

At twelve years of age, when the Lord was hearing the learned doctors in the temple, "and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46), Luke tells us, And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers (Luke 2:47).

After the Lord had taught the parables in Matthew 13, he went to the synagogue in his own country, and taught. The response of the people was that they said in their astonishment after listening to the Lord, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? (Matt. 13:54b).

The Lord was a powerful teacher. He taught with authority. He spoke the truth of God. ALL THAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN IN SCRIPTURE ABOUT THE POWER OF SCRIPTURE CAN BE APPLIED TO OUR LORD'S TEACHING. Cf. Heb. 4:12. In these days when we are so taken with methods, it is good for us to remember Paul's words to the Corinthians church:

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; **But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God** (1 Cor. 1:21-24).

PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD. GOD USES HIS WORD. IT IS THE MIGHTY INSTRUMENT WHICH GOD HAS GIVEN US FOR THE SALVATION OF SINNERS

AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF THE SAINTS.

7:47 Godet pointed out (p. 641) that by the words "ye also" they were appealing to the vanity, the pride of the officers. It was as though they said, "We can understand why others would be led astray, but certainly not you!" Ryle commented, and it would seem accurately, "The question implies anger, sarcasm, ridicule, and displeasure" (I, 488).

7:48 Then they wanted to know if others among the leaders of Israel had been affected by the Lord's teaching. (John was about to write about Nicodemus.)

7:49 Just in case the officers had been influenced by the sympathetic attitude of some of the people toward the Lord, the Pharisees reminded them "with contempt and scorn" (Ryle, I, 489) that the common people's attitude was worthless. In the minds of the Pharisees, the common people were under judgment from God, and so could easily be deceived.

Then it was that Nicodemus, from whom we have heard nothing since John 3, spoke up and said what is recorded in 7:51.

7:50 In case we have forgotten, John re-introduces Nicodemus to us in this verse--another of the Apostle John's explanatory statements. It is obvious that God is still working in Nicodemus' heart even though he was still "one of them."

7:51 It took a lot of courage for Nicodemus to say what he said here because, although he spoke of "our law," he was, in effect, warning his fellow-Jews that they were coming perilously close to violating the very Law which they claimed to uphold and defend. They were ready to arrest and destroy the Lord when they had not heard from Him, nor had they heard from witnesses who would speak in His defense.

7:52 It is clear that they were basing their charge against the Lord upon false information. The Lord had been raised in Galilee, but He had been born in Bethlehem-Judah, the very place that the prophet had predicted that the Messiah would be born.

Again the sarcasm of the Pharisees was very apparent.

7:53 Although this verse, and the first eleven verses of chapter 8 are not in some MSS, I accept them as authentic. These words express exactly what we could very well expect.

The Lord's time had not come. The plan to arrest our Lord had been aborted. Nicodemus, "one of them," had pointed out a major fault in what the Sanhedrin was seeking to do. Their failure at this point was very apparent. They could do nothing but leave. But we can be sure that their hatred for the Lord had reached its highest pitch, and that they left, defeated for the moment, but more determined than ever that somehow they would eventually arrest the Lord, kill Him, and put an end to His teaching forever.

They were, in the providence of God, to succeed in arresting the Lord, and in putting Him to death--in the God's time, not theirs. But with the combined authority of Rome and Jerusalem what they finally did was to lead to the spread of the Gospel, not only throughout the Empire, but also to all of the nations of the earth.

We need to be reminded of the words of Solomon, written long before our Lord came to the earth:

There are many devices in a man's heart;
nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand
(Prov. 19:21).

When "every man went unto his own house," where did our Lord go? The first verse of chapter 8 tell us,

Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.

How long was He there? Verse 2 tell us that He was there all night.

What was He doing there? It must have been that He went there to pray. He got out of the city, away from the crowds, to spend the night in communion with His Father.

What a lesson for us! When the battle gets rough, and the opposition increases, we need to get alone with our heavenly Father to have our strength renewed and our hearts reassured that it is God's will which will prevail, and that it is best! In the days ahead let us remember this example that our Lord has given us.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 8 -- Part 1
September 24, 1990

Intro: We are starting our second year in the Gospel of John. Last year we completed the first seven chapters, and so now we are ready for chapter 8. But before we begin with that chapter, let me spend some time in reviewing what we have already covered.

John 1 gives us the introduction to the Gospel, and actually introduces us to Christ. We have the testimony of the Apostle John concerning Christ in the first fourteen verses. This is followed by the testimony of John the Baptist in verses 15-34. And the chapter concludes with the testimony of five of our Lord's disciples: Andrew, John, Simon (who became Peter), Philip, and Nathanael.

Beginning with chapter 2 and going to the end of chapter 12 we have our Lord's public ministry in the world--and much of it was to the world.

When He began this period in His ministry, for a time He enjoyed some acceptance. That is apparent in chapters 2 through 4. We have in chapter two the miracle that the Lord performed at the marriage in Cana. In chapter 3 John recorded that amazing contact our Lord had with an outstanding Jew, Nicodemus. This was followed in the same chapter with another account of John the Baptist's ministry, showing the popularity that the Lord was enjoying at the time. And then in chapter 4 we have the familiar account of our Lord's contact with the Samaritan woman and the response of many Samaritans to the Gospel. Chapter 4 ends as the Lord went back into Galilee where at Cana he healed the nobleman's son.

Chapter 5 introduces the change from acceptance to opposition. And it all started with the healing of the man who had been crippled for thirty-eight years. "The Jews" (and remember that that is an official title in John's Gospel for the Sanhedrin) strongly objected because the Lord had healed the man on the Sabbath Day. And the Lord's crime was increased in their eyes when He claimed that God was His Father, making Himself the Son of God. And so the Jews sought to kill Him, considering Him to be a blasphemer. The latter part of John 5 gives us the words which the Lord spoke as He sought to minister to them.

In chapter 6 we have the feeding of the five thousand, followed that night with the account of our Lord walking on the water to deliver His disciples from a storm. And then we have our Lord's claim to be the Bread of Life. So John 6 gives us the fourth and fifth miracles recorded by John, and the first "I am": "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48, 51). We will have the second of the seven I am's in John's Gospel as we come to consider chapter 8.

Chapter 7 tell us that the opposition against the Lord was growing. The Lord was hesitant about going to Jerusalem because He knew that the Jews wanted to kill Him. But He did go for the Feast of Tabernacles, and taught in the temple. It was there that the Jews confronted him again, and He confronted them with the truth. We see in this chapter that a work of grace was going on in the hearts of some of the people, plus the encouraging reaction of the officers who had been sent by the Jews to arrest Jesus. And the chapter concludes with a second reference to Nicodemus who made an appeal to His fellow Jews on behalf of the Lord. The big issue at this point was the Lord's Messiahship which, of course, added fuel to the fire as far as the Jews were concerned.

This chapter gives us the account of how the Jews brought a woman to the Lord who had supposedly caught in the very act of committing adultery. This is followed with our Lord's second claim: to be "the light of the world." And the discourse that followed focused attention upon the assertion that the Lord had made repeatedly: that God was His Father. This, of course, was taken by the Jews to mean that Jesus was claiming to be Deity, which He was. And we see it very clearly in that majestic statement found in John 8:58: "Before Abraham was, I am." All of the other I am's of John's Gospel are tied in with this. It is this which helps us to understand the others.

Now I am going to ask you, as you would expect, to be reading this Gospel as often as you can throughout this school year. Read chapter 8 at least once each week while we are studying it. And as you read, concentrate of what John has to tell us about the Lord Jesus Christ. If we are going to get to know Him better, the only way we can do that is through the Word, and there is no better place to do that than in the Gospel of John. It can be tremendously profitable for all of us, but for each of us the results will depend upon the time we give to reading it and praying over it.

Now let us turn to John 8.

The first eleven verses tell us about the woman taken in the very act of committing adultery--a very, very serious charge. You probably have noticed that this account is not in some of the older copies that we have of John's Gospel, but there are many who believe that it belongs here. I accept it as authentic, and am going to treat it as just as much a part of John's Gospel as the rest of the book.

(Read John 8:1-11.)

Last year Lucille let me buy a set of books that I have wanted to have for many years. It is a set of sermons by Charles Simeon covering the whole Bible. It has been out-of-print for a long time. Several years ago I had four or five volumes of the 21-volume set, but couldn't locate the remainder of the set. One day I was in a book store in Montavilla and there was the whole set. I did not have quite money to buy the set, and so I sold the volumes I did have, plus some other books. But by the time I went to buy the set that I had found, someone else had bought them--and so I was left without any of Simeon's sermons. Just recently, however, the set was republished, and now I have them all.

Charles Simeon was a Cambridge University man in England. He ministered at Holy Trinity Church there in Cambridge for over 50 years, and is credited with getting the Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship started (as it is known today). Simeon lived in the late 1700's and into the 1800's, and he had a unique ministry of Bible teaching.

I want to read to you what he wrote about this passage. I think it will help us all to get a clearer insight into these first eleven verses. This is what Simeon had to say:

It is surprising to see in what a variety of ways the wickedness of the human heart will betray itself: sometimes in the commission of gross iniquity, and sometimes in apparent indignation against it: sometimes in open hostility against Christ, and sometimes in hypocritical professions of regard for

him. What that had seen the zeal of the Scribes and Pharisees against an adulterous woman, would not have thought them the purest of the human race? Who that had heard the citations of Moses' law, and their respectful application to Christ as an authorized expositor of that law, would not have supposed that they truly feared God, and desired to perform his holy will? Who would have imagined that the whole was only a murderous plot against the life of Christ? Yet so it was. These accusers had no indignation against the sin of adultery, nor any love to the law of Moses, nor any zeal for the honour of God: they were actuated solely by an inveterate hatred of Christ, and a determination to find, if possible, some occasion against him, that they might accuse him. Their professed object was, to punish the woman; but their real object was, to lay a snare for his life (Vol. 13, pp. 429, 430).

It seems to me that it would be hard to state the situation here any better than Simeon has done. And verse 6 proves it. It shows the godless character of the scribes and Pharisees that they would use a woman to further their own evil schemes.

8:1 At the close of our last class in the Spring I contrasted this first verse of chapter 8 with the last verse of chapter 7. The people went home; the Lord Jesus went to the mount of Olives (which probably means, the Garden of Gethsemane) to spend the night in prayer. We cannot be sure. One thing seems certain: the Lord got out of the city because of the dangers which faced Him there. Although the Apostle John makes it clear throughout the Gospel that our Lord's enemies could not take Him until His hour had come, yet the Lord did not presume upon the providence of God. He did not walk into trouble. Matthew Henry wrote on this verse that "it is prudent to go out of the way of danger whenever we can do it without going out of the way of duty" (V, 980).

September 25, 1990

8:2 It is interesting to see that even while the opposition against the Lord was growing, the Spirit of God was working in the hearts of the people so that they came to the Lord to hear the Word of God. Note also the diligence with which the Lord carried on with the work that the Father had given Him to do. "He sat down, and taught them."

What we all need is to be taught. Never has there been a teacher like our Lord! Let us remember Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:24-26:
 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 peradventure God will give them repentance
 to the acknowledging of the truth;
 And that they may recover themselves
 out of the snare of the devil,
 who are taken captive by him at his will.

When God is working in the hearts of people, He always draws them to His Word. It is through the Word of God that lives are changed, and only through the Word!

8:3 The scribes and Pharisees had no interest in hearing the Lord as a

Teacher; how illogical for them to come to Him as a Judge. And to show how insensitive they were to the work of God in the hearts of the people, we see them barging in on this Bible class with this woman who had been taken in the act of committing adultery.

Who this woman was, what the circumstances were, who caught her, we do not know. Probably the details are very sparse because her adultery was not the main thing in the hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. They were out to find some accusation that they could bring against the Lord. If He were to defend the woman, then He would come under the judgment of the Law. But how interesting it is to see that the scribes and Pharisees felt that the tenderness and compassion of Christ might get Him into trouble! And it is equally interesting that the people flocked to hear the perfect Lord Jesus Christ, but that they were fearful of the sinful, unrighteous scribes and Pharisees.

8:4 They called our Lord, "Master"--meaning, Teacher. This is further evidence of their hypocrisy because they did not accept His teaching.

In John 13, when the Lord was with His disciples in the upper room, He said this to them:

Ye call me Master (Teacher) 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 (John 13:13, 14).

The point is this: If a man were your teacher, you not only believed what he taught, but you did what he told you to do. And so the use of such a title for our Lord by the scribes and Pharisees was the worst kind of hypocrisy. They were trying to trap Him, not to learn from Him.

8:5 The scribes and Pharisees were right, according to Deut. 22:21.

They wanted to see if this teacher would support the Law, or set it aside. It was one of those carefully devised questions that would have gotten the Lord in trouble either way He answered. He could supposedly have gotten into trouble with the Roman government, or with the people, or as one who was setting aside the Law of God--and very possibly with all three!

This question was very painstakingly planned like the question that the Sadducees asked the Lord (see Matt. 22:23-33) about the seven brothers who had the same wife, and whose she would be in the resurrection.

8:6 How despicable it is for anyone to tempt another, but, even more so, to do this to our Lord. By "tempting him" they were seeking to get Him to say the wrong thing, and so to sin. The scribes and the Pharisees needed to remember another word from the Law: Deut. 6:16a, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God...." In view of our Lord's claim to Deity, and all of the evidence to support that claim, the scribes and the Pharisees should at least have been cautious in putting the Lord to the test even in the good sense of the word, but to deliberately try to get the sinless One to commit sin was in itself a sin of the highest and worst order.

What did the Lord do?

He bent over to write on the ground. The words, "as though He heard them not," should be in italics in your Bible because they are not a part of

the original text. They were added by the translators of the KJV because they felt that this was the meaning of what the Lord did, in writing upon the ground. But we have to say that the Lord was never insincere nor hypocritical like the scribes and Pharisees were. But how wise they would have been not to press the Lord for an answer, as the following verses show.

How can we explain His writing upon the ground?

Remember where He was, and what He was doing. He was in the temple, and He was teaching. I do not really know why He did this, nor do I know what He wrote. But I am going to make a suggestion as to what all of this means. The Lord was continuing with His teaching, and, like any teacher would do, He was writing out, or illustrating by some drawing, the things that He was teaching. The Lord did not have an overhead projector, and so He was using the ground. In other words, the Lord was continuing with His teaching; He did not want to interrupt His teaching in order to answer the scribes and Pharisees.

I may not be right in this suggestion, but it seems more plausible to me that any of the other explanations I have heard.

8:7 But this did not deter the scribes and Pharisees. The wicked, even though they are religious leaders, will often fall into their own trap, like Haman did in his hatred of Mordecai.

We do not know how long, nor how strongly, the scribes and Pharisees continued to press the Lord for an answer, but finally He was forced to answer. Note what He said. (Read.)

8:8 I would assume that John was indicating by these words that the Lord went on with His teaching. He stooped down and continued writing.

8:9 We are taught in Heb. 4:12 that
 ...the word of God is quick, and powerful,
 and sharper than any twoedged sword,
 piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit,
 and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor
 of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

These men did not believe (or said that they did not believe) that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God, therefore Deity. But what an illustration we have here of the power of our Lord's words! Somehow these men who had taken such delight in exposing the sin of that woman, now felt that they were in immediate danger of having their own sins exposed. They could not have known what the Lord could have said about them, but they obviously did not want to hear. And so they did not press the matter any more.

One by one they left, and it is interesting that the oldest left first. Why? Because they had been sinning the longest. It is very likely that some of those scribes and Pharisees, maybe all of them, were guilty of the same sin that they were charging this woman with!

The last words of verse 9 would not indicate that the people whom the Lord had been teaching were gone, but simply that the scribes and Pharisees had gone out and they left the woman there, standing alone.

8:10 I take this as meaning, not that the people were gone, but that of all of those who had come in, interrupting the class, only the woman remained. And so He asked her if she had any accusers.

8:11 She answered, "No man, Lord."

Sometimes the title, Lord, was used like we use the word, Sir. But we also know that most of the time it is used of our Lord in Scripture in recognition of His Deity. We cannot say for sure how this woman was using it, but, in view of what the Lord said to her afterwards, I am persuaded that this woman did not mean sir, but that she really meant Lord! I believe that you and I are going to meet this woman in heaven when we get there.

I say what I have said because that seems to be the only explanation for our Lord's words in the latter part of this verse:

Neither do I condemn thee:
go, and sin no more.

Please turn back to John 3:17, 18. And then read Rom. 8:1a.

Our Lord's words have to mean that sometime, perhaps since this sinning woman came into the presence of the Lord, perhaps earlier, she had trusted in the Lord for salvation. And so the Lord had no condemnation for her. He had come to save her. Her sin, which was very grievous, had been cleansed away. The Lord of glory saw nothing in her worthy of judgment because by the grace of God that sin had been put away.

Concl: Let me apply this passage to all of us in three ways:

First, this incident in the life of our Lord teaches us to be very careful lest we, in any way, put the Lord to the test. The Lord is not accountable to us, and any attempt to make Him accountable can only be sinful in the Lord's sight.

Second, let us be careful about exposing other people's sins. Let us remember that we are sinners, too, and that the Lord has not dealt with us as He could have because of the things that we have done. If the Lord would mark our sins, who of us could stand? Cf. Psalms 130:3. To mark them means to remember them, and to hold us accountable for them.

Third, let us always remember that the Lord delights in mercy, not judgment, that He came to save, not to condemn. And so our attitude should be one of seeking the salvation of sinners, and never to delight in seeing the full judgment of God executed upon them. In wrath the Lord still remembers mercy, and we should do the same.

May the Lord enable us to profit in many ways from this familiar story of the grace of God in the life of a guilty sinner. How tragic that the scribes and Pharisees did not stay behind to learn more about the forgiveness of their sins which were still upon their consciences. Cf. Prov. 28:13, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper...."

The word for all of us who know the Lord, is, "Go, and sin no more."

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
Chapter 8 -- Part 2
October 1, 1990

Intro: In the first eleven verses of John 8 we have the account of the woman who was caught in the act of committing adultery, the charge against her by the scribes and Pharisees, and the Lord's decision concerning her. His final words to her were, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (v. 11).

Those of you who were here last week will remember that I expressed my conviction that this woman had been saved--just when, and where, we do not know. But for the Lord to have no condemnation of her when she had committed such a grievous sin, had to mean that she had sought God for the forgiveness of her sin, and had been saved!

The Lord's word to every believer is: "Go, and sin no more." To be saved means, NO MORE SINNING!

Twice in his first epistle the Apostle John stated this as a truth. In 1 John 3:9 we read these words:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin;
for his seed remaineth in him:
and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

And he repeated that truth in 1 John 5:18:

We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not;
but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself,
and that wicked one toucheth him not.

By these statements the Apostle John was not teaching sinless perfection, but he was teaching that a true child of God does not go on living in sin. If this woman, who had committed adultery, had gone on committing adultery, that would have been evidence that she was not saved. She surely would have had her faults, and, like the rest of us, would have still done sinful things, but it was no longer a way of life for her. The child of God does not continue on in sin. He, or she, avoids sin. He hates sin. He is grieved when he does sin. His life is different because he has been saved! The very fact that the Lord told this woman, "Go, and sin no more," is further evidence that she had been saved.

Now it seems to me that this theme, NO MORE SINNING, goes on through the end of this chapter. And I want to give you some evidence from the chapter to prove what I am saying.

First of all, we have our Lord's claim in verse 12, that He was "the Light of the world." And then He added this:

...he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness,
but shall have the light of life.

Walking in darkness, as we shall see in just a moment, is walking in sin. Walking, as we have learned before means living. A believer is one who follows the Lord Jesus Christ, and a person who is following Jesus Christ will not be living in sin.

Let me give you another piece of evidence that NO MORE SINNING is the subject of this chapter.

Read verses 31-36. The true child of God is no longer the bondservant of sin, but has been set free from sin. He is no longer in bondage to sin. Nor is he free to go on sinning. He is free from sin. And because of this his life is to be characterized by NO MORE SINNING!

These statements from our Lord were followed by the Lord's charge that they were the children of the Devil, and that they would live like the Devil because they were his children, just as a child of God can be expected to live like God, a godly life!

In the book of Romans, when Paul had completed his discussion of justification, he raised the question in Rom. 6:1, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" He answered that question with another question in verse 2: How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" And then at the end of verse 4 after speaking of our participation in the death of Christ, said that "we also should walk in newness of life."

The teaching of Scripture concerning one who has been born again, who has been saved, who has become a child of God, is that you can identify him because he no longer lives in sin. He will not be perfect. Occasionally he will do something sinful. But that is not the way he lives. He used to be the bondservant of sin, but now Christ has set him free.

This teaching has not been emphasized in our generation like it should have been. We are more interested in whether or not a person has gone forward in some service, and made a profession of faith. But we are inclined to overlook that person's life. Is there a change? Does he or she go on living the same way, or has there been a break with sin and a desire to please God? The Lord told the woman here in John 8, "Neither do I condemn thee." That is justification. And then He added, "Go, and sin no more." That is sanctification. And I believe we can correctly assume that that woman went away, and no longer lived in sin. She was not only forgiven; she was free!

With this in mind, then, let us look at this latter part of John 8.

It seems to me that there are FOUR PARTS to verses 12 through 59 (the end of the chapter). They are these:

- 1) The Lord's testimony concerning Himself (vv. 12-20). Basically it was, "I am the light of the world" (v. 12).
- 2) The Lord's teaching concerning the importance of His testimony (vv. 21-30).
- 3) The Lord's instruction as to how to identify a true child of God (vv. 31-47).
- 4) The Lord's claim to honor the Father and to be honored by the Father (vv. 48-59).

We need to keep in mind that much of the Lord's controversy with the Jews throughout the first twelve chapters of John focused upon His claim to Deity, that He was the Son of God. This was especially true of chapters 5-12. And that is true of John 8. The Jews hated Him for making this claim, and thought that He was guilty of blasphemy (which He would have been IF it were not true). This is why at the end of chapter 8 they were again ready to stone our Lord.

Let us keep this in mind as we come in chapter 8 to:

I. THE LORD'S TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIMSELF (John 8:12-20).

We come here to the second of the seven I am's in John's Gospel. Let me review them for you.

- 1) "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35; also vv.48, 51).

- 2) "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; cf. also 9:5; 12:46).
- 3) "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7; also v. 9).
- 4) "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14).
- 5) "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).
- 6) "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
- 7) "I am the true vine" (John 15:1; see also v. 5).

There are these seven titles which our Lord claimed while He was here on earth. However, seeing He combined some, there are actually nine of them, one being mentioned twice: He is the Bread of life; the Light of the world, the Door, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection, the Life (2x), the Way, the Truth, and the True Vine.

In addition we have the reference that the Jews made that He had said, "I am the Son of God" (John 10:36). The Lord did not deny this.

In John 13:13 He used the expression "I am" with the fact that His disciples had called him "Master and Lord."

In John 19:21 we see that the Jews were complaining about the title, "The King of the Jews," which Pilate was going to nail to the Cross. The Jews wanted it to say, not that He was the King of the Jews, but that He had said, "I am the King of the Jews."

So, when we add all of these together where the words "I am" are used, there are thirteen titles:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1) The Bread of Life. | 7) The Way. | 13) The King of |
| 2) The Light of the world. | 8) The Truth. | the Jews. |
| 3) The Door of the sheep. | 9) The True Vine. | |
| 4) The Good Shepherd. | 10) The Son of God. | |
| 5) The Resurrection. | 11) Master. | |
| 6) The Life. | 12) Lord. | |

Previously we have seen that our Lord is the Word, the Light and the Life, the only begotten Son, the Lord, the Lamb of God, the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of Israel. He was called Rabbi, Master. All of these are in John 1.

Just to take this titles for our meditation will result in seeing the great glory of Jesus of Nazareth, the eternal Son of the living God!

In addition to all of this, there were at least seven times when the Lord just used the words, I am. They are usually translated, "I am he," but in the original language of the NT, what He said was simply and majestically, "I am." Cf. John 8:24, 28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8.

Probably the key verse in all of these is John 8:58. And many of you will remember that just the two words, "I am," stand by themselves as a title which rightfully belonged to our Lord. He is the "I am" God.

The background for all of this is in Exodus 3:13, 14 and 6:1-8, especially 6:3!

When we come to John 8:58 we will see that the verse can be translated, as Godet suggested, Before Abraham came into being, I am (p. 682). The Lord was contrasting the historical beginning of Abraham with His own eternal existence (Godet quoting Weiss, Ibid.). Abraham began at his conception, coming from what Godet said was nothingness to existence.

Our Lord never made such a transition. He is eternal, without beginning and without end, a concept which goes beyond our comprehension, and yet it is the truth of God. So, coming back to John 8, there never was a time when the Lord was not Light. After creation He could rightly be called, "the Light of the world."

Now let us go to our text.

8:12 Now let us go back to what I said at the beginning about NO MORE SINNING. Related this statement made by our Lord to what He had said to the woman, "Go, and sin no more." She had been delivered from sin's penalty and from sin's power, but, if she were to experience the blessing of the second in her daily life, she would need to follow her Lord.

He is "the light of the world." And only He is "the light of the world." In John 1:9 we learned that He is "the true Light." As the "true" Light, He is the genuine, the real Light. Light does not explain what the Lord is; He explains in His very being what Light is. There was light in the universe before there was a sun, or moon, or stars because the Creator is "the light of the world."

And the Apostle John gave us further understanding of what this means by what he wrote in 1 John 1:5. He was speaking of God, but since our Lord possesses the same nature as God, it applies to Him as well: "...God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Light is a symbol in Scripture of holiness; darkness pictures sin. God and Christ and the Holy Spirit are perfect light, absolute holiness. If we want to define what light is what holiness is, we have to define Christ. And the person who wants to be kept from sin must follow Him, be taught by Him, obey Him, walk with Him, and seek to be like Him. He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5:21). He did no sin (1 Pet. 2:22). In Him is no sin (1 John 3:5). He is and always has been without sin (Heb. 4:15). Our Lord not only did not sin, but He was incapable of sinning.

Do you want to be kept from sin and become one who is holy in God's sight? Then follow the Lord. Likeness to Christ is godliness and holiness--all that God wants us to be. We cannot follow Him and walk in darkness. Again quoting 1 John, this time 1:6:

If we say that we have fellowship with him,
and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

It is only safe to follow others when you can be sure that they are following the Lord, as Paul said,

Be ye followers of me,
even as I also am of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

In John 1:4 concerning our Lord that

In him was life,
and the light was the light of men.

This helps us to understand the expression, "the light of life." It is our Lord's life that gives us the light that we need. And, as the Psalmist said, "...in thy light shall we see light" (Psa. 36:9). So all of this means that holiness is to be seen in Christ and holiness is imparted to us through Christ. Only Christ can make us holy in thought, word, and deed, which means to be made holy in character--in all that we are and do. And this is what we one day will be. Cf. 1 John 3:1-3.

8:13 The world does not accept this truth. It is not surprising that we

find that the Jews rejected this testimony from the Lord, concerning who He was, saying that He was making this claim for Himself, and that His testimony was not true.

October 2, 1990

When the Lord claimed to be "the light of the world," His statement indicated that apart from Him the world was in darkness--total spiritual darkness. And the reaction of the Pharisees was proof that they were in darkness.

8:14 The Lord spoke here with all of His divine authority. For men it is true that a person's testimony for himself, or actually in any other matter, is not sufficient unless there are others who say the same thing. But this is not true with our Lord. When He spoke of Himself, His witness was true and was to be accepted. And the reason for that was indicated by the Lord in the words, "...for I know whence I came, and whither I go; but ye cannot tell whence I come, and whither I go."

The Lord was speaking here of His mission in the world. The Lord knew why He was on earth. He knew that He had come into the world, not only from the Father, but commissioned by the Father to do the work that He had come to do. And when He had finished that work, He knew that He would go back to the Father, a glorified and triumphant Savior! The Lord knew all of this; the Pharisees knew none of this. Therefore, their opinion regarding Him was inconsequential, unimportant, irrelevant. It was clearly a case where the ignorant should listen to the Wise.

The Pharisees belonged in the class of the naive and the scoffers who are mentioned so often in the book of Proverbs.

8:15 "Ye judge after the flesh." And they were incapable of doing anything else. Although they were religious leaders, they were spiritually blind. And therefore "the things of God" (1 Cor.2:14) were foolishness to them. Judging according to the flesh meant, in this instance, that they saw before them a man, and they considered Him to be only a man.

"I judge no man." This was not His mission. See John 3:17-21; Luke 19:10. The Pharisees had judged the woman taken in adultery, and now they were judging the Lord. Some day the Lord will come as a Judge, but that was not His mission at that time. The Pharisees judged by what they saw, and, therefore, they did not see either in the woman, nor in the Lord, that which God wanted them to see. How different the Apostle John was as we learn from his words in John 1:14. (Quote.)

8:16 At this point the Lord returned to the teaching which is so prominent in John's Gospel: the relationship that He had with God, His Father.

It was not that the Lord was not judging because He was unqualified, nor because He did not have the right; He was not judging because this was not His present ministry. But if He had judged, His judgment would have been true, right, just. And the reason for that was that, although He was a man in the flesh, yet the Father was with Him, supporting Him, fully in accord with all that He was doing.

8:17 At this point the Lord did refer to their Law. Cf. Deut. 19:15.

The Pharisees had said in verse 13 that He was the only one who was saying that He was "the light of the world." Therefore, because it was the testimony of one, and of one whom the Jews thought to be only a man, they rejected it. But here the Lord was indicating that they were bound by the Law to accept the testimony of "two" even if they were only men." As the Lord went on to say what He said in verse 18 the implication is that if they were required by the Law to accept the testimony of two who were only men, how much more if those two were GOD!

8:18 Christ has given testimony concerning Himself, and the Father also has given His testimony concerning Christ.

Cf. John 5:31-39. This is a very important passage concerning the united testimony that has been given to Christ--that He is the Son of God.

8:19 The question of the Pharisees seems to have been asked in contempt and scorn. Ryle (I, 520) referred to Hengstenberg who said that instead of asking who his father was, they asked where he was, as though they were looking around to see him. Calvin, also quoted by Ryle (Ibid.), said that their question implied that they would not consider our Lord's Father's testimony as being any greater than His, which they rejected completely.

This situation with the Pharisees is a good example of what the Lord said in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. The rich man wanted Lazarus to go back to warn his brothers not to come to that place. But Abraham said that they would not believe even if someone came back from the dead to warn them. No amount of evidence, no arguments, could have convinced the Pharisees to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God!

The Lord gave an even stronger rebuke to the Pharisees when He told them that they did not know the Father, nor did they know Him. If they had know the one, they would have known the other.

8:20 This statement was made by John not only for our instruction, but for our comfort and blessing. The Jews would have been delighted to take the Lord at that moment to kill Him. But the unseen hand of God restrained them. And we are assured that they could not touch Him until the Father's time had come.

On this verse, cf. also John 7:30. Also 7:6; 2:4.

Spurgeon makes this comment:

The frequent mention of this intimates how much the time of our departure out of the world depends upon the fixed counsel and decree of God. It will come, it is coming; not yet come, but it is at hand. Our enemies cannot hasten it any sooner, nor our friends delay it any longer, than the time appointed of the Father, which is very comfortable to every good man, who can look up and say with pleasure, My times are in thy hands; and better there than in our own. His (our Lord's) hour was not yet come, nor his testimony finished. To all God's purposes there is a time.

II. THE LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS TESTIMONY (John 8:21-30).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
Chapter 8 -- Part 3
October 8, 1990

Intro: From verse 12 of chapter 8 on to the end of the chapter we find the Lord involved in a dispute with the Jews. It was initiated by the way in which He responded to their inquiry about the woman taken in the act of committing adultery. As we have seen, there is evidence in our Lord's words in verse 11 for us to believe:

- 1) That this woman had trusted the Lord, and so He would not condemn her.
- 2) That he was encouraging her to live a holy life: "Go, and sin no more."

To do this she, and everyone present, needed to understand that He was "the light of the world," and that there could be no holiness, no deliverance from sin, unless the one who had believed followed the Lord.

When the Lord made this claim, the Pharisees objected to His testimony saying that He was making this claim for Himself, but that no one else was making it. The Lord responded by saying that "the Father that sent me beareth witness of me" (v. 18). This infuriated the Jews, and we see in verse 20 that the only reason that the Jews did not lay hands on the Lord then was because it was not "his hour."

This brings us to the third part of the chapter, and the second episode in our Lord's dispute with the Jews. I have called it:

II. THE LORD'S TEACHING CONCERNING THE IMPORTANCE OF HIS TESTIMONY (John 8:21-30).

Were the Lord's claims to be "the light of the world" and the Son of God Who had been sent into the world unimportant claims? Could the Jews just forget about it all and not be the losers? What about people today? Is it important to believe in the Deity of Jesus Christ? Is it important to believe that He is the Son of God, and that His advent into the world was the plan of God the Father?

If our Lord's claims were wrong, then He deserved to be put to death for blasphemy. But if they were true claims, then the Pharisees and all of the people of Israel who heard the Lord were confronted with the most important issue that they had ever faced, or would ever face. The same has been true for people from that day to this day. If Jesus Christ were not the Son of God, then forget about Him. BUT IF HE WERE, THEN WE ALL NEED TO LISTEN TO HIM. TO TURN AWAY FROM HIM CAN RESULT IN ONLY ONE THING: OUR ETERNAL DAMNATION. This is why the Lord, in infinite grace, sought to impress upon the minds of the Pharisees the importance of His claims.

Let us notice what He said.

8:21 In verse 14 the Lord had said that He had come into the world, but also that He was going to leave the world. Here He spoke again of leaving, and that they would look for Him but not be able to find Him. Consequently they would die in their sins, and never would be able to go where He was--which meant HEAVEN!

Therefore, if the Lord's claims were true, this was a matter of supreme importance because it had to do with the eternal destiny of their souls.

Note that we have throughout this passage an emphasis upon the Person of

Christ, i.e., Who He is, and upon the Work of Christ, i.e., the purpose of His mission in the world. As to His Person, He was (and is) the Son of God incarnate; as to His work we can use the words of the Apostle John in 1 John 4:14 where he wrote,

And we have seen and do testify
that the Father sent the Son
to be the Saviour of the world.

"To be the Saviour of the world" meant that He had to die on the Cross. These are the issues we are concerned with in John 8.

Matthew Henry made this comment on this section of John 8:

Christ here gives fair warning to the careless unbelieving Jews to consider what would be the consequences of their infidelity, that they might prevent it before it was too late; for he spoke words of terror as well as words of grace (V, 988).

Nothing can be worse than for people to die in their sins!

8:22 In 7:35, 36 we see what the Pharisees had said before when the Lord had said practically the same thing that He said here in chapter 8. There they said, "...will he go among the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles?" In chapter 8 they realized that He was not going to the Gentiles, and so they made a more ridiculous statement: "Will he kill himself?" It shows how they scorned the Lord, possibly saying what they said to show their contempt for Him.

8:23 How gracious the Lord was in showing them why they did not understand what He had been saying to them. They were "from beneath...of this world." He was "from above" and "not of this world." They were only capable of understanding human truth. He had come to make known to them the truth of God. And this is where Paul's words in 1 Cor. 2:14 apply.

What the Lord had been saying to them was truth "from above," the truth of God which they did not have the capacity to understand. It clearly was foolishness to them.

8:24 Their ignorance was the reason that He had come to tell them about their spiritual need. Here were religious leaders who did not understand human depravity, nor did they understand the righteousness of God. The Lord was proclaiming the Gospel to them. They were under the sentence of death because of their sins, and there was only one way to escape from that death, and that was to believe that Jesus was the "I am"--with all that that implies.

Salvation, then, was not given to one because he was a Jew. Nor was it awarded for obedience to the Law of Moses. Salvation was a matter of faith, faith in Christ--faith in His Person, and faith in His work.

8:25 It is impossible for us to know precisely the attitude of the Jews in asking the question, "Who art thou?" But the general tone of this discussion would lead us to believe that they were trying to provoke our Lord into saying something that could be used against Him.

In answering their question, the Lord had nothing to add, nothing to change. Bishop Ryle quoted Rollock who said that our Lord is an Example to all of us in always telling the same story and bearing witness to the

same truth without any variation.

8:26 Our Lord's words in this chapter indicate that there were many other things that the Lord could have said to enlighten them as well as to judge them, but He had placed Himself under the authority of His Father and was speaking only those things which the Father had sent Him to say.

We see in these words the submission of Christ to the Father. Our Lord did not speak on His own authority (although He certainly had the right to do so). No, He spoke only those things which the Father had sent Him into the world to tell. And so He came back in these words to the point He had made over and over before, that He had been sent on a mission, and that His ministry was confined to delivering the Father's message, and doing the Father's will (although He did not mention the Father in this verse.

8:27 This shows their spiritual blindness, their inability to understand the things of the Lord. He had said many times that God was His Father, and that the Father had sent Him, but at this point it was like He had not said any of those things.

We must take a lesson from the Lord in this. We, too, see the ignorance of people who do not know the Lord. They can be exposed to the same words over and over, but they do not comprehend them. It is like the words had not been spoken at all. We see this continually in dealing with people. Hearing people do not really hear, and seeing they do not see.

8:28 It should be instructive to us to see that, although the Jews showed no comprehension of the truth that our Lord had been telling them, yet that did not keep Him from ministering to them, and giving them more of the truth of God. The Lord spoke here as a prophet. He told them of His approaching crucifixion in the words, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man...." "Lifted up" in John's Gospel always has to do with the Cross. Cf. John 3:14; 12:32, 34.

"When ye have lifted up the Son of man," indicates that they would finally succeed in what they even then wanted to do, only they would have been thinking of stoning the Lord.

Notice that the Lord called Himself "the Son of man." He did this a total of twelve times in John's Gospel. Cf. 1:51; 3:13, 14; 5:27; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 12:23, 34 (2x); 13:31. All, with the exception of John 12:34 (2x) are the Lord's words, and in 12:34 the people were referring to what the Lord had said about Himself.

There is general agreement that this title which our Lord claimed for Himself was taken from Dan. 7:13, 14, where we read:

I saw in the night visions,
and, behold, one like the (a) Son of man
came with the clouds of heaven,
and came to the Ancient of days,
and they brought him near before him.
And there was given him dominion, and glory,
and a kingdom, that all people, nations,
and languages should serve him:
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,

which shall not pass away,
and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This is clearly a Messianic title (although it does not seem from John 12:34 that it was so understood by the people in our Lord's day. It is related to and perhaps we can say the counterpart of "the Son of God." And yet, while it emphasizes the humanity of our Lord, we have to say that the idea of Deity is also there in the word "Son." Leon Morris, in his commentary on John (p. 172) says that the Lord used this title of Himself over 80 times in the Gospels. It was His favorite designation of Himself. No one ever called Him the Son of man except the people in John 12:34 who were quoting Him, and wondering what it meant, and Stephen in Acts 7:56).

But, returning to our text....

The Lord taught here that when He was crucified, then there would be general acceptance among the people that He was the Person He claimed to be, that He had never acted in any way on His own initiative, but that His words had been a revelation from His Father Who had sent Him.

But the meaning seems to be that then it would be too late!

People can have much knowledge about the Lord without knowing the Lord, and we need to recognize this for ourselves, as well as when we are dealing with others.

8:29 Taken in its context, we can see that the Lord was expressing a very great and comforting truth which can and should be a great comfort to us as well.

What was the situation here?

The Lord was faced with a hostile group of Jews. They hated Him, and wanted to destroy Him. They did not believe anything that He said. In a very real sense, the Lord was standing alone. And yet He was not alone because He said, **"And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone."** In John 1:11 we read, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." The Lord did not win any popularity contests while He was here on earth. He was never voted Citizen #1 for any year that He was on earth. He was, as Isaiah said He would be, "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...." (Isa. 53:3a). Even at the time of His death His disciples "forsook him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56). But never at any time during our Lord's time on earth, from His birth to His ascension did the Father leave Him. Something happened while He was on the Cross which caused Him to cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). Yet never in a complete sense did the Father forsake His Son. And this was our Lord's greatest comfort!

And, as the last part of John 8:29 indicates, the constant and perfect presence of the Father in the life of the Son was due to the perfect obedience of the Son: "I do always those things that please him."

Let us be sure that we get the idea expressed by the Lord in this verse. It has to be one of the greatest verses to be found in any of the Gospels depicting the perfect fellowship between the Father and the Son.

"With me" does not just mean present with me, but it means on my side. Let the whole world stand against the Lord, the Father would always be on His side, taking His part, sustaining Him in His humanity during the worst of His trials!

And when things got worse and worse for our Lord, what did He do? He did what He had always done: "I do always those things that please him." The Lord did not just do the will of God when it found some acceptance with people; He did the will of His Father when the world stood against Him and wanted to kill Him.

Let us make the application to our own lives.

What can we expect from the world if we are really living for the Lord, doing His will, the things that are pleasing in His sight? We can expect the same kind of opposition that our Lord got. Let me read to you what our Lord told His disciples on the way to Gethsemane: John 15:18-25.

Note also what the Apostle Paul said in his last epistle to Timothy: 2 Tim. 4:14-18.

And remember the Lord's words to Joshua as he succeeded Moses. (Read Joshua 1:5, 9.)

Also we have Heb. 13:5, 6. And Romans 8:31-39.

So what do we do when people oppose us, when even those who claim to be the Lord's people do not want to hear the truth? Do we quit? No! Do we go underground? No! Do we tone down our message to make it more acceptable? No! What do we do? We simply go on seeking to do that which pleases the Lord. We seek by His grace to be faithful in declaring the truth of His Word, trusting Him to use it when and where He sees fit.

Col. 1:9, 10

The Lord was satisfied just to know that the Father was "with him." And He knew that He had one guiding principle for His life on earth: to do the Father's will. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane He prayed that the cup might pass from Him, and yet, more than that, He wanted the Father's will to be done.

Let us take comfort from these truths, and seek by the grace of God to do what our Lord did. Cf. Isa. 50:7-10.

8:30 And here is another verse that is very important, and very instructive for us as the Lord's people.

Cf. also John 10:42; 11:45; 12:42.

It appeared as though there would be a real turning point in the Lord's ministry. John tells us here that as the Lord spoke the words found in this discourse that "**many** believed on him." It looked like a real awakening had taken place in the hearts of "many." But had it?

As we look ahead into the next section, we soon realize that that was not the case. It simply means that they were convinced in their minds that the Lord was telling the truth, but they were not changed in their hearts! Saving faith means, according to Rom. 10:9, believing with the heart, not just with the mind. A person can be intellectually convinced of the truth of Scripture, and yet not be saved. Or people can be moved

emotionally without being born again by the Spirit of God. This fact has been demonstrated, I am sure, by every evangelistic campaign that has ever been held. We see it in our churches constantly. Men will get on the governing boards of churches who talk like they are Christians, and who put up a good front for years, but then manifest in one way or another that they are not saved. Let us be careful of this even when we deal with one person. If his (or her) profession is genuine, his life will be changed, and he will begin to walk with the Lord. Col. 1:21-23

Bishop Ryle says on this point:

The extent to which men may be intellectually convinced of the truth of religion and know their duty, while their hearts are unrenewed and they continue in sin, is one of the most painful phenomena in the history of human nature. Let us never be content with believing things to be true, without a personal laying hold on the living Person, Christ Jesus, and actually following Him (I, 537).

There is much in the way of valuable instruction for us in these verses. Let us pray that the Lord will enable us to profit from them that we might be more faithful in serving the Lord as He deserves to be served.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
Chapter 8 -- Part 4
October 15, 1990
John 8:31-47

Intro: In John 8 thus far we have considered:

- 1) The account of the woman caught in the act of committing adultery.
- 2) The first two parts of our Lord's controversy with the Jews (vv. 12-30):
 - a) The Lord's testimony concerning Himself (vv. 12-20).
 - b) The Lord's teaching concerning the importance of His testimony (vv. 21-30).

Today we are ready to take up the third part of His controversy with the Jews:

- c) The Lord's instruction as to how to identify a true child of God (vv. 31-47).

The entire controversy at this period in our Lord's ministry goes to the end of the chapter.

Verse 30 indicates that there were "many" people who had "believed" in the Lord, but the following verses are very enlightening as to what we need to know when we are dealing with people who profess to believe in Christ.

III. THE LORD'S INSTRUCTION AS TO HOW TO IDENTIFY A TRUE CHILD OF GOD
(John 8:31-47).

8:31 We can always be thankful when people say that they are believing in Christ, but the Lord certainly was indicating here that we need to look for the evidence of spiritual life in those who claim to belong to Christ. And the Lord expressed that which is most vital to true faith. It is not just that people begin, but that they continue--and it means continuing in the Word. It is not just that they continue coming to church (although that is good), but they continue in the Word! This means that the one who has really been saved will be seeking by God's grace to live in obedience to God's Word. There will definitely be a change in lifestyle! The true child of God wants not only to learn the teachings of Scripture, but he wants his life to conform to that teaching.

What we learn from this passage is that it is possible for people to believe the facts about Christ, and about the Gospel, without having their hearts changed. Salvation is a work of God; true faith is the first evidence that a person has really been saved. As I have said many times before, the Bible knows nothing of a salvation which leaves a person unchanged. But it is a change in accordance with the Scriptures.

This teaching is very prominent throughout the NT. Let us look at some of the Scriptures:

- 1) Matt. 7:21-23.
- 2) 1 Cor. 15:1, 2.
- 3) Col. 1:21-23.
- 4) Heb. 3:14.
- 5) Heb. 6:9-12.
- 6) 1 John 2:3-5.
- 7) 1 John 2:19.
- 8) 1 John 3:9, 10.

Therefore, the greatest testimony that have is not our position in the

church, nor is it our knowledge of the truth, but it is the testimony of a transformed life. We have this straight from the mouth of our Savior.

This is the doctrine known as the perseverance of the saints. We do not continue and press on in order to keep our salvation, but we press on to the end as evidence that we are saved. The person who only talks, but does not walk, is very likely a person who does not really know the Lord.

How many there have been in our own lifetime who have professed faith in Christ, but have not continued. We are more inclined to look upon "the decision" that a person makes, rather than at the evidence that God has done a redeeming work in his heart.

The Lord was using the words "my disciples" of those who truly are saved.

8:32 "The truth" that the Lord spoke of here is the same as "the Word" in verse 31. This is a very important verse for all of us who know the Lord.

When most of us were first saved, we knew very little about the Word of God. But we started to do the things that we knew God wanted us to do, and not to do the things that were forbidden by God. And, if we are discerning, we soon learn that it is obedience that leads to an increased knowledge of the Scripture. Perhaps you remember the Lord's words in John 7:17. A disobedient Christian will be stymied in his search after a greater understanding of the truth. We need to put verses 31 and 32 together. The Lord did. The thing that is vitally important as we read the Word, as we study the Word, as we hear it taught, is our own obedience.

And then the next step that follows is the freedom from sin that we are given through the Word. Cf. Psalms 119:11. In Romans 6:17, 18 says,
 But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin,
 but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine
 which was delivered you (or, unto which you were delivered).
 Being then made free from sin,
 ye became the servants of righteousness.

Do you see why it is so important for us to be reading our Bibles, meditating on the truth, memorizing the truth, going to churches where the Word of God is being taught and preached? As I told our Trinity people last Sunday, God never works apart from His Word. We are saved by the Word. We are sanctified by the Word. We are restored by the Word. And it is through obedience to the Word that we understand it better, and that we experience the power of the Word of God in our lives.

8:33 Here is the first indication that things were not as they seemed to be in the lives of some of the people.

This was a very common claim of the Jews. They were more interested in Abraham and Moses than they were in Christ. And in this respect they were very different from Abraham and Moses. Abraham never taught that, if you were his descendant, you were a child of God. Moses never taught that it was enough to be a Jew--that if you were a Jew, you were a child of God. But the scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's day taught this. They did not know the teaching of John 1:11-13. Paul claimed to be "a Hebrew of the Hebrews," but that did not save him. Abraham was a great man, a wonderful man of God, but he did not save Sarah, nor did he save

Isaac. No relative of Abraham is going to be in heaven because he had Abraham's blood in his veins.

A true child of God understands this.

But then these Jews made another ridiculous statement. They put a political interpretation on our Lord's use of the word "free." But even there they were wrong. What about Rome at that very time? What about Babylong? What about Assyria? What about Egypt? How ridiculous to say, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man...."

However, the most illuminating part of their words is that they showed they knew nothing of the bondage of sin. They did not feel that there was any way in which they needed to be set free.

Matthew Henry, back in the 1700's, made a statement on this verse that could have been written for the times in which we live. Listen to his words:

Carnal hearts are sensible of no other grievances than those that molest the body and injure their secular affairs. Talk to them of encroachments on their civil liberty and property, tell of waste committed on their lands or damage done to their houses, and they understand you very well, and can give you a sensible answer: the thing touches and affects them. But discourse to them about the bondage of sin, or captivity to Satan, and a liberty by Christ,--tell them of wrong done to their precious souls, and the hazard of their eternal welfare,--and you bring strange things to their ears; they say of it (as those did, Ezek. xx. 49), Doth he not speak parables? this was much like the blunder Nicodemus made about being born again (V, 994).

Add to these blunders the fact that they were arguing with out Lord, and we certainly have reason to question the genuineness of their faith. A true child of God does not ever understand all of Scripture, but he does not argue with it. He believes what he does not fully understand, and this in turn leads to understanding.

8:34 The Lord, as the excellent Teacher that He was, sought to clarify the truth for His hearers.

And He preceded it with His familiar, "Verily, verily...." The Lord was dealing with very, very important truth, and that is why He said, "Verily, verily," or Truly, truly, or Amen, amen. The Lord's words are always trustworthy, and we dispute with Him to our own loss--eternally.

As the Son of God He said, "I say unto you." We see the highest authority that He claimed for Himself. As I have said to you before, this is the NT equivalent of the OT, "Thus saith the Lord." Again quoting Matthew Henry, he said that the Lord introduced this statement as He did "to command a reverent attention and a ready assent" (V, 994).

Our Lord in His teaching gives us a perfect illustration of what Paul told Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:24-26:

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 given them repentance

to the acknowledging of the truth;
And that they may recover themselves
out of the snare of the devil,
who are taken captive by him at his will.

Why do people sin? Because they can't keep themselves from it. The Lord was not speaking here of isolated acts of sin, but one who habitually lives in sin. He is a slave to his sin. He does not control it; it controls him. The proof that a man is a slave to sin is to be seen in his continuation in it. This is the opposite kind of continuation that has to be true of a true Christian. The sinner perseveres in sin; the saint, in obedience to God. So a person who professes to be a child of God, yet continues on in sin, is deceived. People can be very sincere in thinking that they are right with God, but it is because they are ignorant of the truth.

The truth that the Lord was speaking of here applies equally to the Jew and to the Gentile.

October 16, 1990

Speaking of man in Prov. 5:22, 23, Solomon said,
His own iniquities shal take the wicked himself,
and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins.
He shall die without instruction;
and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

8:35 Our Lord here was contrasting the lot of a servant with that of a son. It seems doubtful that "the Son" in the latter part of the verse should be capitalized. The Jews had claimed to be the children of God because they were "Abraham's seed" (v. 33). The Lord was showing them that their lives indicates that they were not sons, but servants, servants of sin, and in bondage, hopeless bondage to their sin.

And so the Lord was showing them that although they were as natural descendants of Abraham "in the house," yet they had no assurance whatever that they would continue "in the house." It would be only as sons that they would abide forever. Servants come and go; sons belong, and so remain.

Applying this to our day, this is the difference between one who claims to be a Christian, but is not really saved, in contrast with one who really knows the Lord and is a son of God.

8:36 The only One Who can change us from being servants to sons, Who can deliver us from bondage into liberty, is CHRIST! Only Christ can free us from the slavery of sin. Human psychology can't do it. We cannot do it by self-reformation. A reformed slave is still a slave. The Apostle Paul was speaking of true salvation when he was praising God in his letter to the Colossians (1:13) when he said,
Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness,
and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IS NOT JUST ONE WAY OF BEING DELIVERED FROM SIN--FROM SIN'S PENALTY, AND FROM SIN'S POWER, AND ULTIMATELY FROM SIN ITSELF--IT IS THE ONLY WAY!

8:37 The Lord here was referring to the claim that these Jews had made

in verse 33--that they were "Abraham's seed." He acknowledges that from a human point-of-view that is true. They were Abraham's natural descendants, but spiritually they were not his descendants. And this was evident because, as our Lord said here, "...ye seek to kill me...." And the reason that our Lord gave for their vicious intention was that His Word had no place in them. It was not because the Lord was a Law-breaker, not because He had done them harm in some way. It was because they could not accept, and would not accept, the teaching that He was giving them.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT RELIGIOUS MEN WHO ARE ONLY RELIGIOUS, BUT NOT TRUE BELIEVERS IN CHRIST, OBJECT TO THE PERSON OF CHRIST, AND TO HIS TEACHING. They will pick and choose the things that He taught which suits them, but the heart of the Gospel they reject. So we need to be prepared for resistance from people when we speak to the about Christ and about the Word of God. A person's response to these will indicate what his relationship to God actually is. A true child of God loves to hear of Christ, and he loves the teaching of Christ and of all of Scripture.

8:38 Now when we read this verse we need to remember that the Lord was speaking to people who had professed to believe "on him" (v. 30). They had claimed to be God's children. But at this point the Lord told them that they were in a family all right. But it was not the family of God, but the family of the Devil. (The meaning of our Lord's statement here is clarified in verse 44.) The contrast here is between the Lord's words and their actions. Their actions was in contrast with His words. This made their claim to be in the family of God a false claim.

8:39 It is significant that Abraham held the place in their hearts that only Christ should have. In spite of all that the Lord had told them, they still stood by the claim that they had made in verse 33.

There are two ways to be related to Abraham: naturally, according to the flesh; or spiritually, which is by faith.

Cf. Gal. 3:6-14. Also the entire fourth chapter of Romans.

The Lord was not stressing "the works of Abraham" because he was justified by his works, but because his works were an expression of his faith. Even Abraham was not justified because he was Abraham; he was a sinner like the rest of us, justified through faith in the promised Redeemer. We cannot see a person's faith, but we can see the effect of their faith upon their lives.

Cf. Eph. 2:8-10. Also note our Lord's words in Matt. 7:15-23.

As I have mentioned before, the problem that our Lord was dealing with in this passage continues to be one of the major problems in the Lord's work today: unregenerate church members. It had all but consumed the leadership of the Jews in our Lord's day, and it is so widespread today that it is impossible to measure its extent.

8:40 The Lord was not saying here that Abraham had never tried to kill Him. Our Lord was not on earth in His body when Abraham was here. What the Lord was saying was that Abraham had never rejected the Word of God. He believed the truth, and was justified because of his faith.

8:41 The Lord continued to make a strong emphasis upon doing, upon

works. Cf. vv. 31, 34, 38, 39, 40.

If they were not behaving like Abraham did, and yet, as the Lord said here, they were doing the works of their father, who was their father? Again, that becomes clear in verse 44. But the Jews here seem to realize what the Lord meant by what He was saying. The Lord meant that in rejecting the truth and wanting to kill the Lord they were doing exactly what their father wanted them to do. "Ye" is emphatic.

The Jews realized at this point that the Lord was saying that they were not the children of God. They took this rightly to mean that our Lord was saying that they did not worship the true God, that they were, spiritually, illegitimate sons--not sons of God at all! But they, in their statement, "...we have one Father, even God," was a resort to doctrine. But they did not know that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6b).

8:42 Regardless of what a person's background may be, Jewish or Gentile, if he has a sincere love in his heart for God, he will also be open to and have a sincere love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Nicodemus was in this category. Likewise the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. So was Cornelius in Acts 10. And people who love God, love the Lord because He came from God, not on His own, but because the Father sent Him.

Therefore the genuineness of the Jews' faith, or lack of it, was manifested by:

- 1) Their attitude toward sin.
- 2) Their attitude toward Christ.
- 3) Their attitude toward the teachings of Christ, and toward the Word of God in general.

October 22, 1990

We need to keep in mind that we are dealing with the section in this chapter in which the Lord was teaching the Jews how to identify a true child of God. The section is John 8:31-47.

So far we have had three evidences:

- 1) He accepts and is obedient to the words of Christ.
- 2) He does not continue on in sin.
- 3) He will love Christ.

The Jews claimed to be in God's family because they were the sons of Abraham. But even here the Lord rejected their claim because, as stated in verse 39, they were not doing the works of Abraham. So this was the Lord's rejection of them on a third basis.

8:43 We continue to see, as Matthew Henry observed, that the Lord "sets himself to convince and convert them (the Jews), while they still set themselves to contradict and oppose him" (V, 996).

The Jews were always misunderstanding what the Lord said, or perverting His words in some way. Here the Lord was dealing with the reason why it is that men do not understand the truth. There is a difference here between "speech" and "word." "Speech" has to do with the way that the Lord had expressed Himself: as the Bread of life, as the Light of the world, concerning the meaning of bondage and freedom. His "word" was the greater claim: that He was the Son of God, and that He had been sent by

the Father. When once a person comes to the place where he (or she) can accept the claims of Christ concerning His Person and His work, then it is no problem to accept His teaching.

The idea expressed in "cannot" has been seen in:

- 1) John 3:3, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
- 2) John 3:5, "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."
- 3) John 5:44, "How can ye (or, are you able) believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only (or, the only God)?"
- 4) John 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."

Man is born spiritually blind and deaf. He cannot see nor hear the things of God. We do not need to water down this expression. Nor need we ask ourselves why the Lord called upon people to do things which they could not do--as a criticism of the Lord's teaching. Though unable, the Lord held them responsible. It was designed to show them that they could not save themselves, and that they needed to call upon the Lord to enable them to hear and understand so they could be saved. The natural man does not have the capacity to understand spiritual truth. But it is through hearing the Word that they are divinely enabled to see and hear.

So, if they were to understand the Lord's teachings, they must accept His claims. And they needed to look to God to help them to believe the claims that the Lord was making.

8:44 Here the Lord spoke very plainly to the Jews.

God was not their Father, neither was Abraham in his role as the father of the faithful. The Devil was their father. And they were proving it by their treatment of the Lord and by their response to His teaching.

Just as a child of God manifests in certain ways that he is a child of God, the same is true in a completely different way of a child of the Devil. The Devil does not beget children in the same way that we are born of God. Paul expressed the teaching in Ephesians 2 when he said in verse 3 that before they were saved, the believers in Ephesus were "by nature the children of wrath, even as others," or just like everyone else. So the Devil moves in to take over those who are the children of wrath, and he makes them his children. And by nature they do what he wants them to do.

The Lord pointed out two of the major sins of the Devil which are evident also in his children: murder and lying. The Devil brought the human race under the penalty of death after lying to Eve when he gave his own explanation of the words of the Lord. Hatred goes along with murder. Deceit and hypocrisy, with lying. The Jews before whom the Lord was speaking showed that both of these sins were in their hearts.

In the statement, "the lusts of your father ye will do," the last three words are emphatic! It is not just that the potential is there, but man will look for ways to murder and to lie. On the one hand, man is blind and deaf to spiritual truth; on the other, he has an uncontrollable urge to do that which is sinful in God's sight. And yet the Jews did not believe that they were blind to the truth nor in bondage to sin.

8:45 The devil and his children will believe a lie rather than believe the truth. And as they do it they look upon the truth as a lie instead of being the truth. And yet it is the preaching of the truth that the Lord uses to make people see if they are to see at all.

These verses show how hopeless the job of evangelism is. It is only when God works that people are saved, and they hear, understand, and believe the truth of the Gospel.

8:46 The child of God does not continue on in sin. He has sinned. He was born in sin. He knows what it is to be in bondage to sin. THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, HAS NEVER SINNED! He let the Jews be a jury to pass judgment upon Him. The word "convinceth" means convicteth. He was asking His enemies to produce even one case of sin in His own life. It is interesting that no charge was brought against Him--NOT EVEN SABBATH-BREAKING--which He had not done, but His enemies would have been glad to bring any charge. None was produced.

This was evidence of the proof of His claim. Since He claimed to be uniquely the Son of God, then it was to be expected that He would not even be capable of sin, and never guilty of a single violation of the will of God in thought, word, or action.

Now--if He were sinless, then why would they not believe Him? The sinlessness of Christ is a strong argument for the absolute truthfulness of His teaching. And so the Lord said, "And if..., why....?"

8:47 The reason that they did not hear the Lord, did not understand Him nor believe what He had to say, was not that He was teaching error. It was because they were "not of God."

So this part of the discussion ends with the Lord again touching upon the fact that they did not hear because they did not belong to the Lord--they were "not of God."

The parable of the sower proves that, if the Word is not believed, the problem is with the soil, in the hearts of men, not in the seed. Bishop Ryle said on this verse,

When we see people obstinately refusing to listen to counsel, and to attend to the Gospel, we are justified in regarding them as not God's children, not born again, without grace, and needing yet to be converted (I, 561).

And then he wrote: "Rollock observes that there is no surer mark of an unsanctified nature than dislike to God's Word (Ibid.)."

As we come to the end of this part of the discussion that the Lord was having with these Jews, it is good to be reminded that He was speaking to Jews, according to verse 30, who were among the many who supposedly believed on Him. Their claim to faith was nullified by their rejection of our Lord's claims, their rejection of His teaching, and by the way in they sided with the Devil in their actions and attitudes. Each of us needs to make sure, in the light of the Lord's teaching, that we can rightfully claim to be the children of God!

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
Chapter 8 -- Part 5
October 23, 1990
John 8:48-59

Intro: The theme of this last part of John 8 is, The Lord's claim to honor the Father and to be honored by the Father while He is dishonored by the Jews (John 8:48-59).

8:48 The Lord had answered their arguments. There was nothing else that the Jews could say, and so they resorted to slander. In calling the Lord a Samaritan they were casting the worst kind of reproach upon Him, saying that He was not even a Jew, but a despised Samaritan. This would mean that they wanted to have no more to do with Him for, as the woman of Samaria reminded our Lord, "...the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (John 4:9b).

That was bad enough. But they went on to say that He had a demon--that He was demon-possessed! This meant that they were charging Him with talking like a mad man, like he was insane!

8:49 The Lord rejected their charge, but emphasized again that His sole purpose of earth was to honor, to glorify, the Father. This meant doing what the Father had sent Him to do. Our Lord referred to this in His High Priestly prayer in John 17:4:

I have glorified thee on the earth:

I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.

The Lord hastened to add, "...and ye do dishonour me." In John 5:23 the Lord had said,

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.

It is important for all of us to remember this even today. Regardless of how men may seek to honor God, if they do not honor the Son in exactly the same way, they are not only not honoring God, but dishonoring Him.

8:50 On the Lord seeking His own glory, cf. 7:18.

We never find One Member of the Godhead seeking His own glory at the expense of the glory of the Others. The Lord did not act independently of the Father. He came to do the will of the Father. And so He could say, "...there is one that seeketh and judgeth." He was referring to the Father. The Lord was doing here as we should do: He was casting His reputation and His defense upon the Father. Twice in Proverbs (15:33; 18:12) we read, "...and before honour is humility." The Lord in this instance was humbling Himself, a part of His total humiliation, trusting the Father to vindicate Him and eventually to give Him the glory which He had with the Father "before the world was" (John 17:5b).

It is impossible for us to know how such slanderous, blasphemous statements affected our Lord. Even the Devil and the demons know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The whole behavior of the Lord at this point shows both divine dignity and perfect peace.

8:51 And then the Lord proceeded to offer the Gospel to those Jews

again, these men who just a short time before professed to believe in Him. And we have those familiar words once again, as though the Lord were seeking in a special way at this time to convince the Jews of the truthfulness of what He was saying: "Verily, verily, I say unto you."

The Gospel is not only the offer of eternal life, but it promises deliverance from eternal death. Cf. John 3:16; 5:24. The Lord was not saying here that those Jews could be saved by keeping His saying, but, as He had brought out previously in His discussion with the Jews, only those who keep the Word have been genuinely saved! The Word is kept when we carefully observe what it has to say, and then live accordingly.

8:52 At this point the Jews felt that they had additional and conclusive proof that the Lord was "out of His head." They never seem to have entertained the idea that He was right and that they were wrong! They did what they had done before, what the woman of Samaria had done, and what Nicodemus had done. They put a merely human and earthly meaning on words which the Lord was using to convey spiritual truth. The Lord was not saying that His people do not die physically! He was saying that they do not, will not, and can not die spiritually. Physical death has to do with time; spiritual death is eternal.

They felt that they had a case by saying that Abraham and the prophets were all dead.

8:53 The woman at the well had asked the Lord if He were greater than "our father Jacob" (John 4:12). The Jews here asked if He were "greater than our father Abraham...and the prophets....?" We will find His answer before we get to the end of this chapter and the end of His discussion with them. But we know that the Lord was greater than Abraham, greater than any of the patriarchs, greater than any of the prophets individually, or all of them combined! He was greater than Moses, greater than David, greater than Solomon. He is greater than angels! He is greater than the heavens and the earth. He is greater than all and Lord of all!

And yet they asked as though He had not tried to tell them, "...whom makest thou thyself?"

If they had only asked these questions sincerely, it would have meant the difference for them between hell and heaven! But they were not sincere. They were blind slanderers. Think of what their remorse was after death when they realized that they had been speaking with the Son of God incarnate and had not only rejected His teaching, but had blasphemed His holy Name!

8:54 How gracious the Lord is as He continued to confront the Jews with the truth of the Gospel.

The Lord refused even at this time to honor Himself. He refused to act independently of the Father. He refused to take matters into His own hands. He was content to let the Father honor Him in the Father's own time and way. But the Lord claimed that His Father was the One Whom they claimed as their God.

8:55 Their rejection of Christ proved that they did not know the Father. But He knew the Father. If He said that He did not know the Father, He would have been just as great a liar as they were when they

said that they did know Him. Even in the Lord's case, the proof that He was the Son of God was confirmed by His carefulness in observing the Father's word.

And then it was that the Lord made some very amazing statements concerning Abraham, and Abraham's attitude toward Christ.

October 29, 1990

8:56 Sometimes the NT gives us information about the OT that is not mentioned in the OT, or that is not as clear as we might like for it to be. We read in Gen. 15:6 that Abraham "believed God; and it was counted to him for righteousness." This text was used by Paul in Romans and Galatians, and by James in his epistle, as defining the doctrine of justification by faith. Therefore, we know that Abraham had to believe what we have to believe in order to be saved. And so we can say that Abraham believed in the coming of a Messiah Who would be a Savior, and that he was looking for the coming of that Messiah for his own salvation.

This probably also means that Abraham understood that the blessing which the Lord promised to him in Gen. 12:1-3 was the blessing of salvation! He knew a Redeemer was coming, although he did not know when. Obviously he did not have all of the details that Paul or Peter or James or John had, but he believed that the coming Messiah would provide for his salvation, "and he was glad." I think that we can even say that Abraham probably understood that this was to be at the cost of the Messiah's life. Personally I feel that it had to do more with the Lord's first coming than with His second coming--although Abraham could also have known that eventually the curse of sin would be removed so that there would be a new heaven and a new earth. Let us not underestimate the understanding of OT saints. The details may not have been clear, but the basic truths were.

When the Lord was giving the parables of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 13:11) He said this in Matt. 13:17,
 For verily I say unto you,
 That many prophets and righteous men have desired
 to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them;
 and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.
 What can this mean but that this was the hope not only of Abraham, but of many others in OT times?

Hebrews 11:10 says of Abraham that "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

After speaking of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah, the writer of Hebrews declared,

These all died in faith, not having received the promises,
 but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them,
 and embraced them, and confessed
 that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth.
 For they that say such things declare plainly
 that they seek a country...
 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly:
 wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God:
 for he hath prepared for them a city (Heb. 11:13, 14, 16).

It is very possible also that Abraham saw in Melchizedek a type of

Christ, as well as seeing a portrayal of the death and resurrection of the coming Messiah when he offered up Isaac as a sacrifice. Our Lord's statement in this verse has a lot of food for thought in it.

Abraham not only saw our Lord's day, that is he understood that the Lord would come, but it gave him great joy: "and he was glad." He foresaw the mercy of God toward sinners, and may have been one of the first to understand that the Gospel was not only for his own descendants, but for the whole world.

8:57 Again we see how "the Jews" were inclined to put a merely human and earthly interpretation upon what the Lord said.

They scorned this because of the Lord's age. Because their eyes were blinded to the truth, they could not understand Abraham's faith, nor Abraham's hope.

There are several interpretations of the Jews' reference to "fifty years old":

- 1) Irenaeus, one of the early church fathers, said that this is proof that our Lord lived to be fifty. But this idea had generally been rejected.
- 2) Since the Jews felt that fifty years old was the beginning of old age (because the Levites had to quit serving at that age), there are those who believe that the Jews were saying that our Lord was not yet an old man, so how could he have seen Abraham. There is a good possibility that this is the correct interpretation.
- 3) Others feel that the Lord had aged through the trials of His earthly ministry, and that He looked like a man fifty years old. This, too, is possible.

Whatever may be the true meaning, the Jews made it clear that they did not accept what the Lord had said about Abraham. And so the Lord added the words that we find in the next verse.

8:58 For the fourteenth time in John's Gospel, and the third time in this chapter (cf. vv. 34, 51) we have the now familiar words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you...." This always indicates words that are very important as well as words that are unquestionably true. The Lord was exercising His divine authority in saying what is said here. The Lord would use it here because of the greatness of what He was about to say as well as indicating that they would naturally be prejudiced against His words. And they surely were!

The words literally translated could be stated this way: Before Abraham began, I always was! The Lord was saying that there was a time when Abraham began to exist: at conception. But the Lord Himself never began to exist because He has always existed. Before Abraham was born, He always was! The Lord Jesus was here claiming to be the God Whose Name is "I am."

This needs to be related to our Lord's statement in John 6, "I am the bread of life." And in John 8, "I am the light of the world." And there are more to come.

We see from this that our Lord was claiming to be a distinct Person, a living Person, an unchanging Person. He is without beginning and with ending, and without change. His is an eternal existence. He existed

before Abraham, and, because He was and is God, it was no problem for Him to know what Abraham understood, and what Abraham's reaction was. He saw the Lord's day. He knew what it meant. He trusted in the Lord. And it made him glad. His conviction about the promised Redeemer was so strong that he, knowing that somehow Isaac was a part of that promise, nevertheless proceeded with the sacrifice believing that God could and would raise him from the dead even though we have no record of any resurrection before that time.

8:59 The Jews understood our Lord's claim, but they did not believe it. And so, convinced that He was guilty of blasphemy, "took...up stones to cast at him."

"Hid" is lit., was hidden. The Lord's time had not yet come, and so His enemies were powerless to touch Him. The last two phrases in this verse are not in some of the MSS.

Concl: Ten times in this chapter in this chapter the Jews interrupted our Lord, questioning in one way or another what He had to say. What a testimony of the spiritual blindness of men, in this case, religious leaders! The Lord was "the light of the world," and He was shining forth in this chapter, but the Jews could not see. How tragic, eternally tragic, it was that they wanted to kill Him instead of believing Him and trusting Him.

F. B. Meyer (I, 185) said that "there was a force at work which they (the Lord's enemies) little understood, rendering them powerless to harm Him."

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
Chapter 9
October 29, 1990

Intro: This is the sixth miracle recorded by John--the giving of sight to the man who was born blind. The first five were:

- 1) John 2 -- the water into wine at the marriage in Cana.
- 2) John 4 -- the healing of the nobleman's son.
- 3) John 5 -- the restoration of the man who had been crippled for thirty-eight years.
- 4) John 6 -- the feeding of the 5,000 men plus women and children.
- 5) John 6 -- Jesus walking on the water.

There are three parts to this chapter, all having to do with the miracle:

- 1) The record of the miracle (vv. 1-7).
- 2) The controversy about the miracle (vv. 8-34).
- 3) The Lord's ministry resulting from the miracle (vv. 35-41).

October 30, 1990

9:1 The last phrase of chapter 8 and the first of chapter 9 seem to tie these two chapters together, as though the Lord went from one to the other without much of a break. And so it seems that the Lord went from the dreadful circumstances thrust upon Him by the Jews to His contact with this man who was "born blind." It was not a case where the man had been able to see at one time, and then had lost his sight; this man had never been able to see! And so this makes the miracle even more remarkable. Campbell Morgan made the statement in his book on the Gospel of John that this is the only miracle recorded in the Gospels in which the Lord healed a person with a birth defect (congenital).

It is important to note that the Lord took the initiative in this case. The blind man probably did not even know that the Lord was there. He may not even have heard of the Lord. The following conversation seems to show that he did not know anything about the Lord.

9:2 The disciples had noticed him, too. And they asked the Lord a question. (Read.) Their question revealed the fact that they believed that sickness was due to sin.

We all know that there would never have been any sickness if there had not been sin. Neither would there have been any death. So in that sense sickness and death are due to sin. But that was not the disciples' question. They felt, apparently, that specific cases of physical trouble were the result of someone's sin.

"Rabbi" -- characteristic of John's Gospel. Cf. 1:38, 49; 3:2; 4:31; 6:25; 11:8. It is a title which recognized the Lord as a Teacher. The word comes from a root which means a great one.

The question is quite amazing since, with respect to the man himself, he would have had to sin in the womb, or in some previous existence, for his sin to have been the reason for his blindness. But we have no reason at all to believe that the disciples believed in reincarnation, so we can dismiss that idea. There was, of course, more sense to the possibility that his blindness was a judgment for the sin of his parents.

That disease and other troubles are the result of personal sin, is, of course, the idea that Job's friends argued with him. Even the heathen

people on Melita had that idea when the Apostle Paul was bitten by the viper. See Acts 27:4. Even the Law spoke of God "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate me" (Ex. 20:5) --a penalty for idolatry.

The disciples may have remembered what the Lord said to the man in John 5 who had been crippled for thirty-eight years: "Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee" (John 5:14b). So there are times when sickness and even death are the result of sin. But that is not always the case! And that was not the case here.

9:3 The Lord said that neither the man nor his parents were responsible for the man's blindness. And He gave another reason for sickness (which was the reason in this case): "that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Here is at least one reason as to why God has permitted sin to be in the world.

This man was chosen by God to be one in whom the mighty power of God was manifested, thus providing another opportunity for the Lord to demonstrate that He truly was the Son of God. This miracle and the raising of Lazarus have to qualify as two of the greatest miracles the Lord performed while He was here on earth.

And then the Lord went on to say more.

9:4 Here is our word "must" again. It reminds us that the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus was not something that developed as time went on, but that the Lord had come on a specific mission to do specific works. Among the things that the Father had sent the Son to do, for their mutual glory, was the giving of sight to this man who had never been able to see. How wonderful it is to think of the blessings that come to us in this way.

With respect to our Lord's ministry the references to "day" and "night" must refer to the time when the Lord was on earth in contrast with the time ("night") when He would be back in heaven.

That time of "night" could even have included the time when the Lord would be arrested and crucified. It was then that His works for the world had come to an end.

But the same is true of us. We can only be sure of today. Doors for ministry will not always be open. Therefore, we need to be diligent in doing the works that are at hand. The Lord was probably indicating that even the fierce opposition of the Jews was not to hinder His work. He needed to be diligent in doing the work of the Lord regardless of the consequences. So it is with us.

9:5 This statement surely ties this miracle to the teaching of our Lord in chapter 8 where in verse 12 He had said,
 I am the light of the world:
 he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness,
 but shall have the light of life.

This was going to be true of this man physically, but it was also to be true of him spiritually.

This verse gives us a wonderful picture of salvation itself. Salvation means, among other things, the giving of spiritual sight to those who are

spiritually blind.

We see, as mentioned before, that the Lord took the initiative in this healing, just as He takes the initiative in our salvation. The first moves in our salvation came from Him, not from us.

Our Lord indicated also that this work upon this particular man was a part of the works that the Father had given Him to do. It is the Father Who chose us, the Son Who bought us, and the Spirit Who seeks us and brings us to Christ.

The Lord's words in this verse ought to make us think about the time when He was no longer in the world, i.e., physically present in the world. What about the light then?

Our answer is in Matt. 5:14-16 and Eph. 5:8-10. The light that shines from our lives is:

- 1) Derived our personal relationship and fellowship with the Lord.
- 2) Evident in our lives. We are "the light of the world."
- 3) Shining when we give to others the Word of God. It is "the entrance" (or opening) of God's Word that gives light. Cf. Psa. 119:130.

After this the Lord proceeded to do His work. The Apostle John is the only Gospel writer who recorded this miracle.

9:6 The healing was very simple. The Lord made a mud pack, put it on the eyelids of the blind man.

9:7 Then He told the blind man to go and wash it off in the pool of Siloam. The man obeyed, and then he came back to the Lord "seeing." He demonstrated his faith by doing what the Lord told him to do. This is the obedience of faith.

Concl: Now let me summarize what we have seen in this miracle as being an illustration, or type, of the Gospel and of the salvation of sinners. I am indebted in part for this to Spurgeon and his message, The Blind Beggar of the Temple, and His Wonderful Cure, Vol. 33, pp. 445-456.

First, this man had this problem of blindness from birth. He was born blind. He had never been able to see. This is true of every child who has ever been born from Cain's day down to the present. Man is blinded to the knowledge of God, blinded to his own condition, blinded concerning the Gospel.

Second, his condition was hopeless--and the blind man knew it. See John 9:32. There is no human remedy for the problem of sin and evil.

Third, as I have mentioned, the Lord took the initiative in meeting his need. If the Lord had not had mercy upon him, he would have remained blind for the rest of his life. Just so, there are not many remedies for sin, not many saviors--only One, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourth, the method that the Lord used was very offensive, involving spittle. We probably all draw back a little from this even though it was the Lord Who did this. The Gospel is offensive. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..." (1 Cor. 1:18a). There definitely is an offense to the Cross.

Fifth, the Lord's dealing with him was personal. The Lord put the mud on his eyes. He did not have someone else do it. The Lord told him what to do. We are not saved as groups, even as families. The Lord deals with us one by one, not always in the same way, but leading to the same result--always personally.

Sixth, the remedy was very simple. The Gospel message is simple and clear. And yet there are many who reject it because of its simplicity. This blind man could have argued that way to, but instead he believed the Lord, went to the pool of Siloam (probably taken by friends), and came back "seeing" for the first time in his life.

Seventh, the result was immediate. His sight did not come to him gradually, but at once! As Spurgeon said, "He washed, and his blindness was gone" (Op. cit., p. 454). When we believe, we have. As Spurgeon also said, "It does not take the tick of a clock to justify a sinner" (Ibid.).

Eighth, the man knew that he could see. See verse 25. A certain amount of assurance always comes with salvation.

Ninth, others knew that he could see. See vv. 8, 9. They had trouble believing that it was actually true, but the evidence was there that something wonderful had taken place.

Tenth, there is no record that they man ever lost his sight after that. Solomon wrote in Ecc. 3:14,

I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever:
nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it:
and God doeth it, that men should fear before him.

Salvation is eternal. We are saved through Christ, and will never again be un-saved. We are born into God's family, never to be un-born.

Eleventh, there was a break between him and the religious leaders of the day. They cast him out of the synagogue. There is usually a price to be paid in our relationship with others, especially if we have had religious connections where the Gospel is not believed nor preached.

Twelfth, and finally, he believed in Christ and became a worshipper of Christ. See verse 38. This gives us an added reason to believe that regeneration precedes faith. God does a work in us and for us, and then, with spiritual sight and life, we believe, worship Him, and follow Him.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
Chapter 9 -- Part 2
November 5, 1990
John 9:8-34

Intro: Following this most unusual miracle there was a great deal of discussion and contention over what had happened. It began among the neighbors, and then continued before the Pharisees. This section is divided as follows:

- 1) The discussion and dispute among the neighbors and others in Jerusalem (vv. 8-12).
- 2) The contention involving the Pharisees (vv. 13-34).
 - a) With the man who had been healed (vv. 13-17).
 - b) With the parents of the man who had been healed (vv. 18-23).
 - c) A second examination of the man who had been healed (vv. 24-34).

Let us examine the text of Scripture.

I. THE DISCUSSION AND DISPUTE AMONG THE NEIGHBORS AND OTHERS IN JERUSALEM (John 9:8-12).

9:8 We do not know how many people were around when the blind man was given sight--probably not very many, possibly only the disciples were there. Nor is it clear as to whether or not the Lord waited for the blind man to return from the pool of Siloam--probably not. But the report was not long in getting around.

The people who had been accustomed to seeing him (the meaning of "had seen"), and who knew that he had been blind, "said, Is this not he that sat and begged?"

9:9 Some knew that he was the one who had been blind. Others admitted that there was a similarity, but were reluctant to admit that such a change could have taken place. In fact, the original language seems to indicate that they were saying, "No, he is not the blind man, but he is like him."

Bishop Ryle wrote,

The difference between the look and demeanour of the man before and after his miraculous cure would necessarily be very great. One can quite understand that some would hardly know him again. Augustine remarks, "The opened eyes had altered his looks" (I, 590). So it is not surprising that there was some confusion about him.

But the confusion was settled when he said, "I am he." We are not told that he was asked about it. It rather seems that he volunteered the information to clear up the doubts that some people had. Matthew Henry draws an application that would apply to salvation saying that we should all be ready to acknowledge the change that the Lord has made in our lives.

9:10 Bishop Westcott in his commentary pointed out from this verse that the emphasis of the people was upon the manner in which he had been given sight, not upon the fact of it. See p. 146.

It is natural that they should ask such a question because it seems clear that the people had not been around when the Lord did what He did, and told the man to go wash in the pool of Siloam. The same thing is true with respect to the Gospel. We are to "be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with

meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15).

9:11 And so he told them. Cf. vv. 6, 7. His report was true in every respect. The Greek say, "The man who is called Jesus." It seems to indicate that the Lord was well-known. He called Him "Jesus," not Lord, nor Christ. He was not prepared to acknowledge that the Lord was Deity, nor that He was the Messiah. He looked upon Him at this point as merely the man.

9:12 Then the people wanted to know where Jesus was, but the healed man did not know. And we must realize that he had never seen the Lord and so would not have had any way of recognizing Him even if He had been there. As with salvation, we always learn more about the Lord after we are saved than we knew before.

The rest of this section has to do with:

II. THE CONTENTION INVOLVING THE PHARISEES (John 9:13-34).

The first point under this heading is:

A. With the man who had been healed (John 9:13-17).

9:13 What the purpose of the people in doing this, we cannot say for certain. I think that many are inclined to read into this story a lot of antagonism on the part of the crowd which may not have been there at this point. I would rather think that the people felt that such a miracle as this should be made known to their religious leaders that they might know what a great thing had taken place, or possibly for further investigation.

9:14 This probably means that the man who had been blind was not taken to the Pharisees on the same day that he was healed, but possibly the next day. But the fact that the miracle was performed on the Sabbath Day would have been of special interest to the Pharisees because this was a charge that they had brought against the Lord previously: that of breaking the Sabbath by doing work.

9:15 The Pharisees repeated the question that the people had asked in verse 10. And they received the same answer.

9:16 At this point there was a division among the Pharisees. Some said that the Lord could not have been "of God," that is, that He had not come from God. This is the preposition that is used when the Apostle John wrote the words, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John" (John 1:6). It would be the kind of a statement that would have been used of a prophet, or one who was a man of God. They were putting the Lord in the class of an impostor, or, as they had said before, one who had a demon. They denied that this could have been a work of God.

But there were others among the Pharisees who disagreed. They had their own question. (See the latter part of v. 16.) In calling the Lord "a sinner" we can understand more fully what the other Pharisees meant when they said that He was "not of God." They were calling Him a wicked man because He had broken the Sabbath, or they said that He had broken it.

And so a division existed. It is to be hoped that some who showed that they had some light eventually went on to believe that the Lord had been

sent by God, and that He was the Son of God.

9:17 At this point the Pharisees asked the former blind man what he thought of the one who had given him sight. He responded, "He is a prophet." Ryle believed that this was "the beginning of faith in the healed man" (I, 598). He may have been right. The man did not use the word "prophet" with respect to our Lord's preaching and teaching (because we have no evidence that he had ever heard the Lord teach). He used it of one who is a miracle worker like Elijah and Elisha--a proper use of the word prophet.

The Pharisees were not willing to admit even this much. And so we come to the second part of this period of investigation:

B. With the parents of the man who had been healed (John 9:18-23).

9:18 The Jews did not want to have to admit that a miracle had been performed. And so they hoped that they would get some help from his parents in denying it. The calling of the Pharisees was like a present-day summons to appear in court.

9:19 The Pharisees asked two questions. (Read.) The whole point of these questions was to get the parents in some way to deny that a miracle had taken place.

9:20 The parents claimed him as their son. They also said that he was born blind.

9:21 But they claimed that they did not know how he had received his sight, nor who had given it to him. They had not been eyewitnesses of the miracle. Beyond that they would not go. They said that their son was of age, so he could speak for himself.

9:22 The Apostle John commented here on the reason why the parents did not want to say any more. They feared the Jews, i.e., their religious leaders, the men who appeared to hold their eternal welfare in their hands.

Bishop Ryle mentioned that there are four times in John's Gospel where a reference is made to the "fear of the Jews." Cf. 7:13; 12:42; 19:38. It shows the terrible hold that the scribes, Pharisees, and elders had upon the hearts and minds of the people. What will be the judgment of those men, the Jews, when they stand before God, only the Lord knows. Later the Lord Jesus would denounce them with these words found in Matt. 23:13,

But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men:
for ye neither go in yourselves,
neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

There will be many preachers and priests and religious leaders of all kinds who will face this judgment of the Lord in the end times. Even some parents will fall under the wrath of God, not only because they have refused to come to Christ, but because they have hindered their children from coming to Christ.

The parents of this man who had been blind feared what their son would eventually receive: excommunication! He was cast out of the synagogue only to be received by the One Who made the promise in John 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.

9:23 The parents were responsible for their own decision. What a solemn thing it is to be given the light, and then to turn from it whatever the reason might be.

This led to the third and final phase of this investigation.

C. A second examination of the man who had been healed (John 9:24-34).

9:24 This appears like a final attempt on the part of the Jews to take from our Lord the credit for the performing of the miracle. If the Lord performed it, then the Jews were faced with the problem which they did not want to have, and that was explaining why the Lord was able to perform it. And so they told the former blind man, "Give God the praise." And then they added with an emphatic "we," "We know that this man is a sinner." They were "pulling rank" on the healed man. The Jews were using their position to make this man feel that he really did not know as much as he thought he knew, and that they had the real understanding.

9:25 Here we come to the classic statement of the man who had received his sight. He could not deny their claim that the Lord was a sinner, but neither would he deny that Jesus had made it possible for him to see for the first time in his life.

There is a brevity in the Greek that we miss in the English. Sometimes the most powerful and memorable things are said with few words. What the healed man said was, "Being blind, now I see."

This has often been the testimony of people just after they have been saved. They may not know much about the Lord, and certainly are not able to explain the work of salvation. How the Spirit works in our hearts regenerating us and giving us spiritual sight through the work of Christ on the Cross, is more than any of us can understand. But every Christian knows that there was a time when he was blind spiritually, when he could not understand spiritual truth. After the Lord saves us, we see, and we know it. And we will never lose our sight again.

9:26 It would seem that the Jews, asking for the same information that they had asked for previously, were trying to find some loophole in the man's testimony.

Ryle makes a good comment on the situation at this point. He said, Let it be noted, that faith only looks to the result, and does not trouble itself about the manner in which it is brought about. Unbelief, on the contrary, refuses to look at the result, and excuses itself by raising difficulties about the manner (I, 608).

9:27 Here is an unlearned man rebuking the clergy, showing up their hypocrisy, and probably with sarcasm indicating that the only reason for their interest was that they wanted to become disciples of the One Who had healed him.

9:28 The man's comments brought out the wrath of the Jews. He had unmasked them, and was showing them in their true light. And so

"they reviled him." This means that they treated him with contempt. They did their best to malign him. And they accused him of being one of the Lord's disciples, claiming that they were disciples of Moses. "Thou" and "we" are emphatic.

At this point it is good to remind ourselves of the Lord's words recorded in John 5:45-47. (Read.) The Jews were always quick to claim that they were the seed of Abraham or disciples of Moses, as though that would have set them against Christ. Abraham rejoiced to see the Lord's day, and Moses wrote of Him. But the Pharisees were still in their sins, and so were spiritually blind to their own condition and to the truth of God.

9:29 Again the "We" is emphatic. Notice how the truth is included in what they said, and yet at the same time their rejection of our Lord was the gravest of errors because it had eternal consequences. God did speak to Moses, face to face, and the words He spoke are recorded for us in the books of Moses. But what the Jews failed to recognize was that Moses spoke of Christ.

9:30 From this verse on down through verse 33 we have an amazing display of wisdom on the part of the man who had received his sight. He showed that he had more than physical sight; he had spiritual sight as well.

"A marvellous thing" is something to be amazed at, something to cause people to wonder in astonishment. "Ye" is emphatic, meaning, as Westcott has pointed out, you to whom we look for our guidance and for our understanding, do not know where the Healer is from, and yet He had opened the blind man's eyes. He was rebuking them for not knowing something that they should have known.

His rebuke continued in verse 31.

9:31 God has made no promise to hear sinners. Sometimes He may because of His compassion, but the wicked have no promises to claim. This was generally known, and the former blind man knew this. He realized that God was the One Who had healed him, but he could not dismiss the part that Jesus had in it. But he did know that it was not at all likely that the Lord would have been able to do this if He had been a sinner in God's sight. Instead, the fact that He was the instrument that God used (as the healed man understood Him), he had to be devoted to God and One Who did the will of God.

We have these truths in 1 John 3:22 and 5:14, 15. This is why he believed that the Lord must at least be a prophet whom God had raised up and was using.

9:32 Here is another bit of information for the Jews: What had happened to him, receiving sight after having been born blind, had never performed by any man in the history of the world before! He told the Jews that this was something that a mere man could not do. It had to be a work of God.

9:33 This was his conclusion. Here he was contradicting what the Jews had said back in verse 16. They said that our Lord was not "from God"; the former blind man said that He was "from God." And the evidence was that He could not have done what He did if He were not "of God." This was the conclusion that Nicodemus had reached, too. Cf. John 3:2.

Even the woman of Samaria had said to men of the city,
Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did:
is not this the Christ? (John 4:29).

When God opens the eyes and hearts of people spiritually, they demonstrate a wisdom that confounds and confuses the wisdom of men. The Apostle Paul asked the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:20b), "...hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" How pitiful it is when we see only the wisdom of men displayed in those who profess to be men of God!

9:34 The Jews knew they were defeated, and so they lashed out at the man who had received his sight. How would he dare to presume to be able to teach those who were supposed to be his teachers? And so, not being able to answer him, they excommunicated him. This, by the Jews, was feared second only to death itself.

Bishop Lightfoot pointed out that John the Baptist was the first martyr during our Lord's ministry. This blind man who received his sight was the first to suffer excommunication. Both suffered as they did because they stood for the truth and against sin. There have been many, however, who have followed them, men who like the Apostle Paul could say,
But none of these things move me,
neither count I my life dear unto myself,
so that I might finish my course with joy,
and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus,
to testify the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

What a testimony we have here to a twofold healing: a physical healing, and a spiritual healing. One is just as evident as the other. He took a stand which his parents refused to take. They could see physically, but they were blind spiritually. The same was true of the Jews. When the disciples ask the Lord at the beginning of this chapter, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" Note carefully the Lord's answer: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works [plural] of God should be made manifest in him." Not "the work of God," but "the works of God." Did the Lord mean that there would not only be a physical work, but a spiritual work as well--two works? I think He did.

The last verses of this chapter show us how much better it is to be "in" with Christ even though it means being "out" with men, than to be "in" with men if it means being "out" with Christ.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
Chapter 9 -- Part 3
November 12, 1990
John 9:35-41

Intro: The last part of this chapter gives us the Lord's ministry resulting from the miracle (John 9:35-41).

And this ministry was twofold:

- 1) With the man who had been healed of his blindness (vv. 35-38).
- 2) With "some of the Pharisees" (vv. 39-41).

The first two parts of the chapter were:

- 1) The miracle (vv. 1-7).
- 2) The controversy over the miracle (vv. 8-34).

So here we have:

III. THE LORD'S MINISTRY RESULTING FROM THE MIRACLE (John 9:35-41).

- A. With the man who had been healed of his blindness (John 9:35-38).

9:35 To be rejected by men, even by the most powerful religious hierarchy of the day, does not mean rejection by the Lord. We do not know what the man's reaction was to his excommunication, but he apparently did not have long to think about it because the Lord "found him." However, it does seem that when a person has experienced the work of the Lord in his heart (as they man had, as well as in his body) the hatred of men is no longer an issue in his life. The Lord had started a work, but there was still work to be done.

The Lord asked him the most important question that is ever asked: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" (Some MSS read, "the Son of man." The NKJV and the original ASV translate it, "the Son of God; the NIV and the NASB, "the Son of man.") Ryle pointed out that this is one of a very few times that the Lord referred to Himself as "the Son of God." And he cited John 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4.

The lit. translation of this question would be, Do YOU (emphatic) believe into the Son of man? This is the same preposition that the Lord used in John 3:18: _____. The Lord was asking him if he were trusting in the Son of God for his salvation. Or was he trusting in the synagogue, or in the Pharisees?

9:36 Remember that, at this point, we have had no indication that this man had ever seen the Lord before. So his question should not surprise us. He used the same preposition that the Lord had used: _____.

9:37 This statement made by our Lord should remind us of what He said to the woman of Samaria in John 4:26: "Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he." She had just stated in the preceding verse that she believed in the coming of the Messiah.

So it was not to the high and mighty, the upper class of His day, that the Lord revealed Himself so clearly. It was to that lowly woman and this lowly man. He chooses those who are nothing to bring to nothing the things that are. In this way man cannot take the credit for his salvation because of his position, or his wisdom, or nationality, or anything else. All of the glory always belongs only to God!

9:38 It is interesting to note how receptive this man was, evidence of the Lord's work in his heart. He had no argument with what the Lord told him. He believed in his heart, confessed it with his mouth, and, as Matthew Henry said, "Now the bruised reed was become a cedar" (V, 1025).

Believing that the Lord was the Son of God meant that He believed that our Lord was more than a man, that the Lord had come into this world for the salvation of sinners, and he was putting his trust in the Lord in order that he might be saved, and eventually enter into heaven. Many in the synagogue will never see heaven, but here was one who was cast out of the synagogue, but you can be sure that we will see him some day in heaven.

Those who truly believe do not have to be told to worship the Lord. They do it just as they believe, from their hearts. Westcott (p. 149) pointed out in his commentary that the word used here for worship is never used in John's Gospel of mere respect. Cf. John 4:20-24; 12:20.

Following this we have:

B. The Lord's ministry to "some of the Pharisees" (John 9:39-41).

9:39 It must be that the Lord said this with reference to the excommunication of the man born blind. The word translated "judgment" here is the word for the final sentence of a judge. The Pharisees has passed judgment on the man born blind as though that were their prerogative. That was not their right; that was the right of the Son of God. He came into the world to make the way to heaven, the way of salvation, clear.

And then he spoke, using the miracle that He had performed to indicate the deeper significance of His work.

"That they which see not might see" -- Here He was speaking of the man born blind. He had not only had received physical sight, but spiritual sight as well. "That they which see might be made blind" -- Here He was speaking of the Pharisees. They had physical sight, but their rejection of the truth sealed them in spiritual blindness.

9:40 "Some of the Pharisees" sensed that the Lord was speaking about them--which He was!

9:41 The Lord must have been speaking here of that situation where the Pharisees had rejected the Lord, and had rejected the truth. If they had been ignorant, if they had not been exposed so much to the truth, they would not have been guilty of the sin which was now upon them. But since they claimed to see, therefore their sin remained--and He probably meant that it would continue to remain!

We cannot stress too much the responsibility that men have when they are exposed to the truth. People who do not hear the Gospel will, nevertheless, be lost. But the condemnation of those who have heard the truth and rejected it will be much greater than those who have never heard.

It would seem that Peter's words in 2 Peter 2:21, 22 apply here:

For it had been better for them
not to have known the way or righteousness,
than, after they have known it,

to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.
But it is happened unto them
according to the true proverb,
The dog is turned to his own vomit again;
and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Solomon said,
Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?
there is more hope of a fool than of him (Prov. 26:12).

Godet called our Lord's words here words of "crushing severity" (p. 698). Again let us be reminded that it is a solemn thing to hear the Word of God. People often have the idea that hearing the Gospel is like talking to an insurance man, that you listen, can decide later, or delay it indefinitely with no consequences at all. That is not true with the Gospel. We do not know when the Lord is dealing with a person if He will ever deal with that person the same way again. It seems clear that in this instance the Lord was declaring "judgment" against these Pharisees who claimed to see, and yet were doomed to eternal blindness.

This is a very solemn matter for all of us to consider. How different was the readiness of the man who had been given physical sight to hear and believe the truth as it was, and is, in Christ.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 10 -- Part 1
November 12, 1990
John 10:1-21

Intro: The last statement of verse 21 shows that there is a close connection between this first part of John 10 and the account of the miracle we have considered in John 9: sight given to the man who had been born without physical sight. We can see that as far as the text is concerned, there is no break between the end of chapter 9 and the beginning of chapter 10. So we can assume that the Lord was continuing to deal with the same truth in chapter 10 that had been so prominent in the preceding chapters--that He was the Son of God sent into the world on a mission of salvation, and that He is the only Savior and Judge

In these twenty-one verses we have four parts:

- 1) The parable of the true shepherd (vv. 1-6).
- 2) The Lord's claim to be "the door of the sheep" (vv. 7-10).
- 3) The Lord's claim to be "the good shepherd" (vv. 11-18).
- 4) The division among the hearers (vv. 19-21).

First of all, we have:

I. THE PARABLE OF THE TRUE SHEPHERD (John 10:1-6).

Think now of what we have seen. The Pharisees, along with all of the other members of the Sanhedrin, claimed, in effect, to be the true shepherds of the sheep--the sheep being Israel. The Lord showed in this parable how the true shepherd could be identified. This was illustrated by the way in which the man previously blind had responded to our Lord.

What the Lord gave in this parable is generally true of all shepherds, sheep, sheepfolds, as well as of all thieves and robbers. Any shepherd would recognize the truth of what the Lord was teaching here. But, as is the case with any Biblical parable, we must be careful not to push every detail in the parable to its limit. Ryle quotes a couple of old, quaint sayings about parables. One is that "no parable stands on four legs." Another, "Squeeze parables too far, and you will draw blood from them, and not milk" (I, 625). Parables in Scripture teach one main point. The point of this parable is HOW TO IDENTIFY THE TRUE SHEPHERD. Let us notice what the Lord said.

10:1 Our Lord introduced this very important section with the words we have become familiar with by this time: "Verily, verily, I say unto you..." We need to remember that these are words which suggest a solemn message of great importance. As I have said before, any and everything that the Lord said was both true and important. However, when we find these words like we have at the beginning of this verse, they suggest a message of special importance.

It seems clear that the Lord in this verse was describing the religious leaders of the Jews. They were thieves and robbers. Why have two words. Both the thief and the robber are up to no good, trying to take that which does not belong to them, and which, therefore, they have no right to take. But Bishop Westcott, an authority on the Greek Testament, says that a thief is one who seeks to avoid detection; a robber is one who uses open force to get what he wants. See p. 151.

The point is that those who are not the true shepherds of the sheep try to get at the sheep without being detected, and that they will use any

means necessary to accomplish what they want to do. We could scarcely have a better description of the Jewish leaders. They claimed to be true shepherds, but they were not true shepherds. And in not coming by the door, they were avoiding the truth of the Word of God. They would climb up "some other way," any way by that which was the way of truth. They were actually sheep stealers!

Paul told the Ephesian elders when he was with them for the last time,
For I know this, that after my departing
shall grievous wolves enter in among you,
not sparing the flock.
Also of your own selves shall men arise,
speaking perverse things,
to draw away disciples after them (Acts 20:29, 30).

The figures of speech may be different, but the point is the same.

10:2 In Proverbs 8 "wisdom," which can refer to Christ, or to the ministry of the Word, calls out for a hearing. But one significant thing that is said about "wisdom" is recorded in verse 3:

She crieth at the gates, at the entry of the city,
at the coming in of the doors.

The true shepherd has nothing to hide. He does not try to deceive. He tells the truth, and is out in the open in all that he does.

Our Lord certainly qualified as the true shepherd in this respect. When the Lord was being tried before Annas the high priest, the high priest asked him about His disciples and His doctrine. See John 18:19. The Lord responded with these words:

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.

Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me,
what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said
(John 18:20, 21).

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10:3 "The porter" -- cf. Mark 13:34 where the Lord said,
For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey,
who left his house, and gave authority to his servants,
and to every man his work,
and commanded **the porter** to watch.

"The porter" is a doorkeeper. This was to be the work of the elders in Ephesus. They were appointed to protect the sheep, the people of God, in Ephesus. This is the work of all who are especially called to be the servants of the Lord. Moses was a porter. So was Joshua. The judges were porters, and so were the prophets. The apostles were porters. The porters are appointed by the shepherd. They know who the shepherd is, and open the door only for him.

"Calleth" -- Westcott says that this is not a general call, but a personal, individual call.

True sheep know the voice of the true shepherd. And they hear his voice. They listen when he speaks. He also knows his sheep--"BY NAME." Isaiah made a strong point of the Lord knowing His people "by name." Cf. Isa. 43:1,

But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob,
and he that formed thee, O Israel,
Fear not, for I have redeemed thee,
I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.

In Isa. 45:3 we read,

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness,
and hidden riches of secret places,
that thou mayest know that I, the Lord,
which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

Also Isa. 49:1,

Listen, O isles, unto me; hearken, ye people, from far;
The Lord hath called me from the womb,
from the bowels of my mother
hath he made mention of my name.

In Bible times every sheep had a name. Often in sheepfolds there would be more than one flock. So when a shepherd came for his sheep, he would call them by name, they would respond, and he would lead them out to pasture.

10:4 As the shepherd led his sheep out of the fold, he would go before them. The sheep would follow him because they know his voice.

In verse 3 we learn that the shepherd knows his sheep by name; here in verse 4 we learn that the sheep recognize the shepherd's voice. So there is a mutual acquaintance between the shepherd and his sheep.

10:5 The sheep will not follow a stranger whose voice they do not know. The stranger can be another shepherd, but he is not the shepherd of someone else's flock. The Lord was teaching here that sheep, who in some respects are not the brightest of animals, have an inborn ability to distinguish between the voice of their shepherd and the voice of a stranger.

We as the Lord's sheep learn to recognize His voice from His Word. The better we know the Word, the more we are able to recognize the voice of our shepherd. Knowing His voice protects from following a stranger who would lead us astray.

Going back to John 9, verses 35-38, it is interesting to see how readily the man whose sight had been restored, was quick to respond to the voice of the Lord. He was one of the Lord's sheep, and, when he heard the Lord's voice, he immediately responded to Him, believed Him, and worshiped Him.

These five verses should be read along with Psalm 23. Both passages give us much truth to help us and to strengthen us when we think of what it means that the Lord is our shepherd, and that He used sheep to picture to us our utter dependence upon our Shepherd throughout our lives here on earth.

10:6 As simple as our Lord's teaching was, the Pharisees who were supposed to be men of God and men of the Scriptures, did not know what He was talking about. It seems incredible that they would not have known the 23rd Psalm and other passages where this figure of speech was used in the OT. But apparently they had not at least applied such teaching to themselves and to the people of Israel.

We need to remember what the Lord had told His disciples about parables. They asked Him (cf. Matt.13:10) why He taught the multitudes in parables. See His answer in Matt. 13:11-17.

We need to remember that modern translations do not solve the difficulty that people have in understanding the Word of God. In some instances a passage may be clarified for spiritually minded believers. In other cases spiritually minded people will shy away from some attempts to simplify the Scriptures. Spiritual truth is spiritually discerned. This means that no one can really get the message of any part of the Word of God unless the Holy Spirit shows him (or her) what the meaning is. We need to remember 1 Cor. 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.

Until the Spirit of God ministers to an unsaved person, he neither wants to hear the Word of God, nor is he at all capable of understanding it.

But the Lord continued to minister to these Pharisees, seeking to clarify the truth for them, because He knew that there were some among the Pharisees who were sheep!

And so we come to the second part of this section:

II. THE LORD'S CLAIM TO BE "THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP" (John 10:7-10).

10:7 The "verily, verily..." at the beginning of this verse would seem to link it with verse 1, thus tying together verses 1-6 with that which follows in vv. 7ff. This is the seventeenth time that John has quoted the Lord as using these words.

Previously the Lord had said,

1) "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35; cf. also v. 51).

2) "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; cf. 9:5; 12:46).

Now we have the third:

3) "I AM THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP" (John 10:7, 9). No patriarch, no judge, no prophet, nor did any apostle, ever make such claims as our Lord made.

The Lord is both the Door to the sheepfold and the Shepherd. This is one feature that made His parables difficult to understand. The Lord would depart from what might normally be expected to bring out the truth that He wanted people to understand.

It is both interesting and significant that the Lord did not say, "I am the door of the sheepfold," but, "I am the door of the sheep." We need to be alerted to the fact that we are going to learn some important things about salvation from this chapter about sheep! We will see what these truths are as we proceed through the chapter.

Not everyone is willing to accept this teaching. The Pharisees did not accept it. They would probably have felt that Judaism with its Law, particularly regarding the Sabbath, was "the door." However, the Lord did not say that He was a door, but that He was the door! Therefore, He was excluding the possibility that there was any other door.

We have seen in John 9 that the man who had received his sight, both physically and spiritually, entered the door when it was pointed out to

him by the Lord. It is the door FOR THE SHEEP! Those who are not sheep will argue about it, but those who are sheep will enter in.

In considering this point we need to go back to those words spoken by our Lord in John 6:

- 1) Verse 37,
All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.
- 2) Verse 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.

It will become increasingly clear here in John 10 that when the Lord was speaking about His sheep, He was speaking about the elect. He as the Door has been provided by the Father for the sheep.

10:8 The Lord was indicating here that there had been false Messiahs. There had been those who had claimed what only He had the right to claim. He was not saying that all previous prophets were false teachers. He was saying this only about those who claimed to have His place. They were "thieves and robbers." Cf. 10:1.

Many may have followed them, but the sheep, true sheep, did not follow them. A true sheep will never become a permanent follower of a false Christ, nor of any other false teacher. There is only one Messiah, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. All others are impostors.

People naturally do not like this kind of teaching. They feel that this is being narrow-minded, bigoted. But that is because they do not understand how much it takes to satisfy God concerning our sins. People who object to the Gospel are deficient in two ways:

- 1) They have never seen how abominable their sin is to God.
- 2) They have never seen how much it takes to purchase the forgiveness of our sins.

10:9 Here the Lord reiterated the truth, but not just with respect to the sheep, as such. "I am" is emphatic. And so are the words, "by me." The invitation is open to all. No one who comes to the door will be turned away. Note: "If any man..." It means any person. But he must enter in! This means that the one who enters in is the one who has placed all of his hope for salvation upon Christ and what He came into the world to do. He goes in and out of the sheepfold under the guidance of the Shepherd. It does not mean in and out of salvation. Also, in going out, he finds pasture because that is where the Shepherd will lead him.

10:10 The thief does not come to save, but ultimately to destroy after he has done all of the other damage that he can possibly do. On the other hand, the Lord Jesus came to give life "abundantly"--not just life, but more than life--all that is necessary to maintain that life, and to bring it to full maturity in Christ. This is really a promise indicating that the life that we have in Christ will never end, never be taken away from us.

There is a superabundance with the Lord, grace upon grace. We have received of His fullness, and will never be lacking for that which satisfies God, nor for that which satisfies us.

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III. THE LORD'S CLAIM TO BE "THE GOOD SHEPHERD" (John 10:11-18).

10:11 We come to the third division of this passage. In the first part we had the Lord as the True Shepherd (vv. 1-6). In the second, the Lord as the Door, the Door of the Sheep (vv. 7-10). This is the third.

In both v. 11 and v. 14 a literal translation of the Greek would be, "I am the shepherd, the good one." In verses 11-13 He is good as opposed to the hireling who is not good. The goodness of the Lord is seen in His sacrifice: "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

This is a familiar OT representation of our Lord. We remember what King David said in Psa. 23.

Isaiah 4:11 is prophetic of our Lord:

He shall feed his flock like a shepherd:
he shall gather the lambs with his arm,
and carry them in his bosom,
and shall gently lead those who are with young.

See the whole 34th chapter of Ezekiel, especially from v. 11 on. See also Ezek. 37:24.

See also Zech. 13:7 which was quoted by our Lord in Matt. 26:31.

Also in the NT we have our Lord called "the great shepherd of the sheep" in Heb. 13:20. He is called "the shepherd and bishop of our souls" in 1 Pet. 2:25, and "the chief shepherd" in 1 Pet. 5:4.

The idea inherent in this Greek word, _____, is that of beauty. But not beauty as we Americans might think of beauty. The Greeks thought of beauty, or goodness, as expressing wholeness, or completeness, as Archbishop Trench explained it,

...harmonious completeness, the balance, the proportion, the measure of all the parts one with another of that to which this epithet is given (Synonyms of the N. T., p 389).

In other words our Lord is the Ideal Servant. He is all that a shepherd was ever expected to be. There are no deficiencies in Him. Whatever His sheep require, He is able to do for them. He sheep need no one else in addition to Him. As Matthew Henry said,

Note, Jesus Christ is the best of shepherds, the best in the world to take the over-sight of souls, none so skilful, so faithful, so tender, as he, no such feeder and leader, no such protector and healer of souls as he (V, 1031).

And our Lord went right to the top of all the reasons that He is "the good shepherd"; it is because He "giveth his life for the sheep." That is the supreme evidence of love. Our Lord said,

Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends (John 15:13).

But the Apostle Paul made it even more wonderful when he wrote,

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 (Rom. 5:7, 8).

Bishop Ryle said,

It is probable that the name "shepherd," in Jewish ears, would convey, much more clearly than it does in ours, a claim to be regarded as the Messiah, or Shepherd of souls (II, 7).

And he cited Gen. 49:24.

So the Lord is the best, but He is more than the best; He is the Ideal Shepherd. He is all that a shepherd could possibly be. All other shepherds are inferior to Him, and are to be judged in the light of what He is, and Who He is.

"The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." As Ryle said, "He will die rather than lose one" (II, 7). Our Lord knew that the Cross was ahead. And will you note that here He specifically said that He would give His life "for the sheep"? His death guaranteed the eternal safety of all of His sheep!

10:12 In contrast with "the good shepherd" is "the hireling." He is one who is paid for taking care of the sheep. The sheep do not belong to him. His main concern is the pay that he gets for doing his job. But when "the wolf" comes, he is more concerned about his own safety than the safety of the sheep, and so he flees to save his own life! Wolves are false teachers. Cf. Acts 20:29. The Lord said, and His words are found in Matt. 7:15,

Beware of false prophets,
which come unto you in sheep's clothing,
but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

In Peter's instructions to the elders he said that they were to shepherd the flock, "taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly, **not for filthy lucre**, but of a ready mind" (1 Pet. 5:2). Paul told Titus that one of the requirements for a bishop, or elder, was that he was "not given to filthy lucre."

10:13 The main reason that the hireling flees is because he "careth not for the sheep." This is the same expression that is used in a positive way about God in 1 Pet. 5:7, "Casting all your care upon him, **for he careth for you**." A literal translation would be, "For it matters to him about you." The verb expresses forethought. The Lord is always thinking ahead in His concern for us, anticipating our needs, knowing them before we ask Him about them. The hireling flees because he is concerned about himself; the shepherd will take care of the sheep even if it means dying for them.

10:14, 15 We learned this about shepherds and sheep in the parable at the beginning of this chapter. The shepherd knows his sheep by name, and they know the shepherd by his voice.

It seems that the best reading of verses 14 and 15 would link the two verses together something like this:

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep,
and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me,
and I know the Father....

The knowledge that the Lord and His sheep have for each other is likened to the knowledge that the Father and the Son have for each other. In the

case of our knowledge of the Lord, it is not true to the same extent as His knowledge of us. His knowledge of us is perfect. He not only knows our names, but He knows our addresses. He knows our weaknesses, our temptations, our fears, our foolishness, our needs. And He makes provision for all of them. Our knowledge of Him is growing, but it is not complete. But there is an intimacy about our Lord's knowledge of us, and our knowledge of Him, which the world knows nothing about. If we try to tell them, they are inclined to scoff at it. No one on earth knows the Lord like His sheep do. All of this is truth which is wonderful to contemplate, and it brings great peace to the hearts of those children of God who think about it.

There are differences in our knowledge of the Lord and His knowledge of us. One of this is their duration. When did we first begin to know the Lord? Obviously it was when we were first saved. When did the Lord first know us? It had to be before the foundation of the world because that is when He chose us to be His own. To choose us He had to know who we were. The knowledge that we have of the Lord is found in the Word. It is the Holy Spirit's work to make sure that we are continually growing in our knowledge of the Lord.

10:16 "Other sheep" -- In Isa. 56:8 we read,

The Lord God which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith,
Yet will I gather others to him,
beside those that are gathered unto him.

The context of that verse shows that the Lord was speaking of the salvation of the Gentiles. That seems to be the meaning of our Lord's words here in John 10:16.

We have seen that "God so loved the world...." He also claimed that He was "the light of the world." There have been other suggestions in John's Gospel that salvation was not to be limited to the Jews. "This fold" would be the fold of Israel. The Lord has His sheep, His elect, not only among the Jews, but also among the Gentiles. The Lord's flock is much larger than even the disciples realized.

"Other sheep I have...." Ryle commented,

Let it be noted here that our Lord uses the present tense. The heathen sheep were as yet heathen, and not brought in: yet He says, "I have them." They were already given to Him in the eternal counsels, and foreknown from the beginning of the world. So it was with the Corinthians before their conversion: "I have much people in this city" (Acts 18:10).

And then Ryle quoted Augustine who said,

They were yet without, among the Gentiles, predestinated, not yet gathered in. These He knew who had predestinated them: He knew who had come to redeem them with the shedding of His own blood. He saw them who did not yet see Him: He knew them who yet believed not in Him" (II, 12).

"Them also I must bring." This is a very interesting statement for several reasons. He was referring to people who were already His sheep although they were not yet saved. We can assume that He was saying this in its largest possible meaning so that you and I were included in that statement. Notice that they would not come of their own free will (which they did not have). The Shepherd would bring the sheep. He would call them to Himself. If He did not bring them, they would not come. Note

also that we have our word-friend again in this verse, the word "must." There was no uncertainty in the mind of the Lord about who those "other sheep" were. Neither was there any uncertainty as to whether they would come or not. He "must" bring them, and, if He brings them, they will most certainly come.

"And there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." It should read, "And there shall be one flock, and one shepherd.

Paul wrote to the Ephesian church in Eph. 1:10,
 That in the dispensation of the fulness of times
 he might gather together **in one** all things in Christ,
 both which are in heaven, and which are on earth,
 even in him.

These verses teach us that the Lord just has one people! We probably don't know as much as we think we know about how things will be in eternity. Undoubtedly there is a distinction in Scripture between Israel and the Church. And there may be some way in which these distinctions will carry over into the eternal state, the new heaven and the new earth. But there will be just "one flock, and one shepherd." Hebrews 11:10 tells us about Abraham,

For he looked for a city which hath foundations,
 whose builder and maker is God.

And later on in that same chapter (Heb. 11:13, 14, 16) we read of Abraham and his spiritual descendants,

These all died in faith, not having received the promises,
 but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them,
 and embraced them, and confessed that they were
 strangers and pilgrims in the earth.

For they that say such things declare plainly
 that they seek a country...

But now they desire a better country,, that is, an heavenly:
 wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God:
 for he hath prepared for them a city.

So you and I are going to be in the same flock with Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Daniel, and all of the rest of the OT saints. There is just going to be "one flock, and one shepherd." The Lord Jesus Christ will be the Shepherd of all of us--a large flock made up of Jews and Gentiles saved throughout human history. What a day that will be! We have trouble getting along today in our comparatively small churches. But there will be no trouble in those days! There will be perfect unity, total harmony, and fellowship there such as we have never been able to have here.

10:17 At this point the Lord went back to speak of Himself as the Good Shepherd Who would lay down His life for the sheep.

There probably is no one on earth who is capable of giving a full interpretation of this verse. When we speak of the relationship between the Father and the Son, there are certain aspects of that relationship which we cannot fully explain. It is too wonderful, too glorious, for us to be able to understand and to explain fully. But let me tell you the little that I think that I understand about it.

When the Lord said, "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again," He had to mean that the Father was

in full accord with our Lord's plan to die, and to come back to life. It was the Father's will that He die; it was also the Father's will that He be raised from the dead. There never has been any conflict between the Father and the Son about anything, and there certainly was no conflict between them on these two points.

Perhaps this is our Lord saying what Isaiah said about the Lord's death in Isa. 53:10,

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief:
when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin,
he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days,
and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands.

So what the Lord was going to do for the sheep was most pleasing to the Father.

A second reason for this statement may be explained in part by John 14:21 and 23.

These verses show that obedience to the Lord is our way of telling Him that we love Him. And when we lovingly obey the Lord, we enjoy special blessings from the Father, and a greater fellowship with the Father and the Son. John 14:21, 23 say essentially the same things although the wording is slightly different.

When the Lord uttered the words which we have in John 10:17, let us remember that He was speaking not only as the Son of the Father, but He was speaking as a Man on earth. He was the God-man to be sure, but He was a Man, touched with all of the feeling of our infirmity, tested like we are tested, needing the support and fellowship and blessing of the Father just as we do.

Does this not help us to understand our Lord's words back in John 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.

Do you get the picture? Our Lord was a Man, as Dr. Mitchell used to say, "in the midst of men," hated, despised, rejected. His enemies would gladly have stoned Him to death if it had been in their power to do it. And it is in these circumstances with the Cross before Him that He said, "Therefore doth my Father love me...." Men hated Him because of what He had come to do, because of what He told them about His Father. But the Father loved Him, and drew near to Him, and strengthened Him--something that He had never needed in heaven. But He needed it now. Regardless of what it meant our Lord intended to please the Father by dying for those whom the Father had given to Him, and the Father loved Him in a special way for what He was going to do.

In verse 15 our Lord had said that the Father knew Him. Here He declared that the Father loved Him. These were two great truths which comforted the heart of the Lord as the hatred of men grew stronger and as He Himself moved closer and closer to Calvary.

10:18 "No man taketh it from me," that is, His life. Cf. John 19:10,

11. Peter told the Jews on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:23 that our Lord had been "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." That was the only way they could have taken Him, and crucified

Him, and seen Him die!

The Father delivered Him up. The Lord Jesus voluntarily laid down His life. And with great majesty and glory He took it again! He gave up His spirit, and on that resurrection morn He took it again. And why? It was because of His love for you and for me, BUT EVEN MORE IT WAS BECAUSE OF THE GREAT LOVE THAT HE HAD FOR THE FATHER. The first three I's in this verse are emphatic.

WHEN WE GET TO A PASSAGE LIKE THIS WE NEED TO TAKE OFF OUR SHOES, FALL TO OUR KNEES, SHED OUR TEARS OF JOY AND PRAISE, AND WORSHIP HIM WHO LOVED THE FATHER SO MUCH, AND LOVED US SO MUCH, THAT HE GAVE HIMSELF INTO THE HANDS OF MEN TO DIE FOR US AND FOR ALL OF HIS SHEEP.

This section of the chapter ends with:

IV. THE DIVISION AMONG THE HEARERS (John 10:19-21).

10:19 Even though the Lord had said more than ever before, there still was that old division. Notice that it was "for these sayings." It is always the Word of God that causes a division among men--those who are attracted, and those who are repelled; those who are inclined to believe, and those who will not believe; those who are attracted to the Lord Jesus, and those who was to kill Him.

Cf. John 6:52; 7:43; 9:16.

10:20 Some continued to accuse Him of being demon-possessed.

10:21 Others said that demon-possessed men did not talk like He was talking, and were not able to do what He had done in giving sight to the man who had been born blind. This sounds like there may have been some present who were the Lord's sheep, and who were gradually being led to the Savior.

Again the emphasis is upon the things that the Lord had said as well as the miracles He had performed. Both showed that He was from God. The sheep could hear and see; the rest could not.

One way to identify the Lord's sheep is in looking for a positive response to the Word, not just believing its doctrines, but obeying its commands.

Are you one of the Lord's sheep?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 10 -- Part 2

November 26, 1990

John 10:22-42

Intro: As John 10 continues, it tells us of the continuing conflict that our Lord had with "the Jews." This conflict was kept alive by them, as we learn from John 10:24. Their questions were not sincere. Their object was not to learn, but to catch our Lord in some statement that would make it possible for them to do away with Him. We know from the final outcome of the conflict that they could not be satisfied until they had seen the Lord crucified.

The opposition that the Lord had from the Pharisees teaches us that not all "religious" men are good men; in fact, they can be the most wicked of all.

10:22 This is the only mention of in the Bible of "the feast of the dedication." It was not one of the original feasts given to Israel by Moses. It commemorated the cleansing and dedication of the Temple a little over 150 years before the birth of Christ. The temple had been desecrated Antiochus Epiphanes and the Syrians. Antiochus was defeated by the Jews under Judas Maccabaeus. The history of this is given to us in the apocryphal books of 1 and 2 Maccabees. "The feast of the dedication" was an eight-day feast (like the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles).

This was a joyful feast which expressed the great joy of the Jewish people. It encouraged their faith in believing that some day the Messianic prophecies would be fulfilled. It began on the 25th day of the month corresponding with our December, although it would have been the ninth month in the Jewish calendar (Kislev). It has nothing to do with our Christmas holiday. John simply indicated the time of the year by saying that "it was winter."

10:23 "Solomon's porch" is mentioned three times in the NT: here, Acts 3:11; 5:12. After our Lord's ascension and early in the ministry of the apostles after His ascension, this was a place where the apostles preached, and where miracles were performed.

An article in the ISBE, (IV, 2421) says that it would be better to call this Solomon's portico. A porch is actually a covered entrance to a building. A portico is a covered colonnade supported by pillars. "Solomon's porch," according to historical findings, was supported by double columns. All of this means that the "porch," or portico, would have been a place where many people could assemble and yet be protected from the weather.

We do not know for certain how much time there was between verses 21 and 22, but it seems that it was about two months. (This was the ninth month; the feast of tabernacles mentioned in John 7:2 as being "at hand," was in the seventh month.) Some say that it was three months, but that seems to be too long. However, it seems that it was short enough so that "the Jews" would have remembered what the Lord had said in His previous encounter with them about shepherds and sheep.

10:24 "The Jews" were probably attracted by the crowd of people who were standing around, listening to the Lord. Their comment and request made it sound like the Lord had never discussed these things with them. It is very apparent that they were still looking for some accusation that

they could bring against the Lord.

"Then came the Jews round about him" -- which means that they surrounded Him, forcing our Lord to give them His undivided attention.

Some commentators are of the opinion that the Jews did not expect a Messiah who was God, and so this would be an attempt to have a third charge to bring against the Lord. Remember that the two charges they had were:

- 1) He had broken the Sabbath by performing miracles on that day.
- 2) He claimed to be Deity: the Son of God.

"Plainly" is the same word that is used in Heb. 4:16 where it is translated, "boldly." It means to say everything that a person is thinking, to be perfectly candid.

Even if we were to give the Jews the benefit of the doubt, and say that they were sincere in making such a request of the Lord, it is apparent that unbelief never does have enough evidence to make a person believe. We need to be reminded of what our Lord said in telling the Pharisees the story of the rich man and Lazarus. When the rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead to tell his brothers not to come to that place of torment, Abraham said, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The rich man objected saying that they would believe if someone went back from the dead to tell them. Abraham replied,

If they hear not Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded,
though one rose from the dead (Luke 16:29-31).

10:25 Our Lord's response to them shows that He identified His claim to be the Son of God and His claim to be the Messiah as one and the same. And so He said, "I told you, and ye believed not." Lit. it is, and ye believe (present tense) not.

As we have seen in the earlier part of this chapter, our Lord's claim to be "the good shepherd" was actually a claim to be the Messiah.

Not only had the Lord told them, but they had seen His miracles. But when men reject the light that is given to them, nothing is going to satisfy them.

It is clear that our Lord felt about His own miracles as the Apostle John did, that they were ample to show that "Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (John 20:31).

"The works that I do in my Father's name." The Lord made it clear even before he gave sight to the blind man that He "must work the works of him that sent him." He had also stated many times that He did nothing but what the Father had sent Him to do. All of this was a part of His claim to Deity, even as He declared in verse 30 below that He and the Father were "one."

10:26 Here the Lord gave the real reason that they had not believed: "because ye are not of my sheep." He did not say that they were not my sheep because they did not believe, but that they did not believe because they were not of his sheep. You see, only the sheep, the elect, will believe. Our Lord had the divine point-of-view in mind. God's choice of us precedes our choice of Christ. All are to be saved must

believe, but it is not our faith that determines our destiny; it is the sovereign choice of God! We believe because we are sheep; we do not become sheep by believing. Faith identifies the sheep.

Contrary to what "the Jews" believed, this would mean that there were some Jews who were not sheep, but as there were, according to verse 16, Gentiles who were sheep. This would confirm John 1:13.

Some of the MSS omit the last part of this verse: "As I said unto you." That is why you do not have it if you are reading from the NASB or the NIV. But Bishop Ryle treats it as being a valid part of the text. He suggested two verses that the Lord may have had in mind:

- 1) John 8:47.
- 2) John 10:4.

The next four verses are four of the most wonderful in all of the Gospel of John, and deserve our careful consideration.

10:27 How can we identify the sheep?

Three ways:

- 1) They hear the Shepherd's voice.
- 2) The shepherd knows them, as we have learned, by name.
- 3) The sheep follow the Shepherd.

We like to say, as David said, "My shepherd." The Lord loves to say, "My sheep."

Hearing His voice must have reference to the call of the Lord to salvation. There is a general call that is issued to all people. But there is the effectual call which the Lord gives to His sheep. True sheep are like the man in John 9. When the Lord sought him, and called him, he did not argue. He heard and believed.

The Lord knows us by name, as we have also learned. See also verse 14. This means that He knows His sheep even before it is made known to the sheep that they are sheep. He told the Jews who were contending with them that He knew that they were not sheep.

This statement may help those of you who might be struggling with the doctrine of election. If we take just the knowledge of God, we must all agree that the Lord in His infinite wisdom knows exactly who is going to be saved. Since He is perfect in His knowledge, then that knowledge is certain and unchangeable. Nobody is going to be saved except those whom the Lord knows will be saved. No one will fail to be saved who one of the Lord's sheep. The big question is this: IS IT A CASE JUST OF THE FOREKNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD, AND NOT ELECTION, SO THAT HE MAKES HIS CHOICE ON THE BASIS OF WHAT HE KNOWS WE ARE GOING TO DO?

Our answer will be found in the clear statements of Scripture regarding election. E.g., 2 Thess. 2:13, 14. Also, from a negative viewpoint we have Rom. 3:11,

There is none that understandeth,
there is none that seeketh after God.

Paul was quoting from Psa. 14 and from Psa. 53. If there are "none" who seek after God, how then will anyone be saved? The answer is simple: God has to seek them. Well then, if He seeks a person, calls that person, will that person be saved? Certainly he will! If you say, "No,"

then you do not have a sovereign God, and you ignore Scripture which teaches us that He is sovereign. The will of God is inviolable. Does the Lord bring us against our will. Are we not saved because we want to be saved? Do we not believe? Certainly! BUT YOU CAN ALWAYS BE SURE THAT, WHEN A PERSON BELIEVES, IT IS BECAUSE GOD HAS SOUGHT HIM, AND BECAUSE GOD ENABLES HIM TO BELIEVE.

In James 1:18 we read,

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth,
that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Another important Scripture is 1 Pet. 18-21. (Read.)

10:28 Salvation is a gift from God, but also from the Lord Jesus Christ--a personal gift! We do not work for it. We do not deserve it. That is why it has to be by grace. No prophet nor any apostle ever said, "I give unto them eternal life." Salvation is available only through Christ. And the fact that the Lord said, "I give," means that salvation is a present possession, not something that we hope to receive when we die. These may be truths that are clear to us, but we need to keep telling the message over and over again.

"And they shall never perish." The "never" is a double negative in the Greek, meaning that it is an intensive negative. Our Lord was saying that for a true believer (not one who merely makes a profession of Christ), there is not the slightest possibility that anything could ever happen to cause him to lose his salvation! If a person has eternal life, there will be evidence of it, and his salvation is absolutely secure. He will persevere until the end, and then enter into glory.

Why could the Lord make such a promise?

Because His sheep are in His hand, and no one can take the sheep out of the hand of an omnipotent Shepherd and Savior. People have trouble believing that salvation is eternal when they look at the sheep. But if they would only consider the Shepherd, they would see that salvation can only be permanent.

There are, of course, many who profess to be saved, but who are not saved. The Lord was not speaking of them; He was speaking of sheep!

10:29 If what the Lord had just said were not enough, He added the words in this verse to double the assurance of His sheep.

How did the Lord get His sheep? We have learned what is re-stated here: They were given to Him by His Father. Does the Father anything to do with the sheep once they have been given to the Son? Yes, they are in the Father's hand, too.

The Father "is greater than all." He is greater than the sheep--so they cannot get away from Him. He is greater than the Devil. He is greater than any men, or all men combined. When the nations take counsel together against Him, He laughs! He is greater than religious leaders. They may cast a man out of the synagogue, but they are powerless to cast anyone out of salvation, or to deny them an entrance into heaven. We not only have a sovereign, almighty Savior, but we have a sovereign, almighty heavenly Father.

All of this means that if anyone who is truly saved is ever to lose his

salvation, it is because someone or something has overpowered the Father and the Son. Even the mere thought of such a thing is utterly ridiculous. Who can overpower omnipotence?

Cf. Rom. 8:35-39.

10:30 The Father and the Son are not the same Person. They are two different Persons. But they do have identically the same nature. As the Lord told Philip (see John 14:9), "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." They are one in their attributes, one in their glory. But they are one also in Their purpose, Their will. You will never find any instance when there was any conflict whatsoever between the Father and the Son. The Lord had made that perfectly clear time and time again. He came to do the Father's will. He came to speak the Father's words. He came to do the Father's works. There is always perfect agreement between the Father and the Son. The Father has not chosen anyone that the Son did not want to save. Nor did Christ die thinking that all might be saved when He knew that the Father had chosen those whom He intended to save. He died to guarantee, to accomplish, the salvation of everyone whom the Father had chosen. "I and my Father are one." It is impossible to understand the Godhead if we do not understand this. And we can add the Holy Spirit as well. The Lord Jesus was just as much "one" with the Father in His humanity as He had been before He became a Man.

The Father has the same interest in the sheep that the Son does. He is just as intent on keeping the sheep as the Son is.

We have in this statement the basic statement of the Deity of the Son as well as our guarantee that when we are truly saved, there is not the slightest possibility that we will ever be lost again. Assurance comes when we consider Who the Father is, and Who the Son is, and only after that when we consider that we are Their sheep. If we look at ourselves, we can always find reasons to doubt.

December 3, 1990

10:31 They were acting in accordance with the Law IF what the Lord was saying was not true. If the Lord was telling the truth, then they were guilty of blaspheming His name by wanting to stone him.

Lev. 24:16 says this:

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.

Cf. John 8:59 where they had tried to do this before.

The verbs that are used for "took up" in John 8:59 and here are not the same. Here the verb actually means carried. There hardly would have been stones in Solomon's portico which would have been suitable for killing the Lord. It rather suggests that they came prepared to kill the Lord.

10:32 The Lord was asking them for the reason behind their action. The Jews had evidently seen the Lord perform more miracles than John

has recorded. Each one of the miracles was an answer to the question the Jews asked the Lord in John 10:24. Would they kill Him for doing good works? If so, which one?

Notice that the Lord claimed again, as He had done before, that the works that He was doing were the works of His Father--the works that the Father had sent Him to do, and the works which the Father was doing through Him. This is all a part of His oneness with the Father, a relationship which no one can really explain adequately.

We can see that the Lord was saying, in effect, what He had said in John 8:46: "Which of you convinceth [convicteth] me of sin?" It is very clear that He had done nothing worthy of death.

10:33 They were not focusing now upon His miracles, some of which were done on the Sabbath, but upon His claim of oneness with the Father. Those who say that our Lord never claimed Deity need to consider verse 30 very carefully. The Jews understood that He was claiming Deity, and felt that He ought to be stoned for declaring such a thing.

10:34 Our Lord's response to them is very interesting. He referred them to Psalms 82:6. (By the way, will you notice that our Lord here called the Psalms, the Law? This means that "the law" was not used exclusively in the OT for the Mosaic Law, but in a passage like this is synonymous for the Scriptures. See the same thing in John 15:25 where the Lord was quoting from Psalms 69:4. John 12:34 may be another example of the same thing, but it is not as clear as the two other passages I have mentioned.)

We need to note how the Lord appealed to the Scriptures in His controversy with the Jews. He did the same in His conflict with Satan at the time of His temptation. Cf. Matt. 4:1-11.

In Psalms 82 the Lord was speaking to the judges of Israel (probably their princes, their leaders). The Lord called them "gods." The word there in the Hebrew is Elohim! The Lord probably meant two things when He called them "gods":

- 1) That they held their office by divine appointment. As Paul said in Rom. 13:1, "...the powers that be are ordained of God." God is the One Who sets leaders up, and He is the One Who puts them down.
- 2) That they were exalted about the people because of their position like God is above us because He is God.

10:35 Our Lord's argument continues here. If God called them Elohim because of their position, and they held that position by the Word of God, "and the scripture cannot be broken."

Ryle explains the expression that comes at the end of this verse in a very excellent way. He said,

In this remarkable parenthesis our Lord reminds His Jewish hearers of their own acknowledged principle, that the "Scripture cannot be annulled or broken"; that is, that everything which it says must be received reverently and unhesitatingly, and that not one jot or tittle of it ought to be disregarded. Every word of Scripture must be allowed its full weight, and must neither be clipped, passed over, nor evaded. If the 82nd Psalm calls princes who are mere men "gods," there cannot be any impropriety in applying the expression to persons commissioned by God. The expression may seem strange at first.

Never mind, it is in the Scripture and it must be right (II, 41).

Let me give you another quotation from Bishop Ryle which brings out a point about our Lord's statement in this verse that we should not miss. Listen to what he said:

Few passages appear to me to prove so incontrovertibly, the plenary inspiration and divine authority of every word in the original text of the Bible. The whole point of our Lord's argument hinges on the divine authority of a single word. Was that word in the Psalms? Then it justified the application of the expression "gods" to men. Scripture cannot be broken. The theories of those who say that the writers of the Bible were inspired, but not all their writings,--or the ideas of the Bible inspired, but not all the language in which these ideas are conveyed,--appear to be totally irreconcilable with our Lord's use of the sentence before us. There is no other standing ground I believe, about inspiration, excepting the principle that it is plenary, and reaches to every syllable. Once leaving that ground, we are plunged in a sea of uncertainties. Like the careful composed language of wills, settlements, and conveyances, every word of the Bible must be held sacred, and not a single flaw or slip of the pen admitted (II, 41).

10:36 Our Lord continued. If the above is true of mere men, and it has to be true because it is in the Scriptures, then how could they consider One guilty of blasphemy Who had been "sanctified," set apart, commissioned, **by the Father**, and sent into the world, if He called Himself "the Son of God"?

"Son of God" meant God to the Jews. Cf. John 5:18. This meant to them that He was claiming Deity, One Who had the same nature as God--just as a human son has the same nature as his father.

10:37 OUR LORD'S CREDENTIALS THAT HE WAS THE SON OF GOD WERE HIS WORKS! He called them "the works of my Father." He appealed to them to reject Him if they could account for His miracles in any other way but that He was "the Son of God." Cf. John 20:30, 31. Others before Him had performed miracles, BUT NO ONE HAD PERFORMED SO MANY, NOR MIRACLES OF THE KIND THAT OUR LORD PERFORMED. HE, TO THIS DAY, AND FOR ALL ETERNITY, STANDS AS THE GREATEST OF ALL MIRACLE WORKERS.

Our Lord said that if the Jews could explain His works in any other way than that they were the works of His Father, then they did not need to believe Him.

10:38 BUT IF HE DID!!! "Though ye believe not me," i.e., His words. The Lord was continually pointing to His words and His works. If they could not believe the one, but were convicted by the other, then they should believe what they could, and trust that the other would become clearer to them afterwards. The Lord was saying that, if they would believe in the works, the words would soon become clear--"that the Father is in me, and I in him."

To reject the light we have, or to wait until everything becomes clear, is to remain in darkness. The person who accepts what is clear to him is the person who will receive more light. David said in Psa. 36:9, "...in thy light shall we see light."

The person who rejects Christ because he cannot understand everything in

the Bible, is a person who will never be saved (unless his attitude is changed).

This principle is true for us as believers as well. The more we believe, the more we will understand. It holds true for all of the doctrines of Scripture as it is stated in Heb. 11:3 about creation, "Through faith we understand...."

10:39 We need to understand that even the Lord did not win every person to whom He spoke. If He didn't, neither will we!

We see here the blindness of unbelief. They had to admit that the Lord's works were good works (see v. 33), but the hardness of their hearts kept them from acting upon the light that they could see.

They tried to take (seize) the Lord, but miraculously He escaped. His time had "not yet come" (John 8:20). Eventually they would be able to do what they wanted to do, not by stoning, but by Roman crucifixion. But until the time appointed by the Father arrived, they were powerless to do anything to the Lord. Cf. the difference in John 17:1.

It is interesting to note the reference to hands in this chapter. In verse 28 we have the Lord's hand. In verse 29 we have the Father's hand. Here in verse 39 we have the Jews' hands. No one can take us out of the Lord's hand, nor out of the Father's hand. But the Son of God had no trouble getting out of the hand of His enemies.

10:40 Our Lord left Jerusalem and went down to the Jordan River where John the Baptist had baptized, where our Lord Himself was baptized, and where the writer of this Gospel had first met the Lord. It was a place filled with wonderful memories for our Lord.

"He abode there" --probably for as long as three or four months, until the Passover and His arrest.

10:41 Our Lord's ministry as this time must have been, in some respects, similar to John the Baptist's ministry earlier. "Many" came to Him, and, according to verse 42, "many believed on him there."

In referring to John the Baptist we have the two things that the Apostle John has been emphasizing about our Lord: His words, and His works. Of the two, His words were the most important. The Jews could not deny that our Lord did good works, but they rejected His words. John the Baptist, on the other hand, did no miracles, but people still remembered his words, his words about the Lord Jesus Christ! And they knew that his words were true.

Perhaps there is a suggestion here that after we are gone, people will remember what we have said to them about the Lord, and will then believe. In a sense it would seem that our Lord's fruitfulness at this time was one of the continuing blessings which God poured out upon John the Baptist's ministry. "He being dead yet speaketh" (of Abel in Heb. 11:4b).

10:42 The people believed what John the Baptist had said, but John was not their Savior. They believed John's words, but trusted in Christ. How wonderful it is to speak in such a way that people do not turn to us, but to Christ!

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 11 -- Part 1
December 10, 1990
John 11:1-46

Intro: This is the last of seven miracles recorded for us by the Apostle John which were performed by our Lord before He died on the Cross.

The seven are:

- 1) The water turned into wine at Cana in Galilee (John 2:1-11).
- 2) The healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:46-54).
- 3) The healing of the man who had been sick for thirty-eight years (John 5:1-9).
- 4) The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-14).
- 5) Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:16-21).
- 6) Sight given to a man who had been born blind (John 9:1-7).
- 7) Lazarus raised from the dead (John 11:1-46).

After His resurrection He performed the miracle in which the disciples, after having fished all night with no results, caught 153 fish (John 21:1-14).

The purpose of the miracles is clearly stated in John 20:30, 31.

We must remember that chapter 10 closed with our Lord on the other side of the Jordan river. Chapter 11 begins (vv. 1-3) by telling us what had happened in Bethany. Bethany was about two miles from Jerusalem. The scene shifts in verse 4 to the place beyond the Jordan where our Lord was. That continues down through verse 16. In verse 17 we learn that the Lord went to Bethany, but the events described in this section, down through verse 37, seem to have taken place just outside of Bethany. In verse 37 the Lord went to the tomb where Lazarus was buried. It was there that the miracle was performed. The account is concluded in verse 44. In the last two verses of this section, verses 45 and 46, we see two different reactions that the people had who saw the miracle.

I. THE SCENE IN BETHANY (John 11:1-3).

11:1 This is the first time that Lazarus is mentioned in the NT. He lived with his two sisters in Bethany, a town on the outskirts of Jerusalem. From the information given us in the Gospels about them, it does not seem that any of them was married.

The two sisters were mentioned by Luke in Luke 10:38-42. That passage gives us a further glimpse into the life of this family. (Read.)

Bethany is not called "the town of Mary and her sister Martha" because it belonged to them, but the brother and his two sisters were evidently well-known. Bethany was known as the place where they lived. It may have been that they were not only well-known, but well-to-do. This seems implied from the dinner given in chapter 12 which was attended by many guests.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians that "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Cor. 1:26), BUT SOME ARE! The Lord touched the lives of people in every social level.

11:2 There is no reason to suppose that Mary, Lazarus' sister, was the sinful woman mentioned in Luke 7:37, 38. John wrote his Gospel much later than the other Gospel writers wrote theirs, and so it seems most likely that what John referred to in this verse is the event mentioned in John 12:3. As others have mentioned, it is important to note that every

time Mary of Bethany appears in Scripture she is at the Lord's feet. Mary is remembered in the Scriptures as a person who was unusually devoted to her Lord.

The account in this chapter is focused upon Lazarus because he was sick. We do not know what the trouble was, but it was very serious. We know this because in a matter of just a couple of days Lazarus died.

11:3 The sisters of Lazarus knew that he was seriously ill, and so they decided to send for the Lord. It is interesting to note that they knew where He was at that time.

Their appeal to the Lord was on behalf of him "whom thou lovest." Note: THIS WAS A PRAYER! As Matthew Henry brought out so well, their appeal to the Lord was not that Lazarus loved the Lord, but that the Lord loved Lazarus. MH (V, 1044) said, "Our greatest encouragements in prayer are fetched from God himself and from his grace." The Apostle John has taught us in his first epistle,

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us,
and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 Jn. 4:10).
Bishop Ryle said in his commentary, "His love never changes; ours is wavering and uncertain" (II, 59).

Bishop Ryle went on to say that we should notice that they did not frantically tell the Lord to come at once to heal Lazarus, or at least to do something! They simply presented their burden to the Lord knowing that He would know what would be best to do.

Both of these points are important lessons for us in prayer. Our greatest claim on the Lord is not our love, nor our obedience, nor our service. These are never what they ought to be. But our claim upon Him is in His love for us, that He is a God of mercy and lovingkindness and grace. And while we might tell the Lord what we would like for Him to do, we need to say, in effect, in not in so many words, "Thy will be done." Faith calls upon the Lord, but faith gladly leaves the disposition of each matter in the hands of an all-wise, all-mighty God.

Mary and Martha could not have meant that the Lord loved Lazarus more than any of His other people, but that He was one of the Lord's sheep, and, therefore, loved in a special way by the Lord.

Paul told the Ephesians (5:25),
Husbands, love your wives,
even as Christ also loved the church,
and gave himself for it.

A husband's love for his wife is a very discriminating, selective love. He does not love all women in the same way. The wife is special, very special. And so is Christ's love for His church.

Therefore, we can say that Mary and Martha's belief in election was apparent in their prayer.

II. THE SCENE BEYOND JORDAN (John 11:4-16).

11:4 We learned in John 9:2, 3 that not all diseases or physical problems are due to sin. Here the Lord indicated that not all sickness is unto death. We can be thankful for that! It seems that Mary and Martha did not know this at the time, nor do we ever know in the beginning of a trial,

whatever it might be, what the outcome will be. God's purposes are not always clear. However, we can always be sure that, whatever the testing, it is always designed to bring glory to God. We are to do all things to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31), and God always has this in mind, too. God's glory takes precedence over everything else! This is one thing we must always keep in mind. It is God's purpose, but it needs to be ours, too!

And so this is an important lesson for us to learn, and remember!

11:5 This statement could be parenthetical, not because it is unimportant, but because it seems inserted for the reader's benefit, not because it is a part of the narrative.

The Lord not only loved Lazarus (v. 3), but He loved Martha and Mary. Why would the Apostle John insert this here?

Let me mention two reasons:

1) Because John wanted us to know that not only was Lazarus elect, a true child of God, but so were his sisters. They had a double brother-sister relationship: in the flesh, and in the Lord.

But another reason is this:

2) Because the Lord's delay until Lazarus died would tend to cast a dark cloud over the Lord's love for all three of them. If the Lord really loved them, why would Lazarus get sick, and why would Lazarus die?

When Martha and Mary spoke of the Lord's love for Lazarus in verse 3, they used the verb _____; here the word that the Apostle John used was _____. It seems that this is an example where the two words are used with _____ essentially the same meaning.

There is nothing that can give us greater comfort in a time of testing than to remember the Lord's love for us. As hard as it is for us to understand, the Lord's love for us does not fluctuate like our love for Him does. And nothing can ever separate us from His love--from God's love for us, or from Christ's love for us! Cf. Rom. 8:35-39. We must never interpret God's dealings with us as an indication that His love has stopped, or even changed.

This is another important lesson to be learned from this chapter.

11:6 If faith is to be strengthened, it must be tried! An untried faith is a weak faith. However, one of the hardest things for us to understand are God's delays! We know that He does not wait because He is uncertain about what He should do. We also know that He does not wait because He knows what He wants to do, but cannot do it. Such thoughts of God are wholly inconsistent with His nature. Both His knowledge and his power are infinite. Nor can it be that the Lord has so many people waiting for Him to help them that He has to put us "on hold." We must not think that there is anything that can go wrong without His knowledge of it.

When we have eliminated all other possibly explanation, we can only come up with one answer for God's delays: HE HAS A PURPOSE FOR THEM! But there still is nothing that is harder for us to do than to wait!

But let us also recognize from what we learn in Scripture that GOD ALWAYS DOES SOMETHING BETTER FOR US WHEN WE WAIT THAN HE WOULD HAVE DONE IF HE HAD ANSWERED US WHEN WE WANTED HIM TO ANSWER US, AND HAD DONE FOR US WHAT WE WANTED HIM TO DO AT THE TIME.

Cf. Isa. 30:18; 49:13-16; 54:7, 8.

11:7 We learn from verse 14 that Lazarus was dead! What would be our Lord's purpose in going after Lazarus had died--unless it was to comfort his sisters?

It seems important to note that our Lord did not say, "Let us go to Bethany." Instead, He said, "...into Judaea again." The Lord had fled from Judaea because the Jews had attempted to arrest Him because they wanted to kill him.

So the circumstances seemed to be all wrong. Lazarus was dead, and it meant that the Lord would be going back into that area where His enemies would have been watching and waiting for Him.

11:8 His disciples were amazed that He would even think of going back into Judaea! And they reminded the Lord that was still a very dangerous territory for Him, implying that Judaea was the last place He should go.

11:9 It is hard to see all that the Lord may have had in mind in speaking these words.

The obvious meaning of this and the tenth verses seems to be that the Lord wanted to assure His disciples that He would not throw caution to the wind. There was a need for Him to be in Bethany. Traveling by day was the safest way to go. But...

11:10 If He were to travel at night, there would be more possibility of running into trouble. It is possible that the disciples would have advised Him to travel by night to avoid being discovered by His enemies. But the Lord knew that He must go to Bethany. He would go, and go then. There was no possibility that His work would or could be interrupted before His work was finished.

And then the Lord told His disciples what He intended to do.

11:11 "Friend" is from the root of the verb, _____. It shows how dear Lazarus was, not only to the Lord, but also to His disciples. There was a strong bond of affection between them.

"Sleepeth" -- a common word in the NT for the death of believers, but one which the disciples did not understand at this time. It is not the soul that sleeps, but the body. And this term is used to indicate that raising a person from the dead was no more difficult for our Lord than for us to awaken someone from sleep. The Lord said that He was going to awaken Lazarus.

11:12 This seemed to the disciples to be another reason for not going back into Judaea. Sleep is good for a sick person. So it would seem that to go back to awaken Lazarus would be more detrimental than beneficial.

How insensitive the disciples were at times to the work that the Lord had come to do! They hindered rather than helping. This should remind us of the time when Peter rebuked the Lord for saying that He was going up to Jerusalem, would be killed, and then rise again. Cf. Matt. 16:21-23. The Lord knew that this was the work of Satan, while Peter thought that He was restraining the Lord because of his love for the Lord. This ought to be a lesson to each one of us.

11:13 This verse is a parenthetical explanation given by the Apostle John, similar to what we had in verse 5.

11:14 And so the Lord told His disciples that Lazarus was dead. We have not evidence that this word was brought to Him. Therefore, it must have been due to the Lord's omniscience that He knew Lazarus was dead.

But then he followed it with an important statement of His purpose in waiting as He had.

11:15 The Lord had a purpose in all of this for Lazarus. He also had a purpose for Mary and Martha. Now we learn that He had a purpose in all of this for His disciples. Whoever is touched by any situation has something important to learn from the Lord. No experience in our lives is wasted. There is significance to everything.

"I am glad" means I am pleased. The Lord had ordained all of this to strengthen the faith of the Apostles. Faith needs to grow, and one way it grows is by observing the works of the Lord. The Lord always will be able to do more than we have seen Him do, things which we know not, as the Bible expresses it several times.

The disciples had been inclined to question the wisdom of the Lord in going back to Judaea. Mary and Martha had questions in their minds about the fact that the Lord did not drop everything and come to heal Lazarus before he died. Often from our point-of-view God waits too long! But He is never too late from His divine standpoint! And so when we wait for Him, and watch Him work, we learn to wait the next time, and to believe that He knows what He is doing, and that His way is best.

11:16 It is clear that Thomas was not convinced. But he saw that there was no possibility that they would going to change the Lord's mind. And so he encouraged the others to go with him to be with the Lord, fully expecting that they would die with Him.

Even though Thomas' attitude might not have been right, yet his advice to the other disciples was 100% correct. Even when we do not understand what the Lord is doing, or perhaps even disagree with Him, the wise course of action is always to follow Him. That is when we learn, and that is when the Lord Jesus becomes more wonderful to us than ever before.

III. THE SCENE NEAR BETHANY (John 11:17-37).

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11:17 Our Lord raised two others from the dead. Both incidents are recorded in the Gospel of Luke, and only in Luke. The first was the raising of the son of the widow of Nain. Cf. Luke 7:11-18. The second was the raising of Jairus' daughter. Cf. Luke 8:41-56. In the case of the widow's son, he had been dead for only a matter of a few hours (the bodies of the dead were usually buried the same day they died, or the next day at the very latest). Jairus' daughter had just died when the Lord got to her home. And so the case of Lazarus was unique because his body had been in the grave four days, and some deterioration of the body had already started. This made the raising of Lazarus that much more remarkable.

The four days would also place beyond any doubt (for the skeptics) that Lazarus had really died.

11:18 The distance between Jerusalem and Bethany is mentioned, which was also the distance between our Lord and His enemies. Bethany was no more than two miles away, probably a little less than two miles.

Thus, this was a Judean miracle. MH (V, 1048) made this comment:

Christ's miracles in Galilee were more numerous, but those in or near Jerusalem were more illustrious; there he healed one that had been diseased thirty-eight years, another that had been blind from his birth, and raised one that had been dead four days.

11:19 This statement, too, confirms the death of Lazarus.

It was to be expected that friends would come to comfort Mary and Martha, but John said "many of the Jews came." This was an indication of the love that people had for this family, and that they were a prominent family. But it seems that God was doing something else. The Lord used this natural situation to gather many who would be witnesses of the raising of Lazarus from the dead! The Lord did not call people to see His miracles performed, but He did use circumstances like this to give greater confirmation to those who would be more inclined to doubt than to believe.

11:20 Verses 20 through 27 tell about our Lord's meeting with Martha.

Bishop Westcott believes that the words, "Jesus was coming," were the exact message that was brought to Martha: "Jesus is coming!" (The verb translated "was coming" is actually in the present tense.) She had undoubtedly expected that He would come, so when she heard the news she dropped everything to go to Him. Our Lord was the most welcome Comforter of all! Mary may have been in seclusion in another part of the house, and was not told that the Lord had come.

This is a very touching scene--when the Lord first met Martha after His arrival.

11:21 Along with her disappointment and confusion, there is still a certain amount of faith expressed in Martha's words. She still did not understand why the Lord had not come. She felt that, had He come sooner, Lazarus would not have died.

When Mary came to the Lord in verse 32 she said the same thing. So it seems apparent that the sisters had agreed upon this as they talked together about Him after Lazarus died. If the Lord had only come, Lazarus, they believed, would still be alive. They looked at what had happened, and concluded that the reason for Lazarus' death was the Lord's absence.

We do this all of the time, don't we? We pray for something. God does not answer our prayer. But we do not look beyond that fact. We say, "If the Lord had only answered my prayers, how different things would be!" It rarely occurs to us that the Lord might have some other purpose. Perhaps He is going to teach us more about His power than we have known before. Or perhaps there is something in our lives that needs to be cleared up before the Lord will grant our request. Martha's experience shows us that in such times our hearts need to be open to the Lord to teach us what He wants us to know.

Evidently Martha had not heard the healing of the centurion's servant. Cf. Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10. Or if she had known about that miracle, she and Mary had not remembered it in their own crisis over Lazarus.

But this incident also teaches us another lesson. We are always inclined to think that the Lord can only do what we have seen Him do, or heard that He can do, before. Remember Jer. 33:3 with its "which thou knowest not." Our God is not limited to what He has already done. He is continually doing "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20). So fresh trials provide us with new opportunities to see God doing things that we have never seen Him do before.

11:22 Here Martha was like Abraham "who against hope believed in hope" (Rom. 4:18a). She did not express what was in her mind, but it is clear that she thought that even at that late time the Lord might do something to make it all turn out right. We especially see that she had the greatest confidence in the Lord's prayers.

I would say that we have evidence here that faith is from God. You would think that Martha would have said, "I will never trust the Lord again." But she did not say that.

Here I am reminded of Abraham when he went out to offer Isaac as a sacrifice. When he left his servants, as he and Isaac went on to the place of the sacrifice, he told them, "...I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you" (Gen. 22:5). He really expected to bring Isaac back with him alive! Maybe he felt that the Lord would intervene in some way, stopping the sacrifice. But when we turn to the book of Hebrews, we get another idea. In chapter 11 we read, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac...accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11:17a, 19). This is all the more remarkable when we realize that the Scriptures give us no instance of resurrection up to Abraham's time! How did he know that such a thing was possible? It was God who planted that conviction in his heart.

Whether or not, Martha in her grief, had temporarily forgotten that the Lord was God, the Son, we do not know. His statement, however, in this verse should make us realize how much we owe, not to the prayers of others, or at least, not exclusively to those prayers, but to the prayers of our Lord. Cf. Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1. Examples of our Lord's praying: John 14:16; 17:9-24.

The repetition of "God" at the end of this verse is for emphasis, but it also indicates that Martha believed that the Lord had a very special relationship with God, the Father. Our Lord has no unanswered prayers. See how He prayed before He called Lazarus out of the tomb: John 11:41, 42.

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It is hard to understand what Martha had in mind by what she said in this verse in the light of what she would say to Him in verse 39. (Read.)

Martha's confidence in the Lord was as strong as ever. She also recognized that the whole situation regarding Lazarus' death was in the hands of the Lord, and in the hands of God.

This is another interesting thing about our trials. They always do drive us to the Lord. F. B. Meyer, in his brief commentary on the Gospel of John, had this to say:

Whilst Lazarus was in health, no messenger hasted to bring the Saviour to Bethany. But when death hovered over the little

group, they summoned Him with al speed. This is an illustration of how pain, like a surge of the ocean, lifts us up and flings us down at the feet of the Saviour.... The sisters had never known Him as the Resurrection and the Life, if Lazarus had not died.... Thus our very necessities read us lessons of the variety and fulness of the resources of our God. Every stormy wind in its rush whispers some new name for Christ. Every wave that dashes at our feet flings there some message from the ocean fulness of his nature. Every crucifixion rends some impenetrable veil that had hung before his heart (Vol. I, p. 215).

And so it was that the Lord went on to minister to Martha.

11:23 He said, "Thy brother shall rise again." He meant rise immediately!

11:24 Martha took it as a reference to the future revelation "at the last day."

To Martha, the words "rise again" had only a prophetic meaning. She knew her doctrine. She believed in the resurrection of the body, and a future life. But there is one very important thing that she had failed to do. And it is something that most of us have failed to do. This is brought out in verse 25 where the Lord said,

11:25 "I am the resurrection, and the life." Martha had failed to relate her doctrine to Christ.

Who was going to raise the dead "at the last day"? The Lord Jesus was. Cf. John 5:25-29. This is a very important passage of Scripture. Our Lord Jesus Christ had waited until Lazarus died because He wanted to teach Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus, not only that He had the power to raise the dead then, but that He had the power to bring dead souls to eternal life!

Why did our Lord say, "I am the resurrection and the life," instead of saying either, "I am the resurrection," or, "I am the life"?

It was because He wanted to bring out two truths. As "the resurrection" He brings the dead to life; as "the life" He keeps them alive!

The one who believes, although he was dead, yet he shall live, i.e., continue to live. And then He went on to say in verse 26,

11:26 "And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"!

I heard a man who is a Christian say that these two verses have nothing to do with the Gospel, that the Lord was not teaching Martha and Mary anything about the Gospel. He said that this is just a case where the Lord was showing His Deity by raising Lazarus from the dead.

That man is in heaven today, and I am sure that he knows better now.

He could not possibly expound these verses and come up with anything but the Gospel. Let me explain.

~ If the Lord had been talking just about a physical resurrection, He would not have said that "whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Do Christians die physically? Of course, we do. Salvation does not keep us alive physically forever. It is the person who has spiritual life who

will never die! The Greek which the Lord used is very, very strong. It is a double negative with unto the ages added to intensify the negative. So we could translate it, And everyone who lives and believes in me shall no, never die, unto the ages!

I don't know how the Lord could have taught eternal salvation in any stronger terms than we have it here.

What is salvation? Salvation is being brought from spiritual death to spiritual life. Until the Lord does something in the hearts of people they cannot hear the Gospel, and it is certain that they have no ability to believe the Gospel if they could hear it. We can talk to a physically dead person as long as we want to, but they cannot hear, they cannot speak, they cannot get up, they cannot believe anything. They are dead.

Evangelism is bringing the Gospel to spiritually dead people. We are commanded to preach the Gospel to them. But only the Lord Jesus Christ can make them hear. We can't. Neither can they make themselves hear. Only the Lord Jesus Christ can make them believe. We can't. Neither are they capable of believing as long as they are spiritually dead. He not only will raise people from the dead "at the last day," but He is raising people from spiritual death every day. Why? Because He is "the resurrection and the life." And though people were once dead spiritually, when Christ raises them and gives them eternal life, they will never, never die again! Our Lord is "the resurrection and the life."

The Lord waited until Lazarus died because He wanted to give us in the resurrection of Lazarus what is probably the greatest picture of salvation that we have any place in the Word of God.

The day you and I were saved was the day in which the Lord called us by name, and said, "Come forth." And we haven't been in the tomb of those who are spiritually dead since that day--AND WE NEVER WILL!

And then notice what the Lord asked Martha: "Believest thou this?"

Let me say this in the light of this question that the Lord asked. Never get angry with another Christian if he, or she, should ask you, "Believest thou this?" And don't hesitate to ask people this question (after explaining what it is that they are to believe. This is the all-important question.

What was Martha's response?

11:27 (Read.)

What a marvelous statement of faith! Yes, she believed--not just a lot of doctrine (although there is a lot of doctrine involved in which she said). But the point is she believe HIM! She was trusting HIM! There was a day when the Lord had called her from the place of the spiritually dead, and had brought her to life, eternal life. And she knew it!

Actually she said, "I have believed." She meant that this had all been made clear to her before, that she believed some time in the past, and that she was still believing!

She believed that Jesus was the Lord, that He was the Messiah, that He was the Son of God--and here is a good Christmas verse: "...which should come

into the world. She knew Who He was, and why He had come. He came to bring life to sinners through His own death! She knew all of that, believed it, and was trusting in Christ alone for her salvation.

How would you answer our Lord's question? Could you say what she said? There is nothing more important, nothing more wonderful, that can come from the lips of any human being. The person who can say what Martha said is on their way to heaven, and certain to make it.

11:28 What she said left nothing more to be said. She would have found great comfort in the words of our Lord. And so she went to call Mary "secretly" with the good word, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." ("Master" = Teacher.) We do not have the record that He did call for Mary, but we can be sure that He did. This, too, was the reason that the conversation between Martha and the Lord was concluded.

From verse 28 down to verse 37 we see how the Lord dealt with Mary-- different from the way He had dealt with Martha.

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11:29 John seems to indicate that what prompted Mary to go to the Lord immediately was not that she had heard that He had come, but that He had called for her to come to Him.

The invitation to come to the Lord is an open invitation for us. How tragic that we often do this as a last resort instead of coming to the Lord first!

11:30 The Lord probably had two reasons for staying outside of Bethany:
1) He could best minister to Martha and Mary away from the crowd of mourners.
2) There may have been the issue of His own personal safety. This was Calvin's view.

11:31 Verse 19 told us that "many of the Jews" came to comfort Martha and Mary. They would have been very observant of the actions of the two sister, so that when Mary left, they went with her. They thought that she was going to her brother's grave to weep there. But Mary was going to meet her Lord.

11:32 Mary did not stop until she met the Lord. Then she did two things:
1) She "fell down at his feet."
2) She said to the Lord exactly what Martha had said. (Read.) She brought to Him her lack of understanding, her confusion of mind, that the Lord had not come immediately when they called Him. God's ways are always different from our ways. This is when we need to remember that His ways are higher and better than our ways; His ways are "perfect" (Psa. 18:30). But still she needed the Lord's comfort.

However, we have now come to one of the most comforting of all passages in the Word of God. The lessons we learn here give us great understanding for the reason that the Lord had not come right away.

Two things stand out in verses 33 through 35:

- 1) Our Lord's indignation.
- 2) Our Lord's compassion.

11:33 When the Lord saw Mary weeping, and the Jews weeping with her, the Apostle John said that our Lord "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." What did this mean?

"Groaned," the same word, is used again in verse 38. Coupled with the verb, "was troubled," we have the unusual picture of our Lord deeply agitated in His spirit, i.e., inwardly.

January 7, 1991

It indicates that our Lord was angry, very angry. The thought seems to be that the Lord was angered, was moved with the deepest indignation. Why? It evidently was because He was viewing the effect of death upon those He loved, and upon those who had come to weep with them. It was, as Westcott explained (p. 171), as though the Lord were viewing the temporary triumph of evil in death, and the effect of the Devil's work in bringing sin into the world. The Lord knew the real effect of sin, and, as Spurgeon pointed out in his message on verse 35 (Vol. 36, p. 337), a storm of hurricane force was blowing in the Lord's spirit! He was indignant with the powers of evil. He was stirred by the grief of those who were about Him. His spirit was moved to its very depth in viewing the power of evil. And it is likely that the Lord was even grieved in His spirit because these events had been the cause of questions arising in the minds of Mary and Martha about His love for them and His faithfulness to them. The Lord's indignation was against the Devil and all of the evil forces who stood with him--the one who had maliciously lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden when he said, "Ye shalt not surely die" (Gen. 3:4).

This helps us to appreciate even more those words which the Lord spoke which are recorded in John 8:42-47.

It seems that the effect of sin moved in a most dreadful way in the heart of our Lord after having been with Martha, and then with Mary. It is doubtful if anyone has ever been able to explain even a small portion of the anger and indignation that the Lord felt at this time.

11:34 And then, as if anxious to remedy what Satan and sin had brought upon Lazarus, He said, "Where have ye laid him?"

Even though there were ways in which the Lord did not exercise all of His divine attributes when He became a man, yet it would seem that behind this question was not ignorance on the Lord's part, but a desire to have those who were there to take him to Lazarus' tomb in order that they might see the miracle that would be performed.

They did not describe where it was, but said, "Lord, come and see," indicating that they would take Him to the tomb.

11:35 Spurgeon commented in his sermon on this verse that he was often irritated by the verse divisions made by those who did that work on the Scriptures, but he commended them highly because they had made these two words a single verse: "Jesus wept."

Isaiah had predicted that our Lord would be "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3). He also said that the Lord "hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4).

Again, no one can really explain all that this meant. This is the only

time that this particular word for weeping is used in the NT. It means that He shed tears. His grief did not get out of hand, but it certainly indicates that the Lord entered into their sorrow with them.

There is comfort for us here because the Lord was entering into their sufferings.

11:36 One explanation of our Lord's weeping is given here by some of the Jews who were there at the time: "Behold how he loved him!"

11:37 Others were critical, and perhaps a little confused. (Read.) Their reasoning certainly was right. But the Lord does not work the way we think that He should work.

11:38 The word "therefore" in this verse indicates that the Lord's groaning was related to what was said in verse 37. Instead of seeing the true reason for death, and putting the blame where it really belonged, their words seemed to blame the Lord.

But the Lord had arrived where the body of Lazarus was.

Verses 39 and 40 give us two very important lessons.

11:39 Here we see the importance of obedience to the words of our Lord. But immediately Martha objected. She evidently felt that the time for a resurrection was past. She was indicating that the Lord did not really know what He was doing. Perhaps she wanted to keep the Lord from seeing Lazarus' body after four days in the tomb.

What she said was right! But she was overlooking the One Who said, "Take ye away the stone."

How often we are so overwhelmed with the circumstances we are in that we forget the Lord. We forget Who He is. The enormity of the problems seem to negated the Word of the Lord.

We can be sympathetic with Martha because so often we do the same thing in different circumstances. We often feel that it is too late for the even the Lord to do anything. This story is in our Bibles to let us know that it is never too late with the Lord. It would not have been too late if Lazarus had been dead four years!

The Word of God always must overrule any other consideration. How important it is to remember this, and how easy it is to forget it.

That is the first lesson at the tomb. WE MUST OBEY THE LORD EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS LIKE A FRUITLESS, OR EVEN FOOLISH, THING TO DO. The Lord could have removed the stone, but He told the Jews to do it. Often our obedience is that which opens the way to the blessing of the Lord.

The second lesson is in the next verse:

11:40 We must always BELIEVE!

In the words of this verse, was the Lord referring to what is recorded in verse 4? Was that message sent to Mary and Martha? We cannot say for sure, but at least it is a possibility. Perhaps the Lord had said this to Martha at some other time.

Our Lord's words here indicate that the miracles were not performed primarily to meet human needs, but for the glory of God! But what the Lord wanted Martha and the others to do at this point was to trust Him! If there had never been sin, there never would have been distrust in any person's heart toward the Lord. This, too, was one of the reasons for the Lord's groaning.

11:41 The Jews did what the Lord wanted them to do. They removed the stone from the entrance to the tomb. This was an act of obedience. It was preparing the way to blessing.

AND THEN THE LORD BEGAN TO PRAY.

The excitement at this point must have been almost overwhelming. The people may have been speechless in their anticipation of what was going to happen.

Notice how calmly and simply the Lord prayed. He had spoken of God as His Father many times in the hearing of the Jews; now He speaks to God in the same way as He turned in prayer to Him. He said, "Father"! He was indicating again that He did not work independently of His Father. There was never any conflict between the Father and the Son. What the Father wanted the Son to do, He did. And whenever the Son prayed, the Father heard. And, according to 1 John 5:14, 15, we know that when we pray, if we are heard, we have!

11:42 The Father always hears the Son because the Son never asks anything that is not the Father's will.

In verse 40 we saw the primary reason for the work of God; it is for the glory of God. Here in verse 42 we see that the Lord performed all of His miracles that those who observed the miracles might believe that the Lord Jesus was sent by the Father. He came on a divine mission. He did not come just because He wanted to come. He was sent, and so He came.

Our Lord's words here in verse 42 are a restatement of the purpose that John had in writing this Gospel account. Cf. John 20:30, 31.

11:43 Our Lord spoke to the Father, and then He spoke to Lazarus.

Why did the Lord say, "**Lazarus**, come forth"? When Martyn Lloyd-Jones was a boy, he was asked this question along with other boys during a Sunday School catechizing session. Nobody responded. But suddenly the Lloyd-Jones boy responded, "In case they all came forth!" (See Vol. I, p. 5.)

If our Lord had chosen to do so, He could, at that moment, have raised every person who had ever died. He is going to do this sometime, you know. But He just called Lazarus back to life.

This is a wonderful picture of salvation. Lazarus being dead portrayed every sinner who is "dead in trespasses and in sins" (Eph. 2:1). The call of the Gospel goes out every day, but the time comes when those who are to be saved are called personally by the Lord. But before we can hear and come to Christ, we must be given life. So just as Lazarus proved that he was alive by coming out of the tomb, so sinners show that they are spiritually alive by coming to Christ and believing in Him. Lazarus did not receive life by coming out; He came out because He had received life, because he had been raised from the dead!

11:44 When the Lord called Lazarus, he came. His was still bound in his grave clothes, but his body was alive and without any sign of death whatsoever.

Then the Lord told the people who were there, "Loose him, and let him go."

This shows that Lazarus was not in his glorified body. When the Lord was raised from the dead, He came out of His grave clothes without even disturbing them. Our Lord came from His tomb glorified!

In the last two verses of this section we see the same twofold result that we have seen before:

11:45 "Many...believed...."

11:46 Others went to tell the Pharisees what the Lord had done. Again we see the blindness, the hardness of the human heart. Imagine seeing this miracle, but not believing in the Lord.

This confirms what the Lord said in telling the story about the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The rich man wanted Abraham to send Lazarus to tell his brothers not to come there to that terrible place. Abraham responded by saying, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them" (Luke 16:29b). And then when the rich man said that they would believe if one went to them from the dead. But Abraham answered,
If they hear not Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded,
though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 11 -- Part 2
January 14, 1991
John 11:47-57

Intro: The closing verses of chapter 11 are like many passages in the Bible; they are a commentary on the nature of man--its blindness (ignorance), its hardness, its depravity. This is the only explanation for the attitude of the Jews toward not only the raising of Lazarus from the dead, but from all of the other miracles as well. The Pharisees knew that our Lord had performed "many miracles" (v. 47). They did not deny that! Bishop Ryle wrote, "There were too many, too public, and too thoroughly witnessed, for them to dare to deny them" (Vol. 2, p. 124).

We can give this part of chapter 11 the heading:

II. THE RESULTS OF THE SEVENTH MIRACLE (John 11:47-57).

11:47 Verse 46 tells us that some who saw Lazarus raised from the dead, went to tell the Pharisees what had happened. There can be no question as to their motive. Even though they had seen the miracle with their own eyes, they were completely in sympathy with the terrible purpose of the scribes and Pharisees: to do away with the Lord, to put the Lord to death.

This report brought the whole Sanhedrin into session.

The attitude of the Jews here was one of complete frustration. Their words meant that they knew that the Lord was performing "many miracles," the greatest being the one that had just been performed, and they were not doing anything about it!

Last week I mentioned that statement made by our Lord in the story He told of the rich man and Lazarus. Abraham told the rich man who had died that if his brothers did not believe Moses, they would not believe even though someone were to be raised from the dead. Cf. Luke 16:31. This is a statement that we need to consider carefully because we are inclined to feel that people will believe if something spectacular takes place. Our Lord's ministry on earth proves that is no true! Man not only is naturally incapable to receiving the truth, but he has a natural aversion to the truth. Man by nature is an enemy of the truth of God. Man cannot be reasoned into salvation. Logic will not convince him of the truth of the Gospel. Facts will not convince him. In our world today we are surrounded with every kind of evidence of the moral depravity of man, but even all of that does not make men turn to God. The only way that the hearts of men will be open to the Gospel is when they are brought under the mighty conviction of the Spirit of God!

But there is more interesting information that we can see in verse 48.

11:48 Not only were the Jews completely blinded to the significance of the miracles--that they showed that the Lord was the Messiah, but they were completely wrong as to the consequences of the miracles.

They said that if they left the Lord alone, all men would believe on Him, and that would put them in trouble with Rome, leading to the destruction of the whole nation.

They may have felt that the Lord was getting so popular, that more and more people were turning to Him, and soon the whole nation would acclaim

Him as their leader, and so the Sanhedrin would have their authority taken away by the Romans. Undoubtedly one thing that bothered the Pharisees was the way in which the Lord had ministered to Samaritans and Gentiles as well as to Jews. And so they looked upon the situation as one in which their "place" was being jeopardized, as well as their "nation."

At this point they heard from Caiaphas, the high priest.

11:49 "That same year" seems to be John's way of identifying the year that the Lord died! It was not the case that the high priest held his office for only one year.

Caiaphas said, "Ye know nothing at all."

It seems that he was expressing contempt for the feeling of frustration and helplessness which seemed to have paralyzed the Sanhedrin. Perhaps some of them were thinking that they would prohibit the Lord from doing any more miracles--like they tried to stop the preaching of the Apostles in the book of Acts. Caiaphas rejected all of their talk as utterly foolish and unacceptable. He was ready for extreme measures to be taken against the Lord. He felt that anything less would be a waste of time. This is made clear by verse 50.

11:50 The meaning of this verse might be clearer if we read it, "Nor do you consider...." He was rebuking them for not taking into consideration the idea that if the Lord died, the nation would be spared. That would put a sure end to our Lord's ministry (they thought), and His followers would have nowhere to go except back into the fold of Judaism. "Expedient" means advantageous, or profitable. He could not say that it was lawful, nor that it was the righteous thing to do. Like a true politician he believed that the end justified whatever means were necessary to achieve that end.

The preposition "for" which Caiaphas used can mean not only in place of, but also for the benefit of. Caiaphas was saying that if the Lord died, the people, the nation, would not have to die. But, although, he was not aware of it, he used a preposition which suggested that our Lord's death would be profitable for them in ways beyond anything that he could have understood.

Caiaphas occupied the office which was typical of Christ. How interesting it ought to be to us that unwittingly his words were prophetic of the very purpose the Lord had in coming into the world.

11:51 This is the Apostle John's comment. Caiaphas was not speaking "on his own." He did not say this, lit., from himself. Although the high priesthood at this point was corrupted beyond repair, yet the Lord used the mouth of Caiaphas to declare the greatest prophetic truth of all--the truth of the death of Christ. And John used Caiaphas' word "for."

Matthew Henry made this interesting comment about Caiaphas:

God can and often does make wicked men instruments to serve his own purposes, even contrary to their own intentions; for he has them not only in a chain, to restrain them from doing the mischief they would, but in a bridle, to lead them to do the service they would not (Vol. 5, p. 1063).

But then MH went on to say that we see from this that "words of prophecy in the mouth are no infallible evidence of a principle of grace in the heart" (Ibid.). So the fact that a person speaks the truth of God is no proof that he is even saved. This is an important fact of Scripture that we need to understand and remember. People have been led into false cults because the Scriptures were used. Even the Devil quoted Scripture, and will always use it when it is to his advantage.

11:52 But the death of Christ was to have greater benefits than just for the people of Israel. It was to benefit those who were the chosen of God among the Gentiles.

That John was speaking of the Gentiles seems to be confirmed by the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesian church, a Gentile church, when he wrote in Eph. 1:10-12,

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times
he might gather together in one all things in Christ,
both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:
In whom also we have obtained an inheritance,
being predestinated according to the purpose of him
who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:
That we should be to the praise of his glory,
who first trusted in Christ.

Therefore John was not only speaking of reaching the Gentiles who have been predestined to salvation, but of the culmination of God's redemptive plan when the Lord comes and gathers His people from all over the face of the earth.

Here, where it seemed from a human standpoint that the Lord's work was facing its greatest threat and obstacle, John declared the final fulfillment of the divine plan and purpose.

11:53 Caiaphas, by his position and by his dogmatism, persuaded the majority of the Sanhedrin with him. From that day on it was the final determination of the leaders of the Jews that the Lord Jesus Christ had to die! But first they had to find Him, and then work out the time and place and how it could be done without causing an uproar among His followers who were growing in number every day.

We can hardly believe that their decision was unanimous since we have already seen evidence that the Lord was doing a work in the heart of Nicodemus. Possibly the same was true with others.

11:54 How the Lord found out about their decision, we do not know. But He found out. And He left Bethany and the vicinity of Jerusalem. We do not know where the city, Ephraim, was, but we do know that at this point the public ministry of our Lord had come to an end!

Why did He go away? It certainly was not because He feared His enemies. There would have been countless numbers of ways that He could have overcome their plot to kill Him. No, it was not fear. Our Lord did not foolishly walk into danger (we have learned this before), but He exercised great wisdom and purpose in everything that He did.

Why did He go away?

There are several answers to that question.

First, His time had not yet come. It was near, but not at hand. The Lord would not flee from the Father's will, but neither would He move ahead of the divine plan.

It is interesting for us to contemplate this as far as our own circumstances are concerned. God has a time and place for all of the details of our lives, but we need to exercise caution and not be foolish in anything that we do.

Second, we need to keep in mind that the Lord so works with the unregenerate that they are without excuse. "The Jews," using that term officially, were being exposed to the work of the Lord. They had felt the necessity to get the Lord away from the public. If He were out of circulation, would the work come to an end? It must be that the Lord took Himself in seclusion to show that His work was something that "the Jews" could not stop, regardless of the measures they employed.

Third, this verse indicates that the Lord retired from public ministry, but not from a private, personal ministry with His disciples. His time with them was drawing to a close, too. They needed His teaching. They needed His encouragement. They needed to enter more into the burden that was upon the heart of their Lord. It would be wonderful to know what the Lord told the disciples during those days, but we can be sure that it surely was one of the most profitable of all of the times that the Lord had with His disciples.

There will come the time in all of our lives when we no longer can do all that we would like to do, nor will we be able to do all that we have done. But we must always be prepared to do what we can do. Our Lord teaches us at this point in His life, as young as He was, that there is always something for us to do, something that is very, very worthwhile. We may retire from positions that we have held, but we never retire from serving the Lord, or serving the people of the Lord. And it is not just serving for the sake of serving, but profitable service!

The last three verses of this chapter show the glaring inconsistencies and the hypocrisy of "the Jews."

11:55 There was no feast in Israel that was more important than the Passover. The first Passover marked the birth of the nation of Israel. It was the nation's remembrance of their deliverance from those terrible years of bondage in Egypt. It was the most complete picture of redemption that the nation had throughout all of the OT. The Passover Lamb was a glorious type of our Lord Jesus Christ in His death. So the Passover spoke of redemption. It spoke of deliverance through the blood. And it was to this feast that "the Jews" made their way while in their hearts they carried nothing but hatred for the Lamb of God, and every intention that this would be the time and place where their fiendish plan could be accomplished. And notice: They went with Jews from all over the nation "to purify themselves."

What had happened in Israel?

The faith of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the faith of Moses and Joshua, the faith of David and Solomon, the faith of Elijah and Elisha, the faith of Isaiah and Micah, the faith of Ezra and Nehemiah, the faith of Zacharias and Elisabeth and their son, John the Baptist, the faith of Joseph and Mary, had become nothing to "the Jews" and to many in Israel,

NOTHING BUT A LOT OF FORMS AND CEREMONIES. RITUALISM HAD REPLACE REALITY. They sought their purification in observances, but not from God. They were satisfied with outward sanctification, but knew nothing about the cleansing of their hearts. They went to worship, but they went with murder in their hearts--the murder of the Son of God! Just because people go to church does not mean that they are the people of God. These verses tell us that we should not be surprised to find impostors in the pulpits of our country. Many who lead people in ceremonies and rituals of the most solemn kind are leading their people into the gates of hell. It is a most solemn and revealing picture that is presented to us here by the Spirit of God.

11:56 To whom was John referring in this verse when he said, "Then sought **they** for Jesus"?

"The Jews," of course, were looking for Him, but this seems to be a reference to the "many" who "went out of the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover" as we read in verse 55. Perhaps with some of them it was merely a matter of curiosity. Perhaps they just wanted to see the person they had heard so much about, and maybe they hoped to see Him perform His miracles. But there could have been others who sincerely wanted to see Him because they were inclined to believe that He could be the Messiah! BUT HE WAS NOT THERE? AND WHY WASN'T HE THERE? BECAUSE OF WHAT "THE JEWS" WANTED TO DO TO HIM. Those people thought that surely the Lord would come to the Passover, and this is what they were saying to each other.

But He was not there!

This made me wonder how many people there are who go to church even in our day, seeking the Lord, but they do not find Him.

Illus: Several years ago I was asked to speak at a conference of Christian Businessmen up in the Olympic Peninsula. While I was there I met a young man in his thirties whose father was a wealthy California orange grower. He had attended a large church all of his life, but was not a Christian. But through circumstances which I do not remember now he was saved, wonderfully saved. He really loved the Lord, and wanted to live for the Lord. Soon after he was saved he felt called to go into the ministry, and so he made preparations to go to the seminary which was in his denomination. He told me that he had greatly anticipated his studies there, as he said, "being with men who loved the Lord Jesus." But he went on to say that when he got there, he could not find a single student nor faculty member who knew the Lord! He went there to find the Lord Jesus, but He was not there!

One of the worst sins of some clergymen is that they actually keep their people from Christ. So to speak, they have run Christ out of their lives, and they keep others from Him, too.

Do you remember those condemning words our Lord used against the Pharisees which are recorded for us in Matt. 23:13? It is the first of the woes that the Lord pronounced against the scribes and Pharisees. This is what He said:

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men:
for ye neither go in yourselves,
neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.

BUT LET US BE CAREFUL THAT WE ARE NOT GUILTY OF THE SAME THING BY ANY SINS AND/OR INCONSISTENCIES IN OUR LIVES. People who know that we claim to be Christians may be looking for Christ in us, or waiting to hear about Christ from us. The Lord Jesus gave some important teaching along this line in the Sermon on the Mount. Listen to these familiar words:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world.

A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before me,
that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

What an impact the true church today would have on the world if it could be said of us, as it was said of the early church, that the religious leaders "took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus"! Is the Lord Jesus a vital part of our lives? Or have we excluded Him? In our churches, is it possible that people come looking for Jesus, but do not find Him? God forbid that we should stand as barriers in the way of people who are looking for the Savior. Instead, may God make us His servants to bring people to Christ, and to bring Christ to people.

11:57 The chapter ends on an ominous note. It now became a law of the Sanhedrin, the ruling body of the Jews, that if anyone knew where the Lord was, that person was obligated to report it. Was it so that the chief priests and Pharisees could come and learn of Him? NO! It was so they could "take him," and KILL HIM!

I remind you as we come to the end of this chapter what a dreadfully serious thing it is to reject the light, to turn our backs upon the truth. These Pharisees were going deeper and deeper into sin, and farther and farther away from the Lord. They hated the only One Who could open the gates of heaven to them. All of their religious acts could never cleanse them from a single sin.

I encourage all of us to make sure that we are really saved, trusting in Christ, and Christ alone, for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life. And may those of us who know the Lord pray daily that we will never stand in the way of those who are looking for Christ, but that our lives and our words will form a path that will lead people straight to the Savior.

The end of notes on John 11.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 12 -- Part 1
January 21, 1991
John 12:1-19

Intro: This twelfth chapter of John's Gospel is the one in which the Apostle John gives us the record of the conclusion of our Lord's public ministry. Last week I said that the Lord's ministry ended with John 11:54. It would have been more accurate to say that His public ministry to the leaders of the Jews was concluded. We do have a few instances of public ministry in chapter 12 after He came back to Bethany, and then went on to Jerusalem. But His ministry definitely was not like it had been before.

There probably were some events recorded in the other Gospels which took place at this time. As I mentioned last week, we do not know where Ephraim was, the place where the Lord went according to John 11:54, but it may have been beyond Jericho. If so, it may be that on the way back to Bethany the Lord healed the two blind men there, brought salvation to Zacchaeus, and gave the parable of the nobleman who went into a far country after he had given his servants ten pounds. The passages in the Synoptics which may cover this period are Matt. 20:17-35; Mark 10:32-52; Luke 18:31-19:28. (See Ryle, Vol. II, p. 141.)

We are concerned, however, with John's account. In this chapter (12) we have four divisions:

- 1) The supper in Bethany (vv. 1-11).
- 2) The public entry into Jerusalem (vv. 12-19).
- 3) The Lord's ministry to Greeks and to Jews (vv. 20-36).
- 4) The summarization of the Lord's ministry (vv. 37-50).

Matthew Henry pointed out the various ways in which the Lord was honored and/or encouraged by the events recorded in this chapter. Among the things which he mentioned were the following:

- 1) By Mary's devotion (vv. 3-8).
- 2) By the welcome given to Him as He entered Jerusalem (vv. 12-16).
- 3) By the coming of the Greeks (vv. 20-22).
- 4) By the Father speaking from heaven (vv. 27, 28).

He mentioned other ways, but these are the most important. The Lord needed encouragement, and it is interesting to see how it was so wonderfully provided for Him.

Let us consider the first division of the chapter:

I. THE SUPPER IN BETHANY (John 12:1-11).

12:1 It is interesting to see how the Lord made His way back to Bethany as He anticipated the dreadful things that were ahead of Him. It was there that Lazarus and Martha and Mary lived. They loved Him, and He loved them. He was not only safe with them, but they rejoiced that He had come, making Him a supper.

We can certainly learn from this that the Lord delights in the fellowship of those who love Him. This is true even today. One of the things that should always be an encouragement to us to maintain our fellowship with the Lord is the joy that it brings to the heart of the Lord. Cf. Rev. 3:20.

There is also in this visit the possibility that He came to see what Mary and Martha and Lazarus had learned from the trial they had been through,

i.e., how they had improved spiritually because of their trials. When the Lord gives us special blessing, He looks to see if His purposes have been fulfilled. All of our trials are for our permanent spiritual blessing. And as we see God working in answer to prayer, we need to be even more concerned that we do His will, that we live for His glory, and that we seek to be more like He wants us to be. God's blessings increase our obligation to Him. How often we forget this! Many people, Christians and non-Christians, are crying out to God for help in this days of war in the Middle East. But how many are diligent now in seeking to find out what they need to do to please the Lord? How many of us who really know the Lord have asked the Lord to search our hearts, to cleanse away what displeases Him, and to lead us to be and do that which does please Him? This is really worthy of our immediate and continued attention.

12:2 It seems that He was not disappointed. All three members of this family were busy doing different things to show their devotion to the Lord. Martha served Him. Lazarus sat with Him at the table. And the next verses show how Mary worshiped Him.

John does not say here what Luke recorded during a time before when the Lord was with this family for dinner. Luke (10:40) recorded for us that "Martha was cumbered about much serving," and that she was critical of Mary for not helping her. "Cumbered" means that she was distracted. She had no joy in serving the Lord because she was concerned about things that were not her business. But we see none of that in John 12. Here she was the Lord's happy servant, and John's language seems to indicate that Martha served because she wanted to. She was paying attention to the One she was serving!

"Lazarus...sat...with him." There were others at the table too, but he was sitting with the Lord--a beautiful picture of fellowship.

Sitting with Him should remind us of that wonderful passage Paul has given us in Eph. 2:4-7, "But God, who is rich in mercy...." We do not know what Lazarus' fellowship with the Lord was like before he died, but we can be sure that it was better afterwards.

May the Lord teach us to profit spiritually from the trials that we go through. Every trial, every testing, should make us better Christians than we were before the trial hit us.

12:3 Here for the third time in Scripture we find Mary worshiping the Lord at His feet! Cf. Luke 10:39, where she sat at His feet to hear His word; John 11:32, where she was at His feet to be comforted; and here in John 12:3, where she was at His feet to worship.

What the "ointment of spikenard" was, we do not know. We know that it was expensive, and that it was very fragrant. Mary obviously love the Lord very, very much. And she was so grateful to the Lord for what He had done for Lazarus the expense of the ointment was no hindrance to her. How wonderful it is to worship the Lord because of Who He is as well as for the wonderful things He has done for us!

This should remind us of what Paul said about the gift which the Philippian church had sent to him. These were his words:

But I have all, and abound: I am full,
having received of Epaphroditus

the things which were sent from you,
an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable,
 wellpleasing to God (Phil. 4:18).

Even our service, if done out of love for the Lord, gives forth a fragrance that reaches to heaven. The Philippians gave their gift to Paul, but they did it for the Lord! This is the way all of our service should be.

12:4 This verse shows that our Lord's disciples were with Him at the dinner which had been prepared. At this point Judas was not known as the Betrayer, but John mentioned it here so that the readers would see that even then there was evidence that his heart was not right.

12:5 A statement like this sounds very convincing to many people. The unregenerate heart does not understand love for Christ. Helping the poor has priority over worshipping the Lord. This has the sound of a social gospel to it. It is true that the church is to care for the its own poor. Paul went to Jerusalem late in his ministry for that very purpose, carrying a gift from other churches for the saints in Jerusalem. But no where do we find that the church is to become a social agency to care for all poor people. As we are able, we can do what we can. But we cannot substitute social work for the preaching of the Gospel. When that happens, the Gospel is usually set aside, and the social work becomes the all-important thing.

12:6 However, the Apostle John, who most certainly was there, gives this comment about Judas, although he probably did not know what Judas was doing at the time. Judas was a thief! And Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 6:9, 10),

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?
 Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers,
 not effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,
Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers,
 nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Actually Judas was guilty on two counts: he was a thief because he was covetous. And his love for money caused him to be a major participant in the death of the Son of God. Think of Judas when you read 1 Tim. 6:10:

For the love of money is the root of all evil:
 which will some coveted after, they have erred from the faith,
 and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

On one occasion the Lord said this (Luke 12:15):

Take heed, and beware of covetousness:
 for a man's life consisteth not
 in the abundance of things which he possesseth.

And Paul told the Ephesian church that "covetousness" was one of the sins which was "not...once" to be "named among you, as becometh saints" (Eph. 5:3).

Living in a materialistic and affluent society, covetousness is a real temptation to all, and has become a snare to many. Judas had not idea where his "love of money" would eventually take him. It carried him right into hell! Imagine what this all means! Judas Iscariot would deny the Lord Jesus the worship of a devoted child of God in order to fill his own pockets!

12:7 The Lord Jesus responded here and in verse 8.

The Lord saw more in this than just an act of worship, as important as that alone was. He saw in Mary's gift an understanding that probably surpassed the understanding of any disciple at that time. Mary's act of devotion to the Lord anticipated the embalming of His body after His death. She evidently understood the mission upon which the Lord had come from heaven. And she may have been the only one who did.

There have been some, such as Bishop Ryle, who did not think that this showed special understanding on Mary's part of the coming death of Christ. He may have been right. Sometimes people have been known to do things that have real significance even though we may not know what they were doing at the time. E.g., Caiaphas in John 11:47-52.

We may have to wait until we get to heaven to find out what the real situation was. However it may have been, we have in Mary's devotion to the Lord another message of the approaching death of our Lord.

The Lord said, "Let her alone." We should never stand in the way of those who are expressing their love for the Savior. We might not do what they are doing, or we may not be able to do what they are doing. But we must not stand in their way. What Mary did was between her and the Lord. Judas had nothing to do with it.

12:8 No government, no social agency, no church has ever succeeded in doing away with poverty. And they never will! Poverty is a problem related to the sinfulness of man. Sometimes poverty is due to slothfulness. Sometimes it is due to hard times. Sometimes it is because one person has taken advantage of another. There are various reasons, but all traceable to the fact that we will in a sinful world.

But the Lord Jesus was not in the world to stay. The Lord admitted that often we find ourselves in a dilemma because we do not know what to do first when two things come into conflict with each other. Mary had chosen the wise thing to do, worshiping the Lord while He was there, with the possibility of helping the poor later.

There are many people in the world who think that the chief mission of the church is to care for the poor. It is important to help those who are in need. But we must remember that worshiping Christ, glorifying Christ, doing His will and His work, must always take precedence over everything else. If the Lord is first in our lives, somehow by His grace everything else falls into its proper place. But if we put men before the Lord, nothing will be right.

12:9 The news that the Lord was at the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus soon got around, and the people began to come, not just to see the Lord Jesus, but to see Lazarus. The living Lazarus was proof of the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus. So to see the two together was something that might have caused any of us to go where the Lord and Lazarus were. Unfortunately it seems that many came only because they were curious, and not because they wanted to know the Lord.

An even greater miracle than the physical resurrection of Lazarus is the resurrection that takes place when a sinner is saved. Every true Christian is a trophy of divine grace. And the change that the Lord makes in the hearts and lives of the saved is the purpose for our Lord's coming. We, too, are on display, and God often uses the changes that He makes in one person's life a testimony of salvation to others who can see

the change. Let us remember that what we are is our greatest testimony. It is important to speak for Christ, too, but on this occasion we have no evidence at all that Lazarus said anything!

12:10 Here we have further evidence of the depravity of the human heart, and of the limits to which some men will go in their opposition to the Gospel. Lazarus was living proof of the power of our Lord to raise the dead. Instead of accepting that fact, and benefiting from it, they were intent on destroying the evidence--as though that would have changed something! Lazarus had done nothing wrong. There is no evidence that he had tried to turn his friends against the Jews. He was hated simply because he was a trophy of grace, and proof that the Jewish leaders were wrong in their opposition to Christ.

12:11 This was the sore spot as far as the Jews were concerned: it was that "many of the Jews went away, and believed on Jesus." As we have seen before in John's Gospel, this does not always mean saving faith, but it does mean that "many" were convinced in their minds, if not in their hearts, that our Lord was the Person that He claimed to be. As Bishop Ryle has said, they were "convinced but not converted" (II, 153). But we always have to allow for the fact that there were some who were genuinely saved.

What the Jews saw was that the followers of the Lord were increasing in number. That is what made it imperative that something be done soon to stop what the Lord was doing. How tragic it was that these men who thought they were serving the Lord were actually fighting against Him. And yet the salvation of the Apostle Paul shows that even such enemies of Christ and the Gospel are sometimes saved.

January 22, 1991

The second part of our chapter is:

II. THE PUBLIC ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM (John 12:12-19).

12:12 This event probably took place on Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath, and the day after the supper which was held in His honor the day before. It is recorded in all four of the Gospels, which shows how important an event it was. Cf. Matt. 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:29-40.

Bishop Ryle and Dr. Griffith Thomas (among others) have pointed out that this event was in contrast with what the Lord had done before. Although the Lord had worked publicly, yet many times He had told those who had received His ministry, as well as those who were merely observers, not to tell others what had been done to them, or what they had seen. Matthew, in 12:19, quoted Isaiah 42 to show the prediction of this aspect of our Lord's ministry. It says this:

He shall not strive, nor cry;
neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.

The reason for this difference seems to be that the time had come for the Lord to die, to offer His sacrifice for the sins of Jews and Gentiles. No event in which our Lord was involved was more public than His death. Several years later, when the Apostle Paul was speaking before King Agrippa about the death and resurrection of Christ, he said,

For the king knoweth of these things,

before whom also I speak freely:
for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him;
for this thing was not done in a corner (Acts 26:26).

His entry into Jerusalem was a close second. Here, by virtue of the fact that the Gospel writers quoted from Zechariah 9 and Psalm 118, is an indication that by this act our Lord was once again claiming to be the Messiah of Israel. This, too, aggravated His enemies, and made them more intent on doing away with Him. In this event we can see further proof of what the Lord had said in John 10:17, 18. (Read.)

It seems that the raising of Lazarus was primarily responsible for this response of the people. In John 11:56 we learned that the people were expecting the Lord, and looking for Him. Here, "when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem," they prepared for this grand reception. And once again we see how spontaneously people fulfill the Word of God without intending to do so, and perhaps without even knowing that they were doing so.

12:13 The people "took branches of palm trees." Matthew Henry made two interesting observations about palm branches. He wrote this:
The palm-tree has ever been an emblem of victory and triumph; Cicero calls one that had won many prizes...a man of many palms. Christ was now by his death to conquer principalities and powers, and therefore it was fit that he should have the victor's palm borne before him; though he was but girding on the harness, yet he could boast as though he had put it off. But this was not all (italics mine); the carrying of palm-branches was part of the ceremony of the feast of tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 40; Neh. viii. 15), and their using this expression of joy in the welcome given to our Lord Jesus intimates that all feasts pointed at his gospel, had their accomplishments in it, and particularly that of the feast of tabernacles, Zech. xiv. 16 (V, 1072).

So this was actually a victory celebration before the victory. The Lord did not come as a King the first time, but here the people acknowledged both the victory that He would win and the acclamation given to Him by the people that He was their Messiah and their King. The prophet had said that the people were not to fear. That is why they had the boldness to "throw caution to the wind."

The fact that the Lord Jesus came "in the name of the Lord" emphasized what the Lord had said all along--that He had not come on His own, but that the Father had sent Him. We will see this again at the end of this chapter, beginning with verse 44.

"Hosanna" had become a form of well-wishing. It was as though the people had called upon the Lord to deliver them, and were praying that He would be successful in doing just that. They were asking the Lord to save them, and to prosper in His work. It is most likely that they were thinking of deliverance from Rome, but there was a salvation that was much greater that the Lord had come to provide for them. That was salvation from sin. He will do the other when He comes again.

12:14 The Apostle John did not tell how the Lord "found a young ass," but we have those details given to us by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

12:15 It is interesting to see how every detail of the prophecy was fulfilled, even to the fearlessness, the boldness, of the people.

Bishop Ryle has pointed out from this verse that the second coming of Christ was a subject designed to bring comfort to the hearts of the Lord's people, as we learn here and in such passages as John 14:1 and 1 Thess. 4:18, just as the angels indicated to the shepherds that they were to be comforted by our Lord's first coming.

12:16 It is rather amazing that the disciples did not understand the significance of what was going on until after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord.

On this lack of understanding on the part of the disciples, cf. John 2:22; 10:6; 16:18.

John 7:39 would seem to indicate that the increase of understanding with the disciples, and the glorification of our Lord, were linked together because it was after our Lord was glorified that the Holy Spirit was given to them. The Holy Spirit had two responsibilities toward the people of God which He continues to exercise:

- 1) Guiding the saints into the knowledge of the truth and the knowledge of Christ.
 - 2) Bringing the truth to the remembrance of the Lord's people.
- Cf. John 14:26. Therefore, we can see in the book of Acts that the day of Pentecost was a day when the truth of the Word began to be opened up to the apostles in a greater way than ever before.

We should not be discouraged if we do not understand everything that we read, or hear, from the Scriptures. In the Lord's time He will, through the ministry of the Spirit, teach us all that He wants us to know.

12:17 This verse shows that it was the raising of Lazarus that had produced this great demonstration on behalf of our Lord. Those who had witnessed the resurrection of Lazarus ~~was~~^{were} so many in number that there was no way that anyone could possibly say that it did not happen!

12:18 There were people who were doing what is mentioned in verse 13, but who were not witnesses of Lazarus' resurrection. However, because of the witnesses they believed.

12:19 Like Mordecai, our Lord at this time was the One the Lord delighted to honor. The Jews, who were seeking the cooperation of the people in order to apprehend our Lord, had to look helplessly on as it seemed to them that "the whole world had gone after him." This was certainly a display of the sovereign power of God. When things seemed to be at their worst for our Lord, the Father showed by this display of affection and support that He was in charge of all of the people and of all of the circumstances.

The end of John 12, Part 1.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 12 -- Part 2
January 28, 1991
John 12:20-36

Intro: John 12:19 concluded with the Pharisees lamenting that "the world is gone after him," "him" being the Lord. And right away we are told about Gentile proselytes who wanted to see Jesus (vv.20-22). Apparently in their presence, as well as before others, the Lord gave the message contained in verses 23 through 26. At that point, the Lord having contemplated His death, was "troubled," and so He prayed. See verses 27-30. The Father answered in an audible voice. After this the Lord continued with His ministry speaking of (1) the effect of His death upon the Devil (v. 31), (2) the extent of the effectiveness of His death (v. 32, 33), and (3) following a question from the people, He gave them a warning coupled with an appeal for them to believe (vv.34-36). Then begins the summary of our Lord's ministry which occupies the remaining part of the chapter (vv. 37-50).

Now let us turn to:

III. THE LORD'S MINISTRY TO GREEKS AND JEWS (John 12:20-36).

A. The request of the Gentiles, and the Lord's answer (John 12:20-26).

12:20 This passage ought to be an encouragement for us to believe that the Lord even now is working with certain people and in certain ways that we would least expect. It was probably just a short time before this that Zacchaeus was saved--a tax collector. No one knew what was going on in his heart, except the Lord who was working with him. Throughout John's Gospel we have seen the Lord ministering to many Jews. Many believed on Him; many others rejected Him; the Jewish leaders hated Him. And then suddenly some Gentile proselytes, how many we do not know (but there could have been a good number of them), came to Philip requesting that they might "see Jesus."

12:21 They went to Philip. His name is Greek although he was a Jew. But he may have had some connections, suggested Westcott, which made the Gentiles comfortable about going to him--perhaps even the fact that he was of Bethsaida. There was evidently quite a Gentile population in that city.

The request to "see Jesus" was more than just a hope that they would be able to cast their eyes on the Lord. The word they used suggested that they wanted to become acquainted with Him, they wanted to know Him, to understand Him. If they had only wanted to see the Lord, it poses a question as to whether or not Philip and Andrew would have thought that it was that important to tell the Lord about them. Possibly they had some questions which they wanted to ask Him--we do not know. They surely wanted to hear Him teach. And that was exactly what the Lord was going to do for them.

12:22 Philip told Andrew, and together they took the request to the Lord.

We probably can't appreciate the turmoil that Philip and Andrew must have gone through in taking this message to the Lord from Gentiles! There was a high level of prejudice in the hearts of the Jews of that day against the Gentiles. The Lord at one time had told them not to go to the Gentiles. Cf. Matt. 10:5. But there had been times when the Lord Himself had ministered to Gentiles. And then we could hope that they had noticed what the Lord had been saying about "the world" in His teaching. Cf. John 3:16. We have seen in John's Gospel several statements to the effect that the Lord came to save Gentiles just as He had come to save Jews.

12:23 WE NEED TO THINK OF VERSES 23 THROUGH 26 IN PARTICULAR, AND PROBABLY THE WHOLE PASSAGE DOWN THROUGH VERSE 36, AS THE LORD'S WAY OF INTRODUCING HIMSELF TO THE GENTILES WHO WANTED TO "SEE" HIM. The fact that verse 23 begins with the words, "And Jesus answered them, saying," is an indication that the Lord was not ignoring the request of the Gentiles.

He spoke to them as God. But He also spoke as "the Son of man." This was our Lord's favorite title for Himself. It was a Messianic title

He wanted them to know that He was on a mission. "The hour is come" indicated that the main purpose for which He had come was present. It was a time appointed by the Father. And He sought to direct their attention to the ultimate outcome: "that the Son of man should be glorified." The Cross was not glorification, but humiliation. His resurrection and His ascension were the hour of His glorification. In His resurrection it would be clearer than ever before that He was in reality "the Son of God"--the point which had been so strongly opposed by the Jews. Cf. Rom. 1:3, 4. Everything else in the Lord's life on earth had been in anticipation of His eventual glorification. But between His birth and His resurrection there would be the Cross.

Whether or not the Lord enlarged any more upon these words, we do not know. But we do know that if they wanted to "see Jesus," if they wanted to know Him and understand Him, they had to become acquainted with these truths.

Looking at His work in the light of His glorification would have been a great encouragement to the Lord Himself.

12:24 Here was another word of encouragement, and truth which those Gentiles (and all others who were listening) needed to understand if they were to "see Jesus."

The "Verily, verily," which we have become accustomed to in John's Gospel, appears here for the 17th time. It precedes an important message. It assured the listeners that what the Lord was about to say was not only important, but true! So they could put their utmost confidence in what the Lord was saying, and through these words they would become acquainted with Him.

The emphasis here is upon the Cross.

Nature itself teaches us that "a corn of wheat" is unproductive until it is placed in the ground, and dies. This is a type, a picture of our Lord's death. His death, which would appear to be a tragic defeat for Him and a great victory for His enemies, was necessary if there was to be, not only "fruit," but **"much fruit"**! That is true of "a corn of wheat"; that also would be true of our Lord. "Much fruit" would result from His death. It not only secured the salvation of those who had already believed since the beginning of time, but it would secure the salvation of all who would believe from that moment on to the end of time.

It is important to see that the Lord was saying that His death would not be in vain. He would accomplish, He would secure, salvation for all for whom He died. Think of the death of Christ, not just as a provision if anyone wanted to take it, but positive guarantee that there would be "much fruit" as a result.

12:25 This verse seems to apply more to those who are the "fruit" of the Lord's death than it does to the Lord.

This statement appears in all four Gospels (twice in Matthew and twice in Luke--for a total of six times counting John's use of it). Cf. Matt. 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33. Therefore, there can be no question as to its importance.

The Lord never attempted to hide from people the difficult choices that they would face if they believed on Him. Everybody is faced with the question of what is most important to them, this life, or the life that is to come. And let us remember that there is in every heart the consciousness that there is more to come after this life. People may try to make themselves think that when they are dead, they are dead, and that is all there is to it. But their hearts tell them differently. It is possible for people to close their minds to the truth so that they believe things that are contrary to what they naturally know. The same is true as far as the existence of God is concerned. Romans 1 tells us that there really are no atheists.

So the question is: What will we live for, and what will we reject? Or, to use the words that the Lord used, what am I going to love, and what am I going to hate. To state this in other words, What am I going to choose, and what am I going to reject? (This is the point in loving and hating.)

To love our lives is to live for the present. It is to get all that we possibly can out of this life. The present is not only important, it is so important that any thought of the future is shut out. This is the pleasure-loving, self-seeking, person. He lives like he is going to be here forever. Things are important to him. Security in this life is what he is after. He may be very concerned about his family, and very generous even with his time and his money for other people, but he never looks beyond this life.

The Lord Jesus said that people who desperate try to save their lives, who love this life, will, in the end, lose it--lose it eternally! But the person who hates "his life in this world shall keep it unto eternal life."

By hating our lives the Lord did not mean that we despise anything that has to do with this life. We take care of our health. We work to provide a home and food and clothing for our families. We seek to be diligent and faithful in whatever our work may be. We are thankful for the possessions we have, but they do not possess us. We believe the words of our Lord that are recorded in Luke 12:15:

Take heed, and beware of covetousness:
for a man's life consisteth not
in the abundance of things which he possesseth.

It is very possible for the wealthiest man alive to be the most miserable. Things may make life more enjoyable, but things do not satisfy. It is when we know the Lord and life with eternity in view that we find real peace and joy, and look upon this life as only a short preparation for the eternity that is ahead. This is one reason we are exhorted in Scripture to be looking for the coming of the Lord. If we are really looking for Him our lives will be entirely different from what they would be if we are not looking for Him.

This choice faces us every day. This is a good time for us to check up on ourselves. From the way you and I live, which is the most important to us, this life, or the life which is to come? The Apostle John said in 1 John 2:15,

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

Let us take these words to heart. If we understand what the Lord was saying

here in verse 25, we are coming closer to seeing Him and knowing Him.

But the Lord made another point in helping the Gentiles and Jews to understand Him. See the next verse.

12:26 To choose to live for the life to come is really what it means to serve the Lord. Service is preaching, but it is more than that. Service is teaching, but it is more than that. Service is giving of our money, but it is more than that. Service is worshipping the Lord as we gather together in church, but it is more than that. Serving the Lord means living for the Lord. You husbands are serving the Lord when you do what a godly husband is supposed to do--loving your wife, caring for her and for your family. You are serving the Lord when you do a good job on your job. You wives are serving the Lord when you take care of your husband and your children. Young people and children are serving the Lord when they honor and obey their parents. Nothing that we do is outside of the realm of service to the Lord. Paul told the bond servants in the Colossian church that they were to obey their masters because, as he said, "Ye serve the Lord Christ" (Col. 3:24).

But what does it require if we are to serve the Lord?

It means that we must "follow" Him. Cf. John 10:27. See also Matt. 4:19. This was repeated by our Lord many times.

How do we follow Him? We go where He wants us to go. We do what He wants us to do. We believe what He wants us to believe. We live like He wants us to live. We say what He wants us to say. We go with Him. We seek to be like He is. In describing the call of the original twelve, it is said in Mark 3:14 that "he," our Lord, "ordained twelve, **that they should be with him.**" The Lord Jesus is truly the Lord of those who know Him. You will never find the Lord's servant where you would not expect to find His Lord. "Where I am, thee shall also my servant be."

This ultimately will mean that we will be in heaven with Him. That is what He said in John 14:1-3. But, while some think that is the point here, I am inclined to feel that the Lord was talking about our obedience to Him and our fellowship with Him as the condition for serving Him in a fruitful way.

Finally, the person who serves the Lord Jesus is to receive special honor from the Father. This probably means that he will be honored by the Lord in rendering service to Christ, as well as meaning that there are special rewards ahead for those who are faithful and true servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. This verse shed much light on passages in the epistles where the apostles identified themselves as servants of God and of Christ.

At this point I would assume that the Greeks were still listening, as well as many Jews, but the appearance and behavior of the Lord must have undergone a sudden change.

B. The Lord's ministry to the people in prayer (John 12:27-30).

12:27 He was "troubled." His "soul" was "troubled," meaning inner distress. He was "troubled" again in John 13:21 where the Apostle John used the same word. The meaning of this word is illustrated by a calm sea which is suddenly agitated by a strong wind.

What troubled Him? His prayer shows us. He had started ministering to the Greeks by speaking about His "hour." His thoughts had been dwelling upon the Cross, and he was disturbed, deeply disturbed in His soul. This was a preview, a foretaste, of what He would experience in Gethsemane. In His flesh He sought to be spared from the Cross; in His heart He knew that this was why He had come into the world. Let us never think that it was easy for the Lord to face the Cross just because He was the Son of God. He was also "the Son of man"--which has to include, among other things, that fact that He was a human being.

12:28 And so He prayed, "Father, glorify thy name." The main purpose that our Lord had in coming to the earth was to do the Father's will and to glorify the Father's name. This purpose even had priority over what His death would mean for us.

For our instruction and encouragement, it is interesting to see what the Lord did when He was troubled because there are many times when we are troubled in our pilgrim journey through this life in this world. Perhaps some of you are greatly troubled today about the war in the Middle East. Perhaps you have personal problems, or family problems that are troubling you. It doesn't take a great deal for us to get troubled, does it? But look at what the Lord did--five things:

- 1) He prayed. It didn't take a special trial to get the Lord to pray, but that is often the case with us. But when we are troubled, prayer is one of the first things that we think about, and that is good. But we should not just think about praying; we need to pray! Praying is one thing you and I are going to learn to do if we are following the Lord.
- 2) He prayed to His "Father," and that is what He called Him--two times! (Read.) Surely you will remember that when the disciples asked the Lord to teach them to pray, He said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father...." (Luke 11:2). I am sure that the Lord Jesus said this because God wants us to call Him, "Father," and that He loves to hear this word upon our lips. It shows that we know we are in His family, and that we are coming to Him as His children.
- 3) He told the Father exactly what was troubling Him. It was "this hour." Our Lord's prayer is a lesson in prayer. When we pray we need to cast our burdens upon the Lord. And we may have to cast the same burdens upon Him. Cf. Psalms 55:22 and 1 Peter 5:7.
- 4) He surrendered Himself to the will of the Father. It is not for us to try to force the Lord to do things our way, but to seek His will. That is where our peace comes, and that always brings blessing.
- 5) He sought the glory of the Father. Whatever we do, we are to do all for the glory of God. Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:31)--and that includes praying!

And then the Father answered in an audible voice: "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." All through the life of the Lord Jesus it was the Father Who had been working for His own glory. The same would be true in the death of our Lord. And this is what the Son of the Father wanted.

12:29 There is no question but that the Lord spoke in words which any of them could understand. But not everybody understood what was said. In fact, it would seem that very few understood what the Father said. Some thought it thundered; others thought an angel was speaking to Him.

This is typical when the Lord speaks through His Word--either as we are reading it, or listening as it is taught. Some hear sounds, but they don't get the message. All of us need to be continually praying the prayer of

Psa. 119:18, "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." The Lord spoke to Samuel several times before Samuel knew what was going on. May the Lord give us eyes to see, ears to hear, hearts to understand and to obey what the Lord is telling us.

12:30 From what the Lord said in this verse we realize that even what the Father said from heaven was a part of God's answer to the request of the Greeks who came to "see" Him. One of the greatest places to get acquainted with the Lord is to see Him and hear Him as He prayed.

However, the Lord had not finished with what He had to say.

His approaching death meant three other things which those who were listening needed to understand.

C. The conclusion of our Lord's ministry to the Greeks (John 12:31-36).

12:31 One of these was the judgment of the world, and the judgment of the world's prince. The world's prince is the Devil. "Prince" means the one in the chief place of authority and power. The Devil had been under the judgment of God since his own rebellion and fall. But it was by the death on the Cross that the Devil's doom was finally sealed.

Think of what he has done--the way he has ruined lives throughout all of time. Think of the trouble he has caused for the servants of the Lord, the opposition he has constantly raised against God, the people of God, and the work of God. Think of how He even dared to tempt the Lord Jesus, and how he makes life as miserable as he can for all of us. Think of the wars he has started. It took the Lord Jesus to seal his doom, but, thank God, that was done once and for all at the Cross.

But there is another point in verse 32, and this must have been especially heartening to the Gentiles who were listening to Him.

12:32, 33 By the Lord's words, "lifted up from the earth," He was "signifying what death He would die." He would die on the Cross. But one of the glorious things about the Cross was that it was for "all men," that is, Gentiles as well as Jews, rich as well as poor, women and children as well as men--mention any contrast that you like, the Lord died, not for all people without exception, but for all kinds of people!

We know that He is not drawing all people to Himself, or all people would be saved. I mentioned earlier that the Lord did not just make a provision, hoping that some would be saved. No, He paid the penalty. If He died for all people without exception, and some go to hell, then they are paying a second time for their sins. How can a person go to hell if Christ died for him and paid in full the penalty of his sins?

The meaning here is that Christ died for all kinds of people, and you will find all kinds in heaven--from every tongue and tribe and people and nation. That which appeared to be a tragic defeat was instead a marvelous triumph!

12:34 This verse seems to prove that the Lord was still speaking to the people He had addressed in verse 23 because they referred to Him as He had spoken of Himself in verse 23: as "the Son of man."

Their idea was, like most, that the Messiah would live and reign "for ever." So what did the Lord mean by saying that He must be "lifted up." (By the way, here is our word "**must**" again. It was absolutely necessary and certain that our Lord would die.)

12:35 Isn't it interesting that the Lord did not try to prove what He had been saying? He simply pointed out to them that they had been receiving "light," and that they had better bring their lives into agreement with that "light" because the alternative was most certain "darkness." And "darkness" meant ignorance and blindness and hopelessness.

If we would simply proclaim the truth, and not feel that we have to prove it nor defend it, we probably would see greater blessing. The truth carries with it its own authority. It is living truth, a living Word, sharper than any two-edged sword. Notice how the Lord here was expressing His confidence in the power of the Word, and the persuasiveness of the truth.

12:36 And so the Lord told those who were listening to Him that instead of questioning the light, they needed to believe the light. And believing the light is that which would enable them to become "children of light."

So the Lord's death on the Cross was to provide fully for those who would believe the light which He had come to give.

How wonderfully the Lord had answered the desire, really, the prayer, of the Greeks who wanted to "see Jesus"! This passage gives us one of the greatest word pictures of our Lord that we can find any place in the Word of God. I hope that it hasn't sounded like thunder to any of us, or even as the voice of an angel. We have been listening to words spoken by the Son of man, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ. They are holy words, powerful words, true words, words of light and life. Let us make sure that we have believed in this light, and that our lives show that we are the children of the light given us in Christ and in the Word of God.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 12 -- Part 3
February 4, 1991
John 12:37-50

Intro: This section gives us a brief summarization of the ministry of our Lord. It has two parts to it: vv. 37-43; vv. 44-50. It seems clear that the first part is John's general comment upon the results of our Lord's ministry. The second part may also be a summarization of given by John, a review of the preaching which our Lord did throughout His ministry. All of this comes at the end of the record of our Lord's public ministry.

We give this last part of John 12 the heading:

IV. THE SUMMARIZATION OF THE LORD'S MINISTRY (John 12:37-50).

A. The results of His ministry (John 12:37-43).

John established his comments here on the prophecy of Isaiah. He has really divided this up nicely for us. He says that:

1. The people did not believe on the Lord (vv. 37, 38).
2. The people could not believe on the Lord (vv. 39-41).
3. Many of the chief priests did believe on Him, but were afraid to let it be known (vv. 42, 43).

Obviously John had to be speaking generally. He was saying that numerically the results of our Lord's ministry were disappointing. Many people showed an interest in Him, probably because of His miracles, but the permanent, lasting results on a large scale were not there.

John did not blame the Lord for this. Instead, he indicated by his quotation of Isaiah's prophecy that this was all according to the divine plan. Let us examine, first of all, the point that:

1. The people DID NOT believe on the Lord (vv. 37, 38).

12:37 Preachers in our day who are given over to sensationalism need to pay attention to what the Apostle John said here. The Lord performed many miracles before many people (so there could be not doubt but that the miracles were genuine), and they were of amazing quality. Lepers were instantaneously healed, the crippled were made to walk immediately, the blind were given sight, and the dead were raised--to name just a few. No one ever performed as many miracles, nor as great miracles, as our Lord did! No one could successfully dispute their genuineness. Cf. John 11:47. No one could keep count on how many miracles the Lord performed, but we know that they were "many" and great! And they were done "before them." And "yet they believed not on him."

This proves that people are not brought into the kingdom of God because miracles are performed. If they did not come through our Lord's miracles, we can be sure that they are not going to be convinced by anyone else's miracles. People are not saved through sensationalism.

This gives us tremendous proof of the spiritual blindness of the human heart. The credentials of the Messiah had been presented to the leaders of Israel and to the people of Israel time and time again, but they did

not believe! Bishop Ryle believed that this statement had to do primarily with Jerusalem, and he may have been right. It certainly was as true of Jerusalem as it was of any other city in Israel. There in the heart of Judaism, a Judaism which had become corrupted by unbelief and legalism and formality, the hearts of the people were blinded and hardened against the Son of God Himself.

12:38 BUT ISAIAH HAD PREDICTED THAT IT WOULD BE LIKE THIS.

The Apostle John quoted from Isaiah 53:1, a passage which certainly would have to be considered as one of the greatest Messianic passages in all of the OT. Here again we see the supreme authority of the Word of God, the Word which cannot be broken. The prophet speaking prophetically expressed himself to give the impression that you would have to look long and hard to find anybody who believed "our report."

The word "report" is interesting because it focused attention on the Messiah's message. It speaks of something that is heard, not upon something that is seen, like a miracle. The message is always the primary means that the Lord uses in the salvation of sinners. Paul taught the Romans that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). And I remind you again of what the Lord said in those words recorded in Luke 16:31. They are given as the words of Abraham in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus:

And he said unto him,
If they hear not Moses and the prophets,
neither will they be persuaded,
though one rose from the dead.

Paul taught the Corinthians that "it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21). The preaching was not foolish, but that which was preached was branded as foolishness by men. And yet that which they despised was the very means that God had ordained for their salvation.

Peter emphasized this same point when he said,

Being born again, not of corruptible seed,
 but of incorruptible, **by the word of God,**
which liveth and abideth for ever.

"The arm of the Lord" was very prominent through the ministry of our Lord, but it did not come to the people as a revelation from God. You see, Isaiah believed that there has to be a revelation of the truth to any person who is going to be saved. This is not a revelation in addition to the Word, but a revelation of the meaning of the Word.

Bishop Ryle said that from Isaiah 53 "the unbelief of the Jews was as clearly foretold in Scripture as the sufferings of Christ" (II, 204).

Mary, the mother of our Lord, was different. She said in her Magnificat, speaking of the Lord, "He hath shewed strength **with his arm....**" (Luke 1:51a). Mary was one of those exceptions who heard the report, and who believed in her Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There are always more people who will be attracted by miracles than by a message. In our day, preaching, the preaching of the Word of God, has really gone out of style. Many who claim to be preachers speak loudly and long, but there is usually very, very little of the truth of God in

what they have to say. It is the Word of God that needs to be proclaimed throughout the earth. And let us remember, if people will not be reached by the Word of God, they will not be reached by anything else!

12:39 The Word of God is forever true. If multitudes of people had been saved during our Lord's ministry, it would have shown that Isaiah's prophecy was not true. But it was true, and so we should not be surprised that the people did not believe.

But now John and Isaiah take us even a step beyond what is written in verses 37 and 38. John went on to say that:

2. The people COULD NOT believe on the Lord (vv. 39-41).

12:39 John said first that they did not believe; here he said that "they could not believe," and he proved his point by citing another passage from Isaiah's prophecy--this time from Isa. 6:10.

By the way, let me point out something about Isaiah's prophecy that you may not have noticed before.

There are those who speak of a Deutero-Isaiah when they speak of the authorship of that book of the OT. They say that the content of the two sections of Isaiah, 1 through 39, and 40 through 66, is so different, that the whole book could not have been written by the same man, the same Isaiah. They also feel that for Isaiah to mention Cyrus when Cyrus had not been born yet, proves that the latter part of Isaiah was written much later.

But what did John say? He was repeating what the Lord had taught him. He quoted from Isa. 53, which was in that latter part of Isaiah's prophecy, and then he quoted from Isa. 6, which was in the earlier part, and he attributed them both to the same Isaiah. That should settle the question of the authorship of Isaiah's prophecy once and for all! I would rather depend upon the Apostle John even if all of the "scholars" were against him.

This point is not particularly important in understanding this passage, but you may need that ammunition in your gun some day when somebody tries to tell you that two Isaiahs had to be involved in writing that great, foundational prophecy of the OT. What is really wrong with the Deutero-Isaiah people is that they do not actually believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture. If the Lord had wanted to, he could have had Isaiah mention by name some world leader who has not even yet been born! That would be no problem for the Lord. But let us go on.

I know that a statement like John made here in the 39th verse jars us right down to our roots. It is so different from what we have been taught. We have been taught that man is the captain of his own soul, and that the only thing that stands in the way of his salvation is his unwillingness to believe. We have been taught that man's will is free to do whatever he wants to do. And so we have a very hard time with a statement like this.

I sympathize with you in this. There was a day when I had a hard time with it, too. But the day came when the Lord showed me (and I give all of the credit to Him) that it is not my business to argue with the Word, nor am I to try to make it fit into what I think it ought to say, BUT I

MUST ACCEPT THE WORD AS IT IS, AND SEEK THE HELP OF GOD HIMSELF TO UNDERSTAND WHAT HE CAUSED JOHN AND ALL OF THE OTHER WRITERS OF SCRIPTURE TO GIVE US. Therefore, let us believe that "they could not believe" because that is what the Word says. A literal translation would go like this: **they were not able to believe!** That means that "they could not believe."

Now I ask you to believe that they could not believe, and to believe that they could not believe because that is what the Bible says.

Why could they not believe?

We will find the answer in the latter part of verse 39, and then in verse 40. It was because of what the Spirit of God directed Isaiah to write about 700 years before the Lord Jesus Christ came to the earth.

What did Isaiah write? Look at verse 40 which is a quotation of Isa. 6:10.

12:40 Let me read this verse to you.

The people could not believe because of what God did to them. They saw the Lord. They saw His miracles. But they did not really see them. They heard his messages, and they understood them to a certain degree, but they did not really understand what He was saying. God kept them from seeing; God kept them from understanding.

As I have mentioned before, the Lord did not strike everyone with blindness. He did not harden everyone's heart. There were those who did see, and there were those who did hear. But if you want to know why more did not see and understand, it was because they could not, and they could not because God blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts.

Let me give you another illustration of this. Please turn Matt. 13, and I want to begin reading with verse 10. (Read Matt. 13:10-17.)

Add to these words the situation in the early part of the book of Exodus where God hardened the heart of Pharaoh.

The key to these words of our Lord is in verse 11.

No one really had the ability to penetrate into the mystery of God's dealings with people, but it is important for us to believe what the Word of God says even though we do not fully understand it, nor can we give an adequate explanation of it. But there are certain things that we do know and can say about it.

One: We can see from what our Lord did that this truth is not to keep us from preaching the Gospel to every person. People are responsible to God for what they hear, and we are responsible to tell them about Christ. And we are to encourage them to believe the Gospel. We do not know who is going to be saved, just as we do not know who is not going to be saved. The doctrine of election assures us that some will be saved. In fact, we can say that there are those who must be saved. And so we are to preach the Word to all people.

Two: We know from this verse that God is the One Who determines who is going to be saved. God was not indebted to the human race in any way regarding salvation. If God had decided not to provide salvation, no one

could have charged Him with sin. On the other hand, if He had decided to save everyone so that no one would be lost, that would have been right for Him to do that. Where we have our trouble is when we learn that He decided to save some, but not to save all.

Perhaps it will help you to see the righteousness of God in all of this if I remind you of the parable recorded in Matt. 20 regarding the householder who agreed to pay his laborers a denarius a day for working in his vineyard. Some began working early in the morning. Others went out about 9 o'clock. More went out at noon. Still others went out at 3 p.m. And some went out at 5 in the afternoon. All of them worked until "even" (v. 8), and then the householder called the workers in from the vineyard to pay them. To the astonishment of those who had worked all day, the householder gave everybody the same amount: one denarius! Those who had worked all day expected that they would receive more, and they were very unhappy with their employer. But he answered them by saying, "Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own?" (Matt. 20:15).

Think about that question. The householder had agreed to pay a denarius to those who went out in the morning. And he did that! Was he sinning because he gave the man who worked only an hour the same pay? Of course not! He had a right to do what he wanted to do with that which was his own.

We are all the creatures of God. Although we often hear it said that we were created equal, that is not true. Some are born in wealth; others are born in poverty. Some are weak and sickly in body; others are very robust, and hardly ever sick. Some are blind, while most can see. Some are born without certain parts of their bodies; most are born with full bodies, with no members missing. Most have good hearing; some are born deaf. Does all of this mean that God is not a righteous God, or even that He is not a good God? Of course not! We are living in a world that bears the marks of sin everywhere. Even the fact that we die is evidence of human sin.

It will help us a great deal to remember that God does not think like we do, nor does He act according to human ways. His thoughts and His ways are infinitely higher and better than ours. We have no right to pass judgment against Him.

Three: Let me mention one more thing.

The knowledge that God opens the hearts of some and hardens others is truth that should make us realize that the only hope that any of us has is that God will be merciful to us and save us. People know that there is a God. And people know that they are not good. Everybody knows that he is not as good as God is. And so with this truth we can see that the prayer of the publican was right on target: "God be merciful to me a sinner." Read Luke 18:9-14. And, while we do not know the purposes of God, we know that we have the promise recorded for us in John 6:37,

All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me;
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.

God has not saved any of us because we deserve to be saved. It had to be by grace with all of us. But let us thank God that He did provide salvation, and that He has saved us. And let us also thank God that He has commanded us to go with the message of salvation to others, to others who are all around us. This can be a great encouragement to us that He

intends to save some of those we know, and for whom we have been burdened to pray for their salvation.

These truths raise many questions in our minds. But let us always approach the Word of God in faith. We are inclined to say, "When I can see it, I will believe it." But remember that the person who approaches the Word of God with that attitude never sees, and so does not believe. Instead, remember what the Lord told Martha: "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). It is only when we believe first, that we see.

12:41 John gave us a very precious insight here into the Lord's appearance to Isaiah in Isaiah 6. And this ought to help us understand this difficult truth which we have been considering. He said that when Isaiah saw the Lord, he saw the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw His glory, and spoke of Him.

That is what the truth of the sovereignty of God in salvation should do for us. It should give us a clearer understanding of Christ, of His glory, His Deity, and cause us to do that which believers and all of the world need the most: Speak of Him!

The more we know of the Lord, the less we will have trouble with the marvelous teachings of the Word of God.

February 11, 1991

3. Some chief priests did believe, but were afraid to say so (vv. 42, 43).

12:42 At this point we need to remember what is recorded in John 8:30 ff. In that passage it seems that their belief was an intellectual acceptance of Christ, but in the discussion which followed the Lord finally said to them, "Ye are of your father the devil...." (v. 44a). So it would seem that their faith was not a saving faith. They probably believed the Lord's claim to be the Messiah, but they did not actually trust Him as Savior.

Was this the case here? It probably was. Intellectually they were convinced, but in their hearts they really did not trust the Lord. Cf. what Paul wrote in Rom. 10:9, 10. When a person really trusts Christ neither the Pharisees nor their relationship to the synagogue will keep them from following Christ. When a person's heart is open to the truth, he cannot continue on in a dead religion. When a person trusts the Savior, the light has dawned upon his soul, and he cannot go back to the darkness.

Bishop Westcott said in his commentary on this passage, "This complete intellectual faith (so to speak) is really the climax of unbelief. The conviction found no expression in life" (p. 185). This is a very interesting observation.

Cf. also what Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:17. There really was no change in their hearts. They had been afraid of the power of the Pharisees before, and they were still afraid!

12:43 This verse is the clincher. They were more concerned about obeying men than they were about obeying God; they wanted to please men

rather than to please God.

This one thing has probably kept more people from trusting Christ than we realize. All of us feel the pressure put upon us by the attitude of other people. No one likes to be considered a fool. We do not like to be ridiculed or laughed at. Bishop Ryle reminded his readers of Proverbs 29:25: "The fear of man bringeth a snare." And also that the we have the words of the Lord in John 5:44, "How can ye believe which receive honour one from another?"

These two verses are a solemn reminder that it is possible to believe, and yet not believe. There are people in our churches who mentally agreed with the Scriptures. They have no argument with the teaching that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. They believe that the Bible is the Word of God. They even understand that salvation is by faith. They accept all of these truths, and much more. And yet their hearts have never been changed. The light that they have has only added to the intensity of their unbelief. It is hard to think of any state that would be more tragic. In one way, these chief priests were very near; in another way, they were far away with perhaps no possibility of ever getting any closer.

But now we come to the last part of John 12.

B. A summarization of His teaching (John 12:44-50).

There have been various suggestions about these verses. But the general consensus among evangelical writers seems to be that in these seven verses we have a summary of the main truths which the Lord proclaimed throughout His ministry.

Some feel that the change from verse 43 to verse 44 is too abrupt to belong to the same situation. But I feel that it fits perfectly. I believe that it is a summary, but that the Lord could have spoken it at that time. He was certainly showing the nature of true faith, as well as the consequences of not believing. However, it is also a summarization, and it is certainly appropriate that such a summarization should be given as John's account of our Lord's public ministry comes to an end.

Notice the message.

12:44 "Jesus cried and said." This verb was used by the Apostle John in speaking of the John the Baptist's ministry in John 1:15. He used it again of the Lord in John 7:28, and John 7:37. It was used also of the crowds who shouted hosannas to the Lord as He rode into Jerusalem on the donkey. Cf. John 12:13.

It indicates that the one who cries out wants to be heard, considers his message important, and, although he speaks loudly, he speaks solemnly. No words could be more important than the words which the Lord spoke here.

In this verse our Lord was emphasizing the intimate relationship which He had with the Father. He meant that to believe on Him was not all that there was to true faith. The one who believes truly believes on Christ believes also on the Father.

Note the wording of John 5:24. No person can really believe in God

without believing in Christ, nor can a person truly believe in Christ without believing in God. Cf. John 14:6. It is impossible to know God except through Christ, and he who trusts Christ is trusting the Father also. People are never clear on salvation until they understand this basic truth.

12:45 This is a second truth which the Lord was constantly declaring.

He came as a revelation of the Father, the final and complete revelation. For Christ to come was exactly the same as if the Father had come. If people wanted to know what God was like, they were to, lit., behold Christ! To behold the Lord patiently and continuously would lead the believer to a fuller understanding of God Himself. The Father and Christ were different Persons, but identical in nature. We remember that the Lord told Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). To acquire the greatest knowledge of God that it is possible for us to have, we must go to Christ, but never beyond Christ.

12:46 This is the truth we had in John 1, 8, and 9. The Lord Jesus is "the light of the world." He came to make people see, to make the truth clearer than it had ever been before. He came where men were blinded by the darkness. He said here that the person who believes in him would not abide in darkness.

This certainly would apply to what John had recorded about the chief priests in verses 42 and 43. All men by nature are in darkness--the darkness of ignorance and unbelief. But when anyone believes in Christ, he does not "abide" in the darkness any longer.

In this verse the Lord was speaking of His mission into the world, but also make a clear statement about salvation. Obviously if a person says that he believes, and yet walks in darkness, abides in darkness, he is not telling the truth. Remember what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 1:6,

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.

12:47 The Lord was doing two things here:

- 1) He was calling attention to His words, His teaching.
- 2) He was pointing out the purpose of His coming.

No person can be saved without believing the teachings of Christ. Thus the teachings of Christ was extremely important, a matter of eternal life, or eternal death.

However, if anyone does not believe, the Lord will not judge them now. He could not be saying that He would never act as a judge because there are other passages which say that He will! But judgment was not the purpose of our Lord's first coming; He came to save, to save people throughout the whole world--Jews and Gentiles alike.

It was commonly thought among the Jews that when the Messiah came He would judge the world and set His people free. They said that because they did not understand that their basic need was to be saved.

12:48 Verse 47 indicated that hearing the words of the Lord could bring salvation. Here in this verse He indicated that those same words would be the basis of divine judgment for those who rejected Him and His words. So the only One Who could spare sinners from that final judgment

was the Lord. The way of salvation consists in believing the Word, and trusting in the Lord.

12:49 The Lord's words here seem to anticipate that people were saying, "How could your words be so important?" It was because, as the Lord said, "I have not spoken of," lit., out of, "myself." The words of the Lord Jesus were the words which the Father gave Him to speak, and so they were the words of Almighty God!

12:50 And then the Lord concluded this chapter by saying that He had faithfully spoken the words that the Father had commanded Him to speak.

So in these concluding verses of chapter 12, summarizing what the Lord had said throughout His ministry, pointed to His unique nature, and to the message He proclaimed, the words which He spoke. And the Father was vitally involved in both. The Lord Jesus had the same nature as the Father, and the Lord Jesus did not say anything on earth but the words that the Father had given Him to speak.

Therefore, people could not reject Christ without rejecting God. Nor could they reject the message of Christ without rejecting the very Word of God.

The Lord's ministry on earth was exercised under the full authority of God, the heavenly Father. This was a kind of a final appeal for people to awaken to the unique ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was sent by the Father. He was like the Father. His words were the words that the Father had sent Him to cry out! And this Word would for the basis upon which men would be judged in the last day.

Let us not forget these great words spoken by our Lord. Nor should we hide these words from others. If the Lord cried out, so should we! Let us tell the world Who the Lord is, the message He came to proclaim, the importance of trusting in Christ, the evidence that we have when faith is genuine, and the dire consequences of all who do not know the Lord.

The Lord came to save the first time, but He is coming to judge when He comes to the earth again. His word is true. It cannot fail. So let us make sure that we are ready.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 13 -- Part 1
February 18, 1991
John 13:1-17

Intro: In the outline which I have given you, we come in John 13 to the third main point. Let me give you the first two with it to refresh our minds about the way in which the Apostle John has written.

I. THE INTRODUCTION (John 1).

In this chapter the Apostle John was not only introducing his Gospel, but he was introducing the Lord. He did this through his own testimony, through the testimony of John the Baptist, and through the testimony of five disciples--one of whom was the Apostle John himself. The others were Andrew, Peter, Philip, and Nathanael.

II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2-12).

This is the longest section of John's Gospel. In it we have the seven miracles which John selected to show that Jesus was the Messiah:

- 1) Changing the water into wine (John 2:1-11).
- 2) The healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:43-54).
- 3) The healing of the impotent man (John 5:1-9).
- 4) The feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15).
- 5) Jesus walking on the water (John 6:16-21).
- 6) Giving sight to the man born blind (John 9:1-12).
- 7) The raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46).

This is also the section in which we have much of the Lord's teaching. The Apostle John recorded seven claims that the Lord made for Himself, the seven I am's. Five of these are in this section; the other two are in the section we are coming to now. The five are:

- 1) "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48, 51).
- 2) "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5).
- 3) "I am the door of the sheep," or simply, "the door" (John 10:7, 9).
- 4) "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14; cf. 12:46).
- 5) "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).

The remaining two are:

- 6) "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
- 7) "I am the true vine" (John 15:1, 5).

All through this section we have seen the growing opposition of "the Jews"--the religious leaders of the people.

And now we come to the third major division of John's Gospel.

III. THE LORD'S PRIVATE MINISTRY TO HIS DISCIPLES (John 13:1-16:33).

There are three part to chapter 13:

- A. The Lord washed the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17).
- B. The Lord identified Judas Iscariot as His betrayer (John 13:18-30).

The third part probably belongs to chapters 14 through 16 because it gives us the beginning of that which is generally known as THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE. Actually only this part and chapter 14 were given in the Upper Room. John 14:31 indicates that the Lord and His disciples left the Upper Room at that time; chapters 15 and 16 were spoken on the way to Gethsemane. Therefore, we will call the first of these:

- C. The Lord's discourses in the Upper Room (John 13:31-14:31).

The first of these is:

1. The Lord announced His departure from His disciples and predicted Peter's denial (John 13:31-38).

This gives us the outline of chapter 13.

Let us now consider the first part of chapter 13:

A. The Lord washed the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17).

Matthew Henry suggested four reasons from this section as to why the Lord washed the disciples' feet. I have modified them slightly, but it seems to me that these points give us the message contained in the first seventeen verses of chapter 13. The reasons are:

1. To show His love for them (v. 1).
2. To illustrate His humiliation (vv. 2-5).
3. To teach a spiritual truth, the truth of cleansing (vv. 6-11).
4. To give them an example to follow (vv. 12-17).

13:1 What the Passover lamb was to the Israelites in Egypt, the Lord Jesus is to "his own." And just as the time came for the Passover lamb to be killed, so "the hour was come" for our Lord. The Passover lamb died in order that the firstborn of the Israelites would not die; our Lord Jesus took the penalty of our sin upon Himself--the greatest possible demonstration of His love for His people. This verse gives us further confirmation that the death of Christ was primarily for "his own."

"Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." The Lord's love for "his own" had been shown repeatedly throughout His ministry. It was not to change then, nor ever!

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that.

while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

What is here stated about those who were "His own" then, is true also of us as believers today. His love for "His own" is without beginning, without ending, and without change. Nothing can separate us from His love, not even our sins, our failures, or anything else. Cf. Phil. 1:6.

Bishop Ryle said this about the Lord's people:

That He should bear with all their countess infirmities from conversion unto death,--that He should never be tired of their endless inconsistencies and petty provocations,--that He should go on forgiving and forgetting incessantly, and never be provoked to cast them off and give them up,--all this is marvellous indeed! No mother watching over the waywardness of her feeble babe, in the days of its infancy, has her patience so thoroughly tried, as the patience of Christ is tried by Christians. Yet His longsuffering is infinite. His compassions are as well that cannot be exhausted. His love is "a love which passeth knowledge" (Ephes. iii. 19).

We could dwell on that for a long time, but let us go on to the next point.

2. To illustrate His humiliation (vv. 2-5).

13:2 The Lord not only knew that His hour was come, but He also knew His betrayer. As far back as John 6:70 we should remember that the Lord had said to His disciples,

Have not I chosen you twelve,
and one of you is a devil?

This dastardly deed was instigated by the Devil. He put this in the heart of Judas. We must never underestimate the power of the Devil, nor should we, like Judas, play into his hands by allowing sin to go unchecked in our lives.

13:3 Verse 1 tells us one thing that the Lord knew. Verse 2 tells us a second thing that He knew. And this verse tells us a third thing that the Lord knew.

Although the Lord Jesus was there in the Upper Room as a Man, yet He was fully aware of His Deity. He knew His authority. He knew, to give it in the order of words in the Greek Testament, that "it was from God He came forth, and unto God He is going" (so Westcott, p. 3). There is the suggestion of His Deity, but also of the glory that He enjoyed with the Father, and to which He would return. It was in the full consciousness of His Deity that He did what He was about to do.

This verse, and what the Lord did in the next two verses, combine to give us a great illustration of the truth of Phil. 2:5-7. Our Lord's full awareness of His Deity did not hinder Him from acting here as a lowly household servant.

13:4, 5 He got up from the table, took off His outer garment (like a man today might take off his suit coat, roll up his sleeves, and then do some menial task.

No one had performed this courtesy which was usually taken care of when guests first came into the house. This action would indicate that the Lord considered Himself to be the Host for this meal, and, having no servant, He took that responsibility Himself.

This pictures His ministry on earth. No one has ever been as humbled, really, as humiliated, as our Lord Jesus Christ was. Here was the Son of God, not only present as a man, but humbling Himself to be the lowest of men--a common household servant!

So this was a very clear illustration of our Lord's work on earth. He did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to provide cleansing for all who would trust in Him.

This brings us to the third point.

3. To teach a spiritual truth (vv. 6-11).

13:6 This was more than Peter could take. In his question "Lord" and "thou" and "my" are emphatic. Peter knew Who the Lord was, and he knew himself as a sinner. For him to wash the Lord's feet would have been the right way, but for the Lord to wash his feet was completely unacceptable to him.

13:7 Here is another thing that the Lord knew: He knew that Peter did not know the significance of what He, the Lord, was doing. But the Lord promised Peter that he would understand later.

Here is another illustration of the fact that the Lord's ways and our ways are different. But we need to remember at the same time that His ways are

better, far better than ours. We may be confused and discouraged by what we are experiencing. It is as Bishop Ryle said in commenting on this verse, "All is going on well, even when we think all is going on ill" (Vol. II, p. 240).

We can learn from Peter that, when the Lord is dealing with us, as Matthew Henry said, that he "ought not oppose what he did not understand" (Vol. v, p. 1093). If we will only wait, the Lord will show us what He wants us to know. In the meantime, we should trust Him. When God called Abraham, "he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. 11:8b).

13:8 Peter showed here that he was very immature spiritually. He did not really hear what the Lord said. He did not wait for the Lord's time to explain what all of this meant. And so he said, "Thou shalt never wash my feet."

We can sympathize with Peter in his feelings because we would feel the same way. John the Baptist said that he was not worthy to take the Lord's sandals off of His feet.

Peter was very strong in what he said. "Never" is the translation of a double negative. Peter meant that never, under any circumstances, would he allow the Lord to wash his feet. It is a solemn thing to tell the Lord "never."

AT THIS POINT THE LORD BEGAN TO BRING IN THE SPIRITUAL TRUTH THAT HE SOUGHT TO GET ACROSS, NOT ONLY TO PETER, BUT TO ALL OF THE OTHER DISCIPLES. See what the Lord said in response to Peter. Cf. v. 8b.

The word translated "wash" has to do with the washing of a part of the body. But when we look at the spiritual significance of what the Lord was saying it would mean that person who refuses to be cleansed by Christ is manifesting that he (or she) is not saved.

13:9 At this point Peter made the pendulum swing to the other extreme. He wanted the Lord to wash his feet, his hands, and his head. He wanted a full bath! Peter did not want to run any risk that he would have no part with the Lord.

13:10 The Lord's answer is very important.

He used two Greek words, and both of them mean to wash. The first one means to take a full bath; the second one speaks of only washing a single part of the body.

The bath speaks of salvation. Peter only needed one bath. There is no such thing as being saved twice, or three times, or four, etc. However, although we have been bathed, we do need to keep our feet clean.

We use our feet for walking, and walking is a Biblical expression having to do with the way we live. It is our daily living that continually needs to be cleaned. We do things that we ought not to do, and we fail to do what we ought to do. If we keep our feet clean, i.e., our walk, we do not have to worry about defilement any other place. We need to be always walking in the light of the Word of God.

"And ye are clean, but not all." The next verse explains this, and it also carries important truth which we need to understand.

13:11 As we learned from verse 2, the Lord knew who would betray Him. And so He said, "And ye are clean, but not all." This meant that Judas had not had a spiritual bath. He had never been saved. He knew the Word. He had been a preacher and a miracle-worker. Everybody except the Lord thought that he was saved. But he wasn't!

What a warning this should be to all of us! IF IT WERE POSSIBLE FOR A MAN TO BE A DISCIPLE, YES, EVEN AN APOSTLE, AND YET NOT BE SAVED, IT IS MOST LIKELY THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE IN ALL OF OUR CHURCHES WHO PROFESS TO BE CHRISTIANS, BUT WHO ARE NOT SAVED. They have not had their sins washed away.

Cf. 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Rev. 1:5b; 7:14; 22:14 (marginal reading).

The last verses of this section give us the fourth reason why the Lord washed the disciples feet.

4. To give them an example to follow (vv.12-17).

February 25, 1991

13:12 Perhaps the disciples thought that what the Lord had already said about being bathed in contrast with a washing was the reason for what He had done. It certainly was a part of His purpose, but not all.

Our Lord's question would indicate that the Lord has a purpose for all that He does, and that it is important for us to find out why He does what He does. He does not always explain Himself. We might even say that, as a general rule, "His judgments" are "unsearchable," "and His ways past finding out" (Rom. 11:33b). At the same time it is right that we should seek to know His ways, but leave it up to the Lord to reveal to us what He wants us to know.

He did not really expect them to be able to answer Him, but He asked to direct their attention to His purpose in washing their feet. And so He did not wait for an answer.

13:13 Lit. the first words of this verse should be translated, "Ye call me **the Master** and **the Lord**." They recognized Christ as their Teacher and as their Lord. As their Teacher, He taught them what He wanted them to know; as their Lord, He was owned them, He ruled over them, He had authority over them. As their Master, He wanted them to learn from Him; as their Lord, He expected their obedience, their submission to His will.

He added that when they spoke of Him as their Teacher and as their Sovereign, they did well. He was pleased to be their Teacher and their Lord, and He was equally pleased for them to address Him both ways. (Let us learn from this.) He was their Teacher and their Lord--"for so I am," or, as the Greek text says, "For I am"!

Matthew Henry spoke of a man he called, "devout Mr. Herbert," as a man who, when He spoke of Christ, always added, "My Master" (Vol. V, p. 1095).

13:14 If He, their Master and their Lord, washed their feet, then they "ought" to do the same for each other. "I" and "you" are emphatic in the Greek. "Ought" means that if He did it for them, they were obligated to do it for each other. It was a divine obligation which the Lord was placing upon them. We serve the Lord when we serve each other.

Mary, in John 12, anointed the feet of the Lord to express her love for Him. We also have the case of the sinful woman in Luke 7 washed the Lord's feet with her tears, and then anointed them with the ointment which she had. But this, too, was because of her love for the Lord. What we are dealing with here is something different. The Lord did not need to have His feet washed as He had washed the disciples feet because His feet were never defiled. But the disciples' feet were, and they needed to wash each other's feet.

13:15 And so He said that what He had done for them was to be "an example" to them. What is "an example"?

This was something which the Lord had shown clearly before their eyes as something which He wanted them to do. He had not just told them; He had shown them.

We might take this as meaning that the Lord was establishing an ordinance for the church called, foot washing, as some believers interpret this. They would say that the church has three ordinances: baptism, the Lord's Supper, and foot washing--which they normally do at the Lord's Supper, men washing men's feet, and women washing women's feet.

I do not look at it that way, but I am not going to criticize those who do providing they do not miss the spiritual significance of what they are doing!

The bathing which the Lord spoke about in verse 10 is salvation; the washing which He did pictured the need each of us has to have our feet cleansed from the defilement of sin.

We cannot confess sin for another believer. Each person has to do that for himself. But by our example, by our prayers, sometimes by a word of rebuke, by warning, by encouragement, we can become instruments in the Lord's hand to help another believer turn from sin to live a life more pleasing to God. Our feet do our walking for us. Our walk in Scripture is the way we live. That is in constant need of cleansing. And this is where church fellowship can mean so much. That is why we are not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25a). The person who regularly meets with the Lord's people will find it harder to sin when he is by himself than the person who stays away from Christian fellowship. That is why, when a person starts to stay away from church, it is not long before you hear that spiritually they are in trouble.

Let us remember that such a ministry with each other calls for humility on the part of the one who is doing the washing, just as the Lord manifested great humility in actually washing the disciples' feet. We are not going to be able to help people if we approach them in a self-righteous, proud way, but we need to do it in love, seeking the glory of God, and hoping either to prevent sin, or to restore one who has sinned.

Gal. 6:1-10 is a Scripture which illustrates this truth.

February 26, 1991

13:16 This is "Verily, verily" #18.

This was a maxim, a saying, which the Lord repeated at various times, and in various situations. Cf. Matt. 10:24; Luke 6:40; John 15:20. In John 15

it has to do with persecution; here it has to do with service.

One of the great problems that the servant of the Lord faces is that of pride. It was evident in the request that James and John along with their mother presented to the Lord. Cf. Matt.20:20-29. If our Lord made Himself a Servant, then we have no right to make ourselves lords. We need to have the mind of Christ. Cf. Phil. 2:5-8. Peter obviously remembered this incident in the ministry of our Lord when he wrote the words we have in 1 Peter 5:5. Remember Matt. 20:28, and Mark's account of the same in Mark 10:45. Every child of God is to be characterized by humility, and this is pre-eminently true of every man who is set apart for the ministry of the Word. Since the Lord always took the lowest place, we have no business in seeking the highest.

See Paul's words to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 3:1-7. Pride in a child of God is always a sign of immaturity. Cf. Jacob, and Joseph, and Moses, and David, and Peter and John, as well as the Apostle Paul himself as examples to us of humility. This is a truth that we need to be learning in many ways throughout our lives. Our greatest objective in serving the Lord should be that the Lord would be glorified, and that others would be placed before us and above us.

13:17 This, too, was a truth that the Lord emphasized often in His ministry.

The truth is not something just to be known; the truth is to be done. Cf. 1 John 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with him...." Also James 1:22, "But be ye doers of the word...." Happiness comes, not just through the knowledge of the Word, but when we are obedient to what the Lord has told us to do. Let us remember also the words of James 4:17,
Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not,
to him it is sin.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 13 -- Part 2
February 26, 1991
John 13:18-30

Intro: The first section of this chapter had to do with the Lord washing the feet of His disciples, and the lesson that He gave them from what He did. It is probably amazing to us that, at such a time, the Lord would be concerned about this. And yet what He was facing was the time of the greatest humiliation in His entire earthly life.

In this section we have the second point in the outline of chapters 13-16:

B. The Lord identified Judas Iscariot as His betrayer (John 13:18-30).

13:18 It seems that at this point in our Lord's ministry He seemed intent on reassuring His disciples that He held complete knowledge of all of the circumstances that would lead up to His death.

What the Lord had said was applicable only to those who were His. The promise of blessing for obedience does not apply to those who are not the children of God. Obedience must follow faith. If there is no faith, obedience to the Word of God is impossible.

The Lord knew those whom He had chosen--probably speaking of the fact that, when He chose the twelve, He knew that Judas was not a true believer. But He chose him to serve as an apostle "that the scripture might be fulfilled." The Scripture to which He referred was Psa. 41:9:

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted,
which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.
The Psalm was a Psalm of David, and probably referred to his experience with Ahithophel, but it was a prophecy of what would happen to our Lord.

This serves as a warning to all of the Lord's people that there have been times, and there will be other times, when from within enemies would take action to hinder, to confuse, and, if possible, to destroy the work of the Lord. This was the warning that the Apostle Paul gave to the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:29, 30:

For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.

This is one of "the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11), one of "his devices" (2 Cor. 2:11). He often appears "as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14). History gives many examples that, in times of revival, there have been special ways in which the Devil has been active from without as well as from without.

"He that eateth bread with me" may be an indication that Judas was present at the institution of the Lord's Supper. We cannot say for sure. But, if it is, then it makes Judas' betrayal of the Lord more despicable than ever. It certainly does suggest that Judas was in the closest possible relationship with the Lord, and yet that did not keep him from lifting up his heel against the Lord. This is an expression which means that he turned on the Lord, perhaps that he was like one who was shaking the dust from his feet as one who despised the Lord, not wanting to have anything more to do with Him. It surely is an indication of the worst kind of treachery. We need to remember that it was Judas' love for money that led to his eternal destruction. It should also be a warning to us to search our own hearts to make sure that we really know the Lord as our Savior.

13:19 Telling the apostles ahead of time would not only forewarn them, but it would make them realize more strongly than ever that the Lord was truly the Messiah, the "I am" (which is what the Greek text says). And it must mean that the evidences of the omniscience of Christ in this chapter were all intended to give further proof of our Lord's Messiahship.

Fulfilled prophecy is confirmation of the genuineness of the prophet. We are seeing here evidence of our Lord's prophetic ministry--Prophet, Priest, and King.

13:20 This is "Verily, verily" #19. And it was meant to be an encouragement to the other apostles.

The apostles could have looked upon the departure of one of their number as an indication that the entire ministry of the Lord would fail (especially since, at this point, they did not understand nor even believe what the Lord had told them about His approaching death. And so the Lord assured them that there would be those who would receive them. Those who received them in their ministry were receiving Him, Christ. And those who received Christ, were receiving the Father Who had sent Him.

The betrayal of the Lord by one of His apostles was, therefore, a part of the plan of God, and was in no way evidence of the destruction of their work.

We also should be encouraged by this. There will be those who will turn against us, and who will seek to destroy our work. But there will also be those who will receive us and the message that we proclaim. The work of the Lord will not fail. Opposition and temporary setbacks are to be expected. They will grieve us, but they must not stop us. All of God's purposes will surely be accomplished.

Having said all of this, the Lord went on to say,

13:21 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that **one of you** shall betray me."

This is "Verily, verily" #20.

As He said it, John tells us that our Lord "was troubled in spirit." Cf. John 12:27 where the same verb was used by our Lord. This speaks of His inner distress. He was like a calm sea which is suddenly agitated by a strong wind. Here we see evidence of the Lord's humanity. The Lord did not take Judas' departure as a matter of fact. It hurt Him deeply. He was grieved, and we can be sure that it was most of all for Judas that He was grieved. This is probably the greatest illustration in the Bible of the fact that the Lord has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Cf. Ezek. 18:23; 33:11. Judas was spiritually blind, spiritually shortsighted, and did not realize until it was too late, the consequences of what he had done.

How do we feel about the eternal punishment of the wicked in hell? It ought to trouble us, trouble us deeply, as it did our Lord Jesus Christ.

We also should consider what our attitude is when people turn against us. David's reaction to Absalom should be an example for us to follow, as well as our Lord's attitude toward Judas. While Judas is fully responsible before God for what he did, yet let us remember what John has related for us in the second verse of this chapter. We are seeing what Judas did

because of what the Devil put in his heart. In verse 27 we are going to see that Judas was actually indwelt by Satan! And so what Judas did was the result, not of demon-possession, but of Satan-possession! When we trifle with sin in its smallest beginnings, we can never even remotely imagine what terrible things we may finally do.

Therefore, the story of Judas holds many lessons for us, and we should pray that we will learn all of those lessons so that we may be kept from sin and so that we may react in a manner pleasing to the Lord when others sin against us.

13:22 This shows how completely Judas had been able to conceal his true condition. None of the disciples was suspicious of him. Their first reaction seems to have been silence. They did more than doubt; they were stunned, they were perplexed. They had trouble believing that one of them would be able to do such a thing. In fact, Mark tells us that they all began to say, "Is it I?" (Mark 14:19).

Perhaps we are wrong in thinking that Judas deliberately sought to conceal his true identity throughout our Lord's public ministry. He may not have been aware that his heart was not right with God. But the other apostles, and probably Judas himself, had failed to detect the warning signs. E.g., his opposition to the devotion shown to the Lord by Mary as recorded for us in the opening verses of John 12. Perhaps it was his interest in money that had caused the apostles to give him the treasurer's job. This is why it is so important for us to know the signs of a true believer, as given to us in 1 John. We need to know them for our own good, but we need to know them also so that we will be able to determine when professing believers do not actually manifest that they have been born of God. It may very well be that there is someone in your church, in our church, whom you esteem very highly, is not even saved. Look for the evidence, not just the fact that a person goes to church. There have always been hypocrites in the church, and there always will be.

We all need to be reminded of what the Lord said in Matt. 7:15-29. And this helps us to understand also why the Lord placed His emphasis upon doing the will of God in verse 17 of John 13. We can be sure that Judas would not have been one who would have been happy to wash the feet of the other disciples.

March 4, 1991

13:23 We have a reminder of this event (vv. 23-25) in John 21:20.

John was evidently describing himself here, as the disciple who "was leaning on Jesus' bosom, as well as the one "whom Jesus loved." This latter description of John is used four more times in John's Gospel: 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20. John 21:20 and 24 seem to prove that this was John.

Although I have not seen this in any of the commentaries, I wonder if this expression did not have something to do with John's obedience, and his devotion to the Lord. Cf. John 14:21, 23. By nature John was one of the "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). It was the Lord Who gave them this name: "Boanarges." It may have been because of the incident in Samaria when the villagers would not receive the Lord because He was headed for Jerusalem. James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven upon them. The Lord rebuked them when He said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of" (Mark 9:55).

It seems that John may have been the youngest of the apostles, and perhaps one with the strongest will. But through the years of the Lord's ministry John mellowed tremendously. His epistles show both a devotion to the Lord and a tenderness toward the Lord's people. And, if I am right in this, it would seem that the Lord had a special place in His heart for John. Doing the Lord's will out of love for the Lord brings special love to such a devoted child of God.

13:24 Peter, who was the leader of the apostles, and a man also with a strong will, told Peter to ask the Lord who He was talking about.

13:25 John did as Peter asked him to do.

13:26 The Lord said that it was the disciple to whom He would give the sop. The sop was a thin wafer that was used like a spoon. What the Lord did was an expression of friendship, an act of tenderness that should have touched Judas' heart. This indicates also that Judas was sitting near the Lord.

Matthew (26:50) tells us that when Judas came in the Garden of Gethsemane with the crowd to take the Lord, the Lord said to him, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" There is no evidence that Judas ever answered. But just before this Judas said, "Hail, Master," or, "Greetings, Rabbi" (Matt. 26:49--NKJV)--and then he kissed the Lord.

Remember the quotation from Psalm 41:9 that the Lord repeated in John 13:18. The betrayal of the Lord was the worst that it could possibly have been because it was the work of one so closely associated with our Lord, one whom the Lord called, "Friend."

13:27 At that moment Judas was indwelt by Satan.

In Lange's commentary on the Gospel of John he pointed out that there are three distinct periods in the development of sin in the heart of Judas. (1) In John 6:70 our Lord said that Judas was "a devil." The Lord did not say that Judas had a devil; He said that he was a devil. He used the Greek word, _____. This is one of the words that is used for the Devil himself. Judas at heart was like the Devil, and belonged to the Devil. He was a slanderer. He was a false accuser. It means that he definitely was not saved; he was not a child of God. Our Lord's words in John 8:44 were descriptive of Judas:

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 liar, and the father of it.

(2) In John 13:2 we see that the Devil had put in Judas' heart the intention to do the terrible thing that he did in betraying the Lord.

(3) The final stage is here in John 13:27.

There could be no greater contrast between two men than the difference that we see in this passage between John and Judas. One was a devoted follower of the Lord; the other was a devil. And yet they were both apostles. Both had lived and travelled with the Lord. Both had preached. Both had performed miracles. And yet one was a child of God; the other was a child of the Devil. If such were the case with the apostles, let us not be surprised when we discover the same kind of a situation in our churches.

The Lord's words, "That thou doest, do quickly," indicate that the Lord was in charge, not Judas, nor the Devil.

Judas might have felt that the Lord's doom was sealed, but it was his own that was irreversible. The Lord's words meant, What you are already doing, do it more speedily than you had intended. The Lord was doing what He said in John 10:18 that He had the authority to do; He was laying down His life that He might take it again. As Peter said on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2:23, the Lord was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." His hour had come, and He was prepared to drink the cup that the Father was giving to Him.

13:28 With all that the Lord had said, none of the disciples understood the intent of the Lord's words to Judas. This is truly amazing, and yet we undoubtedly have also displayed our spiritual blindness many times.

13:29 Here we have the two ideas that was suggested by the other apostles; that Judas was the treasurer, and was going to buy food for the feast, or that he was going out to give to the poor.

13:30 John's words here are very significant. It was night time-wise. It was night spiritually for Judas. It was night for the nation Israel.

Earlier our Lord had told Nicodemus (and most likely His disciples were present also),

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world,
and men loved darkness rather than light,
because their deeds were evil (John 3:19).

We see that the night did not deter him. Rather it would have given him a greater opportunity to conceal what he was doing.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 13 -- Part 3
March 4, 1991
John 13:31-38

Intro: This section marks the beginning of:

C. The Lord's Discourses in the Upper Room (John 13:31-14:31).

The remainder of His discourse is in John 15, 16, but that part was probably given as the Lord and His disciples made their way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

The outline of this section is as follows:

1. The Lord's imminent glory and departure (John 13:31-38).
2. The Lord's appeal for their trust (John 14:1-14).
3. The Lord's appeal for their obedience (John 14:15-25).
4. The Lord's provision for His people (John 14:26-31).

After giving His disciples a lesson in humility, and then identifying His betrayer, the Lord turned His attention to the remaining disciples. He spoke to them of:

1. The Lord's imminent glory and departure (John 13:31-38).

Judas had gone to deliver the Lord into the hands of His enemies. The Lord knew that His hour had come to depart out of the world. See John 13:1. But His primary concern at this time was for His disciples. He would leave them, but He would not leave them alone. Chapters 14, 15, and 16 all tell us about the coming of the Holy Spirit and His ministry to them and to the world. This section is full of encouragement and instruction for the people of God throughout this present age in which we are living. There were many things about the Lord's mission that the disciples did not understand. However, the Holy Spirit would continue to teach them what the Lord had said to them, and He would also give more truth to them.

But let us now see what the Lord said about His glory and His departure.

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13:31 After Judas was gone, the Lord did not panic as a mere human being might have done. Instead, we see that He was thinking of His disciples--their comfort, their instruction, their guidance, not only for the hours immediately before them, but for the years of their ministry after He had gone back to the Father.

Matthew Henry called this section (to the end of chapter 14), the Lord's table talk. And he said that this teaches us to make our time at our meals spiritually profitable.

What the Lord said here and in verse 32 gives us the divine perspective of the Cross. It was to be, more than anything else, the time when our Lord would be glorified, and the time when the Father would be glorified.

This is what the Lord had prayed for in 12:28, and it was at that time that the Father reassured our Lord that He (the Father) would be glorified. It

was also our Lord's burden and prayer as the Lord began His prayer in John 17. See verses 1, 4, 5, 6, 10, 22, 23, 24, 26.

According to this passage, there were three ways in which the Lord would be glorified:

- 1) Through His own death, resurrection, and ascension (vv. 31, 32).
- 2) Through the loving fellowship of His people with each other (vv. 33-35).
- 3) Even through Peter's denial of the Lord (vv. 36-38).

To be glorified is to be revealed, to be manifested. The Lord Jesus had been glorified at His birth by the ministry of angels. He had been glorified, and the Father had been glorified, at His baptism, and at His temptation. They had been glorified by His teaching, and by His miraculous works. He had been glorified before Peter, James, and John at His transfiguration. But, as the Lord spoke, He was to be glorified in another way, in a climactic way, AT THE CROSS! It was pre-eminently at the Cross, followed by our Lord's resurrection and ascension, that the Father and the Son were glorified the most.

At the Cross we see the love of God displayed. There we see the righteousness of God, the holiness of God. There we see the faithfulness of God. There we see the patience of God. There we see the grace of God. There we see the sovereignty of God.

Likewise, at the Cross, we see the humanity of Christ, but we also see the Deity of Christ. As with the Father, we see the love of Christ for His people. We see the humility of Christ in subjecting Himself to such a humiliating death. We see our Lord's submission to the will of the Father. We see the mighty power of Christ in what was accomplished through His death--the glory of the Father, the salvation of sinners, the defeat of Satan and all the demons of hell, the defeat of sin, of death, and the grave. The Lord Jesus was to be glorified in His triumph over the wicked Jews who could not rest until He died. He also glorified Himself in overruling the mighty power of Rome.

It is no wonder that Paul wrote to the Galatian churches,
 But God forbid that I should glory,
 save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 by whom the world is crucified unto me,
 and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

Notice that our Lord's statement in this verse is not a prayer, nor just the expression of an uncertain desire that He had. It was a positive declaration of that which was then taking place. When we consider the Cross, there can be no question about the Deity of Christ, nor of the existence and glory of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is important to note that the Lord did not dwell upon the humiliating nature of death by crucifixion, but on the glory of the Cross. By this He had to be thinking about what was being accomplished by His death.

13:32 We can see in this verse how important it was with our Lord, and it should be with us, that the Father be glorified. We see here also the submission of the Son to the Father for the purpose of glorifying the Father.

If the Father is glorified, then He will glorify Himself in what He does

for His Son. As Paul said in Phil. 2:9-11,
 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him,
 and given him a name which is above every name:
 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
 of things in heaven, and things in earth,
 and things under the earth;
 And that every tongue should confess
 that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

This was all to be done "straightway," i.e., without any further delay in time. In a matter of days our Lord would be crucified, buried, raised, and back with the Father. The high exaltation of our Lord was to be seated at the Father's right hand, as we are told over and over in the book of Hebrews.

13:33 In verses 31 and 32 the Lord had spoken of how He would glorify the Father, and how the Father would glorify both Himself and His Son. In this, and the next two verses, the Lord spoke of how He would be glorified in the loving fellowship His people would have with each other.

He was going away. They could not follow Him. But, as He told Peter in verse 36, they would come later. However, the time in between His glorification and the glorification of His people was also important for the Lord's glory.

13:34 The Lord gave them "a new commandment." It was "new" in the sense that such a commandment had not been given to them before. The commandment in the Mosaic Law having to do with their love for each other was this: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Lev. 19:18b). Cf. also Matt. 22:39). But the "new commandment" was that they were to love one another as the Lord had loved them.

We are to love the Lord first, and then to love each other as He has loved us. This is a requirement that is impossible for any child of God to obey if he is left to his own resources. But it is possible by the grace of God. This may very well have been the way that the Lord was approaching what He had to say in the following verses about the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Paul taught that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5b). He also taught that "the fruit of the Spirit is love..." (Gal. 5:22a). So that which is impossible to us, is possible by the Holy Spirit.

And then the Lord said a very significant thing in the next verse.

13:35 How is the Lord Jesus Christ going to be glorified in the world after He has returned to heaven? It is not primarily by their doctrine, nor by their obedience to the Word--although both of these are significant, but not first! The world is going to know that we are the followers of Jesus Christ by our love for each other.

In this connection note also our Lord's prayer in John 17:20-23.

In the hymn, Onward, Christian Soldiers, we sing,
 We are not divided, all one body we,
 One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.
 However, that is not true, is it? We are one body. We all have one hope. And our doctrine has one source: the Holy Scriptures. But we are divided,

and our doctrine is different, and often there is anything but love among the people of God. And without a doubt this explains why the Church is such a powerless force in the world today! The world does not pay any attention to what we are saying because it is so keenly aware of what we are! Our practice does not match our doctrine, and, in many instances, our doctrine does not hold up in the light of the Word of God. It will be a great day in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ John 13:34, 35 is written on the walls of our churches, and especially upon the walls of our hearts. Do we want revival? It is not going to begin in the world, but in the Church. And it is not with a lot of fancy programs, but when we as the Lord's people get back to this "new commandment" by which we are to glorify our Lord by showing through our love for each other that we belong to Him.

Let us go on to verse 36.

13:36 Is this prophecy regarding Peter out of place in this section dealing with the glory of the Lord? We know that it followed what the Lord had just said, but why would John include it here.

It seems clear that Peter had not heard the "new commandment." Neither did he understand what it meant that the Lord was going away. All he had heard was that the Lord was going away, and he did not like that!

Peter's question was explained by the Lord as meaning, "Wherever you go, that is where I am going!"

And so the Lord told him that he could not come then, but he would be able to follow the Lord later. This may not only be a prediction of Peter's death, but that Peter would die in a manner similar to the death of the Lord: by crucifixion!

13:37 Peter reminds us here of a little child who is told that he cannot go with his parents, but he insists on going anyway. Mark reported that Peter said, "Although all shall be offended, yet will not I" (Mark 14:29).

Peter expressed that he had the greatest kind of love for the Lord--a willingness to lay down his life for the Lord. And we cannot doubt that he was absolutely sincere in what he said.

13:38 The Lord by His heart-searching question was seeking to show Peter, not that he was speaking a lie, but that he did not have the strength in himself to follow up on what he had said. Peter suffered from the same fault that we all have: he felt that he was strong; he did not know how terribly weak he was. He would not only deny the Lord once, nor twice, but three times! And this would take place that very night!

Let me give you Bishop Ryle's comments on this part of chapter 13:

These verses show us...how much self-ignorance thee may be in the heart of a true believers. We see Simon Peter declaring that he was ready to lay down his life for his Master. We see his Master telling him that in that very night he would "deny Him thrice." And we all know how the matter ended. The Master was right, and Peter was wrong.

Let it be a settle principle in our religion, that there is an amount of weakness in all our hearts, of which we have no adequate conception, and that we never know how far we might fall if we were tempted. We fancy

sometimes, like Peter, that there are some things we could not possibly do. We look pitifully upon others who fall into certain sins, and please ourselves in the thought that at any rate we should not have done so! We know nothing at all. The seeds of every sin are latent in our hearts, even when renewed, and they only need occasion, or carelessness, or the withdrawal of God's grace for a season, to put forth an abundant crop. Like Peter, we may think we can do wonders for Christ, and, like Peter, we may learn by bitter experience that we have no power and might at all.

The servant of Christ will do wisely to remember these things. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." (1 Cor. x. 12.) A humble sense of our own innate weakness, a constant dependence on the Strong One for strength, a daily prayer to be held up, because we cannot hold up ourselves,--these are the true secrets of safety. The great Apostle to the Gentiles said, "When I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. xii. 10.)

Did this lead to the glory of Christ?

It certainly did! Out of Peter's weakness he was made strong. And he became one of the mightiest instruments for the glory of God that the church has ever had. It is further proof of the glory of Christ that He takes our failures, causes us to become stronger because of them, and makes it all bring about greater glory for Himself, and for the Father.

This should not make us careless about sin, but it should help us when we sin, not to give up, but to look for the gracious work of our God to bring good and blessing out of evil.

And so our consideration of John 13 is concluded.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 14 -- Part 1
March 11, 1991
John 14:1-14

Intro: We are in the section of the Gospel of John which deals with the Upper Room Discourse. It begins in John 13:31, and continues to the end of chapter 14. At the end of chapter 14 it seems that the Lord and His disciples left the Upper Room, and headed for the Garden of Gethsemane. On the way the Lord finished His discourse. The conclusion is found in John 15 and 16.

And so, although the discourse was not all given in the Upper Room, it has been given the title, the Upper Room Discourse, because it is all one message. However, in the outline I am going to distinguish between the two parts. And so we have first,

C. The Lord's Discourse in the Upper Room (John 13:31-14:31).

We have just completed the first part of that discourse:

1. The Lord's imminent glory and departure (John 13:31-38).

Now we are ready for the second part:

2. The Lord's appeal for their trust (John 14:1-14).

We can say that the Lord's emphasis in chapter 13 was on the truth that the disciples should follow Him. They were not going to be able to follow Him to heaven at that time, but they would follow later. For the present they needed to follow His example:

- 1) In washing each other's feet, and
- 2) In loving each other as He had loved them. See vv. 13, 14.

Of course, the two are intimately related to each other. They would not wash each other's feet if they did not love each other. But in their love for each other, as we have seen, the Lord set a new and higher standard than that which was given in the Law of Moses. There, it was said that they were to love their neighbors as themselves; here, the Lord told them by the "new commandment" to love each other as He had loved them.

Although the Lord had spoken several times before about His approaching trial, death, and resurrection, the disciples had not understood what He meant. The time had come for the Lord to be arrested, killed, raised from the dead, and then go back to the Father. This was, the Lord knew, a great blow to the disciples, and so in John 14:1-14 we see His appeal for them to TRUST Him. And so we have some form of the verb "believe" five times in these fourteen verses. But it seems to be the underlying thought all through these verses.

The Lord asked the disciples to trust Him regarding four things:

- 1) Regarding the necessity for His departure, and the promise of His return (John 14:1-6).
- 2) Regarding what He had taught them about His relationship with God, the Father (John 14:7-11).
- 3) Regarding their own service after He had gone (John 14:12).
- 4) Regarding the help that He would give them in answer to prayer (John 14:13, 14).

Let us now consider the first point:

- a. They were to trust Him regarding the necessity for His departure, and the promise of His return (John 14:1-6).

14:1 "Troubled" -- Twice before we have seen that the Lord was troubled. Cf. John 12:27; 13:21. But here and in 14:27 the Lord told them not to be troubled. If the heart is troubled, then a person becomes worried, agitated, anxious, filled with inner turmoil. This always happens when the ways of the Lord run into conflict with our ways. Peter, in the last verses of chapter 13 had given expression to the inner turmoil that was in his own heart. That troubling may have been there ever since the Lord first told the disciples of His approaching suffering and death. Even in the Garden of Gethsemane we see evidence of Peter's troubled heart when he pulled his sword and attacked the servant of the high priest. A troubled heart is not a trusting heart. Here the Lord was appealing to them for their trust.

And so the Lord told His disciples in so many words, "You are trusting in the Father; trust in Me as well." The Father was worthy of their trust, and so was He. Even when they did not understand, they were still to trust. What a lesson there is for us here as well!

The Lord was not seeking their faith for salvation; they were already saved. He was speaking of a walk of faith and their need to trust Him even as they trusted God.

As Bishop Westcott has pointed out, the heart is the seat of faith. Therefore, a troubled heart is bothered by unbelief.

The two verbs in the Greek which are translated, "believe," are identical in form. And since for this verb the indicative and the imperative are the same, both could be indicative (a statement of fact), both could be imperatives (commands), or one could be indicative, and the other imperative. Westcott believes that both are imperatives. But it seems to me that the AV is correct in making the first an indicative, and the second an imperative. The Lord was saying that they did believe in God; He wanted them to trust Him also. And I think that verse 2 confirms this.

This verse sounds the keynote for the Upper Room Discourse. It is "to comfort, establish, and build up His downcast disciples" (Vol. II, p. 282). And the first of these is twofold:

- 1) The fact that the Lord's purpose in going was to prepare a place for them.
- 2) The fact He was going was in preparation for His return to take them to be with Him.

As has been said very correctly, "Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people."

14:2 "Mansions" are dwelling places. They are places to live. The "Father's house" is heaven, where God dwells.

This word for dwelling places is found also in John 14:23.

There is plenty of room in heaven for all who will be there. But what it means that the Lord has gone to prepare a place for us, is not clear. This probably has to do with the teaching of the book of Hebrews, that the Lord has opened a new and living way for us, that He has entered into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us. Whatever it means, we know that heaven will be ready for us when we get there, and that we will

be expected. Ryle said, "When we arrive there we shall not be in a strange land. We shall find we were known and thought of before we appeared" (II, p. 285).

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"If it were not so, I would have told you." This was meant to be a source of comfort to the disciples. The Lord would never deceive them. His words are true, absolutely trustworthy.

Later on in the chapter this fact was emphasized when the Lord told His disciples that the Holy Spirit would "bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26b). We need never question anything that our Lord taught. The same applies to all of the Word of God. Since it is the Word of God, it cannot be wrong. We need to accept all that God has told us in His Word with complete confidence.

"I go to prepare a place for you." By this the Lord did not mean that some part of heaven needed to be improved. Nor did He mean that He would add on to heaven. Heaven is a perfect place. What He did mean was that all that He would do in returning to heaven, and His ministry after He got there, would guarantee that they would get there--all of them! The meant basically two things:

- 1) His work on the Cross.
- 2) His work on the Throne.

The first was a substitutionary sacrifice by which the Lord removed all sin which stood in the way. The second was His high priestly ministry presented so wonderfully for us in the book of Hebrews. Cf. Heb. 7:25.

14:3 Here the Lord assured them of His return. He would not go to the Cross, and then intercede for them, if He did not intend to return for them. They did not want Him to leave. He was leaving in order that eventually He could take them where He was going.

Therefore, their separation from the Lord was not to be forever. He did not set any time when He would come, but He assured them that He would come. This, too, was intended to comfort their troubled hearts.

In times of trial, in times of sorrow, nothing can be more comforting than the truth that some day we will be with the Lord. Cf. 1 Thess. 4:18. In all of this the Lord wanted His disciples to trust Him so that they could draw comfort from His words.

14:4 The words of Thomas in verse 5 contradicted what the Lord said here in verse 4. Who are we going to believe? The Lord, of course! But how then are we going to explain these conflicting expressions?

First, let us recognize that the disciples, and every child of God, has knowledge that others do not have. We do not know everything. Hopefully we are learn more and more every day. But we know so much more than people do who have not been exposed to the truth, or than people do who have been exposed to it and have rejected it. We may "see through a glass darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12a), but we see!

Second, Thomas' statement shows that we know more than we think we do. It seems at times that we hardly know anything. It may be that we have not put things together the way we need to. But Thomas knew where the Lord was going, and he knew how to get there. This was truth that Thomas had heard

many times. The Lord was very gracious in dealing with Thomas, but it was something like a parent seeking to remind his child of things that he had been told many times, but, at least for the moment, was not remembering.

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14:6 And then, without arguing with Thomas, the Lord stated the truth once more. How apropos at this point are Paul's words to Timothy in 2 Tim. 2:24:

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...

Where was the Lord going? He was going to the Father. What was the way? CHRIST!

Cf. John 16:28. Notice how the Lord spoke, not of coming from heaven, and returning to heaven (which actually He did). But He spoke of coming from the Father, and returning to the Father. Just as in the opening verses of this chapter He did not use the word heaven, but He spoke of His "Father's house." In the same way, He did not speak of their being in heaven, but that they would be where He is!

The same emphasis is made in 1 Thess. 4:17--not, and so shall we be in heaven, but, "and so shall we be **with the Lord**"!

Let us learn the lesson of this verse well. Salvation is a Person--the Lord Jesus Christ. Heaven is a place, but it is more than just another place. It is the "Father's house"; it is where the Lord is. All truth needs to be related to the Members of the Godhead. Then it becomes life and power.

Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life." Bishop Ryle pointed out that from this "fretful complaint of Thomas we owe one of the grandest texts in Scripture" (II, 292). There is no going without Christ. There is no knowing without Christ. There is no living without Christ.

One thing that so many people hate about the Gospel is its exclusiveness--that it does not permit any other way of salvation. "No man cometh to the Father, but by me." But those who oppose the Gospel do not understand the great issues of salvation. Our sin is that which stands between us and God. Our sin is what necessitated the terrible sacrifice of Christ. When we talk about salvation, we need to be concerned about "the truth," not with works, nor with sincerity by itself, nor anything else. It is good to be sincere, but we need to be sincerely right. Christ is the way for those who are lost. He is the truth for those who are ignorant and in darkness. He is the life for those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Christ alone is sufficient to guarantee that some day we will be in the "Father's house"!

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12; cf. 16:25). We have no right to determine how we want to be saved, and no man has the right to tell us something that is different from what our Lord said.

And then the Lord touched again upon another related truth which He had taught His disciples many times: the relationship that He had with the Father.

14:7 The Lord did not mean that Thomas did not know Him, but that he did not know Him as fully as he needed to know the Lord. If he had, he would have known the Father also. The mystery of God is made known in Christ. And so "from henceforth" things were to be different with Thomas even though we are yet to see other evidence of his immaturity in the things of the Lord.

14:8 At this point Thomas had no more to say, but Philip spoke us, showing that he, too, needed more maturity in the truth.

He said, "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." His words mean, "Make the Father visible to us, and we will be satisfied." It seems that he was speaking for all of the disciples. Thomas was not the only one who was of the opinion that if he could see he would believe. All of us have a lot of this in us. We want to see, and then we will believe. The Lord's way is for us to believe, for us to trust Him, and then the truth will be opened up to us. But as long as we insist on seeing first, we will remain in our ignorance.

14:9 One thing that stands out in this passage of Scripture is the fact that the knowledge of God is the key to understanding all other truth. The disciples struggled with the knowledge of God, and the Lord was appealing to them to trust Him as far as His teaching was concerned.

The Lord's question at the beginning of this verse seems to express His grief at Philip's failure to make more progress than he had made. Philip was one of the first disciples that the Lord called to Himself (cf. John 1:43, 44). And yet it seemed that Philip had made very little advancement in his understanding of both Christ and the Father.

And then the Lord brought out again what He had said so many times before: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." How could he then say, "Shew us the Father"? Although God was not visibly present before them, our Lord was. And that was just like having the Father visible. They were different Persons, but identical in nature. So to see One was to see the Other. This is a very strong statement for the Deity of Christ.

14:10 Philip needed to believe what he could not necessarily explain. There are mysteries connected with the relationship that the Members of the Godhead have to each other which we cannot fully understand. But the Lord was appealing to Philip and the others to trust His teaching, to believe that what He was telling them was the truth: He was in the Father, and the Father was in Him. And this was demonstrated in the ministry of the Lord. He did not speak on His own. The Father was working in Him and through Him. He said nothing, nor did He do anything, but what it was not only the Father's will, but also in which He and the Father were working together in the closest way.

14:11 Again He appealed to them that they would trust Him--trust Him just because He had said it. But in case that was not enough for them at their present state, they could see that His works supported His claim. Because, as Nicodemus had recognized long before this, "No man can do the miracles, except God be with him" (John 3:2). Nicodemus had seen God in Christ. He probably did not know all that the Lord was discussing here in the opening verses of John 14, but Nicodemus knew that there was something about Jesus of Nazareth that could not be explained in mere human terms.

Thomas' doubts concerning the resurrection of our Lord illustrate also what

the Lord was concerned about here in John 14. Cf. John 20:24-29.

14:12 "Verily, verily" (the 22nd, with only three remaining in this Gospel) indicates, as before, a message of great importance and absolute reliability.

What did the Lord mean by "greater works"?

In its context it does not seem that the Lord was speaking about His miraculous works. We know from the book of Acts that the disciples did not perform more miracles, nor did they perform "greater" miracles than our Lord did. In fact, before the NT was completed, the gift of healing seems to have been taken away from the apostles. Paul had his thorn in the flesh. He told Timothy to "use a little wine for his stomach's sake and" his "often infirmities" (1 Tim. 5:23). In 2 Tim. 4:20 he said, "Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick." So the "greater works" cannot be in the area of miracles.

Instead it would seem that here in verse 12 the Lord was referring to His spoken ministry: His preaching and its results. He was saying that the one who believes in Him, and who continues to trust Him, would be the one who could expect to see even greater results than the Lord saw. This was powerfully illustrated by Peter's ministry on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. It is also seen in the statement that was made about the apostles as men who had turned the world upside down. Cf. Acts 17:6. Such a statement was never made about our Lord.

The Lord meant this for their encouragement, as He did all of this Upper Room Discourse. The disciples had to be concerned about what would happen to them and to the work of the Lord if the Lord were leaving them. Would it stop? How could it possibly continue? These were the kind of questions that must have been racing through their minds.

March 25, 1991

The key to the encouragement which the Lord was giving them would bound up in those words, "Because I go unto my Father." See this same statement in John 16:10.

All through this message given by our Lord, which we call the Upper Room Discourse, there is a strong emphasis upon this truth, that our Lord was going to the Father (especially in chapters 14 and 16).

- 1) We see it in the last part of 14:2.
- 2) Again in verses 3 and 4.
- 3) See also 14:28.

And it is in other verses, too.

Three things seem to stand out in this statement, "Because I go unto my Father." They have to do with what He had to do before He went back to the Father, and with what He would do after He got back with the Father. (1) The first is the work that the Lord would do on the Cross. (2) The second had to do with the coming of the Holy Spirit. See John 16:7 ff.; (3) The third is His intercessory work in heaven, a part of which is mentioned in verse 16 of chapter 14, and then chapter 17 gives us examples of other requests that He brings to the Father for us.

Our Lord came from the Father, and He would return to the Father. Later on He would come back for His own. So there is much truth contained in those

words, "Because I go unto my Father."

The whole conversation between our Lord and the apostles seems to indicate that they were concerned about two things:

- 1) They were sad because the Lord was telling them again that He was going away.
- 2) They were anxious, wondering what would happen to them. He had been their support, their security, during the years that they had been with Him. They could not imagine what it would be like to be without Him, and it caused them to worry.

Matthew Henry pointed out that in verses 12-14 the Lord was encouraging them to believe that on earth and in heaven they would have even greater power because He was going back to the Father.

On earth they would see "greater works" than they had seen before. So the departure of Christ would not mean an end to their work, nor even a slowdown. In fact, it would be stronger than ever. And this was His promise to them.

As we move on to verse 13 and verse 14 He showed them that they would have great power in prayer--great power in heaven by prayer.

During our Lord's earthly ministry we can see from the four Gospels that prayer was a major part of our Lord's life. But that was not the case with the disciples. In fact, when they left the Upper Room and went to the Garden of Gethsemane where the Lord entered into His passion, Peter, James, and John went to sleep rather than praying. The Lord told them to pray; instead, they went to sleep.

Therefore, we see that our Lord was indicating that one great change that would take place in their lives as a result of His departure from them would be that they would learn to pray, would see the need to pray, and would commune with God as they never had before. And we see this very clearly in the book of Acts. And we see a strong emphasis on prayer in the NT epistles.

Matthew Henry compared our Lord's words here to what the Lord said to Jacob after that night in which Jacob wrestled with Him. He said,

Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel:
for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men,
and hast prevailed (Gen. 32:28).

I believe we can say that at this very moment the Lord was working in the hearts of His disciples, strengthening them for the work to come, and opening their eyes to the great work that was ahead for each one of them.

Now let us look at what He had to say about prayer.

14:13, 14 There comes a time in the life of every child of God when he considers prayer, not just as a possibility, but as an absolute necessity. If you are a true child of God, but not given to prayer, I know, without being a prophet, that you have been convicted in your heart that you ought to be praying more than you do, and more fervently than you do when you do pray.

The key to both of these verses, 13 and 14, is the phrase, "in my name," i.e., in Christ's Name. This means much more than simply adding the Lord's Name to the end of our prayers (although I love to hear people do that).

What does it mean to pray in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ? We all need to be able to answer this question.

It means several things.

First, it means that we know that the only reason we have for expecting that God will listen to us is because we come to Him in Christ's merit, not our own--for we have none except in Him.

Second, it means that we come to the Father seeking what Christ would have us seek. When we go to God in prayer, we are on heavenly business. That means that we are to pray about the things that the Lord Himself is concerned about. Do we need cleansing? We come in Christ's Name. Do we need wisdom? We come in Christ's Name. Do we need strength? We come in Christ's Name. Do we need guidance? We come in Christ's Name. Look at the words "whatsoever" in verse 13 and "any thing" in verse 14. This throws the door wide open for every request that falls within the limits of the will of God and of Christ. You and I are only praying in the Lord's Name when we ask for those things which are according to the will of God.

Third, the last part of verse 13 really explains what it means to ask in the Name of Christ. It is "that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

James spoke of two reasons for unanswered prayer. Cf. James 4:2, 3. One was that they had not prayed. Even though our heavenly Father knows what we need before we ask, He wants us to ask. That is clear in our text in John 14. But the other reason is stated in these words:

Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss,
that ye may consume it upon your lusts.

When we think of "lusts," we usually think of immorality. That certainly is one evil lust. But the basic meaning of a lust is a desire. It is usually a strong desire, something that we want very much. When James and John requested that they be able to sit on the right and left hand of the Lord when He established His kingdom, they were making a lustful request. And it was not granted. A prayer that we might be able to make a lot of money is a lustful prayer. A prayer that our basketball team would win the conference championship is a lustful prayer.

Perhaps it will help us to remember what the Lord had said earlier about what we should seek, and then apply that to prayer. I am referring to His words in Matt. 6:33:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness;
and all these things shall be added unto you.

What were the "things" that He had reference to? What we should eat, what we should drink, and what we should wear. We certainly can pray about those things. Our Lord taught His disciples to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread." But that was not the first thing that they were to pray for, nor was it the only thing that they were to pray for. They were first to be concerned about the will of God: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).

So, when we pray, we are to pray in Christ's Name, and this means to pray "that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The questions we need to ask about our prayers are these?

- 1) Would the Lord Jesus ask for this, and would He approve my asking for it?
- 2) If the Lord answered my request, whatever it might be, would He be

glorified by the answer?

This does not limit prayer; this gives us guidance in prayer. And you and I will find that when our main concern is for the will of God, for the glory of God, for the blessing of God upon ourselves and others that we might render the greater praise to God and bring the greater glory to Him, we are seeking what the Lord Jesus sought while He was here on earth. No one should be able to read the Gospel of John without seeing that the one thing that the Lord Jesus was concerned about here on earth was that He would do the will of God for the glory of God. Nothing else mattered to Him. Even in Gethsemane where He prayed, for Himself, if it had been possible, He wanted the cup to be taken away. But He set that aside saying,

Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me:
nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done (Luke 22:42).

Did you notice that the word believe is not found in these two verses? Neither do we see the word faith here. Why? Two reasons:

- 1) He had been appealing for their faith right up to this verse. It is in verse 12. We had it first in verse 1. So believing in the Lord, trusting Him, is the foundation upon which these verses rest.
- 2) It is understood that we are to ask expecting that the Lord will do it. He said twice in these verses that He would. He only needed to say it once, but He said it twice. This is like the "verily, verily" at the beginning of the verse; it shows the certainty of our Lord's promise. So the reason for asking would be that their prayers, and our prayers, would be answered!

When we ask anything of God in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord Jesus Christ will personally see to it that our prayer is answered. It may not come immediately, but it will come. The answer is guaranteed by the promise of Jesus Christ Himself!

We see in these words evidence of the high priestly work of our Lord. It was pictured by the Aaronic priests of the Old Testament who received the sacrifices from the people, and then offered them to the Lord. When we pray in the name of our Lord, He takes the request to the Father, and then He comes back with the answer. Notice that He did not say that He would send the answer, but that He would do it!

So when our prayers are answered, it is proper and right for us to say, "The Lord did this for me"--and then give Him the glory. In reality what happens is that the Lord moves our hearts to pray for what He intends to do for us, so the praise really belongs to Him.

Praying in the name of the Lord Jesus includes praying for the people whom the Lord providentially brings into our lives. The will of God not only includes what we pray for, but who we pray for. Let me illustrate what I mean from my own life. I do not mean to set myself up as an example because I am still learning to pray, and my prayers are never what they ought to be. But I do want to be faithful to the Lord in prayer.

Many years ago one of the young ladies who went out to the mission field from Central Bible Church told Dr. Mitchell, "If the people of Central Bible don't pray for me, I don't know of anyone else who will." She did not have many churches behind her--just Central Bible Church!

That started me thinking. How many are there among my relatives who do not

have a single Christian praying for them? How many people are there under my ministry who do not have anyone praying for them? I had been praying for my family, and for those who were in special need, but this began to expand my praying as nothing else had.

When Lucille and I met, and then got married, she became #1 on my prayer list, not because she needed prayer the most, but because I love her the most.

The Lord gave us four children. Each one is married, and they all have children. We have eight grandchildren. So with Lucille, four children, their spouses, and our eight grandchildren, I have 17 people at the top of my prayer list, which is not written down; it is just in my heart.

Each of my daughters-in-law has a family, and so does my son-in-law. I pray for each of them. Many of these are believers; some are not; others are questionable--they may be, or they may not be.

When I married Lucille, I became a part of the Mouton family. I got a another father, and another mother, two more brothers, and another sister. All of them got married, and they all have children. They are all on my list, or were, until the Lord took them.

Then Lucille has, or had, several aunts and uncles, and a lot of cousins. Many of them were added to my praying. Likewise, I had five brothers and one sister. All but one of them married, and so I had a brother-in-law, and four sisters-in-law--and they had children. In fact, in both of our families there have been divorces, and there have been second families started. I have tried to pray for them.

Then there are those of you who are a part of the Trinity Bible Church family. You are all in my prayers, along with your families, and in some cases members of your families who do not come to Trinity. You have a major place in my prayers.

And then I come to those of you who are in this Tuesday Bible Class. You are in my prayers. The Lord has brought you into my life, and me into your lives. And I take you as a part of the people the Lord wants me to pray for.

We also have some very dear neighbors I pray for, some we have known as long as we have lived where we are--thirty years this summer.

Then there are pastors and missionaries I have known through the years that I pray for. And I seek to remember our President and people in government in my prayers.

And last of all I pray for myself.

None of this came about at once, but this is the way the Lord has led me through the years. I don't really know anyone's heart; probably at times I am confused about my own which "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." But what should be my concern in praying for the people I pray for. Do I pray for their health? Yes. Do I pray for their safety? Yes. Do I pray concerning the work that they do? Yes. In fact, I pray for the people that they work with if I know who they are. The people of Hillcrest Chapel where Gary ministers are on my list. I pray for the ladies who work in the clinic where Dr. John and Dr. Darrell are the

doctors. But what should my burden be? How should I pray for them?

I am to pray that the will of God may be done in their lives. I pray for their salvation if they are not saved. I pray for their spiritual growth and blessing if they are. I pray that they will love the Lord, walk with the Lord, live for the Lord, and be used by the Lord--not doing their own will, but doing His will!

I know that probably most of you are doing what I am seeking to do. We bring our loved ones to God. The Lord Jesus our Great High Priest takes the request, and then He does the answer!

Sometimes the things we see are heartbreaking. You see those you thought were saved, turning away from the Lord. You pray for years for some you know are not the Lord's, but see no change in their lives. In other cases you see growth, and progress, and increasing love for the Lord and His Word, and that brings real joy. Remember: You probably know people who no one is praying for. That may be the reason you know them. The Lord's work did not come to an end when the Lord Jesus went back to the Father. It is still going on. But may it never be that we missed seeing God's blessing in the lives of those we know, those who are dear to us, because we did not pray for them. I believe as firmly as you do in the sovereignty of God, but I also believe that God uses us and our prayers for the accomplishing of His purposes in people's lives.

Let us pray that the Lord will make us faithful, and keep us faithful, in prayer. These are tremendously encouraging words which the Lord gave to the apostles, and to us. Let us believe them, and come to the Father in the Name of His dear Son to seek and find the blessing which we and those we love so desperately need. Blessings come through prayer that cannot be obtained any other way. Let us be assured that the Lord meant what He said, and that He wants us to believe Him, and continuing asking for His blessing.

End of notes on John 14:1-14

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
JOHN 16 -- Part 1
September 23, 1991
John 16:1-22

Intro: John 16 is the final chapter in what is usually referred to as The Upper Room Discourse. This section begins with chapter 13, and goes through chapter 16. In my outline I have called these four chapters, 13 through 16, as the chapters in which the Lord was ministering to His disciples. But remember, as I pointed out several times last year, that it would appear that chapters 13 and 14 contain the words which were spoken in the Upper Room, while chapters 15 and 16 tell us what the Lord said as they made their way to Gethsemane.

Although these words of our Lord were spoken, first of all, to the apostles, yet they contain teaching that is very helpful for all of us who are the Lord's people in these days in which we are living.

In chapter 16 the Lord made two announcements which, I am sure, the apostles did not like to hear. They were:

- 1) That they would be put out of the synagogues, and even killed, by those who would feel that they were serving the Lord in doing so. This is in verses 1-4a.
- 2) That the Lord Himself was leaving them. For this see vv. 4b-6.

The remainder of the chapter gives teaching which was designed to comfort them in the light of these predictions. And the four means of comfort for them were:

- 1) The coming of the Holy Spirit and His work (v. 7):
 - a) In the world (vv. 8-11).
 - b) With believers (vv. 12-15).We might consider these as two reasons, but, nevertheless, they were spoken for the comfort of the apostles. And there are three more.
 - 2) Although He was leaving them, they would see Him again and their sorrow would be turned into joy (vv. 16-22).
 - 3) Our Lord's words concerning prayer (vv. 23-27).
- And finally,
- 4) The peace that they would have in Him because He had overcome the world. You see this in the last verse of the chapter, but the Lord was leading up to it in vv. 28-32.

Let us begin, then, with verse 1, and look in detail at:

I. THE LORD'S TWO PREDICTIONS (John 16:1-6).

The first was this:

A. Persecution (Vv. 1-4a).

This is not the first time that the Lord mentioned persecution in His words to His disciples on this occasion. Cf. John 15:18-25, followed by words of encouragement and comfort in the last two verses of chapter 15. So really the two sections (the one in chapter 15 and the one here in chapter 16) go together. But there is a difference!

In the section in chapter 15 the Lord was speaking of the world on the outside; here in chapter 16 He was speaking of the world on the inside!

What do I mean?

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 14 -- Part 2

April 1, 1991

John 14:15-31

Intro: This is actually the third part of our Lord's Upper Room Discourse. It began with the latter part of chapter 13:

1. The Lord's imminent glory and departure (John 13:31-38).
2. The Lord's appeal for their trust (John 14:1-14).

And now we are ready for the third and last division (revised from the previously mentioned outline):

3. The Lord's appeal for their love (John 14:15-31).

The Lord's words in the 14th chapter of John indicate that there are three words that are closely related in the life of a child of God. They are: trust, love, and obedience. And the very heart of the three is love. This agrees with what the Lord said about the greatest commandment in the Law. It is that which is found in Deut. 6:5,

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart,
and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

The Lord quoted this verse when He was asked by "a lawyer," "Master, what is the great commandment in the law?" (Matt.22:36). If the Lord has our love, everything else will fall into its proper place. This has the greatest priority among all of the things that the Lord has asked us to do.

If we love the Lord, we will trust Him. If we love the Lord, we will obey Him. In John 13:1 we read about the Lord's love for "His own." He demonstrated His love for them by washing their feet. The Apostle John is spoken of in John 13:23 as "one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." Now we are to look at the disciples' side--their love for Him!

14:15 The disciples had shown their love for the Lord by not wanting Him to leave them, but there was an even greater way to show their love. It was by their obedience to His commandments, His words, the things which He had told them to do, the condition upon which many of His promises rested.

Obedience has many rewards. The Lord was connecting their comfort (which He was so concerned about here) with their duty. The rewards for such love for the Lord as causes us to obey Him, are unlimited. This is one of the greatest ways to comfort, and to peace. This is the way of happiness. This is the path of holiness, and fruitfulness of life. Obedience is certainly a confirmation of our faith. Obedience is evidence of our submission to Christ as our Lord and Master. Later the Apostle John would write,

And hereby we do know that we know him,
if we keep his commandments.
He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments,
is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3, 4).

Obedience even is basic to our fellowship with each other. Cf. 1 John 5:2, 3). These verses tell us,

By this we know that we love the children of God,
when we love God, and keep his commandments.
For this is the love of God,
that we keep his commandments,
and his commandments are not grievous.

"Grievous" means to be hard, afflictive, hard to bear. The Lord had told

His disciples earlier, "If ye know these things, **happy are ye if ye do them**" (John 13:17).

This statement of our Lord makes it very clear that no person can really claim to love the Lord who does not live according to the Word of God.

14:16 But what does this promise have to do with loving the Lord, or with obeying Him? It has everything to do with it! As much as we want to obey the Lord, we cannot do it without the help of the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote to the church at Rome that "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5b). He told the Galatians that "the fruit of the Spirit is love...." (Gal. 5:22). So we have evidence here of the truth that, what the Lord requires of us, He enables us to do.

All three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned here. The Lord Jesus will pray. He will pray to the Father. And the Father will give the Holy Spirit to His people. Bishop Ryle said that it is the Son praying, the Father giving, and the Holy Spirit comforting. See Vol. II, p. 303.

The word that is used here for "pray" is a common Greek word for asking. Implied in the word are the two ideas of familiarity and equality, but it is a word that is never used of man's prayers to God. It belongs uniquely to the Son to be on such terms with the Father.

This, of course, guarantees that the Holy Spirit would be given. No prayer of the Son of God is ever denied.

For the first of four times in John 14, 15, and 16 we have the Holy Spirit called, a "Comforter." What does this word mean?

The word lit. speaks of one who is called to the side of another. It means that the Holy Spirit was sent by the Father to His people to help them.

The word "another," does not mean a different kind of a Comforter, but another Comforter of the same kind. Up to this point the Lord Jesus had been their Comforter, their Helper. But now He was going away, and they were going to have the Holy Spirit to help them. And the Holy Spirit would not be taken away from them because the Lord said "that he may abide with you for ever."

As long as the Lord was on earth in His body, He could only be in one place at one time. There may be aspects of the incarnation that we are not familiar with, but passages in the Gospels tell us about our Lord leaving one place, and going to another. Or of His disciples being in a storm out on the sea of Galilee, and how He came to them walking on the sea. The ministry of the Holy Spirit would be different. He would abide with each one of them 24 hours of every day, and every day throughout their lives. It was not that each one had a part of the Holy Spirit; each one had the Holy Spirit in the completeness of His Person. We may not be able to understand how that could be, but we do not have to understand it. What we need to do is to believe it.

The Holy Spirit certainly ministered to the people of God in the OT, but not as One Who permanently indwelt them. Those who wrote the OT spoke as they were moved upon by the Holy Spirit, as Peter said in 2 Pet. 1:21. David prayed in the 51st Psalm that the Holy Spirit would not be taken from

him. There are many passages dealing with the Holy Spirit in the OT. But for the Holy Spirit to dwell in the people of God permanently, was a new thing! If the Holy Spirit came to the people of God, and then went from them, it did not mean that they were losing their salvation. It simply meant that the power and blessing of the Holy Spirit was removed from their lives. We, too, can lose the blessing of the Holy Spirit, but we cannot lose Him, as we shall see in this verse.

More about this glorious truth is given to us in the following verse.

14:17 Here and in John 16:26 He is called, "the Spirit of truth." Lit. what the Lord said was that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the truth.

This means at least two things:

- 1) The Lord Jesus had just said that He was "the truth." Therefore, it would seem that the title here would have reference to Christ--the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ.

Some have referred to the Holy Spirit as the Vicar of Christ. A vicar is one who acts of behalf of another, and this is exactly what the Holy Spirit does; He acts on behalf of Christ. We will learn more about this later.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ in two NT passages: Rom. 8:9 and 1 Pet. 1:11.

- 2) In John 17:17 the Lord Jesus spoke of the Word of God as the "truth." And we know that the Holy Spirit has been given to guide us in "all truth" (John 16:13). He is the Author of Scripture, and He is the Teacher of Scripture.

These two things are not separated, but are most closely related. The Bible is a book about Christ. It is the only source of information that we have about Christ. Any teaching about Christ that cannot be supported by Scripture is to be rejected. So the Holy Spirit, a Comforter like the Lord Jesus, would be sent to the apostles to comfort them by teaching them about Christ from the Word of God. He is "the Spirit of truth," the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the truth of God.

"Whom the world cannot receive" -- cf. 1 Cor. 2:14.

"Because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." The Lord was still referring to the Holy Spirit. The world does not have any idea that such a Person exists, and it is certain that they are not acquainted with Him. They are totally lacking in the capacity to have anything to do with the Holy Spirit.

"But ye know him" -- The Apostles were no strangers to the Holy Spirit. He had been "with" them, using them, blessing them. He had been with them; soon He would be "in" them. And we can add from verse 16, He would be "in" them "for ever." We are really now living in the age of the Holy Spirit.

It is on this point that we have one of the distinguishing differences between one who knows the Lord as compare with one who does not know the Lord. The one who knows the Lord, has the Spirit; the one who does not know the Lord, does not have the Spirit and cannot have the Spirit as long as he is without Christ.

14:18 Here again we have comforting words. And, as we might expect, there have been various interpretations given to this verse.

Some say that the Lord was speaking of coming back to them after His resurrection--which He did. But this does not seem to me to fit in with what the Lord had been speaking of. Besides, it would not have been very comforting to them to have the Lord return, and then leave them again.

Others think that the Lord was speaking about His return, such as He had promised at the beginning of this chapter. That is a stronger possibility, but I personally do not think that is what the Lord meant.

This is what I believe it means: The Lord had been speaking about a new relationship that the disciples were to have with the Holy Spirit. He had been with them; from now on He would be in them. The Lord's departure meant that their relationship with Him would also be different, but not as different as they might have imagined. The Lord Jesus would be with them, too, not like He had been, but He would also be "in" them. See verses 19-23. I believe that the Lord was telling them that they would not only be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, but also by Himself, and, as verse 23 indicates, by the Father also!

The word "comfortless" is a Greek word from which we get our English word, orphans. It appears only one other time in the NT, in James 1:27 where we read that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit **the fatherless....**" The Lord was saying that he would not abandon them like children who had no father, or whose father had left them. He would not leave them helpless and uncared for. He, too, as well as the Holy Spirit, would come to indwell them.

Did not Paul tell the Colossians, "**Christ in you**, the hope of glory"? See Col. 1:27. And did he not write to the Galatians, "**Christ liveth in me**"? See Gal. 2:20. And did he not exhort the Corinthians,
Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith;
prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves,
how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

What is a reprobate? He is one who cannot pass the test to show that he is a child of God. He is rejected as an impostor.

So Paul was telling the Corinthians that, if you are saved, Christ is in you. If you are not saved, He is not in you.

So the Lord was going to heaven in His body, but He would be living, again, in the entirety of His Person, in the hearts of all of His people.

What could be more solemnizing, and yet more comforting than this?

14:19 In just a short time the world would not be able to see the Lord any more; He would rise from the dead, and return to heaven. The disciples would not see Him either in His body. But they would see Him in another way. They would see and experience the evidence of His presence in every one of their lives. And the Lord indicated here that the reason they had evidence of spiritual life was because He, the living One, was living in them!

This was not new teaching. Back in John 6:57 we have the record of what the Lord said when He was speaking to the Jews about eating His flesh, and drinking His blood, He said,

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father:
so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

Here the Lord was getting into some of the deepest teaching in all of the Word of God, truth which we cannot fully explain, but teaching which we know is true, which we can believe and enjoy more and more as we continue to walk with the Lord.

14:20 What day was the Lord referring to here? It would have to be the day when all of this took place. When was that? For those disciples it was some time after the ascension, maybe immediately, but more likely when the Spirit was given on the day of Pentecost.

What would they know then?

They would understand more clearly the truth that the Lord had been giving them all along: the unique relationship between the Father and the Son, but also the unique relationship that they would have with the Lord Jesus Himself: "Ye in me, and I in you."

Can I draw this distinction between those two phrases? "Ye in me" is our justification; "I in you" is our sanctification.

And this brings us to the first of those two very wonderful verses: 21 and 23. Here we get back to what the Lord had introduced in verse 15--the connection between our obedience to the Lord and our love for the Lord, with the addition of the amazing results which are guaranteed to every child of God who walks in loving obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.

April 2, 1991

14:21 When you read a passage like Deut. 28, you probably wonder, as I do, how the children of Israel could possibly have chosen to seek anything but the blessing of the Lord. Many wonderful blessings were promised, and they were all conditioned upon one simple thing: that the people would obey the Lord. The curses were terrible, and there was just one reason for them: disobedience! And yet when you look at the history of Israel, you find more curses than blessings. Why? Because the people did not obey the Lord.

They would probably wonder at us in the same way.

There are very few promises in the NT that could surpass what we have here in verse 21, and which is repeated in a slightly different way, in verse 23. But let us look carefully at it. There are some things about it that might cause some misunderstanding.

The first part of verse 21 is practically a repetition of verse 15. The one who keeps the Lord's commandments is the one who really loves Him. To keep the Lord's commandments means that we observe them. We adhere to them, abide by them, obey them. And the commandments of the Lord are those commandments that are found in our Bibles, the Word of God. The one who loves the Lord, lives like the Lord has told all of His people to live.

This much of the verse is clear. But what about the last half of the verse? If the Lord has been saying anything, He has been showing His love for His disciples, and He has said that although He was leaving them, He would not in another sense leave them. Here He seems to be saying that if we don't love Him, the Father won't love us, nor will He love us, nor will we see Him. He will not manifest Himself to us. How are we to explain this?

April 8, 1991

The answer is quite obvious. Bishop Westcott has some good comments on this verse which bring out the meaning very clearly. Look at the last half of the verse.

"Shall be loved of my Father," in the passive form, "seems to bring out the idea of the conscious experience of love" (Westcott, p. 207) in the heart of the person who is being loved. God loves us; we know that to be true. But we are not always aware of that love. We do not always enjoy that truth the way we should. An obedient Christian is showing His love for the Lord; the Father demonstrates His love in return.

The same is true of the words, "And I will love Him." The Lord does not love us because we obey Him. His love for us is eternal--without beginning and without ending. But the obedient Christian is somehow made conscious of and assured of that love. And the love is shown by a manifestation of Christ Himself. It is like a person who suddenly discovers that a friend is present when he wasn't aware of it before. An obedient Christian is blessed with an awareness of the presence of Christ which disobedient Christians do not have.

14:22 Philip showed that he, like Thomas, was lacking spiritual understanding. He was evidently putting a physical interpretation on the word, "manifest."

But the Lord was speaking of a spiritual manifestation, not one that was physical.

Who was this Judas?

In Luke 6:16 we read of Judas, the brother of James. And this was James, the son of Alphaeus (cf. Luke 6:15). In Matthew's Gospel he is referred to as Thaddaeus and Lebbaeus; in Mark's Gospel, as Thaddaeus. And so there were three pairs of disciples among the twelve: Peter and Andrew, James and John, and James and Judas. Matthew Henry believes that he was the writer of the NT epistle of Jude. If so, and it probably is, this makes it especially significant that he would include among his exhortations in that epistle, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." How do we do that? By being obedient to the commandments of our Lord.

14:23 It is clear that the Lord's apostles needed to have more understanding of the truth. But the Lord was very patient with him, repeating in verse 23 what He had said in verse 21.

Let me repeat: We as believers are indwelt by the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. But it is the obedient Christian who is made conscious of the presence of the Father and the Son, and who enjoys Their fellowship much more than a child of God who is careless about His relationship to the Word.

Verses 21 and 23 indicated that the Lord's fellowship with His disciples could be even more wonderful after His ascension than it had been while He was on earth with them. And this manifestation of the Father and the Son would mean that their understanding of the truth of God would increase even after the Lord Jesus went back to heaven.

14:24 The opposite is true also. If an obedient Christian loves the Lord,

a disobedient Christian does not love the Lord. We can say that we love the Lord, but our lives contradict our claim if we are not doing the will of the Lord.

And to add strength to His commandments, and His words, the Lord pointed out again that unique relationship that He had with His Father. The word of one, was the word of the other. This would indicate that our Lord's commandments were given with the authority of the Father. They were not only the Lord's, but the Father's also.

14:25 The words, "these things," must refer to what the Lord had just said to them--about the importance of obedience, and about the greater fellowship that was in store for them in the days to come. He had said these things while He was still with them that they might be comforted when He departed, and so that would be even more careful about obeying Him so that they could expect the fulfillment of the Lord's promise.

But we have to recognize from what Peter had said (in the last part of chapter 13), and from what Thomas said, and from what Philip had said, and from what Judas had said, that there was much that they did not understand. And there was much that the Lord had told them that they did not remember, such as Philip's request in verse 8. So, how could they know that they would remember and understand these tremendous truths that the Lord was giving them?

The answer to these questions is given in the next verse.

14:26 It would be the work of the Holy Spirit to continue to teach them, and to make sure that they did not forget the things that the Lord had told them.

Notice that again, as in verse 16, we have all Three Members of the Godhead mentioned here in verse 26. All Three Persons of the Godhead are concerned about our knowledge of the Word, and about our obedience to the Word.

The Father would send the Holy Spirit to represent the interests of the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit would not only be their Teacher, to help them to understand the words of the Lord, but their Remembrancer--to keep the Word of God ever in their hearts and their thoughts.

This is the only time in John's Gospel that we have the full title, or name, of the Spirit. He is the Holy Spirit! And it is His work to make the people of God a holy people! Therefore, it is important for us to see that there can be no holiness of life apart from (1) an understanding of the truth, and (2) obedience to the truth. And I am talking about the truth of the Word of God.

"He" is emphatic, and emphasizes the personality of the Holy Spirit (as verses 16 and 17 did also). The "I" toward the end of the verse (it is the last word in the Greek text) is also emphatic. The Holy Spirit's main concern is the teaching of Christ. We will see later that He is not limited just to the things that the Lord taught while He was here on earth. He teaches all of the truth. But the emphasis here is on what the Lord said because that was the immediate problem as far as the disciples were concerned.

These words also seem to suggest that the Lord's ministry to His disciples was essentially over, although, as we shall see in chapter 16, there would

be more to come even after our Lord's ascension back to the Father. And yet, at the same time, there is a suggestion here of the inexhaustible character of the Word of God. Regardless of how much we know, there is always more to be learned from the passages that we know the best. That is why we can read, and re-read, the Word of God, always expecting to learn more and to gain greater help from the Word.

Before we leave this verse, there is one point that Bishop Ryle made about this chapter that is important for us to notice. It is our Lord's use of "the Father" and "my Father" throughout the chapter. The Lord spoke of God as "Father" twenty-two times in this one chapter--a detail that is not surpassed, nor equaled, in any other chapter of the Bible! There are probably many reasons for this. One was that it supported the Lord's claim to Deity. Another was that it showed how dear the Father was to Him. He was the Father's beloved Son, and God was His beloved Father. But third, this would also be for their comfort. He had taught them to say, "Our Father," when they prayed. And, before we finish the Gospel of John, we will come to those words which the Lord spoke to Mary Magdalene when He said (and the words are recorded in John 20:17,

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.**

As unbelievable as it might seem, we as the Lord's people have been admitted into that marvelous fellowship that exists between the Father and the Son. This was not a prominent term for God in the OT, but it became very prominent in the NT!

It is little wonder that the Lord went on to speak of the peace He was leaving with them, the peace that He was giving to them.

14:27 "Peace" was the usual greeting which one Jew would give to another whenever they met. The blessing that the Lord told Aaron and his sons to give to the children of Israel was this:

The Lord bless thee, and keep thee:

The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee:

The Lord lift upon his countenance upon thee, **and give thee peace.**

Cf. Num. 6:24-26. In many ways this blessing reflects the same truth that we have in John 14. What was to give the Israelites peace? It was when the Lord's face was shining on them, when He would lift up His countenance upon them. What is the Lord's countenance? It was His presence! What would give the disciples peace in John 14? The same thing: the presence of the Lord as the blessing which accompanies obedience.

Cf. the wonderful promise in Isa. 26:3, 4.

What is peace? It is a heart at rest. It is inner quietness. There can be trouble all around, and yet we can be at peace. The Lord said He did not give it as the world gives it. Worldly peace is dependent upon circumstances, but the peace that the Lord gives is often in spite of our circumstances. It is a peace "that passeth all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). The peace that the world gives, comes and goes. The peace that the Lord gives abides. The peace that the Lord gives, is His peace.

Illus: Over forty years ago when I was in Seminary, Dr. Chafer taught us a hymn that I had never heard before. He always wanted us to pay attention to the words. And he told us that the first line of each stanza was a question; the second line was the answer. Each stanza only had two

lines. The last line brought the truth of the whole hymn together. It is #590 in our hymnal. Please turn to it, and let me read it to you. (Read.)

Peace is contentment, isn't it? Cf. Heb. 13:5, 6.

On the basis that the Lord was giving them His peace, then He added, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Fear and peace do not go together; faith and peace do.

14:28 The disciples were distressed because the Lord was leaving them. It was apparent that they were thinking of themselves, not of Him. Even though He said that He was coming back, they did not want Him to leave. But He said that if they really loved Him, they would rejoice, because He was going back to the Father.

This is surely an indication that to depart and be with Christ is "far better" (Phil. 1:23)--not just better, nor a little better, but "far better"! A statement like this can be a great comfort to us when our loved ones who know the Lord are taken from us. We need to think about what the death of the saints means to the Lord, and we need to think about what the death of the saints means to the saints. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psa. 116:15). As much as the Lord loved His disciples, He loved the Father more--and He wanted them to love Him as He did.

But then He added that they ought to rejoice, not only because He was going to the Father, but because the Father was greater than He was. What did He mean by this?

The Lord Jesus was equal to the Father in His Deity, but less than the Father in His humanity. When the Lord Jesus went back to the Father, He would be restored to the glory that He had with the Father before the world was. Cf. John 17:5. There He would be equal to the Father again in the full use of His attributes--which He had to lay aside in part when He became a man. So in going back to the Father, the Lord would be regaining His former glory and power.

But it was also an indication that His work on earth was not only finished, but accepted, and this should have brought joy to the hearts of His disciples.

14:29 Cf. verse 25. The Lord was speaking here as a prophet, and, as He said in John 14:1, He wanted them to trust Him, to believe that the things that He was saying to them were true.

14:30 As we have seen before, the Lord's ministry had come to an end. He still would speak the words that we have in John 15 and 16, but the number of those words was not much in comparison with what He had already said.

The Devil was ready to make His final and fatal attack upon our Lord. He is "the prince of this world" for the present. But that which looked like a victory over the Lord was the very thing that would seal Satan's doom.

To say that the Devil "hath nothing in me" is a statement which no other person could make. It was a declaration of our Lord's sinlessness, and that there was nothing in the Lord that he could appeal to, nor was there any fault in our Lord that would enable the Devil to bring a true accusation

against Him. He can justly accuse us of sin, but not our Lord.

14:31 Here is the primary significance of the Cross. The Lord's first purpose in going to the Cross was to do the will of His Father. The Cross will forever stand, not only as evidence of the Lord's love for His people, but more so, of His love for the Father. Our obedience is a testimony of our love for the Lord; our Lord's obedience was a testimony of His love for the Father.

"Arise, let us go hence." With this, the Lord and His disciples left the Upper Room and made their way to Gethsemane, where, after prayer, Judas would come to betray the Lord, and His arrest followed.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 15 -- Part 1
April 22, 1991
John 15:1-11

Intro: We are in the third main division of the Gospel of John. Let me review the outline for you.

- I. THE INTRODUCTION (John 1).
- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY TO THE WORLD (John 2-12).
- III. THE LORD'S PRIVATE MINISTRY TO HIS DISCIPLES (John 13-16).
 - A. The Lord's ministry in the Upper Room (John 13, 14).
 - 1. The Lord washed the disciples' feet (John 13:1-17).
 - 2. The Lord identified Judas as His betrayer (John 13:18-30).
 - 3. The Lord's discourses in the Upper Room (John 13:31-14:31).
 - a. The Lord's imminent glory and departure (John 13:31-38).
 - b. The Lord's appeal for their trust (John 14:1-14).
 - c. The Lord's provision for His people (John 14:26-31).

Now we are ready for chapters 15 and 16, which are a part of chapters 13 and 14, but not spoken in the same place. Chapters 13 and 14 took place in the Upper Room; chapters 15 and 16, on the way to Gethsemane.

- B. The Lord's discourses on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane (John 15, 16).
 - 1. Four relationships of the disciples (John 15).
 - a. Their relationship to Christ (John 15:1-11).
 - b. Their relationship to each other (John 15:12-17).
 - c. Their relationship to the world (John 15:18-25).
 - d. Their relationship to the Holy Spirit (John 15:26, 27).

Let us begin, then, by dealing with the first of:

- 1. Four relationships of the disciples (John 15:1-27).

The first of these is:

- a. Their relationship to Christ (John 15:1-11).

15:1 The subject of this section is fruit-bearing. The illustration had to do with a vine and its branches. The requirement for the branches is that they abide in the vine. This is the necessary condition for all of the branches if they are to bear fruit.

Here we come to last of the specific claims that the Lord made for Himself. He had said:

- 1) "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35, 48, 51)
- 2) "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; 9:5; 12:46).
- 3) "I am the door of the sheep" (John 10:7, 9).
- 4) "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14).
- 5) "I am the resurrection, and the life" (John 11:25).
- 6) "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).
- 7) "I am the true vine" (John 15:1, 5).

(Review the meaning of "I am.")

No subject relating to the Christian life and Christian service can possibly surpass in importance this subject of the vine and the branches as illustrating the relationship between Christ and His disciples. And support for that statement is certainly brought out in the first eleven verses of John 15.

The Lord Jesus is the vine. We who are believers are the branches. And we

can all understand that, if a branch becomes separated from the vine, it will be unfruitful, so it is with us in our relationship to Christ. It is the life that is in the vine, going out into the branches, that makes it possible for the branch to bear fruit.

Christ is "the true vine." He is not just "the vine," but "the **true** vine." He is the genuine vine, the real vine. A vine takes its definition from Him. All that a vine is, and all that it needs to be to its branches, He is!

The word "true" is used twenty-three times in John's writings, and only five times elsewhere in all of the NT. (So says Thayer on p. 27.)

"My Father is the husbandman." He is the vine-dresser. He is the One Who cares for the vine and the branches, seeking fruit.

Bishop Ryle made the distinction in dealing with chapters 15 and 16, as compared with chapter 14, that in chapter 14 the Lord was comforting, but here He was instructing. Such a distinction may lead to a mistaken idea. It would be that there is no comfort in teaching, or instruction. The two are so closely related that it really is impossible to separate the two. True comfort is always found in the teachings of Scripture, and teaching always brings with it comfort and encouragement. We ought to remember here, too, that the disciples were grieving because the Lord was leaving them. But here the Lord was comforting them with the teaching that they could be closer to Him after His departure than they ever had been while He was on earth with them. And to think that the Father had charged Himself with the responsibility of seeing to it that the relationship between the vine and the branches was all that it should be, and that the outcome would be fruitfulness.

15:2 At this point we run into a problem, and we come back to that problem in verse 6. These verses seem to suggest that a branch that does not bear fruit is cut off from Christ, and so those who believe that it is possible for us to lose our salvation love to come to a verse like this. But is this what the Lord was teaching? Certainly not! Even if this presents us with a problem, we know that there are many other passages which teach that a true believer in Christ cannot lose his salvation.

We need to remember that every doctrine has its problem passages. There are passages which seem to throw doubt upon the inspiration of Scripture. There are passages that raise questions about the Deity of Christ. There are passages which seem to question that the Holy Spirit is a Person. And there are passages which seem to teach that we can lose our salvation. That is why it is essential that we know as much as we can about all of Scripture! One reason that the Scriptures have been written as they have is so that you and I will recognize our need to be taught by the Holy Spirit.

Another thing that we need to remember is that not every detail in parables is meant to be interpreted. Bishop Ryle has given an excellent description of how we should interpret parables. Listen to what he has to say.

We must always remember that the passage before us is a parable, and as a parable it must be interpreted. We must be careful not to press each word and sentence in it too far; and, as in all parables, we must look at the main scope and the great lesson which it contains, rather than at each clause.--The only saying is most true, that "no parable stands on four legs"; and in all parables there are parts which are only the drapery of

the figure, and not the figure itself.. Neglect of this caution does much harm to the souls of Christians, and is the cause of much crude and unsound doctrine.--In the passage before us we must remember that our Lord Jesus Christ is not literally a vine, nor are believers literal branches, nor is the Father literally a husbandman! We are dealing with figures and pictures, mercifully used in order to meet our weak capacities; and we must take care we do not draw from them doctrinal conclusions which contradict other plain passages of Scripture (Ryle, Vol. II, pp. 331, 332).

This is sound advice for all of us who are seeking to understand the Word of God.

Another thing that we need to remember in interpreting this parable is that passages in Scripture which deal with the work of the Lord in this world frequently give us a picture of a mixture of good and bad. Think of the meal and the leaven. Think of the parable of the wheat and the tares. And we have that here. The branches which do not bear fruit are false branches. And, as the case would be with any vine-dresser, he would cut away the dead branches, or the non-bearing branches, so that greater strength can go into those branches that do bear fruit. The Lord did not attempt to set a time for the taking away. Sometimes He removes people rather quickly; others stay on although they give no evidence whatever of having spiritual life.

Charles Simeon once made this observation:

There are "branches in Christ," which are so only in appearance--

[They have never been thoroughly separated from their old stock: they have never been truly engrafted into Christ. The change wrought in them has been only partial: they bring not forth such fruit as the living branches do.]

These the Father "taketh away"--

[They are a disgrace to the vine, and to the husbandman himself: he, however, exercises forbearance toward them. His culture of them, in the meantime, shews their unfruitfulness to be of themselves; but he will ere long separate them from the others. He will take them away, in order to burn them. How fearful should we be lest we be found such branches at the last! And how carefully should we examine our fruit, in order that we may not be self-deceived!]

This quotation is found in Vol. 14, pp. 51, 52, in his series, Expository Outlines on the Whole Bible.

The point is that every true branch will be a fruit-bearing branch. And the husbandman purges a branch that might be weak, or defiled, so that it will bring forth more fruit. "Purgeth" can mean cleansing, or it can mean pruning--cutting back dead wood to make the branch more fruitful. The husbandman determines what needs to be done. This can probably be explained by the chastening of the Lord which is spoken of in Heb. 12.

The idea of cleansing seems to be brought out by verse 3. But cleansing often results from chastening.

15:3 One of the ways in which the Lord cleanses us to make us more fruitful is through the Word. There may be a reference in this verse to the foot-washing of chapter 13. A lesson in humility has a cleansing effect upon the Lord's people. Cf. Psalms 119:9. Also Eph. 5:26. Thus it would seem that the cleansing is that of sanctification.

Thus far the Lord had been speaking of what He and the Father had done, and

would do, for them to make them fruitful. Now He speaks of their responsibility.

15:4 Cf. John 14:20.

"Abide in me" is explained by the Lord when He spoke immediately afterwards about the relationship between the vine and the branches which was absolutely essential for fruit-bearing. The branch by itself is lifeless and helpless. But joined to the vine there is life and power and the capacity to bear "much fruit."

Therefore, to abide in Christ is to maintain the closest possible fellowship with the Lord, to depend upon Him, to draw from Him for every need we have, regardless of what it might be. One who abides in Christ is not trusting in himself, nor seeking his own way, but is walking in the Lord, careful to please Him in all things.

April 23, 1991

Abiding in Christ was a favorite theme with John. Cf. 1 John 2:6, 24, 27; 3:6, 24; 4:13, 15, 16. There is a doctrinal and absolute sense in which we abide in Christ, and Christ abides in us. But there is also a practical and conditional sense in which we are to abide in Christ. This is where we experience the blessing of Christ's indwelling presence in our lives plus the power and blessing and fruitfulness that accompanies such a practical relationship with God and with Christ.

Abiding in Christ is the true Christian life. Not to abide is to be living in sin. The two most important essentials for such a life are obedience and faith, or trust. A person who is disobedient to the Word cannot be abiding in Christ. And since obedience and faith are both related to the Spirit's ministry, it can be said that the life of abiding in Christ is a Spirit-filled, a Spirit-controlled, life. The Lord was touching here upon the theme which is expounded so powerfully and clearly in the writings of the Apostle Paul, the truth of our union with Christ.

It is just as impossible for a child of God who is not abiding in Christ to bear fruit as it is for a branch that is cut off from the vine.

15:5 Here the Lord made it clear that true believers are the branches. The one who abides in Christ is not only fruitful, but brings forth "much fruit." And yet, on the other hand, our Lord said, "Without me ye can do nothing."

Listen again to a comment from Charles Simeon, Vol. 14, pp. 52, 52:

The various systems of heathen philosophers were all calculated to confirm the pride of man: the tendency of the Gospel, on the contrary, is to humble and abase the soul. Its sublimest doctrines are by far the most humiliating. The sovereignty of God, for instance, annihilates, as it were, our fancied greatness; and the atonement of Christ brings to naught our boasted goodness. Thus the mysterious doctrine of union with Christ proclaims our insufficiency for any thing that is good. Our blessed Lord declares this, first by comparison, and then in plain terms, "Without me ye can do nothing."

The Lord was not speaking here of merely intellectual or physical matters, but of spiritual things. We have no spiritual life without Christ. We have no spiritual wisdom without Christ. We have no spiritual power without Him.

April 29, 1991

15:6 This verse continues the emphasis of verse 2. As in that verse, it seems that the Lord was speaking here of those who profess to be the people of God, but without the evidence. The parable continues by indicating that they are like dead branches which men in a vineyard would gather and burn. (The word "man" is not used in the Greek text, so "anyone" would be a better translation. Neither is "men" used in the latter part of the verse, so a simple "they" would be closer to the Greek text. It probably means men because our Lord was giving His disciples a parable.)

Without pressing the details of the parable too far, there certainly is the suggestion here that those who are not vitally united to Christ will experience the judgment of hell. A mere profession of faith without a living union with Christ is not sufficient for salvation. In fact, the judgment of those who profess, but do not possess, could very well be worse than a person who makes no profession at all.

15:7 One answer to the question, What fruit was the Lord speaking about?, is given to us in this verse where the Lord spoke of prayer. The promise contained in this verse was to be an incentive for His disciples to abide in Him.

This is a promise with two conditions:

- 1) "If ye abide in me."
- 2) "If...my words abide in you."

Godet (p. 856) suggested that we might have expected the Lord to say, "If ye abide in me, and I abide in you." But instead He said, "If ye abide in me, **and my words abide in you...**" Actually this means the same as if our Lord had said, "And I abide in you." Christ and the words of Christ are inseparable. We cannot have the Lord abiding in us in a practical sense if His Word is not abiding in us.

As we have said, to abide in Christ is to maintain a life of the closest possible fellowship with the Lord in which we are trusting Him for all that we need to live for His glory. We draw from Him the wisdom we need. We draw from Him the grace that we need. We draw from Him the peace that we need. He is our very life, and we are abiding in Christ when we live in constant dependence upon Him.

To have the Lord's Word abiding in us is to be learning what the Word means, meditating upon it, and then living as the Word instructs us to live. It means knowing and doing the will of God. We trust Him to make it possible for us to live the way He wants us to live--in thought, in speech, in action. It means not doing what the Lord does not want us to do, as well as doing what He does want us to do.

Then the Lord said, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." Does this mean that the Lord will give us anything we ask for? That is what He said! But we need to remember that He has described a person who is wholly devoted to the Lord, and wholly dependent upon Him, one in whom the Word abides. The effect that abiding in the Lord and having His Word abiding in our hearts will have upon our requests, is that our requests will be different from what they were if we had not met those conditions. Now we only want His will. We seek not to please ourselves, but to please the Lord. We are concerned about the progress of His work in the world. Our prayers are really offered in faith in His promises.

The prayer promises of Scripture show that the Lord wants us to pray expecting that our prayers will be answered. Cf. John 14:13, 14. See also John 16:23, 24.

So a part of the fruit we bear is to be seen in answered prayers!

One of the marks of a true Christian is that he prays. We have every right to question the salvation of those who say that they are Christians, but who do not pray.

There is much here for all of us to learn. The fact that we do not see the answers that we would like to see probably is an indication that we are not abiding in Christ as we should, nor are we seeing to it that His Word is abiding in us.

15:8 We have a further indication here of what constitutes effective pray.

It is prayer that glorifies the Father. The more we experience answers to prayer, the greater glory do we bring to the Father. We are asking amiss when we seek just the satisfaction of our own desires.

Many before me have pointed out from this chapter that we have "fruit" (v. 2), "more fruit" (v. 2), and "much fruit" (v. 8). The trials that the Lord brings into our lives and the testings which we face every day are all designed to make us more fruitful.

"So shall ye be my disciples." The Greek would be better translated, So shall ye become my disciples. Godet said, "One must always become a disciple" (p. 857). He meant that as we go on with the Lord it should become more apparent to all that we really belong to the Lord.

Matthew Poole wrote in his commentary on the Gospel of John,
And though men must be Christ's disciples before they bring forth any fruit, yet their bringing forth much fruit is that which alone can evidence and make them appear (italics mine) to be the disciples of Christ. And often in Scripture being signifieth appearing (italics mine) (Vol. 3, p. 359).

After all, is this not what we want--the glory of God, and unmistakable evidence that we are His disciples? And remember that it all is dependent upon our abiding in Christ and having His Word abiding in us.

Paul certainly had these truths in mind when he wrote to the Colossian church,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;
teaching and admonishing one another
in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.
And whatsoever ye do in word or deed,
do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks to God and the Father by him
(Col. 3:16, 17).

15:9 In order to understand what the Lord was saying here, we need to go back to a verse like John 10:9 where we read that our Lord said this:
Therefore doth my Father love me,
because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

Now we know that the Father did not just love the Son because He came to die

on the Cross. The Father and the Son have always loved each other with a perfect love, an unchanging love, an eternal love. But it seems that the Lord was saying that the Father was especially pleased because of what the Lord Jesus had come to do. The coming of Christ into the world to provide salvation for sinners was tangible proof of the love that Christ had for the Father, and of the love that the Father had for Him in return.

We read in the last verse of John 14,

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.

This establishes the truth that there can be no love apart from obedience. Christ demonstrated His love for the Father by doing the Father's will, and this brought forth from the Father a manifestation of His love for His Son.

Our verse here (v. 9) tells us that, as the Father had loved Him for His obedience, so the Lord Jesus had loved His disciples because they had been obedient to Him. And then indicating that He wanted that fellowship of love to continue, He said, "Continue ye in my love." The word "continue" is the word abide, or remain. How would they continue in His love? By continuing to be obedient to the Lord.

Then notice verse 10.

15:10 Continued obedience is abiding in the love of the Lord. We please Him by our obedience, and He shows His pleasure by manifesting Himself to us in more and more ways. This is the teaching we had in John 14:21, 23.

So when we get down to the basic truth, abiding is obeying, not out of fear, nor from a sense of duty, but obeying the Lord because we love the Lord. Think of it as LOVING OBEDIENCE!

The Lord Jesus is our great Example of what it means to love God. He did not just say that He did; He showed that He did--by His perfect obedience to the Father's will. John 8:29b tells us that the Lord said, "I do always those things that please him," speaking of the Father. What joy it brings to the heart of Christ, and to the heart of God, when we make it our business to obey our Lord.

But there is another special benefit of such a life in addition to those our Lord mentioned in verse 8. Our Lord said what it was in verse 11.

15:11 The Lord had two reasons for telling His disciples these things. The first was that His joy might remain in them. His joy was the joy that He experienced because of His obedience to the Father's will. We can state it another way: His joy was the joy of His special fellowship with the Father. Nothing gave our Lord greater joy while He was here on earth than His fellowship with the Father resulting from His obedience to the Father.

The second was that their joy might be full.

This shows that their joy was capable of getting better and better. A full joy is a joy that is complete in itself; it needs nothing else to make it full.

You will never meet a person who does not want to be happy. The problem is

that we are inclined to seek our happiness in those things which really cannot satisfy us. And so most people are on a constant stretch to find that which will really satisfy them. If they can only have this, or go there, or achieve certain goals, then we think we will be happy.

But the Lord said that a full joy is the result of full obedience to His commands. Our hearts are so foolish that we think that if we agree to do the will of God, it will result in unhappiness. Loving obedience produces a full joy. King David wrote long ago,

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy;
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore (Psa. 16:11).

Now let me summarize for you the blessings that are promised when we abide in Christ, or to state it another way, the blessings that we will receive when we obey the Lord:

- 1) Verse 5 -- "much fruit."
- 2) Verse 7 -- answered prayer.
- 3) Verse 8a -- the Father will be glorified.
- 4) Verse 8b -- people will recognize that we are the Lord's disciples.
- 5) Verses 9 and 10 -- special fellowship with the Lord.
- 6) Verse 11 -- the joy of the Lord, fulness of joy.

Fruit is answered prayer. Fruit is a life that glorifies God. Fruit is the blessing of the Lord upon our ministry. Fruit is also, as we will see in the next section, the love that we have for each other as the Lord's people.

May the Lord enable each of us to abide more fully in Christ!

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 15 -- Part 2
April 29, 1991
John 15:12-17

Intro: In the first section of John 15 we learned that we are to abide in Christ, and that this means we need to obey the Lord, and depend upon the Lord, which leads to blessed fellowship with the Lord.

We also learned what some of the blessings are that come to us as we abide in Christ.

Now, in this section we are moving on from our relationship to Christ to, stating it from the perspective of our Lord's disciples,

b. Their relationship to each other (John 15:12-17).

This is entirely consistent with what the Lord said were the two greatest commandments in the Law. The Jews were commanded to love the Lord first, and then to love their neighbors as they loved themselves. Cf. Matt. 22:34-40. We had the first in verses 1-11 of this chapter; now we are ready for the second--not exactly as it was stated in the Law, but "a new commandment, much stronger and much higher.

And so when we think of all of the commandments in Scripture, the question is, Where shall we begin? The Lord has given us the answer. We see it in John 15:12.

May 6, 1991

15:12 "This is **my** commandment" is a statement that would attract the attention of the disciples. Their hearts would have been very tender at this time because the Lord had told them that He was leaving them. Therefore, they would obviously want to do whatever would be pleasing to the Lord.

The order of this statement in the Greek would bear the translation, The commandment that is mine. And Bishop Westcott says that the words, that is mine, that which was consistent with our Lord's nature as well as His mission in the world. There is nothing in the world that even begins to compare with the love that believers have for each other.

His words indicated that in our relationships with people, our relationship with other believers comes first. It is the most important of all. And it is to be characterized by love!

The commandment in the Law was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The commandment that the Lord gave here was, "That ye love one another, **as I have loved you.**"

The commandment in the Law had to do with all people. The "new commandment" of the Lord had to do with other believers. Our fellowship with each other is to be characterized by love, not like the love that each one has for himself, but by the love which the Lord has for each one of us.

This was not the first time the Lord had said this to them. Cf. John 13:34, 35.

The world is not interested in our doctrine, but they will pay attention to what our doctrine does to our lives. This is the most powerful testimony

that we can have with the world. On the contrary, extensive damage has been done to others when the Lord's people fight with each other, or fail to manifest love for one another.

It is important to bring together verses 9 and 12. The Lord loves us the way the Father loves Him, and we are to love each other the way the Lord loves us. The connection is clear.

Let us recognize that the standard is impossible for us to reach. We can see an example of this in Paul's instructions to husbands in Eph. 5:25. Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. But no husband has ever loved his wife that much. The commandment means that every husband needs to realize that he can always love his wife more, even though he will never love his wife as much as the Lord loves each one of us. But whether we are speaking of a husband's love for his wife, or the love believers are to show toward each other, we have a super-human standard, and it is only with the Lord's help that we can obey such a commandment. The love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us. Cf. Rom. 5:5. "The fruit of the Spirit is love..." (Gal. 5:22).

So we are not speaking of human love, but of divine love--a love which the world only knows by observation. We know it by revelation, and then by actual experience.

This would explain why Paul prayed for the Ephesian church as he did according to what he wrote in Eph. 3:14-21. (Read and comment.)

See also Eph. 5:1, 2. And Phil. 1:9.

Before we think of the characteristics of the Lord's love for us, let us ask what the object of His love is. And it seems indisputable that the object of our Lord's love for us is our spiritual blessing. His love is not a purposeless love, nor is it a love that causes our Lord to close His eyes to that which may be wrong in us. But it is a love that seeks to make us holy as He is holy, a love that causes Him to seek our sanctification, and ultimately, our glorification!

This, then, should be the object of the love that we have for each other if we are to love one another as the Lord loves us. Our concern should be for anything that will encourage our fellow-believers to live for the Lord. And a big part of that will be the godliness of our own lives. If we love one another, we will seek to help each other to be holy, and one of the greatest means of help is a godly example.

What are some of the characteristics of the Lord's love for us?

It is a gracious love--completely undeserved. It is an active love. It is an unchanging love. It is a fervent love. It is an unending love. It is a godly love. It is a sympathetic love. It is a patient love. It is a sacrificial love. Those of us who know the Lord should make a study of the love of the Lord a life-long project! The more we know about His love, the more we will understand how we are to love each other.

15:13 Matthew Henry said of this verse, "If all that a man has he will give for his life, he that gives this for his friend gives all, and can give no more" (V, 1126). The Lord's love actually went beyond this because we are told in Rom. 5:8, "But God commendeth his love..." And in

verse 10 of the same chapter we read,

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God
by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled
we shall be saved by his life.

But here the Lord did not call them "sinners," even though they were. Nor did He call them "enemies," because they had been that, too. But He called them, "friends."

A friend is a person you love. A friend is a person you will defend. A friend is a person you support and are sympathetic with. A friend is a person you want to be with. Those who are your friends are dearer to you than others are. I think it was Dr. Edman who for a long time was President of Wheaton College who spoke of his wife as "friend-wife."

Here the Lord Jesus called His disciples, His friends. You talk about grace; that is grace! The Lord loved them. He loved to be with them. He would support them, defend them. He was sympathetic with them.

15:14 "Ye are my friends." That is what the Lord says about all of His people. We are His friends! Can you really take that in? I am sure that none of us can take it in. It is one thing for me to call the Lord my Friend; it is quite another thing for Him to call me, and to call you, "My friends." If He would lay down his life for us, proving His friendship, then there is nothing that He will not do for us.

But how do you identify a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is he a friend of the Lord just because he says that he is? No. The one who is friend of the Lord Jesus is the person who does what the Lord tells Him to do. And this is the kind of obedience that delights the heart of our Lord. We obey Him because we love Him. We obey Him because He is our Friend. It is a gross contradiction to claim to be a friend of Jesus Christ, and yet not be doing what He wants you to do.

15:15 In this verse the Lord distinguished between servants and friends. And He called His disciples friends rather than servants.

When we simply take the terms, lord and servant, as compared with friend and friend, we can see a vast difference. A lord does not discuss his plans with his servant. He decides what he wants the servant to do, and then tells him to do it. But with friends it is different. Friends share with each other what is on their hearts. And the Lord Jesus said here that His whole ministry had been a proof of His friendship with them because, as He said, "All things that I have heard of my Father I have made known to you."

Will you think about your Bible that way? And will you think that way about what the Lord has taught you from His Word? He told you that you were a sinner because He is your Friend. And He told you that only He could save you because He is your Friend. All of the precious truths, the instructions, the promises of the Word, are proofs of the friendship of our Lord Jesus Christ. And our heavenly Father is our Friend, too, because He told His Son what He wanted His Son to tell us.

Can you think of any higher honor that could be conferred upon you that to have the Lord Jesus Christ call you His friend? There is none! That is the honor of honors, the greatest honor of all.

But how did I become of friend of the Lord Jesus? How did the disciples become His friends? Did they choose Him? Did you choose Him? Did I choose Him? Did we initiate this relationship? NO--a thousand times, NO! We did not have that much good sense. Verse 16 gives us the answer.

15:16 We did not choose Him; HE CHOSE US! He did not just take those who wanted to be His friends. As strange as it seems to us now, there never has been anybody who first chose Christ. It is true of every single person who has ever been a friend of the Lord Jesus Christ that the Lord did the choosing! And we can see now why we should have chosen Him, but if we have any spiritual light at all we still are unable to find even one reason as to why the Lord should choose us.

When did He choose us?

According to Eph. 1:4 it was "before the foundation of the world." "Well," you say, "that was before I was born!" It certainly was. It was before there was an earth, before there was a sun or a moon or a star. It was before there was an angel. It was before there was an animal, or a bird, or a fish, or a man!

When Paul was writing to Timothy in 2 Timothy, he spoke of God in this way:
Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling,
not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace,
which was given us in Christ Jesus **before the world began**
(2 Tim. 1:9).

Listen to what Bishop Ryle had to say about this great doctrine of election:

Election to eternal life is a truth of Scripture which we must receive humbly, and believe implicitly. Why the Lord Jesus calls some and does not call others, quickens whom He will, and leaves others alone in their sins, these are deep things which we cannot explain. Let it suffice us to know that it is a fact. God must begin the work of grace in a man's heart, or else a man will never be saved. Christ must first choose us and call us by His Spirit, or else we shall never choose Christ. Beyond doubt, if not saved, we shall have none to blame but ourselves. But if saved, we shall certainly trace up the beginning of our salvation to the choosing grace of Christ. Our song to all eternity will be that which fell from the lips of Jonah: "Salvation is of the Lord." (Jonah ii. 9.) (II, 348).

Can you understand why many of the Lord's people literally hate this truth when it is as clear as it possibly can be in Scripture? This ought to make us fall on our faces before God every day that we live, praising Him that He in infinite grace would choose us to be His friends, and friends of His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

What else did the Lord do?

He "ordained" us!

This is the common Greek verb which is usually translated to put or to place. Here it might have the idea of an appointment, but still it indicates that we are where we are by a divine placing.

We could say that the Lord had appointed the men to whom He was speaking as His disciples. And that would be true. We could also say that the Lord

had appointed them to be His friends. That also would be true. But it seems to me that what the Lord said here has to be related to His original comments as they left the Upper Room and made their way to Gethsemane. He had said, "I am the vine, ye are the branches." This is where He has placed us. This is our appointment! WE HAVE BEEN PLACED INTO CHRIST. WE ARE RELATED TO CHRIST LIKE A BRANCH IS RELATED TO A VINE.

And why did He place us in Himself? "That ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."

Three things stand out in this verse:

- 1) We have a divinely appointed place.
- 2) We are promised fruitfulness.
- 3) We are assured that our fruit will remain.

We see from this that all fruitfulness is traceable to our relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the fruit that is produced as a result of our relationship to the Lord is fruit that remains!

As we come to the last statement of this verse, "that whatsoever....," I want you to notice the first and third times that the Lord used the word "that" in this verse:

- 1) "That ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."
- 2) "That whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."

These two words are the translation of a Greek word which means, in order that. So we have here two of the reasons why the Lord has chosen us, and placed us where we are: in Himself. The first is that we could bring forth lasting fruit; the second is that we could produce that fruit, not only because of our relationship to Christ, but also in answer to prayer. Thus, the power to produce fruit and the expectation that our prayers will be answered are both traceable to our union with Christ.

And this brings us to the last verse of this division:

15:17 The Lord stated this section with this commandment, and now He closes it with the same commandment. Why?

I can see just one reason. He wanted His disciples to see (and He wants us to see) that both fruitfulness and answered prayer have their roots in our relationship to Christ (the vine and the branches), yet the full blessing of service will be experienced only when we as believers are rightly related to each other in love.

For our Lord to emphasize again that this is His commandments, is to show how extremely important it is and how vital to our fellowship with the Lord, with each other, and to service with lasting fruit which is produced all and only to the glory of our precious Savior.

Concl: And so we come to the end of the second section of John 15. In the first we learned that our primary responsibility in our relationship to Christ is indicated by the verb, "Abide." In this second section we have learned that our primary responsibility in our relationship to each other in the family of God is described by the verb, "Love."

For all of us it is to be hoped that this goes beyond mere information. Let us pray that what we have learned will become ours in experience.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 15 -- Part 3
May 13, 1991
John 15:18-25

Intro: The first two parts of John 15 have to do with the believers' relationship to Christ (vv. 1-11) and the believers' relationship to each other (vv. 12-17). The third part of the chapter has to do with:

c. Their relationship to the world (John 15:18-25).

15:18 Their relationship to each other and their relationship to the world, could hardly been more in contrast with each other. They were to expect love from each other; they were to expect hatred from the world.

What did the Lord mean by the expression, "the world"?

He was speaking of the people of the world, whether Jewish or Gentile, who were unregenerate--people who were not saved. They are people like all of us once were, blinded by their sin, spiritually dead in their sin, people who are opposed to the truth of God. They might be religious leaders like the scribes and Pharisees, or like the one thief on the Cross who did not repent of his sins. By nature we all are enemies of God, enemies of Christ, enemies of the Word of God, the Gospel, enemies of those who claim to be the people of God.

Such hatred can vary from indifference to open hostility. Hatred amounts to rejection, whatever form it may take. Our Lord, the apostles, and the early church, experienced hostility of the worst kind. And we are to expect that we, too, will be hated because of our relationship to Christ and the Gospel.

By, "If the world hate you," the Lord was not suggesting that it might not hate the disciples. This is what is known in Greek as a first class condition. Robertson suggested in his commentary that the words, as it certainly does, are implied by the Lord's words.

"Ye know" can be either a present tense, as it is translated here, or it can be an imperative: "Know!" So the Lord was saying, If the world hates you, and continues to hate you, know that it has hated me, and continues to hate me, FIRST, before you.

So this was a situation that had not changed in spite of the Lord's ministry in the world, and it would not change for the disciples. And we know that right down to the end of the 20th century, it still has not changed.

Therefore, when the world honors a believer, we can be sure that something is wrong. It hated, and still hates, Christ, and will hate us because we belong to Christ.

Remember that the world "hate" carries with it the simple idea of rejection, just as the word "love" includes the ideas of acceptance and choice.

Cf. our Lord's words to His brothers in the flesh in John 7:7. He said,
The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth,
because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.
The world cannot tolerate the Word of God.

15:19 To be "of the world" is to belong to the world, to be a part of it, to live according to the ways of the world, and to think the thoughts of the world.

Cf. John 17:14, 16. Then contrast this with what the Apostle John wrote in 1 John 4:4-6. He was writing about the "many false prophets that have gone out into the world" (v. 1b).

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them:
because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.
They are of the world: therefore the world heareth them.
We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us;
he that is not of God heareth not us.
Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

We are not "of the world" because the Lord has "chosen us out of the world." It was not our doing, but His! However, when He brought us out of the world, a change took place in our hearts so that we could never really be "of the world" again. And this is why the world hates us.

I have often heard Christians say that, after they were saved, they did not have to give up their non-Christian friends; their non-Christian friends gave them up. They don't like being around us anymore. They don't invite us to their functions anymore, etc. It does not mean that they want to kill us; it can only mean that they reject us.

When you see the teaching of Scripture on this point, you see that there is a clear line drawn in this world between those who know the Lord, and those who do not know Him. The professing church has been in the process for a long time of wiping out that line. Christians have toned down their witness of the Gospel. The church has taken on many of the ways of the world--their methods, their way of getting money, their music. The church caters to the world's desire to be entertained, and tones down anything that might be offensive. The early church, for the most part, knew nothing of this. And the difference between the early church and the church today is probably one reason why we have such an easy time, and yet, at the same time, are not seeing people saved and lives changed the way we would like to.

15:20 The Lord repeated here what He had been saying in the two previous verses. It was as though He had told them something, and then went on to say, "Now remember this; I don't want you to forget it."

Bishop Ryle made this comment:

We ought to observe carefully how strongly this lesson about the world is laid down by our Lord. It was doubtless spoken for all time, and with a special reference to believer's slowness to realize it. If there is anything that true Christians seem incessantly forgetting, and seem to need incessantly reminding of, it is the real feeling of unconverted people towards them, and the treatment they must expect to meet with. Wrong expectations are one great cause of Christians feeling troubled and perplexed. That word "remember"--"do remember,"--has a mine of meaning in it (Vol. II, p. 357).

This raises the whole question of suffering which we find throughout the Scriptures. The main emphasis on suffering in Scripture is upon persecution for the sake of the Gospel. That is why the Apostles suffered, and why they died. That is why there were so many martyrs in the early church. They were bold in their testimony, and many of them paid for it

with their lives.

Paul told Timothy in his last epistle to him,
Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus
shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

There are many, many passages on suffering in the NT. Peter gave us one which you will probably remember:

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy (1 Pet. 4:12, 13).

"The servant is not greater than his lord." The Lord had made this same statement to His disciples in John 13:16, only there it was about foot washing. We must not expect higher honors than our Lord received. Neither should we expect better treatment than our Lord received. If we are true believers, living for the Lord, we can expect what He got! And this is both positive and negative. If they persecuted the Lord, they will persecute us; if they heard the Lord, they will hear us.

There were those who kept the Lord's saying, but it was not because they decided on their own to do it. Whenever people are receptive and responsive to the Gospel, we can be sure that God has opened their hearts so they will hear and believe.

15:21 For the second time here the Lord accepted the responsibility for the way the world would treat them. (See also v. 19.) And the reason that the people of the world had no respect for the name of the Lord, i.e., Who the Lord is, was because they did not know the Father. The Jews claimed to know God, but not our Lord. But the Lord said that they did not know the Father.

Among religious people today, professing Christians, they claim to know God and to worship God, but they reject the Deity of Christ. The Lord would tell them, too, that if they do not know Him, they do not know God. Cf. John 14:6. See also John 16:1-3, esp. v. 3.

The teaching that people cannot know God except through Christ is one reason why true Christians are often persecuted by religious people who claim to be Christians. Such teaching is too narrow for them.

15:22 However, these were people who were without any excuse. Here the Lord made a point of showing that exposure to the truth puts us in a position of responsibility to act upon that truth.

"If I had not come" -- This probably means not only coming as a Man, but coming as the Messiah. "And spoken unto them" -- The Lord had ministered the truth to the Jews over and over again. If the Lord had not shown His credentials as the Messiah, and further supported it with His teaching, the Jews might have rejected Him as a mere man without being guilty of sin. But having had all of that evidence clearly presented to them, and then rejecting it, they had "no cloke for their sin"--no excuse! They were guilty! There was nothing that could cover their sin before God.

It is a most solemn thing to be exposed to the truth, and yet not to accept it. The more light we have, the greater our responsibility before God. It

was our Lord Himself Who said, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required...." (Luke 12:28m).

Note that the rejection of Christ, however it may manifest itself, is SIN! It cannot be considered anything else.

15:23 In verse 21 the Lord had said that those who persecuted Him, and who would persecute His disciples, did not know the Father. Here He went beyond that and said that they hated the Father.

15:24 Neither in this verse nor in verse 22 was the Lord saying that His enemies were not sinners before He came and ministered to them. He was speaking of their sin in rejecting the light which had been given to them. So their guilt was greater than it would have been had they not seen and heard the Lord Jesus Christ, their Messiah. But having heard, they were not only guilty of hating Christ, but of hating the Father also.

The Father and the Son are so intimately related that you cannot accept the One without accepting the Other. Nor can a person reject Christ without rejecting the Father also.

15:25 The way the Lord quoted this Scripture does not mean that the Jews rejected Christ in order to fulfill Scripture. But He meant that, in their rejection they were fulfilling Scripture.

The Lord was probably quoting from Psa. 69:4. Note that He called it "their law." This would mean that the Law was used not only for the Ten Commandments, nor just for the books of Moses, but for all of the OT Scriptures.

Therefore, such a rejection of Christ did not take the Lord by surprise. But they did it without any real reason. It was blind unbelief. The evidence was there in an overwhelming manner, but their eyes could not see, nor could their ears hear.

Concl: This was the kind of a world into which the Lord came. They loved "darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19b).

But we need to note that this was also the world into which the apostles were being sent. They had no hope that they would be liked any more than the Lord was, nor treated any better than the world had treated Him. And yet this was the world where they would be able to bear fruit, abiding in Christ, loving each other. Only God can change the human heart! He does it in sovereign grace. We cannot do anything without Him, but with Him all things are possible. Even the chief of sinners can be turned into a friend and a brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every child of God is a miracle of grace. Men by nature hate the Lord "without a cause." And the Lord saved us also, "freely"! This also is without a cause. Cf. Rom. 3:24.

How thankful we should be for the grace of God that reached our needy and sinful hearts! But we need to be equally thankful that, because of the grace of God, serving the Lord in this world is not hopeless, but hopeful. Without Him we can do nothing; with Him all things are possible. But it all comes about by prayer, through the Word, through Christ, and by the work of the Holy Spirit, as we will see in the last two verses of this great chapter.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 15 -- Part 4

May 20, 1991

John 15:26, 27

Intro: In these last two verses of John 15 we come to the fourth and last of the disciples' relationships about which the Lord had been speaking in this chapter.

The first was their relationship to Christ Himself (vv. 1-11). The second was their relationship to each other (vv. 12-17). The third was their relationship to the world (vv. 18-25). The fourth and last is:

d. Their relationship to the Holy Spirit (John 15:26, 27).

This was not the first time that the Lord had mentioned the Holy Spirit in this Discourse, nor would it be the last. In fact, we can say that our Lord's emphasis upon the Holy Spirit in chapters 14, 15, and 16 was one of the main things that He had upon His heart as He spent these last hours ministering to His apostles. And, as we have seen, these were not truths just for the apostles, but they were for all who know the Lord from that day on until the Church is called home.

It seems clear from these chapters as well as from other NT passages, that this age in which we live could correctly be called the Dispensation of the Holy Spirit, or the Age of the Holy Spirit. And yet as we look at the professing church today, it seems that there is a wide difference among those who profess to be the Lord's concerning the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The difference extends from those who practically ignore the work of the Holy Spirit to those who have departed from Scripture in their emphasis upon the Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is very important for us to be clear in our understanding of the NT doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Let me read to you what one writer has written about the importance of the Holy Spirit and His ministry:

Of all that has been wrought in the believer in the way of conviction, repentance, faith, joy, holiness, &c., the blessed and Eternal Spirit is the sole Author. Great and glorious is his work: yea, but for it, the redemption accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ, as to any saving effects, would have availed nothing. The "Sun of righteousness" might have risen upon the world in all his peerless splendor; but until the mental eye had been opened by the Holy Spirit, not a beam had found its way into the dark chambers of the understanding and the heart. The Gospel "supper" might have been prepared, the Lamb slain, and the invitation issued; but without a supernatural power working upon the will, the desires, and the affections of man, all would have "made light of it, and have gone their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise." ...Our views of the work of the Spirit cannot be too spiritual, nor can our estimate of its value be too high. The great danger to which we are exposed is, not in overrating, but in undervaluing the office-work of the Spirit; not in thinking too high, but in thinking too low of it; and that anything tends more to wound, grieve, and chase from us his sensible presence, than a known and permitted declension of his work, we cannot imagine (Winslow, Octavius, Personal Declension and Revival of Religion in the Soul, pp. 128, 129).

This was written back in the 19th century by a man who ministered in England. He was one of the men who spoke at the opening of Spurgeon's Metropolitan Tabernacle in London.

He said in another part of his book that he believed that doctrinally there were three reasons for the declension that was evident then in the work of the Lord, and which we see so clearly today. I thought that his comments were so appropriate for today that I pass them on to you. You judge as to how much they apply today. He pointed his remarks at what we have done with the Word of God, what we have done with Christ, and what we have done with the Holy Spirit.

Concerning the Word of God he mentioned the doctrines of grace. Then, and today also, there evidently was more of a tendency to appeal to man's pride, rather than to preach those truths of the grace of God which humble man, expose his sin and his helplessness and his unworthiness. Mr. Winslow said that it is the doctrines of grace that become a mighty force under the blessing of the Spirit for the salvation of sinners and for the spiritual growth of the people of God.

Concerning Christ he said that they heard very little about Christ crucified. He said that there was a tendency in the pulpits of England in that day to hide the Cross, not to glory in it. There was a tendency to make our Lord only a man instead of proclaiming the double glory of His absolute Deity and His perfect humanity. The church had placed her emphasis rather upon the talents of the preacher, his eloquence, human wisdom. Even in those days the work of the church was more man-centered than God-centered, and Christ-centered, and the church seemed to be more concerned about pleasing men than she was about pleasing God.

It is the preaching of Christ that the Spirit of God uses, His Person, His life, His death, His resurrection, His exaltation, and His return that the Spirit uses to bring sinners in contrition and repentance to the feet of our glorified and glorious Savior. It is Christ whom we need to preach.

Finally, Mr. Winslow spoke of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Some denied that the Holy Spirit was a true Person. Others substituted their methods for that which only the Holy Spirit can do. We live in a day when in our Christian schools students are taught more about methods than they are about doctrine. "How to" has become more important than holiness of life. In many of our larger churches there is a false emphasis, an unscriptural emphasis, on the work of the Spirit. The consequences of this are often as misleading and damaging as no emphasis at all.

The more I read of the Lord's work in the past, the more I see that the present-day situation in the church is just past history repeating itself. I hope that you see, that you understand, and that you are praying and working to do all that you can to bring the church today back to the doctrines of God's sovereign grace, back to Christ, and back to the Holy Spirit. I don't think that anything could better describe the urgent need of our churches today.

Now before we get to the last two verses of this chapter, let us review what we have learned about the Holy Spirit thus far in the John's Gospel.

Here are the passages:

- 1) John 1:29-34.
- 2) John 3:5, 6, 8.
- 3) John 3:34.
- 4) John 4:24 (may or may not be a reference to the Holy Spirit).
- 5) John 7:37-39.
- 6) John 14:16, 17.

- 7) John 14:26.
- 8) John 15:26, 27.
- 9) John 16:7-15.
- 10) John 20:21-23.

Thus we see that the Holy Spirit was an essential part of our Lord's ministry. It is only by the Holy Spirit that anyone can be born again. The Holy Spirit had not yet been given to the Lord's people to indwell them permanently. That had to wait the glorification of our Lord. In answer to our Lord's prayer the Father would send the Holy Spirit to indwell His people, and this would be a permanent indwelling. The Holy Spirit would be their Teacher, with special emphasis upon the teaching of the Lord, also continually reminding them of what the Lord had said. And in the verses at the end of chapter 15 we learn that the Lord would send the Holy Spirit to His people from the Father, AND THAT HE WOULD TESTIFY OF CHRIST!

15:26 For the third time the Lord spoke of the Holy Spirit as a "Comforter." This is the Greek word which is transliterated into English as Paraclete. Our Lord is called a Paraclete in 1 John 2:1. And He indicated by the word "another" (another of the same kind) in John 14:16 that He and the Holy Spirit were the same kind of a Paraclete.

The word speaks of one who is called to the side of another for the purpose of defending him, assisting him. The word "advocate" in 1 John 2:1 is a good translation. The verb _____ means to exhort, to admonish, as well as to comfort and encourage. In 2 Cor. 1:3 God is spoken of as "the God of all comfort"--and it is the noun taken from this verb.

If the disciples really understood what the Lord was saying, they must have been overwhelmed. The Lord was presenting the most glorious truths for their encouragement. And we can say that as our Comforters, the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus INTERCEDE FOR US, PRAY FOR US!

Notice that all Three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned here, as they were in 14:16 and 14:26! If for no other reason than this, such a fact makes them very, very important passages.

And for the second time the Holy Spirit is called, "the Spirit of truth." Cf. John 14:17. We will have it again in John 16:13. What does it mean that the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth"?

The Holy Spirit is the Custodian, so to speak, of the truth, which is the Word of God. He is the Author of Scripture; He is the Teacher of Scripture; He is the Guardian of Scripture. In John 17:17 the Lord said in His prayer, "Thy Word is truth."

But the title also indicates that it is His responsibility to teach and to exalt Christ. Our Lord is also called, "the truth" (John 14:6).

And thirdly the title would indicate that the Spirit of God teaches the "truth" in contrast with error. The Apostle John was referring to the Holy Spirit and His work in 1 John 2:27 when he wrote,

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.

There is a wealth of meaning in that term, "the Spirit of truth."

"He shall testify of me." This is absolute proof that the Holy Spirit teaches us about Christ. It is by the Holy Spirit that we know that Christ is the Son of God. It is by the Holy Spirit that we know that our Lord is a perfect Man, as well as being God. It is by the Holy Spirit that we understand the teachings of Christ (as much as we do understand). It is by the Holy Spirit that we know the meaning of the Cross, that we believe in the resurrection and ascension of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that has taught us where Christ is now, and what He is doing. It is by the Holy Spirit that we know that Christ is coming again. It is by the Holy Spirit that we learned that Christ is the only Savior. It is by the Holy Spirit that we have been saved. And the Holy Spirit continues to testify to us of Christ. We would not know any of the truth about Christ, nor would we have experienced His saving grace, if it were not for the Holy Spirit.

But now look at:

15:27 "And ye also shall bear witness."

Just before this the Lord had been speaking of "the world"--the place where the ministry of the Apostle would take place. Ryle related that passage about the hatred that the Apostles would experience from the world to their witness in the world. This is what he had to say:

The expression is singularly instructive and full of meaning. It taught the eleven what they must expect their portion to be as long as they lived. They would have to bear testimony to facts which many would not believe, and to truths which the nature heart would dislike. They would often have to stand alone,--a few against many, a little flock against a great multitude. None of these things must move them. They must count it no strange thing to be persecuted, hated, opposed, and discredited. They must not mind it. To witness was their grand duty, whether men believed them or not (II, 362).

Perhaps one reason we do not do more witnessing is because we know so very little about the testimony of the Holy Spirit to our own hearts. Although the words were spoken initially to the Apostles, they apply just as much to us today. Our task as far as the world is concerned is to tell the people of the world what we know about Christ. How the message is used, is in the hands of the Lord. Ryle went on to say,

We must all be witnesses for Christ. We must not be ashamed to stand up for Christ's cause, to speak out for Christ, and to persist in maintaining the truth of Christ's Gospel. Wherever we live, in town or in country, in public or in private, abroad or at home, we must boldly confess our Master on every opportunity (II, 363).

Thus, our Lord taught that our witness would be impossible and ineffective if it were not for the Holy Spirit. Cf. Acts 1:8.

See also the boldness of Peter and John in Acts 4:19, 20, followed by the church's prayer for greater boldness (Acts 4:29, 30), and how the Lord answered.

"Because ye have been with me from the beginning." The testimony of Christ to an ungodly world is to be carried out by those who know the Lord, and who have been with the Lord. We may be the weak and the foolish and the despised, people who are nothing in ourselves (as were the apostles), yet it is through us, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that the Lord intends in every generation to make Himself known. Cf. what Mark recorded about the Lord's choosing of the twelve. It is in Mark 3:14:

And he (our Lord) ordained twelve, **that they should be with him,** and that he might send them forth to preach.

Concl: Thus we can see that there is much that enters into our witness, the most difficult task in the world. It means that we must abide in Christ. This calls for obedience. We must love each other. We must understand that we are going to a hostile world which does not want our message, but whose people desperately need it. We must depend upon the Holy Spirit, not only His teaching, but His praying. We must tell people about the Savior, and trust Him to use the Word to accomplish His own purposes which were determined before the foundation of the world.

Let us remember that today we must:

- 1) Proclaim the truths of Scripture.
- 2) Always seek to exalt our Savior.
- 3) Realize how futile our work is if the Holy Spirit is not using us.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
JOHN 16 -- Part 1
September 23, 1991
John 16:1-15

Intro: John 16 is the final chapter in what is usually referred to as The Upper Room Discourse. This section begins with chapter 13, and goes through chapter 16. In my outline I have called these four chapters, 13 through 16, as the chapters in which the Lord was ministering to His disciples. But remember, as I pointed out several times last year, that it would appear that chapters 13 and 14 contain the words which were spoken in the Upper Room, while chapters 15 and 16 tell us what the Lord said as they made their way to Gethsemane.

Although these words of our Lord were spoken, first of all, to the apostles, yet they contain teaching that is very helpful for all of us who are the Lord's people in these days in which we are living.

In chapter 16 the Lord made two announcements which, I am sure, the apostles did not like to hear. They were:

- 1) That they would be put out of the synagogues, and even killed, by those who would feel that they were serving the Lord in doing so. This is in verses 1-4a.
- 2) That the Lord Himself was leaving them. For this see vv. 4b-6.

The remainder of the chapter gives teaching which was designed to comfort them in the light of these predictions. And the four means of comfort for them were:

- 1) The coming of the Holy Spirit and His work (v. 7):
 - a) In the world (vv. 8-11).
 - b) With believers (vv. 12-15).We might consider these as two reasons, but, nevertheless, they were spoken for the comfort of the apostles. And there are three more.
 - 2) Although He was leaving them, they would see Him again and their sorrow would be turned into joy (vv. 16-22).
 - 3) Our Lord's words concerning prayer (vv. 23-27).
- And finally,
- 4) The peace that they would have in Him because He had overcome the world. You see this in the last verse of the chapter, but the Lord was leading up to it in vv. 28-32.

Let us begin, then, with verse 1, and look in detail at:

I. THE LORD'S TWO PREDICTIONS (John 16:1-6).

The first was this:

A. Persecution (Vv. 1-4a).

This is not the first time that the Lord mentioned persecution in His words to His disciples on this occasion. Cf. John 15:18-25, followed by words of encouragement and comfort in the last two verses of chapter 15. So really the two sections (the one in chapter 15 and the one here in chapter 16) go together. But there is a difference!

In the section in chapter 15 the Lord was speaking of the world on the outside; here in chapter 16 He was speaking of the world on the inside!

What do I mean?

I mean that the first section in chapter 15 is speaking of the kind of trouble that a believer faces with unsaved family members, on the job among unsaved workers, at school among unsaved students. This is the kind of opposition that we expect and get from the world. It may not take the form of physical abuse and death such as it has so often for the people of God in the past, but it can show up in others ways. We may just be left out of things because we are Christians. The world has no love for the Church when the Church is doing what it is supposed to do.

Now let us look at this first section of chapter 16.

Our Lord was not speaking about the people of the world on the outside, but the people of the world who somehow have gotten inside the synagogue, in positions of leadership, and want to get rid of those who are true believers in Christ.

Can you make the application to the church today?

You and I may not see it that much in the churches we attend, but it does make itself felt in various ways. For years it has been true that men who feel called to the ministry and who stand for the truth have not been given ordination in many of the large denominations. Why? Because they love the Word and love the Lord and want to preach the truths of the Word of God.

Just recently I was talking to an elder of a church which is located in another city, and he was telling me that his pastor is in trouble because he does not like for people to clap their hands in their services after somebody sings. The pastor is under pressure, too, to get a Saturday evening service started for the benefit of those who want to do something else on Sunday besides go to church. The synagogue in our Lord's day was far from what it should have been, and the same is true of the church today. The church has gotten worldly in our day, and we seem to be more concerned about pleasing the people of the world than we are pleasing the Lord. We are inclined to think in terms of what the world wants, or what worldly Christians want, instead of what God wants, and what the Scriptures teach.

So the Lord was telling His disciples that you can expect trouble from the people you would think would be on your team! And remember that it was the synagogue crowd that put the Lord Jesus Christ to death. And they were the chief opponents that the apostle had when they went about to spread the Gospel in the early days of the church.

This kind of opposition has always been in the church, and it always will be until the Lord returns.

But let us look at what the Lord said in this section of John 16.

16:1 Notice that there are several times in this chapter when the Lord said, "These things have I spoken unto you." Cf. here, vv. 4a, 4b, 25, 33.

This particular warning He sounded out for His apostles because He did not want them to be "offended." What did He mean by that?

This word "offended" means that He did not want any of them to stumble in their faith, nor in their walk with the Lord, nor in their service, when they discovered that people like this were in the synagogue. It is the

Greek verb from which we get our English word, scandalize. The Lord did not want His apostles to be shocked to find that they were being opposed in the synagogue.

Perhaps you parents have had the experience of rushing into a room in your home to help a child in distress only to fall over something that the child had left in the way. You were not expecting a stumblingblock, but one was there. That is the idea in this verse.

Our Lord wanted His disciples to know that they were not only going to be opposed by people outside of the synagogue who made no profession of faith, but that they would be opposed by leaders and their followers in the synagogue who professes to be the people of God, but who in their hearts were not!

No synagogue was ever perfect, and no church today is perfect. You will always find those who for one reason or another oppose the truth, and oppose those who stand for the truth.

How gracious of the Lord to warn His disciples of this danger! The very people that you would expect to stand for the truth are often those who are most opposed to the truth. And what a snare, what a stumblingblock, this is for young people who are looking to older people, or the prominent people in the church, for the right kind of guidance.

16:2 Bishop Ryle pointed out in his commentary that the Greek words here would support the translation, "They will make you out-of-synagogue men" (Vol. II, p. 373).

To be put out of the synagogue was something that most Jews would avoid like a plague. It brought disgrace on them, and on their family.

Cf. John 9:22; 12:42. Was this not possibly the reason that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea were so slow in declaring themselves to be believers in Christ?

But the enemies of the Gospel often will not stop with excommunication. They will go so far as not only killing the true believer, but sincerely claim that they are doing what God wants them to do when they do it. So bitter is man's hatred of the truth and of the Lord that he will stop at nothing to destroy it.

Note Paul's testimony about himself before he was saved. Cf. Gal. 1:13, 14. Church history is full of examples of those who murdered claiming they were doing what God wanted them to do.

This verse is descriptive of our Lord's death.

16:3 Here we have the explanation. Those who engage in such dreadful activity do so because they do not know God, the Father, nor do they know the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son.

We need to beware of religious unbelievers. They are everywhere. The Enemy of our souls is continually sowing tares among the wheat. The unbeliever can look pious, act piously, talk like a Christian, but his heart has never been changed. And down in his heart is a hatred for all that is righteous and Christ-like and Biblical. And so the Lord was saying, in so many words, "Don't be scandalized when you discover it. In

fact, be on the lookout for it. You will find it everywhere."

16:4a There is probably a connection between "yea, the time cometh" in verse 2, and "when the time shall come" here in verse 4. It speaks of an appointed time. Our Lord was indicating here that such trouble would surely come to them. When it did, they were not to be taken by surprise. Nor were they to take it as the Lord's displeasure upon them or their ministry. They were to know that this was a part of the ministry, and that it could not be avoided. The "I" in "I told you of them" is emphatic.

At this point we come to the Lord's second prediction:

B. The Lord's departure (Vv. 4b-6).

16:4b There had been times before when the Lord had spoken of difficulties in the ministry, but not like this, coupled with His prediction that He was leaving them. He had been present to take care of them. He would still take care of them although He would not be physically present with them, but from this point on their walk would be more a walk of faith.

16:5 Nothing could have been more painful for the disciples to hear than that He was leaving them. And yet none had really asked our Lord about it. We have Peter's inquiry in John 13:36, but Peter was more concerned about what he was going to do instead of waiting on the Lord to learn more about the reason for His departure. We also have Thomas' statement and question in John 14:5, but it does not seem that he pursued the Lord for an answer in any satisfactory way.

This was a gracious rebuke on the part of our Lord. How often we must grieve the Lord when we are impressed with something in the Scriptures, but then quickly lay it aside and forget all about it. And this is how we fail to learn things which can be for our comfort. The disciples seem to have been feeling sorry for themselves rather than to learn why the Lord was going and how this could mean even greater blessing for them.

Matthew Henry made this comment on the Lord's statement, "None of you asketh me, Whither goest thou?"

A humble believing enquiry into the design and tendency of the darkest dispensations of Providence would help to reconcile us to them, and grieve the less, and fear the less, because of them; it will silence us to ask, Whence come they? but will abundantly satisfy us to ask, Whither go they? for we know they work for good, Rom. viii. 28 (Vol. V, p. 1135).

Thus we do not view things in a bad light, but look to see what gracious and "expedient" (v. 7) purpose the Lord has in what He is doing with us.

16:6 Failure to seek the Lord and to seek some answers from Him is one of the chief reasons our hearts are filled with sorrow, rather than with the joy of the Lord.

It is amazing that the words of the Lord would produce sorrow rather than joy. The fault was certainly not with the Lord, but with the disciples. When we are occupied with our own desires, or our own ideas of how things should be, even in the Lord's work, instead of what the Lord is doing and what His purposes are, then we have sorrow instead of joy. Self-pitying sorrow not only disturbs our peace, but it keeps us from doing what we ought to do in faith and anticipation of the Lord's blessing.

At this point we come to the second main division of the chapter, and the last:

II. THE LORD'S WORDS OF COMFORT (John 16:7-33).

There are four means of comfort, or instruments of comfort, which the Lord pointed out in the remainder of this chapter.

A. The coming of the Holy Spirit (Vv. 7-15).

None of the disciples had really asked the Lord where He was going, how He was going, and why He was going. And so the Lord was going to tell them even though they had not asked.

This was not the first time He had spoken to them about the Holy Spirit on this occasion. Cf. John 14:16, 17, 26, 27; 15:26, 27. Let me read these passages to you, and, as I do, think of how they could and should have brought comfort to the disciples in this time of sorrow.

1. The necessity of our Lord's departure (V. 7).

The Lord used the word "expedient." This means that His departure was necessary in the light of His purpose, and it was also for their advantage. It was not only necessary, but it was profitable. Here is an excellent illustration of Rom. 8:28. The disciples could not see this at the time, but they would realize the truthfulness of the Lord's words later on.

The statement, "For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you," probably has reference to the purpose of the Godhead which idea is present in the word, "expedient." The coming of the Spirit was ordained to follow the incarnation, the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. His coming into the world necessarily awaited the ascension of Christ. A passage that confirms this is John 7:37-39.

It is obvious that it would be more to the advantage of every believer to have the Spirit indwelling each one than for the Lord Jesus to remain on the earth confined to His human body. The coming of the Spirit would introduce what we might call the dispensation of the Spirit. There never had been such a ministry of the Spirit since the beginning of time as that which would follow the ascension of Christ. Then, and only then, would the Lord send the Spirit to take His place.

"But if I depart, I will send Him unto you." This was one of the primary reasons for the ascension of our Lord. How sad it is that we pay so little attention to the presence of the Spirit of God in each of our lives! Of all of the times to live on the earth, this has to be the best! No other period in history has been so blessed of the Lord!

At this point the Lord Jesus began to tell what the Spirit would do both to the world, and to the people of God.

It is important to see that the Holy Spirit did not just come into the world in a general way, but that He was sent to believers. "I will send him unto you." Again look at John 14:16, 17. The NT epistles teach us that every child of God has the Spirit of God indwelling him, or her. Cf. 1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 8:9.

2. The Spirit and the world (Vv. 8-11).

The Lord had just spoken of the troubles that His disciples and all future servants of the Lord would experience in the world. Here we are to see why the Lord leaves us here in this world. It is because there are always those in the world who will be saved.

16:8 We saw in verse 7 that the Lord was sending the Holy Spirit to His people. That same idea needs to be brought into verse 8. "And when He is come"--unto you!

The Lord in His sovereignty can work in the people of the world in any way that He chooses, but it should be noted that the normal way in which He has chosen to work is through His people! We are concerned here with the evangelization of the world. God's way is, as Dr. Mitchell used to say, for the Spirit of God to use the Word of God through the people of God. And long before our Lord came to earth He directed the prophet Isaiah to write these words which ought to be written upon our hearts:

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven,
and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth,
and maketh it bring forth and bud,
that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:
So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth:
it shall not return unto me void,
but it shall accomplish that which I please,
and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

These words are found in Isa. 55:10, 11.

We learned in John 3 that to be saved is to be born of the Spirit. John 1:11-13 makes it clear that it is not in any way a work of man, but a work of God. And Peter in 1 Pet. 1:23 wrote:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,
by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.

The Lord works through us, His people. But He does not need our tricks and our methods to accomplish His purposes. The Spirit of God uses the Word of God through us to reach the people the Lord intends to save. If we want to see His blessing, we have to do His work in His way.

"He will reprove." This is the Spirit's work with people in the world. What does "reprove" mean?

It means to convict and to convince. And it carries with it both the ideas that a thing is wrong, and that it brings shame. A person is not under conviction who still wants to argue, or who will delay turning to Christ. A person under conviction cannot get to Christ too soon.

Our Lord said here that the convicting, convincing work of the Holy Spirit has to do with three great truths:

- 1) "Sin."
- 2) "Righteousness."
- 3) "Judgment."

16:9 "Of sin, because they believe not on me."

A sinner under conviction will look upon his refusal to accept Christ as SIN! It will not longer be just an option for him, i.e., to accept or reject (without any twinge of conscience in the latter case). He will be very conscious that he is a sinner, but he will see that his greatest sin is that of not believing in Christ that he might be forgiven. He no longer

speaks of what he has been doing, or wants to do, to satisfy God. He sees that in rejecting Christ he has been guilty of sinning against the love and grace of God in Christ.

16:10 "Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see me no more."

If the apostles had known the truth the way they should have known it, they could have been comforted in the departure of the Lord.

Where did the Lord go when He left this earth? Not just back to heaven, nor even back to the Father, but He was exalted to sit at the right hand of the Father in heaven! What did this mean?

- 1) It meant that His work on earth was finished, i.e., that nothing more needed to be done for the salvation of sinners.
- 2) It meant that the Father was pleased with the work of the Son, and that His work was accepted by the Father.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to show the sinner that "righteousness" is possible, justification before God is possible, because Christ is exalted at the right hand of God! The Spirit will convince the sinner that he has no hope for salvation but in Christ.

16:11 "Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged."

Who is "the prince of **this** world," the ruler, the one who is first in power, the ruler in this world? Cf. John 12:31; 14:30. It is the Devil.

What has he done, and what does he continue to do? Cf. 2 Cor. 4:3, 4.

The judgment of Satan was at the Cross. He was defeated by our Lord. It was there that his doom was sealed. What he did to the Lord resulted in his own complete and eternal judgment. The Holy Spirit convinces the sinner that no one can keep him from coming to Christ, and that the Devil and sin and the death that accompanies sin will eventually be finally and eternally banished as far as the child of God is concerned.

Therefore, there is in this third statement the doctrines of eternal security and the perseverance of the saints.

These are the three truths that we need to be concerned about in our witness to the people of the world. These are the truths that the Holy Spirit uses to bring sinners to Christ. How superficial our appeals sound in the light of these great truths! People are asked to come to Christ so they won't be lonely any more. Or, they are asked to come to Christ because life can be so great for them afterwards. These are not the issues. Rarely in these days do we see people not only convicted of their sinfulness, but of the terrible sin of rejecting the Savior which God has provided for guilty, helpless, condemned sinners. The Holy Spirit brings conviction upon the guilty sinner concerning Christ, showing the sinner that there is no hope but in Christ, but that there is complete and eternal hope in Christ. May the Lord enable us to bear testimony to others cooperating with the Spirit! Sinners are usually saved through the testimony of some Christian, or Christians. But we are not absolutely essential. They can be saved without us. But they cannot be saved apart from the work of the Spirit, and the Spirit always uses the Word of God to show sinners their need of Christ.

9/30/91

Let us remember that the Lord's main purpose in this latter part of chapter 16 was to comfort the Apostles. He was leaving them in a hostile world, a world that did not want them nor their message. He was leaving them in a world of people who were blind and dead to spiritual truth, incapable of changing their own hearts. And so it had to be comforting to know that the Holy Spirit was coming to work with them and through them, not only in presenting the truth, but in seeing the truth become effective in the hearts of many who would hear it.

Now, beginning with verse 16, the Lord shifted His emphasis from what the Holy Spirit would do with the world to what He would do with believers. And so let us call the next four verses:

3. The Spirit and the people of God (John 16:12-15).

These were also intended to be words of comfort.

How tragic it is that the ministry of the Holy Spirit is such a neglected truth today! Often, when it is emphasized, it is not taught correctly. The work of the Holy Spirit is a part of divine revelation from Gen. 1 on to Rev. 22. But it is apparent from our Lord's words in John 14:16, 17 that there was to be a major change in the Spirit's work following His ascension. So it is very important that we know what the Scriptures teach about the Spirit's ministry. I personally think that the Scriptures would justify calling this present time the dispensation of the Spirit.

But now let us look at the text.

16:12 Dr. Chafer used to tell us that this will always be true of every one of us. We do not know all that we need to know. We do not know everything that we can know. We do not know everything that we will know. It is a wonderful thought, isn't it, to think that there are things that the Lord Jesus wants us to know. Read your Bible with that in mind. Listen to the Word when it is taught with that in mind. The Lord Jesus is the One Who teaches us, but He does it through the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the Holy Spirit ministers directly to us. He does this when we are reading the Word, or even when we are listening to the Word taught by someone else. The Holy Spirit may point out something to you in the Scripture that we are considering today which I will not point out to you. But He frequently ministers to us through our teachers.

But when we learn something new, think of it like this: The Lord Jesus has told the Holy Spirit to tell me something from His Word, and this is what I learn! Even when we are altogether in a class like we are in today, the Holy Spirit ministers individually to us. The Lord knows what we need, and He knows what we can "bear." Will you notice that word in verse 12? What did the Lord mean by that?

This is the word which the Lord used when He was rebuking the Jewish lawyers with these words:

Woe unto you also, ye lawyers!
for ye **lade** (burden, our verb) men
with grievous burdens to be borne,
and ye yourselves touch not the burdens
with one of your fingers (Luke 11:46).

The Lord used it again in Luke 14:27 where we read,

And whosoever doth not **bear** his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.

The Lord was speaking of that which is a burden. He may have had reference to what they needed to know about the Cross. After the resurrection would have been a better time to talk to them about the Cross. But when we think of how this applies to us as believers today it means that the Lord leads us into the truth as we are able to receive it. And those of us who are teachers need to keep this in mind also. We must not try to push young believers too fast in their understanding of the truth. Some will appropriate the truth faster than others.

On Sunday mornings here at Trinity we are presently going through the book of Hebrews. A few weeks back we came to that latter part of Hebrews 5 where the Apostle had started to tell those Hebrew Christians about the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ. But he suddenly stopped, and told them that he had many things to say to them, but it was difficult for him to teach because they were "dull of hearing" (Heb. 5:11). And we have learned that this meant that they were lazy hearers! This means that they had failed to apply to their lives the truth that they had already been taught!

This was very likely the problem with the apostles. The Lord had spoken to them about His death, but they did not want to hear it.

We can be like that. Some people will reject the doctrine of election in Scripture just because they think our salvation is up to us. And yet they have to admit that it is taught in Scripture. We need to be careful that our rejection of any truth is not a blockade that closes our hearts to things that the Lord wants us to know.

So there is a great deal of truth in this verse.

Let me point out another truth that we have in this verse.

To whom was the Lord speaking? He was speaking to His apostles. How was He going to use some of them? The NT was not yet completed, and the completion of it was to be the work of the apostles. And so this is a verse which also indicates that the Bible was not yet finished. There was more to come. But the things that the Lord was yet to reveal were truths which they were not at that time able to bear. There were things about the Law, and about sacrifices, and about the priesthood, and about the Sabbath, which they were not ready to receive. So the Lord very wisely postponed what He wanted to say. It was not His time to give the revelation of certain things to them.

Well, this could have raised a question in their minds. If He were going to die, how would they ever find out what He wanted to tell them. Remember that the truth of His resurrection was one truth they were not yet prepared to receive.

The answer is given to us in verse¹³. This is where the ministry of the Spirit enters in.

16:13 The Holy Spirit is here called, "the Spirit of truth." Our Lord had also called Him that in John 14:17. He is the Author of the "truth" of God, which we have in the Bible. And He is also the Teacher of that which we find in the Bible. Nobody really knows any truth of Scripture but what he has been taught that truth by the Holy Spirit, "the Spirit of

truth." Literally the Lord said, the Spirit of the truth.

"He will guide you into all truth." Notice the evidence here again, as we have had in the other Comforter passages, that the Holy Spirit is a Person. He is not just some kind of an influence from God that we feel, but He is a real Person, just as much a Person as the Father is, and as the Son is. And here the "he" is emphatic.

And let me mention also that here again in the Greek text we see that the Lord did not just say, "truth," but the truth. He was speaking about the truth of Scripture. Some expositors like to extend this to history or science or mathematics. But the Lord was limiting the teaching of the Holy Spirit to the truth of the Word of God. That is what He teaches.

Illus: How many of you have a computer at home, or where you work? How many of you have ever had a problem, or problems, with your computer? I have had plenty of problems, as Lucille will tell you. And I have prayed about those problems, but the problems have continued on. I almost decided that the Lord doesn't know about computers either. I have called the companies that have put out those programs, but they have not been much help either. But when I call John or Gary, they usually tell me what I'm doing that is wrong, and correct the problem for me. Does that mean that John and Gary know more than the Lord does? Certainly not! The Lord used them to answer my prayer. But the point I am making is that the Holy Spirit has not been given us to teach us knowledge generally, but specifically for the Word.

He guides us into all truth.

"Guide" -- I like that word. He leads us to the truth, and guides us through it to teach us what He wants us to know. "All truth" here means all revealed truth, all of the truth that is between the covers of your Bible. He does not mislead us. He does not go too fast for us. He does not lead us beyond the Word by giving us special revelations in addition to the Scriptures. Beware of the person who either wants to ignore some part of Scripture, or who wants to go beyond Scripture. You and I have a life-long task with the Scriptures themselves. We are all going to heaven without knowing all that it is possible to know about the Word of God. Stay with Scripture.

But notice: "For he shall not speak of himself." The Holy Spirit speaks. He does not speak audibly as we do to each other, but He speaks to us in our minds and hearts. And you and I know when the Holy Spirit is teaching us. Even after I have said what I have said about the Lord guiding, sometimes I am afraid that I will not be able to get down all that the Spirit is showing me when He speaks to me, opening the Word to me.

But let me improve upon the translation of that statement, "For he shall not speak of himself." The Lord was not saying that the Holy Spirit never speaks about Himself. If that were the case we would have no teaching in the Scriptures about the Holy Spirit. But we have much teaching in the Bible about the Holy Spirit. We are in one of those passages right now. What the Lord said was this: He shall not speak from himself! That is, what you and I learn from Scripture, while He is the Teacher, He does not decide what we are to learn. And the rest of the verse shows us what our Lord had in mind:

...but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak:
and he will shew you things to come.

if the Holy Spirit teaches us what He hears, this means that He is listening to someone. To whom is He listening to find out what He is to show us? Verse 12 answers that question for us, as I have already pointed out to you. The Lord Jesus Christ said, "I have yet many things to say unto you..." The Holy Spirit is listening to the Lord Jesus, and He tells us what the Lord Jesus tells Him to teach us.

This ought to make our Bible reading even more of a blessing. Did you read your Bible this morning? If you did, did the thought occur to you that the Lord has something in your reading that He has told the Holy Spirit to show to you? It is not by chance that you are reading what you are reading. The Lord guides in that, too. This ought to make us realize how important it is for us to read the Word and to hear the Word taught. Both the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit are personally interested in your knowledge of the Scripture.

Is it possible for us to get the wrong ideas from the Word? Yes. How can we be kept from error?

Let me give you some suggestions along that line?

First, before you read the Word, or attend a church service or a Bible class where the Word is being taught, ask the Lord to open your eyes and your heart to the Word. Cf. Psalms 119:18. And see what the Lord did for Lydia in Acts 16:14.

Second, don't build your doctrine on just one passage of Scripture. Compare Scripture with Scripture. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:12, 13. This why it is important that you read all of the Bible at least once a year. The more you know about all of the Bible, the better you will be able to understand a particular passage.

Third, make sure that your heart is right with the Lord and with the Holy Spirit. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14, 15. Again let me quote from Dr. Chafer. He used to say that to be a Christian, a person has to be rightly related to Christ; to be a spiritual Christian, a person has to be rightly related to the Holy Spirit. Don't grieve the Spirit of God. It will hinder you in your understanding of the truth.

Fourth, always check what you are learning with someone you trust because of their knowledge of the truth and their walk with the Lord. That is one reason why I use commentaries. I read the writings of men whom I have come to respect for their understanding of the truth. If I find myself out of step with them, I go back and re-examine what I think I have learned.

Finally, let me remind you that it is important to see the application of the truth to your own life. Don't be a lazy hearer. Walk in the light that the Lord has given to you from the Word. This keeps your heart open, and assures that the blessing you have experienced in the Word will continue.

The last part of the verse say, "And he will shew you things to come."

Have you noticed that verses 13, 14, and 15 all end with the same expression? This is true in the Greek also. The verb "shew," or shew, means to announce, to declare, to teach. The three times that this verb is used obviously is for the sake of emphasis.

"Things to come." Let me quote from Bishop Westcott, an authority on the Greek New Testament, who wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John back in the late 1880's. This is what he had to say about this expression: "And he will shew you things to come":

"Things to come] **the things that are to come**, not simply some things to come, but the whole system of the world to be; or still more exactly "the things that are coming"...., "that future which even now is prepared, and in the very process of fulfillment." ...The reference is, no doubt, mainly to the constitution of the Christian Church, as representing hereafter the divine order in place of the Jewish economy (The Gospel According to St. John, p. 231).

In interpreting this we must think in terms of all the things that were to come as far as the apostles were concerned when the Lord spoke these words. The Holy Spirit was coming, Israel as a nation was being set aside, the Church would be established, and then we have all that the NT tells us about the consummation of all things as they lead up to the new heaven and the new earth.

These were things that the apostles were not able to "bear" as yet. But the Lord would give them to the Holy Spirit to make known to the writers of the NT, and then to us in understanding what has been written in the Scriptures.

When Paul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthian church, he said this in 1 Cor. 10:11, after referring the history of Israel in the OT,

Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples:
and they were written for our admonition,
upon whom the ends of the world are come.

In our Bibles we in this age have the unique privilege of being able to look back, to learn from the past, but we also have the privilege of looking forward as no other generation could. And, as the Holy Spirit revealed the end of the ages to the apostles, so now He enables us to understand what we can look forward to in the future of time and eternity.

How wonderful it is to have the Bible, and how wonderful it is also to have the Holy Spirit to teach us what is in the Bible.

But we are not through. Let us go on to verse 14.

10/7/91

16:14 "He shall glorify me." Previously the Lord had said concerning the ministry of the Spirit, that the Spirit would remind them of the things which the Lord Jesus had taught them. See John 14:26. And then He said in John 15:26, "He shall testify of me." Now our Lord added, "He shall glorify me." It is very clear, then, that those who are under the ministry of the Holy Spirit are going to be growing in their knowledge of Christ, and very involved in the teaching of Christ.

But what does it mean to "glorify" Christ?

To glorify Christ is to honor Christ. It is to show how very important our Lord is. It is to acquaint the people of God with Christ. It is to be always directing the Lord's people to Christ. When Paul said what he did in Phil. 3:7-9, he was expressing the influence that the Spirit of God had upon him. One way to test the extent to which we are being taught by the Spirit is to see if Christ the One Who is always in our thoughts, and in

our affections. A Spirit-taught Christians is a Christ-centered Christian. And there is nothing that the Spirit delights to do any more than to show believers the things of Christ. And He does this with the Word!

Notice that verses 13, 14, and 15 all end in a similar way. And the word translated "shew" is the same in the original language in each verse. Here in verse 14 it is, "And shall show it unto you." It means to disclose, or to make known.

But here a word of warning is in order.

It seems that the idea that many people have about the ministry of the Spirit has led more people into fanaticism than any other doctrine in all of the Word of God, unless it is in the area of prophecy. What is a fanatic? He is a person who is zealous to an extreme, and he will set aside the truth in his zeal to get his point across. I am speaking of people who go beyond the Word of God, who claim that the Lord has told them this or that, things which are not found in the Word of God. We need to remember that the Holy Spirit is lit. the Spirit of the truth. His ministry now is not to add to the Word of God, but to teach us the truth that is in the Word of God.

And so you want to look for two things in the ministry of the Holy Spirit:

- 1) He exalts Christ.
- 2) He exalts Christ in the Word and through the Word.

Now look at verse 15.

16:15 This verse concludes what the Lord Jesus had to say about the Holy Spirit. It is one of those special verses in which we have reference made to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This is a deep statement of truth, but obviously one of great importance from the very fact that it includes all Three Members of the Godhead.

What additional truth was the Lord seeking to convey to His disciples here?

By the statement, "All things that the Father hath are mine," it would seem that the Lord was saying that, as His disciples learned of Him, they would be learning also of the Father because He and the Father are one! Cf. John 10:30. This does not mean that they are the same Person; it means that they are identical in nature, and so to learn of one is to learn of the other. And, of course, the emphasis here is upon their Deity.

Verses 12 through 15 have to be among the most important passage of Scripture in the Bible for the child of God. If we are clear on what the Lord said here, it will both lead to much blessing, and protect us from getting off the track. If these words were not comforting to the disciples at the time they were spoken, they surely became a great source of comfort in later days when they went on with their work after the Lord had returned to heaven.

From verse 7 to the end of this 16th chapter of John the Lord was concerned about comforting His disciples. He did this in four ways, as I have pointed out before:

- 1) By what He had to say about the coming ministry of the Holy Spirit. We have just finished that section: vv. 7-15.

We now come to the second section of comfort:

2) The disciples would see Him again. And this is in vv. 16-22.
In our outline this is:

B. The going and coming of the Lord (Vv. 16-22).

The Lord had spoken to them before about His going away. In this chapter He mentioned it in verse 5 and again in verse 7. This had caused real distress to His disciples. They could not fear the thought of being without the Lord. But now He mentions it again, and at some length, not to add to their grief, but to relieve it. Just what do we mean when we speak of the going and coming of the Lord?

It seems that there are two different ideas about this passage that are the main explanations:

1) That the Lord was talking about His ascension, and His coming again such as He mentioned at the beginning of chapter 14.

This other is:

2) That the Lord was speaking of His death and then the time that He would spend with them after His resurrection before He returned to His Father in heaven.

I am inclined toward the second view. We do not need to spend a great deal of time in this section because much that is said is repetitive, probably for the sake of emphasis.

16:16 This verse is the verse which seems to teach that the Lord was speaking of His return to heaven, and His return at the end of this dispensation in which we are living. But let me tell you what I think the Lord meant, and then you can decide whether or not you think I am right or wrong. I don't know that any great issue rests upon the view that we take, because either interpretation would be comforting to the disciples.

You will notice the prominence in these verses of the little phrase, "a little while." It appears seven times in verses 16-19: twice in v. 16; twice in verse 17; once in verse 18; twice in verse 19.

The phrase is the translation of one Greek word: μικρόν. We actually have brought that word into our English language as it is, micron. A micron is "one millionth of a meter." That is very, very small. The Greek word means small. In our text it means just what the translators have indicated, "a little while," or a short time. Our Lord used it in John 13:33. (Read.) At that time He was speaking about only a few hours.

I prefer to think that what this verse means is that in just a little while they would not see the Lord (because He would be put to death on the Cross), and again they would see Him, but only for a little while because He was going to the Father. Let us see if this idea continues throughout this section.

16:17 This statement confused the apostles, and they said so "among themselves."

16:18 Still talking among themselves it was the little phrase, "a little while" that confused them.

16:19 How gracious and patient the Lord was with His apostles! Although for some reason they sought to hide their lack of understanding from the Lord, but He knew that they wanted to ask Him about what He said. For

some reason they were hesitant to ask Him. But He knew their thoughts, and raised the question Himself. They wanted to ask Him, but continued to discuss it among themselves.

This ought to be an encouragement to us to go directly to the Lord when we are troubled about what we read in the Word, or when we have difficulty in understanding what it means. This is not to say that the Lord will not use teachers, and/or books written by godly men, but it does mean that we should seek our knowledge of the Word from the Lord. He had said that He had many things to say to them, and that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance the things which He had said. This is an example of what the Lord was anticipating. We cannot learn too soon the importance of seeking knowledge from the Lord, however the Lord may see fit to give it to us.

16:20 At this point the Lord resumed His usual way of saying something that was very important and unquestionably true: "Verily, verily" (the 22nd time).

They would "weep and lament." This speaks of very deep grief, grief that was expressed with tears and sounds of great sorrow. This would be because of His death.

The world would react differently. They would be glad that He was gone.

And then the Lord said, adding to what He had already said, that they would "be sorrowful." This word speaks of personal grief that one keeps to himself. They apparently wept and lamented when they were by themselves, but in the presence of the world they kept the world from knowing how deep their grief was.

But here is the word of comfort: "But your sorrow shall be turned into joy." This would initially take place when they saw Him raised from the dead! We read in John 20:20 that, after the Lord showed His disciples His hands and His side, proving that it was really He Who was alive, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

16:21 Then the Lord illustrated it with the pain and sorrow that a woman has when she is giving birth to a child as compared with the joy which she experiences afterwards.

16:22 This seems to me to confirm the fact that the Lord was speaking of His death, then His resurrection, and the joy that the disciples had during those days after His resurrection--a joy that "no man taketh from you."

This group of men were headed for great troubles and much persecution, ending in death for all of them (according to tradition). Their trials were going to be severe. But it is important to see that they could even lay down their lives with joy because their Savior was alive, and their joy in that great realization provided them with a joy that would carry them through their greatest trials.

How wonderful it would be if the resurrection meant that much to us! We have our trials and testings, too. There can be breaches in families because some know the Lord, and others do not. Friends often forsake us because of what we believe. None of that is pleasant to experience. But through it all our joy in our living Lord, with all that His resurrection

means, carries us through our trials, and causes us to look forward to that time when we will be with the Lord, not for "a little while," but forever!

Dr. Luke ended his Gospel with these words which give added confirmation to what the Lord said about the apostles having a joy that no one could take from them. It was after the resurrection and as that second "little while" was coming to an end when the Lord went back to the Father. This is what Luke said:

And he led them out as far as to Bethany,
and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.
And it came to pass, while he blessed them,
he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.
And they worshipped him, **and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:**
And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God.
Amen.

This sounds rather strange, doesn't it? The moment had arrived which they dreaded so much, and yet we find them, not in tears, but rejoicing and worshiping, "and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." May the Lord give us that kind of joy, and for the same reason!

And so the Lord had, at this point, given His disciples two great means of comfort:

- 1) The abiding presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit.
- 2) The resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What brought them comfort and encouragement, can, with the blessing of God, do the same for us.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 16 -- Part 2
October 14, 1991
John 16:23-33

Intro: The outline of John 16 is twofold:

- I. THE LORD'S TWO PREDICTIONS (John 16:1-6).
- II. THE LORD'S WORDS OF COMFORT (John 16:7-33).

His two predictions were:

- 1) That they would suffer persecution by being cast out of the synagogue, and even by death in some instances. This is in verses 1-4.
- 2) That He was going away. This is in verses 5, 6.

The first of His words of comfort had to do with the coming and ministry of the Holy Spirit. The second was that even though they would not see Him for "a little while," yet in another "little while" they would see Him again--referring to His death, followed by His resurrection. As far as Scripture testimony is concerned, our Lord only appeared to His own people after He was raised from the dead. He did not appear to a single unbeliever.

Beginning with verse 23 in John 16 we come to the third means of comfort that the Lord had promised His apostles. It had to do with PRAYER. The verses are 23-27.

B. Prayer (John 16:23-27).

Many things changed following the death and resurrection of the Lord. The people of Israel were no longer under the Law. The veil in the Temple had been torn from top to bottom when our Lord died. Animal sacrifices continued, but it was only due to the unbelief of the people. The death of Christ put an end to the need for those sacrifices. In the same way, the Aaronic priesthood was finished. And, as we have learned in this chapter, the Holy Spirit was going to take up a new ministry. Our Lord referred to this in John 14, 15, and 16. We have just concluded the section on the Holy Spirit in chapter 16. But prayer was also to change, and we are about to find out what those changes were.

The Lord had been with His disciples for approximately three years. They were accustomed to come to Him for the supply of their own needs, as well as the needs of others. An example of this is in John 6:5 when Philip came to the Lord concerned about the multitude of people who were hungry and had nothing to eat. He asked the Lord, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" It is interesting that as long as the Lord was with them, we have no record of any apostolic prayer meeting. They went directly to the Lord about their needs.

But He was about to go away, and He would not be with them any longer. Therefore, there had to be a change in their praying. That is what the Lord spoke about in these next five verses.

16:23 The expression, "in that day," has to be interpreted in the light of what the Lord had just said in verse 22. He was speaking of the day when they would see Him raised from the dead, after which He would soon leave them to return to the Father. The "day" was not a twenty-four hour day, but like it so often is in Scripture, a period of time. And the Lord's "verily, verily" indicated, as on previous occasions when He had used them, that what He was saying was both very important, and true! So He wanted their attention.

Bishop Westcott had this to say about "that day":

"That day begins with Pentecost and is consummated at the Return [of Christ]. The Lord now brings before the disciples the consequences of this "going to the Father" (v. 17), perfect knowledge, the perfect fulfillment of prayer, perfect joy (p. 233).

His statement may be a little strong. Perhaps it would be better to say that the Lord's ascension would introduce a time when they would have greater knowledge, enjoy greater answers to prayer, and experience greater joy (although the Lord did say in v. 24, "That your joy may be full").

Prayer was henceforth to be directed to the Father in the Name of the Lord Jesus. And the promise was, "He will give it you." That is, He will grant your request. This was the Lord's teaching about prayer for the dispensation that we are now living in. Let us examine our Lord's words.

When the disciples had asked the Lord to teach them to pray, He began by saying, "When ye pray, say, Our Father..." Read the Psalms, and read the prayers of the OT, and you will find that this was not the way they prayed in OT times. There was to be a new emphasis on the family of God. God is our heavenly Father, and we are His children, His sons and His daughters. We do not come to Him as a stranger, but we come with the simplicity that any child should be able to approach his father.

Notice that the word "ask" appears two times in this verse. They are two different words in the Greek. Ryle suggests that the first (ἐρωτάω) means to ask a question, mainly seeking information. The second word (αἰτέω) means to make a request for something to be done. Others say that this latter word can also be used for something that is to be given.

Matthew Henry had this to say about this verse:

An answer to their asking is here promised for their further comfort.

Now there are two ways of asking: asking by way of enquiry, which is the asking of the ignorant; and asking by way of request, which is the asking of the indigent [a needy or poor person]. Christ here speaks of both (V, 1143).

This time in which we live is a time of unparalleled light. The Word of God has been completed. The Spirit of God has, we can say, certainly become more active in teaching the truth that He has revealed. The questions which seem to have come up so frequently in the Gospels are not found in the Acts of the Apostles. Matthew Henry pointed out from the Gospels that the disciples had asked ignorant questions, ambitious questions, distrustful questions, sometimes impertinent questions, often curious questions. But all of this seemed to be greatly curtailed, if not almost eliminated, after the Spirit was given.

This does not mean that we are not to ask for information, but it would seem that the Lord was pointing them ahead to a greater, more wonderful relationship with God, the Father, and with the Holy Spirit, than they had ever enjoyed with Him.

But however we might distinguish between the two, the Lord was showing His apostles their dependence, and that their dependence should be directed toward their heavenly Father, not toward each other, nor anyone else.

The limitation of the promise can be seen in the words, "in my name." The Lord was not saying that the Lord would give them anything they might ask for, but that he would give them whatever they could ask for "in my name."

What does this mean?

There probably is not one answer to that question. Let me suggest some possibilities.

To come in the Lord's Name means we are coming with Him. It is just as though when we approach the throne of grace, the Lord Jesus is there by our side.

Along the same line it means that we must recognize that our right to approach the Father to present our requests to Him is based, not on our merit, but on the merit of Christ. It is by His authority that we come.

This summer we had the privilege of having Jerry Bridges with us for our Family Camp. He spoke of various subjects related to the grace of God which he has written on in his book, Transforming Grace. He pointed out many wonderful things about the grace of God. But one thing that he said which I hope I never forget was this: He said that every answer to prayer that we will ever receive was purchased for us by the death of Christ. We do not come to the Father in our names, but in the name of Christ. He is the One Who has given us the right to appear before the Father.

This expression also means that we are seeking those things which, as Thayer said, promote the cause of our Lord. This is the same as saying that we are praying according to His will. To pray in the Lord's name we are seeking the salvation of the lost. We are seeking the sanctification of His people. We are seeking that which will bring glory to His Name.

A third thing that I would say about praying in the Name of the Lord Jesus is that it means claiming the promises of His Word. Those promises are not limited to what He said during His life here on earth, but it includes all of the Word, even promises that were given in the epistles after our Lord had gone back to heaven.

Praying in His Name means that we come to the Father just as the Lord Jesus Himself would come. We come living in obedience to the Word just as the Lord Jesus always pleased the Father. If our lives are wrong it is because our hearts are wrong, and if our hearts are wrong we cannot possibly pray in His Name.

Before I leave this important expression, let me say one more thing that is a matter of personal conviction with me. Keep all of these things in mind that I have mentioned, but I always like to hear a person end his prayer by saying something like this: "In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen." Praying in the Lord's Name is much more than just adding His Name to our prayers, but don't forget to add His Name. It will help us to remember that if it were not for Him we would not be able to pray. And I am sure that the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ always brings special delight to the heart of the Lord.

How comforting this verse is. But let us go on.

16:24 This verse says practically the same thing as verse 23 with the reminder that this was a new way to pray, and that such prayer would bring sure and certain answers that would give us fullness of joy.

Oh, what power there is in such praying, and what blessing is promised. Notice the promises in the two verses:

- 1) Verse 23: "He will give it you."
- 2) Verse 24: "Ask, and ye shall receive."

One thing that is clear from both of these verses is that we need to ask. A prayerless Christian is a contradiction. And yet there are many who profess the Name of Christ who never pray except at the table, or when they go to bed, and there are many who do not even do that. The Lord knows our needs before we ask, but He wants us to ask. God, because He is so gracious, gives us many blessings that we have not asked for, but He wants us to ask, and to continue asking. "Ask" is a command, not something you can do if you want to, or not do. If you are not asking God, you are sinning against Him. The Lord wants us to come to Him, and ask. There is nothing about prayer that is any clearer in the Word of God. Be sure to pray. Nothing brings greater joy than answered prayer. It is even a joy to anticipate what it will mean when God answers our prayers.

16:25 The Lord had told His apostles many things in "proverbs," or better, parables. This He had done in washing their feet. Calling Himself the true Vine and His disciples the branches, was another parable. The truth was given in these simple forms, and it was all designed to teach them about the Father. But again, as a result of His death and resurrection, they would see the truth concerning God more clearly than He had ever been revealed before. Cf. what John wrote in John 1:14. And what we find in Heb. 1:1-3. Also 2 Cor. 4:6,

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,
hath shined in our hearts,
to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God
in the face of Jesus Christ.

As we have seen before, Christ is the revelation of the Father. He and the Father are one--not the same Person, but identical in nature. "Plainly" means without reservation or concealment, according to Westcott (p. 234). The fullest revelation of God followed the resurrection of Christ.

16:26 Here again the Lord was placing before His apostles truth that applies to us as well.

It seems that the Lord was explaining here more about what it means to pray in His Name. It means to seek a clearer and more complete understanding of God and of Christ. And such will be our certainty of God's answer to such inquiries that the Lord said that it would not be necessary for Him to pray for them for that. We know that He does pray for us, will always pray for us, but we come with such authority seeking that which God desires to give, that even the cry of our hearts is sufficient to guarantee an answer.

16:27 And here is comfort upon comfort.

What is our guarantee that our prayers will be answered--if we ask in the Name of our Lord? It is that the Father loves us. He delights in our coming. He listens to our prayers. He answers them. He reveals more and more to us about what He has been pleased to reveal about Himself in the Word.

The Lord's love for His own is, of course, eternal. It had no beginning (although we cannot understand that), nor will it ever end. It will not change in the least. But His special delight in us is that we love His Son, and believe that He came from God to become a Man, to live as He lived, to teach what He taught, and to do the work that He came to do. The

Father loves us and blesses us for what we could only have done by His marvelous grace.

The word for love that our Lord used here is φιλέω. This speaks of the friendship that we have with the Father. It is as though the Lord had said, The Father is your friend because you have been My friends, and because you have believed that I have come from Him.

(Some MSS have "from the Father" at the end of this verse instead of "from God.")

Now these words mean that we should always put the friendship of God and prayer side by side whenever we come to God in prayer. What a difference this will make in our praying! We come to the Father to lay claim to His love by experiencing His answer to our prayers.

So ends this section on prayer, but it is a passage that we should come to frequently to be reminded of the blessings that await us when we pray in the Name of our Lord.

This leads to the last section of John 16, and the fourth and concluding means to comfort:

D. Peace (John 16:28-33).

October 15, 1991 (Anne's birthday)

16:28 The point that the Lord made here had been made before as a means of comfort for the apostles. But the preposition "from" in verse 27 is different from the preposition that is used here. In verse 27 it is παρά meaning from the side of. In this verse it is ἐκ meaning out of. Our Lord not only came into the world from a place of nearness to the Father, but He came as One Who shared the very likeness of the Father. His mission into the world was at that time being completed (with His death and resurrection, and He was returning to the same place that He had before with the Father.

By these words the Lord expressed the voluntary nature of His mission into the world. Although He was sent by the Father, yet He came willingly and eagerly. In the same way, when His mission was finished, He willingly and eagerly returned to the Father. They had believed the former; now they must believe the latter.

16:29 The disciples were obviously delighted with the words the Lord had just spoken to them, although they probably did not really comprehend as much as they thought that they did. The following verse seems to show that while they had believed that He had come from God's side, they did not comprehend what was involved in His return to the Father.

16:30 We could translate the beginning of this verse, Now we know that You know all things. They used the same word for their knowledge that they did for His knowledge. They were assured that the Lord was omniscient. And they likewise had realized that they did not have to pry knowledge out of the Lord. He knew the truth. He was eager to tell them the truth. And He knew the difficulty that they were having with the truth even before they told Him the problems they were having in understanding Him.

It is different with us. We are often hesitant to tell people the truth of God. Nor do we always know how much they really understand. But the Lord knew all. And this further convinced the disciples that the Lord had come from God.

If we are really understanding the truth, additional truth confirms what we have already learned, and strengthens our conviction that what we know is really the truth.

16:31 The Lord seemed to detect in them a measure of self-confidence. Did they know all that they thought that they knew? Did they really believe all that the Lord had been telling them? While they knew that He had come from God, did they know why?

And so to forewarn them again, He told them that their behavior in the next few hours would reveal that they did not really know as much as they claimed to know. Bishop Westcott commented on this verse: "The power and the permanence of their faith are brought into doubt, and not its reality" (p. 236). And he went on to say that our Lord's words suggested the approach of a crisis!

Bishop Ryle said on this verse,

Never do we find our Lord flattering His disciples. Warnings against self-confidence need to be continually pressed on believers. Nothing is so deceptive as feeling and excitement in religion. We know not the weakness of our hearts (II, 407).

Matthew Henry's comments show that he interpreted this verse in the same way. He said that the Lord's rebuke was as though He were asking why they had not believed sooner. And, our Lord was suggesting, "Because you now believe, will you always believe? Do you think that you are beyond failure?"

It was as though the Lord was anticipating those words of the Apostle Paul in 1 Cor. 10:12, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

16:32 The disciples had said, "Lo," or Behold, in verse 29; here the Lord responded with His own, "Behold."

It seems that the time when the apostles reached their greatest height in understanding was the time when they would experience their greatest failure. It is very hard for us to understand how weak we are. We are inclined to trust in our knowledge, or in our experiences, rather than seeing that our only sufficiency is in the Lord.

In spite of all the claims that the apostles might make for themselves, before the night was over our Lord's words were shown to be true: "Ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone." In their haste to get away, Ryle said that they were like sheep trying to get away from a wolf. They did not flee together in the same direction, but each went his own way to his own things, i.e., to whatever place and/or people would give each one the greatest feeling of safety and security.

"And yet," the Lord added, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." The disciples would forsake the Lord, but the Father would not forsake Him. In this the Lord was touched with the feeling of our infirmities during these days in His flesh. We are always inclined to trust in ourselves, or

to trust in other people. But the Lord is the only One Who will never leave us, nor fail us. Our sufficiency must be in Him. And it seems that the only way we are able to learn this is through our own personal failure.

It is wonderful to know that we have the Lord's promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb.13:5).

We often sing, but how much do we believe those words:

Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Stand in his strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own.

However, with this predicted failure, the chapter ends with a word of comfort and of hope.

16:33 "These things have I spoken unto you" -- cf. John 14:25; 15:11; 16:1, 4, 25, and here.

The Lord had not said what He had said to humiliate them, nor to discourage them, nor to show that they did not know as much as they thought they knew. But He said these things to warn them, to help them, to encourage and strengthen them, to keep them from being overwhelmed with they did fail the Lord.

This, like all of the Lord's other promises, is a gracious promise, i.e., one given in grace. He promised them PEACE. Cf. John 14:27. See also Phil. 4:6, 7.

Peace does not mean peaceful circumstances. If so, the Lord would not have said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation." "Tribulation" means trouble, pressure, stress and distress. To the Apostle Paul it meant imprisonment, or going without food. It meant being pursued by his enemies. It meant a thorn in the flesh. It ultimately meant death. But "tribulation" is not only physical. It is anxiety, worry, discouragement, and depression. It is anything that, as Trench has said, which burdens the human spirit. We face it every day, and we will always have it in this world.

It would seem that such a statement would wipe out all of the encouragement that the Lord had given them--and it would, IF we did not have His concluding words: "But be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

"Be of good cheer" means be confident, be hopeful, take courage.

The Apostle John must have remembered these words of our Lord when he was writing about the stress and distress caused by false teachers, he said,
Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them:
because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world
(1 John 4:4).

What did the Lord mean, "I have overcome the world"?

He overcame the world by defeating the prince of this world, and sealing his doom at the Cross. He continues to overcome the world by claiming out of the world those whom He has chosen for Himself. He overcomes the world by overruling the tribulations that His people have in the world, and turning them to their profit. Through our tribulations we realize our own

weaknesses and needs. Through our tribulations we learn to pray. Through our tribulations we learn to trust the Lord. Through our tribulations we exchange our weakness for the Lord's strength. Through our tribulations we learn how to minister to others. Through our tribulations we become more faithful and more zealous in our service to the Lord. Through our tribulations the Lord conforms us more to His own image and likeness. Through our tribulations we bring greater glory to God.

Note what Paul wrote about tribulations in Rom. 5:3-5.

See also Acts 5:41, and 2 Cor. 12:7-10.

We also have that good word from the Apostle John found in 1 John 2:17,
And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof:
but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

Concl: Martin Luther said about this chapter:

Thus is the 'good-night' said, and the hand shaken, But very forcibly does He conclude with that very thing around which His whole discourse has turned. Let not your heart be trouble. Be of good cheer (Quoted by Ryle, II, p. 409).

Bishop Ryle had this to say about John 16 as he concluded his own notes:

No devout commentator, I think, can leave this wonderful chapter without feeling how little we understand of the depths of Scripture. There are many words and sentences in it [this chapter] about which we can only give conjectures, and must admit our inability to speak positively. Nowhere in Scripture, if I must speak my mind, do commentators appear to me to contribute so little light to the text as in their interpretation of this chapter (II, 409).

These words out to bring us back to this chapter, and to this Discourse, again and again, seeking for hidden treasure to be discovered under the careful instruction of the One Who has been given to us to guide us into all of the truth.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 17 -- Part 1
October 21, 1991
John 17:1-5

Intro: We might say when we come to the end of chapter 16 that we have had

the sermon, and now we are to have the prayer. But this was no ordinary sermon, nor is this an ordinary prayer. The Preacher is our Lord, and the One Whose prayer is recorded here is also the Lord. All ground where our Lord stands is holy ground, as we can learn from Moses at the burning bush, when God speaks to man. But when the Son of God speaks to the Father, this becomes the holiest of all ground. It is truly the Holy of Holies in Scripture. Nothing could possibly be more sacred than when we are privileged to stand in silence and listen to the Son as He communed with His Father. All Scripture is God-breathed, but this more than any other. This is the longest prayer of our Lord recorded in Scripture. It is a prayer which only He could pray, therefore it deserves the title, the Lord's prayer. Only He could pray this prayer. The prayer which is usually called, the Lord's prayer, is a prayer which He did not need to pray.

This is a prayer that will help us in our prayers, too. As Bishop Ryle said in his comments on this chapter, "What Christ asks for His people, His people should ask for themselves" (Vol. 2, p. 410).

Among other things Matthew Henry mentioned that this was a parting prayer. How loving it was of the Lord to pray before them and for them as He prepared to enter the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing what would follow shortly.

He would instruct all of us who teach the Word that we need to water our words with prayer, and that we need to pray for those who are under our instruction. Our failure to pray, and to persevere in prayer, are probably the reasons for the lack of blessing that is apparent in the work of the Lord today. Thomas Manton, the Puritan, said about our Lord,

From preaching he descendeth to prayer; the word worketh not without the divine grace. We may open the word, but God must open the understanding ... When God has spoken to us, we must speak to God again. Prayer is the best key to open the heart, because it first openeth heaven (Vol. 10, p. 110).

Bishop Ryle quoted Calvin who said,

Doctrine has no power, unless efficacy is imparted to it from above. Christ holds out an example to teachers, not to employ themselves only in sowing the Word, but by mingling prayers with it, to implore the assistance of God, that His blessing may render their labour fruitful (Vol. 2, p. 415).

It is a prayer in which we are able to see what occupied the mind and heart of our Lord in those final moments before He would go to the Cross to experience His worst hours on earth. It is a pattern for us to follow in our devotion to God and in our desire to see His purposes accomplished in the earth. John Brown, an Englishman, who wrote a commentary on this chapter which bears the date 1850, referred to a man people called "holy Spener" who in his day was responsible for bringing about a great spiritual revival in the Lutheran church. He had this chapter read to him again and again as he lay dying.

No spiritual exercise would be better for us than to read this chapter over

and over again. It would be good to read it until we can quote it from memory. Pray that the truth of this prayer will grip our hearts until the things that were uppermost in the Lord's heart will become supremely important to us.

The prayer has three divisions which practically everyone I have consulted agrees upon as being the proper outline of the chapter:

- 1) In vv. 1-5 our Lord prayed for Himself.
- 2) In vv. 6-19 He prayed for His disciples who were with Him.
- 3) In vv. 20-26 He prayed for all future believers.

I will follow these divisions in seeking to explain our Lord's prayer. Let us begin with the prayer.

I. OUR LORD PRAYS FOR HIMSELF (John 17:1-5).

I believe that we can say from the beginning of our Lord's prayer that we ought to pray for ourselves.

Do you? That is, do you pray for yourself? If so, how do you pray for yourself? Would you like for someone else to listen to you as you pray for yourself, and your needs? Do you suppose you pray for yourself the way others pray for you?

Perhaps we are accustomed to pray for others before we pray for ourselves, but the Lord prayed for Himself first! The Lord did not have all of the needs that we have, but He had needs. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says that our Lord "was in all points tempted [or tested] like we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15b). We usually have sins to confess; He never had that. But He was tested in other ways far beyond what we will ever experience, so He understood perfectly when the way gets hard for us. And from His prayer in these first five verses we can see that the Lord's burden for Himself had to do with the work that the Lord had appointed for Him. But the important thing is to see that HE PRAYED FOR HIMSELF--FIRST!

17:1 The Apostle John seemed to be particularly interested in what the Lord did as He began to pray.

"These words spake Jesus" probably refers what the Lord had said in John 13 through 16. When He had finished, He "lifted up his eyes to heaven."

The Lord Jesus did not always pray this way. Matt. 26:39 tells us that in the Garden of Gethsemane He "fell on his face, and prayed." Why did He lift up His eyes to heaven as He began His high priestly prayer? Perhaps there are several reasons.

For one reason, cf. Psa. 121.

Along that same line, I would think also that it had something to do with what He had been saying about the troubles that His disciples were going to experience in this world. He was recognizing that there is One in heaven Who is above all, and Who is able to meet our needs. How often in OT prayers we see God being recognized as the One Who inhabits heaven, Who made the heavens and the earth, and Who is sufficiently powerful and wise to meet the needs of His people.

But then the Lord began to pray--and it seems that He was praying audibly. The disciples did not pray. We have no record that the Lord ever held a prayer meeting with them. That would have been very much out of place.

How did He address God?

He called Him, "Father." He did this again in verse 5. He called God, "Holy Father," in verse 11. "Father" again in verse 21, and in verse 24. Then "righteous Father" in verse 25.

He had encouraged His disciples to address God in this way when He gave them the model prayer which is found in Luke 11:2. It does not mean that there was a time when our Lord became the Son of God (as is the case in our families). But it does speak of an intimate relationship, of a loving relationship, of a responsible relationship--one in which both the Father and the Son took great delight. When the Father spoke from heaven when our Lord was baptized, what did He say? "This is my beloved Son..." (Matt. 3:17).

After our Lord was raised from the dead, He spoke those amazing words to Mary Magdalene when He told her not to try to hold Him back. He told her to go tell His brethren, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17b).

Then our Lord said a very significant thing: "The hour is come." What ominous words these were! The hour had come for which He had come into the world--the hour when all of the forces of the Evil One would be arrayed against Him. This was to be the hour of His death. His enemies would gladly have hastened His hour, but they were unable to touch the Lord until the time appointed by the Father had arrived.

How good it is for us to be assured of the absolute sovereignty of God when we pray! The Lord orders our steps. The Lord knows the way that we take. And He is able to work all things together for good for those who love Him, those who are called according to His purpose. The Father had determined when and how and why the Lord Jesus would die.

"Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee."

Our Lord teaches us here that the way to find comfort from "the hour" in our lives, is to look ahead to the GLORY!

On the glory of Christ, cf. John 13:31, 32.

For Christ to be glorified would mean that it would become clear to all that He really was the Person He claimed to be, the Son of God. Cf. John 1:14. Also Rom. 1:1-4.

And His primary purpose in wanting to be glorified was so He could glorify the Father. The Jews did not believe His claim to Sonship. They wanted to stone Him for blasphemy for making such a claim. But it was true, and the resurrection would demonstrate it.

17:2 Here again we see how our Lord revelled in the sovereignty of His Father. Salvation was not something which was to be provided without any thought on God's part as to the acceptance it would have. God bestowed upon His Son in the flesh the authority over all flesh (including that of His enemies) that nothing might stand in the way of the effectiveness of the saving grace of God.

Both verse 1 and verse 2 speak of the purpose of God with respect to the work of Christ. That purpose in each verse is suggested by the Greek word

17:1, in order that. The authority of God is never deficient. Regardless of the obstacles that might stand in the way, God's purposes will always prevail. That truth entered into our Lord's prayer, and it should enter into our prayers, too. It is so easy to be discouraged unless we get our eyes on the Lord, remembering Who He is, and His mighty, sovereign power.

Those whom the Father has given to the Son are the elect. And by the authority of the Lord Jesus, no person given to the Son by the Father will fail to be saved. What assurance this should give us in the ministry of the Word. What encouragement this ought to be for us to pray with great assurance that the will of the Lord will be done.

October 28, 1991

This is the way that the Lord Jesus spoke of the elect all through this prayer. Cf. vv. 6, 9, 11, 12, 24. What precious truth this is to think that we have been given by the Father to the Son!

17:3 In verse 2 our Lord said that the Father had given Him authority to give "eternal life" to those whom the Father had given to Him. But what is "eternal life"?

Throughout the Gospel of John we have seen how the Lord in His ministry made it clear that He had come that people might have life. "Eternal life" is spiritual life. Apart from God and Christ people are spiritually dead. Death means separation; life means union. By birth and by nature everybody is spiritually dead, that is, they are separated from God, aliens, rebels, under divine judgment. But Christ is the One Who has the authority to give "eternal life." This means a personal knowledge of God and Christ which results in a changed heart and a changed life. To have "eternal life" is to be saved. There is no such thing as being saved without a personal knowledge of and personal trust in God, in Christ, and in the work that the Father sent His Son to do. Salvation is not by God alone, nor by Christ alone, but through a living relationship with both the Father and the Son.

God is "the only true God" just as the Lord Jesus is "the true vine." "True" means genuine, real, as opposed to that which is false, and even non-existent. Paul told the Thessalonian believers that they had "turned to God from Idols to serve the living and true God." They turned from those false gods, gods which were not really gods, to "the living and true God." The expression, "the only true God," seems to imply that there are false gods to whom people will turn, but they are not gods which can give anyone eternal life. Salvation involves sincere faith, but sincerity alone is not enough. People need knowledge; they need teaching; they need doctrine; they need the truth. And it is through the preaching of the Gospel that people are brought to know God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

17:4 The purpose of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ was to glorify God. We have seen that to glorify God means to make Him known, to exalt Him, to make people conscious of God and His glorious perfections. David told the Lord in Psa. 36:9,

For with thee is the fountain of life:
in thy light shall we see light.

It is only as we begin to see the glory of God that we are ever able to see our own need. Glorify God, and sinners will be convinced of their need of salvation.

What did the Lord mean, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to

do"? He had not yet died, and it was by His death that His earthly ministry was finished, as He said from the Cross. Cf. John 19:30.

The Lord came to earth for many purposes. However, two stand out most prominently:

- 1) He gave to reveal the Father.
- 2) He came to provide salvation for sinners.

The first is very prominent in John 1, Colossians 1, and Hebrews 1. (Read these sections.) The second took place at the Cross, and later was confirmed by His resurrection from the dead.

The Lord had really finished the first, but He could speak of the second as "finished" because of the absolute certainty that it would be. The Father gave the Son His assignment. If He had not done what He did, there would be no salvation for anyone! This was necessary as His part in giving salvation to those whom the Lord had given to Him.

"I have finished the work..." This shows the Lord's purpose on earth. It expresses how perfectly He had done it all. He left nothing undone, but was the One Person in all of human history Who always did what please the Father, and Who was never guilty of displeasing the Father in any way.

October 29, 1991

17:5 One thing that stands out clearly in these opening verses of John 17 is that the Father and the Son are two distinct Persons. Otherwise language means nothing. But here we see the pre-existence of Christ. He was with the Father eternally--a thought that surpasses our ability to understand.

But we also see in this verse that the Lord Jesus did not return to the Father with any less glory than He had before His incarnation. He returned as the God-Man, but in every respect as glorious as He had been from eternity past. What the Lord was praying for in this verse, which was the request that He prayed for Himself (see verses 1 and 5) was that which the Apostle Paul taught the Philippian church in Phil. 2:5-11.

The Lord Jesus had been made in "the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin." He had "condemned sin in the flesh." He "bore our sins." But we can be thankful that He "put away our sins by the sacrifice of Himself." Therefore, the doctrine which seems to be prominent here is the doctrine of propitiation--the satisfaction of God with the work of His Son. This is truth of the greatest importance, and that which was the primary objective of the Lord Jesus Christ in His death. If He had not, in every respect, satisfied the Father with His life on earth and His death on the Cross, there would be no such thing as salvation. The Lord Jesus as a Man was seeking the final confirmation of the Father that He had not only done the work, but that the Father, in every respect, was satisfied.

This section of John 17 confirms what I have emphasized more than once in our study of the Gospel of John--that the main emphasis in the work of Christ was not what He did for us, but what He did for the Father. Of course it is impossible to separate the two because He accomplished both by the same life and death. And both were necessary. But pleasing the Father was His greatest priority; saving man was the result of what He did to please the Father.

But we also see in this verse that the Lord Jesus was satisfied with the work that He came to do. And this is what was prophesied in Isa. 53:10, 11. (Read.) It pleased the Father "to bruise Him"--with all that the bruising included: the incarnation, the humiliation, and ultimately the shameful death of the Cross. But the Lord Jesus also was satisfied that all that God required, and all that sinful man needed, He had been able to accomplish. Nothing necessary for the salvation of those whom the Father had given to Him, had been omitted. The Lord Jesus did not die in vain.

In this request it is the fellowship that our Lord had enjoyed with the Father prior to His incarnation about which He was concerned. The Lord Jesus was forsaken at the Cross, but the fellowship was fully restored when He returned to the Father.

Bishop Westcott (p. 241) made a very significant statement as to how, in the days ahead, Christ and the Father would continue to be glorified. This is what he wrote:

The glory of Christ, and of the Father in Christ, was to be realised by the continuance and completion of that which He had begun in men. The first three verses of the next section in this prayer tell us what had begun.

Now we are ready to go on to the second part of His prayer.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 17 -- Part 2
October 29, 1991
John 17:6-19

Intro: This is the second main division of our Lord's prayer. In the first He prayed for Himself (vv. 1-5). In the second He prayed for His disciples who were with Him at the time (vv. 6-19). In the third and last section He prayed for all who would believe in Him in the future (vv. 20-26).

Let me read this second section to you, beginning with verse 6 and going down through verse 19. (Read.)

And now let us examine this part of our Lord's prayer.

II. OUR LORD PRAYS FOR HIS DISCIPLES WHO WERE WITH HIM (John 17:6-19).

It has been often pointed out that the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh is a threefold ministry:

- 1) Prophet.
- 2) Priest.
- 3) King.

In some ways this may be an over-simplification of His work because the three offices are not mutually exclusive of each other. But there is both truth and merit in recognizing these aspects of what our Lord did.

His public ministry on earth was that of a Prophet. He was a Prophet in the fullest sense of the Word--a Forthteller and a Foreteller. That is, He preached the truth and He prophesied coming events. The Jews were expecting a King, but His work on earth, preaching, performing miracles, etc., was that of a Prophet.

When He comes again in glory, He will come as a King. This is yet future. And what a wonderful day that will be when, according to Rev. 11:15b,

The kingdoms of this world are become
the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ;
and he shall reign for ever and ever.

The world today is confronted with problems which only the Lord Jesus will be able to meet.

However, in between our Lord's prophetic ministry and His royal ministry as King, we have His high priestly ministry--the ministry which the writer of the book of Hebrews set forth in such a glorious way. From the time that the Lord prayed this prayer in John 17 until He comes again as King, He has been involved, and is involved, in His high priestly work. As a Prophet He was concerned about getting the message of the Father to His people, and to all people. As a Priest He is concerned about establishing and maintaining and completing the work of salvation in the lives of His people.

The high priestly ministry of Christ is twofold:

- 1) He is the Sacrifice.
- 2) He is our Intercessor.

And I think that we are absolutely safe in assuming that the requests which the Lord presented to His Father in John 17 are the same requests that He continues to present for us now that He is seated at the Father's right hand.

Let us note what the requests are before we consider these very wonderful

verses.

Our Lord's requests for His disciples who were with Him on this occasion when He prayed:

- 1) Verse 11: He prayed that they might be kept in oneness.
- 2) Verse 13: While not presented as a specific request, yet the Lord said that this was one of His desires for His disciples: "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."
- 3) Verse 15: Not that they would be taken out of the world, but that they should be kept "from the evil"--a phrase which is usually, and, I believe, correctly, taken to mean, from the Evil One!
- 4) Verse 17: For their sanctification through the Truth.

17:6 Verses 6, 7, and 8 form a kind of a report which the Lord Jesus gave to His Father. They tell not only what the Lord had done with those whom the Father had given to Him, but of our Lord's success in His work with them. Again, it is very evident that the Lord was concerned with His elect.

"I have manifested thy name" is the equivalent of saying that He had revealed the Father to His own. He had done this in several ways:

- 1) By His own character.
- 2) By the miracles which He had performed. John 20:30, 31 tell us that this was even the purpose that John had in recording the miraculous works of Christ that we have in this book.

But it seems that the Lord placed special emphasis in this revelation upon:

- 3) His words, the Word of God.

Manifesting the Father's Name is the same as glorifying the Father. Christ had made the Father known more clearly and more fully than He had ever been revealed before. And this revelation was the final revelation.

All of the people that the Lord had contact with during His life had been exposed to this revelation, but it was only those who had been given by the Father to Christ who actually understood it.

This is a marvelous verse on the doctrine of election. Notice: "Thine they were." That is, they belonged to the Father before they were given by Him to Christ. How long before? Cf. Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13, 14.

Therefore we have this progression of truth:

- 1) Elected, or chosen, by the Father in eternity past.
- 2) Given by the Father to the Son.
- 3) Redeemed by the Son at the Cross.
- 4) Regenerated by the work of the Spirit when we are drawn by the Father to Christ.

What is the evidence that a person has been chosen by God?

The evidence is to be seen in the last statement of verse 6: "And they have kept thy word."

"Have kept" is in the perfect tense in English, and it is the same in the Greek. One use of the perfect in Greek is to show that something has been going on, and continues to go on. So our Lord meant not that they had just started to believe, but they had believed some time in the past, and they were continuing to believe.

However, the word that the Lord used here is not believe, but keep.

To believe often means to anyone who speaks English, a mere acceptance of something as being true, as opposed to being false. We believe that Minnesota won the World Series, but that doesn't make Minnesotans out of us. We believe that this is Tuesday, but that does not do anything to us--unless it makes us realize that we are getting older. However, to believe as it is used in Scripture is more than accepting the facts of the Bible as being true. It includes that, but it is more than that. It includes trusting. To believe in Christ means that we not only believe in the Deity of Christ, and in His death as a sacrifice for human sin, but it means we are trusting in Him Who died as my Savior. And the Bible clearly teaches that believing in Christ results in a changed life. The believer turns from his sinful ways, and keeps the Word of God. He seeks to obey the Scriptures. He wants to observe, to do, what the Bible tells him to do.

This is what the Lord meant when He said, "And they have kept thy word." It is as though the Lord said, "They have been keeping your Word, they have been obeying your will, and as I pray for them they continue to obey you; they desire to please you."

Now if you cannot say that about a person, you cannot say that he (or she) is a Christian. A person may have professed faith in Christ in the past, but the crucial issue is, Are they keeping the Word of God? Many people are resting in false security because they, or someone else they know, made a profession of faith some time in the past. And the reason that it is false is because there is nothing about that person today which indicates that they are saved. Such a person may go to church every Sunday. He or she may be very faithful about giving. He may do a lot of work around the church. He may even be a board member, or a Sunday School teacher. The question is not what office does he hold; the question is about his life. If people were half as concerned about how they live as they are trying to disprove the doctrine of election, our churches would be in much better condition today.

There is a lot of wonderful truth in verse 6 of our Lord's prayer, and I trust that it is clear to you, and that you will be assured that you know the Lord because your life is lived according to the Word of God.

2 Cor. 5:17 tells the whole story. (Quote.) "In Christ" is something we cannot see about a person. But we can see, and that person can see, if the old things have passed away, and all things have become new. We are not changed to the point of perfection yet. That is coming. But we are changed, and it is the change that we need to look for.

November 4, 1991

17:7 This continues what the Lord had said in verse 6. We need to note particularly in verse 6 that salvation begins as a work of God to us. The Lord had "manifested" the name of the Father to these disciples. That speaks of the revelation of God to the souls of these men. This expression is used as a synonym for salvation. And the evidence, as we have seen that they have been saved is that they kept the Word of God.

Marcus Rainsford, in his book Our Lord Prays For His Own, pointed out that the Lord Jesus made no distinction between His disciples when He said, "And they have kept thy word." He said,

Some were much more instructed than others; some were much more faithful

than others; some walked much more closely with Him than others. Doubtless it was so; but He makes no distinction" (p. 123).

And so from this verse we would think that they all knew the same amount of truth.

But, relating this to verse 6, it must be recognized that those who know what this verse declares are only those in whose hearts a work of God has taken place. As a result of what the Lord had done in their hearts, we learn now that the disciples knew that what the Lord was as a Man, what He taught in His messages, and the works that He performed, were "of" God. Many people recognized the uniqueness of our Lord Jesus, but the truth did not have a transforming effect on anyone but those to whom the Lord Jesus had manifested God. Once a person recognizes Who the Lord Jesus is because they are taught by God, all resistance breaks down, and that person believes. We cannot bring ourselves to that point, nor can we bring anyone to that point. It is a work of God.

Before I leave this verse let me mention the things that the Lord pointed out in this prayer which He had received from the Father:

- 1) V. 2 -- "Power over all flesh."
- 2) V. 2 -- "Eternal life."
- 3) V. 2 -- The people. This is repeated in v. 6.
- 4) V. 4 -- "The work" which He did.
- 5) V. 8 -- His "words."
- 6) V. 22 - His "glory."

17:8 Here the Lord was indicating that He was thinking primarily about "the words" which He had spoken, many of which are recorded in John's Gospel.

Cf. John 3:31-34 to see what John the Baptist said about the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Cf. John 6:68 to see what Peter said about the Lord's ministry. When many turned away from the Lord and did not come back, the Lord asked the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6:67):

Then Simon Peter answered him,
Lord, to whom shall we go?
thou hast the words of eternal life.

Cf. John 12:48 where the Lord spoke about His own words, obviously the words given to Him by the Father. This is a strong point in affirming that the words of the Lord Jesus were the Word of God.

Cf. John 14:10 where the Lord again affirmed that His words had been given to Him by God. Remember that we learned that also about the ministry of the Spirit. Cf. John 16:13. There is an intimacy of relationship, a union that exists between the Members of the Godhead that is hard for us to comprehend, but it all goes back to God.

The apostles had received the words that the Lord Jesus had given them. And having received them, they knew where the Lord Jesus came from, and that He was on a divinely appointed mission.

To know these things identifies a person as a child of God. He has no doubts concerning Who Christ is. He has no doubt about the message of Christ. He receives them and he believes them. He may not understand it

all but he knows that it is the Word of God, believes it, and he seeks to live by it.

This is the present purpose, even to this day, of our Lord's ministry in the world, that people would hear, and receive, and believe. It still is going on.

17:9 These were the men for whom the Lord was praying.

If those words describe you and me, then we can be sure that the Lord is praying for us, too. What comfort this ought to bring to all of us. This is the work that He is doing for us now in glory. We learn this from Rom.8:34 and Heb. 7:25.

The "I" in the original is emphatic. The Lord Jesus did not commit the care of His apostles to anyone else. They could pray for themselves, and they could pray for each other, but over and above the praying that others do for us, the Lord prays for us!

Let me read to you what Bishop Ryle had to say on this verse:

The special intercession of the Lord Jesus is one grand secret of the believer's safety. He [the believer] is daily watched, and thought for, and provided for with unfailing care, by one whose eye never slumbers and never sleeps. Jesus is "able to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by Him, because He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. vii. 25.) They never perish, because He never ceases to pray for them, and His prayer must prevail. They stand and persevere to the end, not because of their own strength and goodness, but because Jesus intercedes for them. When Judas fell never to rise again, while Peter fell, but repented, and was restored, the reason of the difference lay under those words of Christ to Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." (Luke xxii. 32.)

The true servant of Christ ought to lean back his soul on the truth before us, and take comfort in it. It is one of the peculiar privileges and treasure of a believer, and ought to be well known. ...it is one which those who really feel in themselves the workings of the Spirit should hold firmly, and never let go. Well says the judicious Hooker (a preacher in the last century),

No man's condition so safe as ours: the prayer of Christ is more than sufficient both to strengthen us, be we never so weak; and to overthrow all adversary power, be it never so strong and potent (Ryle, Vol. 2, pp. 427, 428).

In Eph. 1:19-23 Paul prayed these words, borrowing three words from verse 18:

That ye may know... what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

In referring to these words, Marcus Rainsford said (p. 149),
Oh, for faith to grasp this great fact! We often tremble here below in

the contemplation of the weakness of self, the malice of our enemies, and the difficulties we have to grapple with; yet our risen Head and King is above them all; they have all been put under His feet,--is it possible He could have them under His feet, and yet allow them really to hurt us? It is impossible. The fact that the crown of the universe is upon His head secures us; the fact the principalities and powers are beneath His feet, and subject to His sway, secures the soul that looks to Him by faith, and enable us to say as the apostle did,

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.

These verses are Rom. 8:38, 39.

And earlier in the chapter the Apostle had written, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He came for us. He died for us. He arose for us. He lives for us. He prays for us. He is coming again for us. The whole Bible tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is for us.

And so that little verse of poetry is true,
Bear not a single care thyself,
One is too much for thee;
The work is mine, and mine alone,
Thy work to rest in Me.

What a difference it makes for us to know that the Lord Jesus said, "I pray for them"! All of the angels of heaven listen when the Lord Jesus prays. And what is even more important, the Father listens. And what He hears, He does. Then add to this the great truth that the Holy Spirit also prays for us. Listen to Rom. 8:26, 27:

Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities:
for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:
but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us
with groanings which cannot be uttered.
And he that searcheth the hearts
knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit,
because he maketh intercession for the saints,
according to (the will of) God.

The Lord Jesus does not pray for the world, i.e., those who are not saved, those who do not receive the words of Christ. He just prays for His own, those whom the Father gave to Him.

How foolishly people claim to be men of the world, or women of the world. The world is passing away, the Apostle John said. It is only those who do the will of God who have the prospect of eternal life.

And yet, even though they were given unto the Lord Jesus, they still belong to the Father: "For they are thine." Believers belong to Christ, they belong to the Father. But that is not the case with the world. It is surely true that there are those in the world today who have not yet been saved, yet they belong to the Father. But the Lord prays specifically for His own. If men were not so blinded by their sin, such truth as this would make everybody want to be saved.

17:10 And then, to emphasize that even though they still belong to the Father, it does not mean that they are no longer Christ's, He said,

And all mine are thine, and thine are mine,
and I am glorified in them.

This verse really is a part of verse 9 and probably should not have been divided from it.

These verses ought to encourage us. We are often so conscious of our sin, or our unworthiness to be a child of God. We can all truthfully sing that hymn,

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene,
And wonder how he could love me,
A sinner condemned, unclean.

And yet He does. And the Father does. And They both love to say about us, "They are mine."

Illus: My parents had never met Lucille until after we were married. We were married in Harrisburg, Arkansas which is about 40 miles from Memphis, Tennessee, and they were not able to come to the wedding. However, Lucille's parents gave us train tickets to Tacoma so my parents and the rest of my family, and my friends, could meet her. I still remember what a thrill it was for me to show off my bride. She was mine. And it still excites me to be able to say that.

A few years ago after Dr. Lewis Johnson's first wife died, Lucille and I were invited to Dallas where I was to perform the marriage ceremony for Dr. Johnson and the lady who was to be his second wife. After the ceremony was over, his first words to her were, "Now you are mine."

We feel that way about our children, don't we? I am thankful to be able to say about every one of our children, and their spouses, and their offspring, "They are mine."

Now transfer those feelings to these words of our Lord, and you will have just a little idea of how He feels about us. We are His! We are the Father's! And they love to claim us, unworthy though we are in ourselves, they delight in saying, "They are mine!"

And not only that, but the Lord added, "And I am glorified in them." This is a truly amazing statement.

Notice again that He did not distinguish between them. He did not say I am glorified in some of them, or in one or two of them. But He included them all when He said, "And I am glorified in them." This was true of the weakest, the neediest, the most foolish, the most immature -- "I am glorified in them." What did He mean? Who is wise enough to explain these words of our Lord. I can only guess at what He meant.

I think He meant that while they were not what they ought to be, or will be, yet they were not what they used to be, nor what they might have been if the Lord had not saved them. The weakest, youngest, most immature saint has some ways in which He glorifies Christ. We glorify Christ when we believe Him. We glorify Christ when we trust Him. We glorify Christ when we obey Him. We glorify Christ when we pray to the Father in His Name. We glorify Christ by our love for His Word, and by our love for His people. We glorify Christ by proclaiming His Word. There may not be much glory for the Lord, but there is always some.

And this is why the Lord has left us in this world, why He prayed later that we should not be taken out of the world, but that we should be kept from the Evil One.

The first question in the Westminster Catechism is, "What is the chief end of man?" The answer: "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." And one of the greatest ways that we can glorify God is by glorifying Christ. Paul stated it like this in Eph. 1:12, "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." The last words of the model prayer are, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory for ever. Amen" (Matt. 6:13b). Concerning the world, the Apostle Paul said that they "glory...in their shame" (Phil. 3:19). They "mind earthly things." They are not concerned about God and His glory. What is sin? It is anything that comes "short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). Paul's instruction to the Corinthian church was this: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

If the Lord Jesus and God delight that we are Theirs, how much more should we delight in glorifying Them. And let us remember that whenever and however we are able to glorify any Member of the Godhead, it is always because of the work that the Lord has done in our hearts in bringing us to Himself. Such a desire is in and of itself an evidence that we are the Lord's.

November 18, 1991

17:11 In verses 9 and 10 the Lord had indicated those for whom He was praying. It was not for the world, but for those who belonged to the Father, and to Him. Now, in this verse, He mentioned why He was praying for them: Because He was "no more in the world, but they were still "in the world."

So there was a twofold reason for His prayer:

- 1) He was going back to heaven.
- 2) They would continue on in this wicked world.

The Lord spoke of Himself as though He were already in heaven while His death, resurrection, post-resurrection time, and His ascension were still ahead of Him. But it was so certain that He would soon be back with the Father, having accomplished all that the Father had given Him to do, that He could speak of it as though it were already finished.

On the other hand, notice how keenly aware the Lord was of the needs of His disciples. He was leaving them. The world would hate and persecute them. They were utterly weak in themselves. And so they needed the Father to "keep" them. It would be a new experience for the disciples to walk by faith in their relationship with their Lord instead of walking by sight, which had been their privilege. And the Lord Jesus was concerned for them. He truly is "the Good Shepherd." His disciples were as helpless in the world as a flock of sheep would have been among a pack of wolves. They were few in number, and had demonstrated that they were no strong enough to face the battles of life and the ministry alone.

It is interesting to see how the Lord spoke to the Father telling the Father things which He already knew. You will doubtless remember that the Lord, in His teaching about prayer, said that we are not to use a lot of vain repetitions like the heathen do because "your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matt. 6:8).

I love the simplicity and brevity of Jacob's prayer as he was headed back home, and faced the prospect of seeing Esau again. And this was a part of

his prayer:

Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother,
from the hand of Esau: **for I fear him...** (Gen. 32:11a).
The Lord knew why Jacob was praying. He knew that Jacob was not only concerned about meeting Esau, but that he was terribly afraid of meeting him. The last he knew of Esau was that Esau wanted to kill him. Jacob, in the weakness of his faith at this time, was anticipating the possibility that Esau would not only kill him, but kill family. And it seems that he was especially thinking of Rachel.

How the Lord is delighted when we tell Him exactly what is upon our hearts.
Cf. Psalms 62:8:

Trust in him at all times; ye people,
pour out your heart before him:
God is a refuge for us. Selah.

November 19, 1991

This is what our Lord did. He poured out His heart to the Father.

Notice how He addressed the Father: "Holy Father."

I have pointed out to you that our Lord addressed God six times in this prayer as Father. Four times He simply said, "Father." Once, in verse 25, He said, "O righteous Father." But here in verse 11 it is "Holy Father." And this is the only time in the Gospels where the Son addressed the Father as **"Holy Father."** It amounts to blasphemy that this title should ever be used of a man.

Why "Holy Father"?

Because this is the crown of all His attributes. (Cf. Rainsford, p. 186.)
It is really that which represents all that God is. He was not only that to Christ, but He is that to us. Psalm 111:9 reads,
He sent redemption unto his people:
he hath commanded his covenant for ever:
holy and reverend is his name.

We also read in Psalm 89:35,
Once have I sworn in my holiness
that I will not lie unto David.

So the holiness of God is a guarantee of the faithfulness of God. It is an indication of His sovereignty. As our "Holy Father" He will do all that is necessary to keep us. And, as our "Holy Father," He is uniquely different from what we are by nature, and totally different from this wicked world in which we live. What a difference it would make in our lives if we could only realize and remember that our God is our "Holy Father."

What did our Lord pray that the "Holy Father" would do? He prayed, as His first request, that the "Holy Father" would "keep" His disciples. What does this word "keep" mean?

Our Lord used this word three times in His prayer: here in verse 11, the first "kept" in verse 12, and then in verse 15. It means to guard, to protect, to take care of, to keep them in the same state in which they were as the Lord prayed for them. It is a word which suggests present possession, and a plea that the relationship will not be changed. Bishop

Westcott says that the idea of watching is prominent in this verb. It is what you mothers do when you take care of your little children. You know where they are all of the time, and you do not leave them unattended. It is a word rich in its meaning and expresses that which is one of the greatest needs any of us has as a child of God. It is in the aorist tense which suggests that there was an urgency about the Lord's request. This was something which could not be delayed, nor could it ever be discontinued. As long as the disciples were in the world they would need to be kept by their "Holy Father." The most mature believer needs to be kept. We need to be kept from the sin that is in our hearts. We need to be kept from the temptations that we face daily in this evil world. We need to be kept from all of the onslaughts of the Evil One, Satan, as we shall learn in verse 15. This is the basis of our security in Christ. While a different word is used in Jude 24, 25, the idea is there.

It is apparent from what our Lord said in John 10:27-30 that the Father had already been doing this. (Read.) The Lord Jesus had been doing this, too, as He would say in the next verse (12). Cf. also such passages as Psa. 121. See also Isa. 27:3.

The Lord Jesus not only prayed that the "Holy Father" would "keep" them, but He prayed that the Father would do it "through thine own name." This means that all that God is in the full exercise of His attributes, was to be put into operation for the keeping of His people. How could anyone who understands this possibly doubt but that those who are saved will continue to be saved, and will ultimately experience the completion of their salvation?

However, notice the particular emphasis that our Lord made as to the object of the keeping power of our "Holy Father." It was "that they may be one, as we are."

Cf. John 17:20-23. (Read.)

The prayer for oneness was our Lord's first request for the disciples who were with Him at that time; it was also His first request for those who would from that moment on become believers.

Disunity among believers has caused inestimable damage to the cause of Christ in the world. And yet we take it today as the norm. Instead of seeking the Lord's solution for this great need in all of our lives, we often are willing to sacrifice the truth for the sake of a so-called unity.

It probably is impossible for any of us to explain fully what was in our Lord's mind and on His heart as He made this request of the Father. But we do know that sin has divided people from each other. Sin continues to divide the nations of the earth. It is only through our union with God and with Christ that there can be any unity among us as the Lord's people today. The oneness of the Father and the Son is a oneness of nature, a oneness of purpose, a oneness of fellowship. Our oneness will never in this life actually attain to the oneness that has existed eternally between the Father and the Son, but that is to be our goal.

Unity among believers was a burden that was upon the heart of the Apostle Paul as he wrote to the Ephesian church. Cf. Eph. 1:9, 10; 2:19-22; 4:1-6, 11-16; 5:21. A husband and wife are "one flesh" (Eph. 5:31b).

By our very nature we want to have our own way. We do not want anyone else

telling us what to do. But God's thoughts and ways are different from our thoughts and ways, and we as believers need to learn to live by, and to seek to follow, God's ways in our relationship with each other here in this world. True unity is possible only with those who have become new creatures in Christ through the new birth. True unity begins with the knowledge of the truth, and then continues through the practice of the truth.

A further idea of the unity that the Lord was concerned about is expressed in John 14:10.

17:12 The Lord Jesus was asking the Father to do for them what He had been doing during His time on earth. He had kept them in the Father's name. But here the Lord used two different words which are both accurately translated, "kept."

The first is the word we have been discussing, the word used in verse 11. It is _____. The second "kept" is the word _____. This second word suggests what has to be done in order for the first word to be accomplished. This second word speaks of the child of God as continually under assault and the guarding that is necessary in order for the child of God to be safe. Sometimes we need to be kept from the sin that is in our own hearts. We need to be kept from the sinful influences of our old nature. But we need also to be guarded in the world, and guarded from the attacks of Satan. We often put ourselves in the way of temptation. We often play right into the hands of the Evil One. So we have to be protected from within and from without. And the Lord Jesus said that He had done this. Cf. John 6:39.

Marcus Rainsford made a very excellent comment on the words of our Lord at the beginning of this verse. He said,

Perhaps it may be said the apostles were a better order of men than we are! Not so, the Lord Jesus Christ sought, and found them, for they were lost; He quickened them, for they were dead; and He kept them. Everything but God was against them; the world against them, the flesh against them, the devil against them, everything against them but God, and everything is against us but God. When shall we learn to view God in this light? If we did--if we learned to know God thus, nothing would keep us from Him. We have too much the habit of regarding God as if He were against us: we go here and there for some motive or reason to induce God to be for us. Everything is against us but God, and God is not against us, but for us. And Christ in our nature is a pledge of it, the Holy Spirit in the Church is a pledge of it, the Book of God is a pledge of it. Think of the variety of the characters, constitutions, temptations, and difficulties of God's children, and yet not one of them lost. Oh! the sufficiency of Christ, the fullness of the fountain open for sin, the glorious righteousness to cover, the strength of the Lord to keep--"I kept them" (pp. 209, 210).

The only one who had been lost was Judas, and the explanation for that is that he was not, and never had been, one of the Lord's own. He was "the son of perdition." The Scriptures of the OT had predicted what would happen to him. Judas Iscariot, Rainsford said, "never fell from grace, for he never had it..." (p. 211). Cf. our Lord's words in John 13:15-19. In this passage our Lord quoted from Psa. 41:9.

We probably cannot now understand all of the reasons that the Lord had in making Judas Iscariot one of His disciples, but two are certain:

- (1) The Scriptures had to be fulfilled. We may not be able to explain all that is revealed in the Word about Peter, but it is important that we believe it. It is a serious mistake to reject what we cannot explain to our own satisfaction. In dealing with all of the difficult things in Scripture (and there are many of them), the important thing is to believe them. From that point the Lord will give us the understanding that He wants us to have. But the person who begins with either doubt or outright rejection will never profit from the truth.
- (2) It was to serve as a warning to all generations of the Lord's people. It was possible for a man to be an apostle without being saved. This being the case, it is possible for a person to be a pastor, or to be a church leader, or to be a Sunday School teacher, or "a miracle worker," or a Bible reader and a student of the Scriptures, without being a Christian. Just because a person goes to church faithfully, is no evidence that person is a child of God. It seems to be a safe and true statement to make that in every church there are people who profess to be saved who are not saved. It was like that with Judas; it is like that today.

November 25, 1991

Cf. also Acts 1:15-20 where Peter described what Judas had done, and what had happened to him.

This is all very interesting, and should be instructive for each one of us. The Word of God teaches us in many places that not everyone who professes to be a Christian, is a Christian. Cf. Matt. 7:21-29. Also the parable of the Sower in Matt. 13:1-23. The warnings of the book of Hebrews can only be explained in the light of this possibility. It is not what a person claims to be that is the deciding factor; it is the present evidence in his (or her) life that gives the proof.

But let us go on to verse 13.

17:13 "And now come I to thee." This is a repetition of what He said in verse 11, the first part.

David Brown, in the JFB Commentary (V, 451), brings out a point about this statement that we need to understand. He said that the repetition of this statement shows how the Lord Jesus was yearning to return to the Father. This was His joy! We cannot understand the relationship that the Father and the Son enjoyed throughout eternity past and up until the time that the Son came to earth. But we know that it was different when He came to earth. We also know that it was strained the most when the Lord was dying on the Cross. It is brought out by His cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). The Father and the Son had never experienced such a breach in all of time before, or in eternity past. It is apparent that the Son's return to the Father could not come too soon. And it seems that this is what gave Him comfort and joy as He faced the sufferings that were ahead for Him.

He was leaving His disciples "in the world." And this is where He was saying what He was saying. Our Lord knew very well the trials, the suffering, and death that was ahead for His disciples. The world would not give them joy, or peace, or any of the happiness that everyone so desires. But the point is that they could find the same joy, what the Lord described as "my joy," if they sought it in the same hope that He had: the hope that they, too, would one day be with the Lord!

Let me show you this from the writings of the apostles in the NT.

— Please turn to Peter's comments along this line in 1 Pet. 1:3-9. Notice his references to joy in verse 3 ("Blessed"), in verse 6-9.

Paul touched upon this several times. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:1-10. See also Phil. 1:20-26. And we cannot overlook Tit. 2:11-15. There are three verses in 2 Tim. 4:6-8. Do we really love His appearing?

Look at Heb. 9:28.

We also have Jude 24, 25, and Heb. 12:1, 2.

Therefore the joy that the Lord had was a joy that He had in God. He lived for God. He communed with God. He obeyed God. He sought to glorify God. And He looked forward to being back with God in heaven. And so the things that He had mentioned in His prayer about God and how He had sought to do the will of God and anticipated getting back to God, brought joy to His heart, and He wanted the apostles, in spite of all of the troubles they would experience in the world, to have, as He said, "My joy fulfilled in themselves."

We are coming into the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. These are times when we get together as families. Either they come to us, or we go to them. And, if we can't get together, we talk about when we will be able to get together. If there is a breach in our family, so that someone we love will not be there, it makes us unhappy.

— If we are having our family, I know what preparations Lucille will make. The house has to be cleaned. There are meals to plan and cook. Beds have to be made. We try to have everything, as the saying goes, "in apple pie order." Why? Because people we love are coming--and that makes us very, very happy!

The Lord has told us He is coming. He hasn't said when because He wants to surprise us. But the question is, Are we looking for Him? Are we ready for Him?

The Apostle John said in 1 John 2:28,

And now, little children, abide in him;
that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence,
and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

If we want the Lord's joy to be "fulfilled" in us, we need to live, as much as we can, like He lived.

17:14 This part of our Lord's prayer needs to be linked with verse 8.

The Lord Jesus had given the Word of God to His apostles. From verse 8 we learned that the apostles received the Word, and believed both that our Lord came from God, and that He was sent by God. This, of course, means that they had been saved by the Word.

— However, verse 14 gives us a different result. This is the reaction of the world. The world hates those who receive and believe and live by the Word of God. Believers are in the world, but they are not "of the world" because our Lord is not "of the world." Believers march to a different tune from that of the world. And it is the Word of God that makes the difference.

The apostles lived by the Word. They trusted in the promises of the Word. They believed the prophecies of the Word. They stood upon the doctrines of the Word. The Word was their joy and delight. It was food for their souls. And it also was the message that they were to proclaim to a lost world. It is for these reasons that the children of God are hated, despised, and rejected by the people of the world. If we would only forget about the Word of God, most of our troubles would end. However, if the people of the world are ever to be changed, it has to be through the Word of God. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psa. 119:130).

The Word exposes the sin of the people of the world, and that is something that the world does not like. The Lord experienced the world's hatred, and so will we if we really live by the Word and bear testimony to the Word.

17:15 In spite of what the Lord had just said, He did not pray that the apostles should be taken out of the world--at least, not at that time. He was not praying that they would die, nor that they would be raptured like Enoch was. One or the other would eventually come, but that was not the Lord's time. Instead, the Lord prayed for something that would bring even greater glory to God: "I pray...that thou shouldest keep them from the evil."

Our Lord could have been praying that the Father would keep them from the evil that is in the world--and that surely was a part of what He had in mind. But the latter statement of this verse would bear the translation, "But that thou shouldest keep them from **the Evil One**."

The Evil One is "the god of this world" (2 Cor. 4:4). He promotes all kinds of evil. He does everything within his power (which is great) to get people to sin, and to keep them sinning. And the Evil One hates God, and Christ, and the Word of God. He is greater in power than we are. And he is the Master Deceiver. And there is a part of us, our old nature, which is responsive to the temptations which he places before us. And so we need to be kept from the Evil One!

Marcus Rainsford, whom I have quoted before, makes the following comment about this verse:

Perhaps it may have occurred to us as exceedingly strange, perplexing, and mysterious, that we should find ourselves in a world such as this, in which we are subject to evil thoughts and evil desires; prone in ourselves to what is evil, and impotent for anything that is good, surrounded on every side by difficulties and temptations,--fightings without and fears within: where we are constantly solicited by an evil heart of unbelief to do what we ought not to do, and to be what we ought not to be--a world which is filled with the peculiar attractions suited to our fallen corrupt nature, where we have to

"Wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12); forces which, humanly speaking, it is impossible for us either to avoid or to overcome. And to hear our Lord say under such circumstances, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world," is surely something very wonderful, if not very mysterious (p. 270).

And then Mr. Rainsford raised a series of questions to show possible explanations for our Lord's request.

He asked if it were possible that the Lord could not remove His apostles from the world. We know that is not the explanation. Our Lord has all authority in heaven and in earth.

Is it possible that He was unwilling to take them out if it were for their own good? The Lord is good, and always does that which is not only good, but best.

Is it possible that this indicates a failure in the Lord's battle with the world? Could it have been that the Lord was not really aware of the awful character of the world? Was He ignorant of their weaknesses, or of their natural inclination to sin? Was it possible that He did not really love His own as much as He had indicated to them that He did?

None of these gives us the right explanation. What we do know is that He had a ministry for them in the world. We also know that they would be strengthened and conformed more to the likeness of Christ through the trials that they would experience in the world. It is here that we can learn lessons that we cannot learn any other place. It is here that we learn how truly weak and foolish and needy we are. But it is also here that we learn how mighty, how wise, how patient, how loving, how gracious, how longsuffering and how good our God is. It is here that we will experience that the One Who is in us is greater than the Evil One who is in the world. This world has been the scene of the glorious victories of our God, and it will continue to see His victories until the end of time. In this way our Lord is glorified, which is the most important result of all.

And let us not forget that God has left us here to bear testimony to the Gospel of Christ, by our lives, and by the testimony of our lips. The Father has "other sheep" that are yet to be reached, and it is His purpose to use us in reaching them.

The time would come when the apostles would be taken out of the world, but that time had not come for them, nor has it yet come for us. It will come either when we die, or when the Lord comes. In the meantime, we need to be busy doing the Lord's will, learning what He is teaching us about Himself, about ourselves, about His purposes, about the world, and about the Evil One.

It is the Father's responsibility to keep us, and He does this faithfully day after day. It is impossible that such a request from our Lord would not be granted. This does not give us the liberty to become careless about sin, but it does assure us that, in all of the conflicts and trials of life, we have One Who is watching over us, keeping us for Himself until that glorious day when we will be with Him forever.

So there is much in this request.

17:16 This is a repetition of the last part of verse 14. For the Lord to repeat it must mean that this was a very important truth to Him. Brown says that this is repeated to prepare the way for the request which follows.

This is one very important way in which we are like our Lord. It may not always be as apparent as it should be, but nevertheless it is true. Cf. what our Lord said in John 15:19.

November 26, 1991

To enforce this truth we have verses like Rom. 12:1, 2; Jas. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17. And these support what Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:17.

It is easy for us to have our hearts set on money, or possessions, or the glory that comes from the world, or doing things the way they are done in the world. These are verses that believers today need to pay attention to, and obey. The world, and the ways of the world, have invaded the church, and the result is that we have a powerless church. We need to get back to doing things the way the Lord wants them done. It may not be what people are looking for, but it is what people need. And it is only in following the Lord's ways that we are going to see the Lord's blessing. Cf. Isa. 55:6-11.

We used to be "of the world," but, if we are truly saved, we are "of the world" no longer. Before we cared little or nothing about God; now we desire to please Him, and the only way that we can do that is by living according to His Word. Beware of the person who does not want to hear the Word of God. Beware also of the person who wants to explain why he or she is not responsible to obey all of the Word.

Perhaps this is a good time for me to remind you what I learned from Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse years ago with respect to the three enemies of the child of God: the world, the flesh, and the Devil. He said that our guidance regarding the world is Rom. 12:2 and 1 John 2:15-17. With respect to the flesh it is 2 Tim. 2:22:

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness,
faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon the Lord
out of a pure heart.

Add to that Paul's words in 1 Tim. 6:1-16. And concerning the Devil, we have Jas. 4:7-10 and 1 Pet. 5:6-11.

As far as the church today is concerned, there probably are no words that are more important than these which I have just read to you. What a tragedy it is that it should be so difficult to find churches today where the Word of God is preached and applied! The days in church history when the voice of the church has been heard have been those days when the Lord's people have sought to please God rather than men. We cannot do both, as our Lord said in Matt. 6:24:

No man can serve two masters:
for either he will hate the one, and love the other;
or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.
Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

7:17 December 2, 1991.

"The world" is mentioned 19 times in John 17. And it is always the same word in the original Greek: _____. It is where we live. We used to be a part of it, but we are no longer "of" it. Satan is called by our Lord "the prince of this world" in John 14:30. It was into this world that our Lord came, but He was never a part of it. This is the world which, according to 1 John 2:15-17, we are not to love. And, according to Rom. 12:1, we are not to be conformed to this world. (_____ is the word that is used in Rom. 12:2.) This world has no place for God, nor for His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an evil world. And it is in this world that the apostles were being left. And it was from this world and the Evil One who is the prince of this world that the apostles needed to be kept.

Such a request requires a twofold answer. First, they need the

providential oversight of the Father in protecting His people from temptation, and from the devices of the Evil One. This is what the Lord had in mind when He taught His disciples to pray according to Matt. 6:13a,
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil (or, from the Evil One).

But, secondly, it also requires that a work be done in them. And that is the request that we have here: "Sanctify them through thy truth."

In other words the apostles needed to have God working for them, but they also needed Him to do a work in them. The work in them was a work of God by which they would be made holy.

This is the request of all requests for the people of God. To be sanctified is to be made holy. It was on the heart of the Lord Jesus as one of the chief burdens, perhaps the greatest, that He had for His apostles. The object of our salvation is that we would be made holy. Cf. Eph. 1:4 and 5:25-27. See also Heb. 12:9, 10; 1 Pet. 13-16; 2 Pet. 1:2-4. Cf. also 1 Thess. 5:23.

Our Lord's request not only indicates that He was concerned about the character and conduct of His apostles, but we see that God is the only One Who can sanctify us. He alone can make us holy. It is just as impossible for us to sanctify ourselves as it is for us to justify ourselves. Obviously, there are means that God uses for our sanctification, but the work is a divine work.

What I have been saying about the obedience of the apostles, i.e., "They have kept thy word" (v.6), and about the extent to which the Lord was glorified in the lives, "I am glorified in them" (v. 10), applies also to their sanctification. In God's sight they were perfectly sanctified, but from a practical and personal standpoint, the degree of their sanctification differed from one to another. Some were more sanctified than others. And so the Lord's request did not mean that they had not been sanctified at all, but that the Lord was praying for greater sanctification for each one of them. And, regardless of how closely we walk with the Lord, or how long, it will always be true of us that we need to be more holy than we are. That was true of the apostles as well.

The verb "sanctify" is an aorist imperative, and would seem to indicate that the Lord was praying for their final and complete sanctification. Sanctification completed is glorification. And that would seem to be confirmed by the last request our Lord made in His prayer. See v. 24.

We also have the exhortation of Heb. 12:14 in support of this:

Follow peace with all men, **and holiness,**
 without which no man shall see the Lord.

The means of sanctification, as the Lord indicated in His prayer, is the Word--the truth of the Word of God.

This would mean that, while God does the sanctifying work, there is human responsibility involved in it. But even in our responsibility, God is at work. We learn that from Phil. 2:12, 13 and Heb. 13:20, 21.

What is involved in our being sanctified by the Word? Let me mention five things that it means:

- 1) Read the Word.
- 2) Meditate on the Word.
- 3) Believe the Word.

4) Obey the Word.

5) Hear the Word.

Let me give a brief word of explanation about each one.

READ THE WORD. The Bible is the Word of truth. But it is not going to do us any good unless we find out what is in it. That basically comes from personal reading. The Bible should be read completely and repeatedly. And as we read we need to pray that the Holy Spirit would show us what He wants us to see, and teach us what He wants us to know. Therefore, we need to read the Word prayerfully, and in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

MEDITATE ON THE WORD. It is possible for us to read so hurriedly, and so inattentively, that we don't get anything out of our reading. To meditate means to think about what we are reading, and to think about what we have read after we have completed our reading.

Reading and meditation were probably in the mind of the Apostle Paul when he wrote to Timothy, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13). And two verses later he added, "Meditate upon these things; given thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." In other words, people should be able to see in our conduct the profit we are receiving from reading the Word and meditating upon it.

BELIEVE THE WORD. Faith is one of the results that the Word produces in our hearts. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). However, faith in the Word is one of the prerequisites for understanding the Word. We must not approach the Word questioning whether or not it is the Word of God. We come believing that it is!

But not only that, there are many doctrines taught in Scripture plus many promises which God has given to us in His Word. We must believe these. We must trust God that He will be faithful to His Word. Hebrews 11:6 says,

But without faith it is impossible to please him [God];
for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,
and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

And 2 Cor. 1:20 tells us,

For all the promises of God in him are yea,
and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.

The writer of Hebrews, in speaking of the people of God in past days, said, "But the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Heb. 4:2b).

OBEY THE WORD. After the Lord had instructed His disciples in humility by washing their feet, and telling them that they ought to wash one another's feet, He said, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13:17).

Cf. also Jas. 1:22-25.

Hebrews 10:35, 36 says,

Cast not away therefore your confidence,
which hath great recompense of reward.
For ye have need of patience,
that after ye have done the will of God,
ye might receive the promise.

This is one of the distinguishing marks of a child of God; he obeys the Word. Cf. 1 John 2:3-5.

HEAR THE WORD. Here I have in mind three things, and I have already touched on one of them:

- 1) We are hearing the Word when we read it.
- 2) We are hearing the Word when we hear others read it, or preach it.
- 3) We are hearing the Word when we read the works--the books--of godly men and women who help us to understand the Word of God.

This is one reason why Paul told the Hebrew believers to whom he wrote the book of Hebrews, that they should "not" forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Heb. 10:25). In the meeting of the Lord's people we receive exhortations from the Word that will help us live holy lives.

The Lord is the only One Who can keep us faithful in the Word and with the Word. But we have to assume our responsibility in reading it, seeking to understand it, obeying it, and making sure that we are in a church where we are being taught the Word so that we can become the holy people that the Lord has chosen us to be.

There can be no holiness without the Word. There can be no holiness without prayer. There can be no holiness without the Holy Spirit to guide us in the truth, and to enable us to live according to the truth of the Word.

And yet it is in this very area that Christians fail, and churches fail.

17:18 Here is one of the main reasons for the sanctification of the apostles. Just as the Father had sent Him into the world, so He was sending the apostles into the world. And this is the reason He was not taking them out of the world. There were people in the world who had to be reached with the Gospel.

Linking verse 17 with verse 18 we should see that the primary qualification for the Lord's work is holiness. A holy person, from what we have just been learning, is one in whose life the Word of God comes first. A holy person is one who prays. A holy person is one who is taught by the Holy Spirit. Training, personal abilities, and experience are all fine, and they have their place. However, a person can be well-trained, and very gifted, with good experience, and yet not be holy. In the choice of pastors, or missionaries, of Bible class teachers, of workers in the church, the crucial question is, Does he (or she) know the Lord and know how to walk with God?

As far as the world is concerned, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). And, as far as the world is concerned, this is our mission, too. Although we do not save. We carry the message of Christ, pointing people in the world to the only One Who is able to save. We are to preach the Word. We are to tell sinners about Christ.

17:19 This is the last verse of the second section of our Lord's prayer.

We saw in verses 17 and 18 that holiness was the primary qualification for any servant of the Lord. Here the Lord was speaking about His own part in the sanctification of His apostles, and of their ministry--and for all of us! The Lord was not sanctified in the sense that He needed to be holier than He was. He was perfect in holiness. The word "sanctified" is used

here in its basic meaning, that of being set apart. The Lord had set Himself apart, set Himself apart wholeheartedly, for the work that the Father had given Him to do. There was no part of the work which the Father sent Him to do which He left undone. And it was through His accomplishment of the will of God that they would be sanctified through the truth.

And so we see that the sanctification of the apostles, and of all believers from that day to this, was not only accomplished through the Word, through the work of the Holy Spirit, and through the work of the Father, but pre-eminently through the work of Christ.

This could well be the prayer of a pastor for His people. It ought to be the prayer of a husband for his wife, of parents for their children, of teachers for their classes, of a Christian who is concerned about the spiritual needs of his friend, or friends. This is a very important point for anyone engaged in the ministry. If we are looking for the blessing of the Lord in our ministries, if we want to be fruitful, we must give ourselves to the Lord, and to His will for us, unreservedly. We must give ourselves to the Lord in behalf of the people the Lord has given to us. That is where the power and the blessing come from.

Concl: And so we come to the end of the section in which the Lord was praying for the apostles who were with Him. He had two requests for them. First, that they would be kept, kept from divisions, and kept from the Evil One. Second, that they would be sanctified.

We can be assured that both of these continue to be requests that the Lord, as our Great High Priest, presents to the Father for us now. That being the case, we ought to keep these requests uppermost in our prayers as we pray for each other, for spiritual leaders, and for the Lord's people wherever they may be. Divided saints and unsanctified saints are the cause of bring much reproach upon the Name of the Lord, and His work. May the Lord preserve our oneness, and may we seek daily to become more holy through the power of the Word of God working in our lives.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John 17 -- Part 3

January 6, 1992

John 17:20-26

Intro: The Lord began His prayer by praying for Himself (vv. 1-5). It is amazing that believers from that day to this would be permitted to know what the Son of God said to the Father as He drew close to the end of His ministry on earth. This is truly holy ground.

The second part of his prayer is the longest, and has to do with the apostles who had worked with Him during the time of His public work on the earth (vv. 6-19). He prayed for their oneness. He prayed that they would be kept from the Evil One. And He prayed for their sanctification. As we reflect back over the four Gospels, we can see the need for the requests that our Lord made on their behalf. And they are just as important for us today.

But now we come to the third part of His prayer. This has to do with all "them which shall believe on me through their word." And so here the Lord was thinking about all future believers down to the end of time. Think of the great host of the Lord's people that have come from the work of those lowly apostles who had so many needs themselves. Obviously what has happened as a result of their work has to be attributed to the ministry of the Holy Spirit working through them.

Let me read this part of the prayer to you, and then we will consider it together. (Read.)

III. OUR LORD PRAYS FOR ALL FUTURE BELIEVERS (John 17:20-26).

This final section of our Lord's prayer contains three requests. They are:

- 1) About oneness (vv. 20-23).
- 2) About heaven (v. 24).
- 3) About love (vv. 25, 26).

Let us consider our Lord's first request.

A. About oneness (John 17:20-23).

How important it is to pray for believers! Our Lord made that clear in this prayer, and it is emphasized by the fact that most of the prayers recorded for us in the NT have to do with believers. This is often overlooked in the work of evangelism. We are going to see in the verses of this part of our Lord's prayer that the blessing of God upon the evangelization of the world is vitally related to what is going on in the lives of the Lord's people. Our Lord still prays for us. We need to pray for ourselves. And we need to seek for the prayers of others, and be thankful to the Lord for them. Pray for those of your family who know the Lord. Pray for the people who attend your church. I hope that you pray for those who attend this Tuesday Class. I would be most grateful to you if you would pray for me and Lucille and our family.

Think of what it means that the Lord is praying for us now! Hebrews 7:25 tells us that this is His chief work at the right hand of the Father. This ought to encourage us to be faithful in prayer. Our days should be planned around the time that we spend in prayer and fellowship with our heavenly Father. Bishop Ryle, in his commentary on John, referred to a man named George Newton who said that it ought to encourage us to realize when we are praying for some child of God, the Lord may be praying for that one at the

same time.

17:20 Notice how the Lord described those for whom He was praying: "Them that shall believe on me through their word." Actually the verb "believe" is not in the future tense in the Greek, but in the present. So we can translate it,

Neither pray I for these (the apostles) alone,
but for them also which believe on me through their word.

However, those who translated this verse were perfectly accurate in translating it, "shall believe." In Greek there is what is called a futuristic present, that is, a present tense is used when it applies to the future. According to two Greek authorities, it refers to something "which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that in thought it may be contemplated as already coming to pass" (Dana and Mantey, p. 185).

Therefore, the Lord was indicating that the testimony of the Apostles would not be in vain. There would be those who would believe through the message that the apostles were ordained to proclaim. Be sure to notice that it is through the preaching of the Word that people will believe. The Apostle Paul taught us that "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

This puts limitations upon those for whom the Lord was praying. He was praying for those who were trusting in the message of the apostles. This was a message concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection, and the necessity of trusting in Him for salvation. The Lord was not thinking of some kind of massive organization made up of all kinds of religions, or even of those who professed to be Christians but do not believe the message of the apostles. There can be no salvation accept through the Gospel preached by the apostles, the Gospel of salvation through Christ which is by the grace of God.

17:21 This verse gives us the first request that the Lord presented to the Father for all future believers. But before we note what that request was, let me point out something that is of special importance for us to understand.

Look at the word "all" in the first part of this verse: "That they **all** may be one." If you will read verse 20 with this verse you will see that the Lord was praying that there would be perfect oneness between those who had believed and those who would believe in the future: "That they **all** may be one."

What does this mean?

It means (as I have just pointed out) that every future believer would be in agreement with the apostles concerning the doctrines of the faith and would seek to live as the apostles lived--from the standpoint of the holiness of their lives. So we as believers in Christ need to ask, What did the apostles believe? What did they teach about God, about Christ, about salvation, and all of the others things that they taught? And how did they live? How did they conduct themselves in their relationship with God, in their relationship with each other, and in their relationship even with the people of the world? In other words, the oneness that the Lord was praying about was a oneness based upon the teaching of Scripture.

This was exactly what Paul was teaching when he wrote the truth that we find in Eph. 4:11-16. Let me read that passage for you. (Read.)

This oneness is the oneness that we seek in the body of Christ.

This is how the Lord described it:

That they all may be one;
as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee,
that they also may be one in us...

Charles Simeon described this as oneness "in essence and in operation" (Vol. 14, p. 136). And then Simeon went on to say that it meant acting in every thing in perfect concert with the Father, having no will but His, speaking nothing but according to His commands, doing nothing but by His direction, and seeking only the glory of His name.

As the Lord's people we are partakers of the divine nature, and we are to seek to be just as devoted to God and to His will as the Lord was, and as the apostles were. The basis of our oneness is the new birth, and the fact that we are members of Christ's body, the Church. Man's way is to seek to be one even though the teaching of the apostles has to be set aside; God's way is a oneness based upon the teachings of Scripture both with regard doctrine and practice.

In addition to bringing glory to God, what is the purpose of this oneness with respect to the world? Look at the last statement in verse 21: "That the world may believe that thou has sent me."

Here is an amazing truth. The relationship that believers have with each other will have a major part in determining what the people of the world will actually believe about the Lord Jesus Christ. And once people are convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was sent into the world by God as indeed He came, then there is some possibility that they will listen to what we have to say about their need of Him.

I firmly believe that God has chosen those who are going to be saved. The Word of God is very clear on that point. But I believe equally that we have a responsibility to carry out with regard to the world. If our witness were not important, we would not be told to witness. It is important. It is a part of the total work that the Lord is doing. But if there are divisions between believers and among churches, it is definitely going to hinder our witness to the world. The greatest need in our day is for the perfecting of the saints, and that can only come about through the faithful teaching of the Word of God. This is pre-eminently the message of the book of Ephesians. But there are also other books in the NT which touch upon this subject of unity among believers. It would be hard to overstate the importance of this subject to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And so when it comes to evangelism, we think of methods. God thinks about what is going on in the lives of His people. A unity of people which is not based upon the Word of God is an affront to God, to Christ, and to the Scriptures. Having churches involved in city-wide evangelistic efforts which do not believe the Word of God is as contrary to Scripture as it can be--or to have people involved in the meetings, singing, etc., who do not know the Lord, is also contrary to Scripture. We would be surprised to see what God would do if we would do things His way instead of ours. We may have trouble getting others to believe this, but the Lord certainly made the whole matter very clear in this wonderful prayer that He prayed.

January 13, 1992

7:22 This is a difficult verse, and has been interpreted in many different ways. Bishop Ryle (II, 450) has listed seven different interpretations.

One thing that we can say about glory in relation to God is that it speaks of the manifestation of His presence, of His Deity. Many scriptures confirm this. When Moses had finished and set up the Tabernacle, we read that the "the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (Ex. 40:34b). That was the presence of the Lord. After Isaiah saw the Lord, he said, "The whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3b). In the opening chapter of this gospel, John wrote of our Lord Jesus Christ, "And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14b).

Probably the most important verse in determining the meaning of this statement is that which is found in 2 Cor. 3:18, with other supporting verses. Paul said in 2 Cor. 3:18,

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror]
the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image
from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

"Beholding" can be translated, reflecting. Peter told us that we are "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4). We all know that the primary purpose of our salvation is to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ. Several Scriptures teach us that. Cf. Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:20, 21; 1 John 3:1-3.

Putting all of these passages together it would seem that our unity is made possible through our conformity to Christ. Where you see believers who are growing in grace and in their knowledge of the Lord, you will find oneness. Where there is a lack of spiritual growth, there will always be disunity. So it behooves us to be growing in the Lord.

To have the glory of the Lord does not mean that we become Deity, but it does mean that we bear the likeness of the Lord. We will only know what this actually means when we are with the Lord. But there is no question from this verse but that "glory" and oneness are inseparable.

17:23 The Lord is in us, and the Father was in the Lord, and it is in our relationship with the Father and the Son that we "are made perfect in one." Through our union with Christ we find our oneness with each other. And that in turn bears convincing testimony to two things:

- 1) That the Lord was sent by the Father, and
- 2) That we are loved by the Father just as the Lord Jesus is loved by Him.

There is no deeper truth in all of Scripture than the truth that we have in these verses. We will never plumb the depths of what they mean, but we should be growing in our understanding of them the longer we know the Lord and the more we seek to be like the Lord.

How different all of this is from what many people think a Christian is. To state it as it is: A Christian is a person who has been joined to Christ. He is our life. Our goal is to become like He is. That is not realized simply by following an example (although He is the pattern of what we need to be). It is realized through our fellowship with Him where we trust Him as One Who abides in us to make us like He is. And it is in this that the Holy Spirit empowers us through the Word to be like Christ. That

is why He takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us. Cf. John 16:14.

Bishop Ryle wrote the following words in reference to this verse:

The divisions of real true believers are the greatest possible injury to the cause of the Gospel. They waste precious time and strength, and supply the world with reasons for unbelief. If all believers at this moment were of one mind, and would work together, they might soon turn the world upside down. No wonder the Lord prayed for unity (II, 451).

Our unity is not an organizational unity, but a unity in Christ--in our desire to please Him, to be like Him, to do His will, to believe His Word, and to glorify His Name.

This completes our Lord's first request for all future believers, His request for us!

The second was:

B. About heaven (John 17:24).

17:24 Our Lord's request in this verse seems to confirm what I have said that He meant when He referred to His glory in the preceding verses.

This verse reveals that there are two reasons why the Lord wants us in heaven:

- 1) So that we can be with Him.
- 2) So that we can behold His glory, i.e., so we can see Him.

In verses 22 and 23 glory and love are linked together, and they are linked together again here in verse 24.

Notice that those "which shall believe on" Him (v. 19) are among those whom the Father has given to the Son. Those who were with the Lord when He prayed this prayer had been given to Him by the Father. And the same thing is true about everyone who will ever believe on Christ. We give ourselves to the Lord because, first of all, the Father gave us to the Son. Salvation does not originate with us, but with God. The Lord has promised that He will be with us as long as we are in this world, but He is looking forward to having us in heaven. In fact, we can say that the Lord will not be fully satisfied until we are all there.

I remind you again that this is the way heaven is spoken of in Scripture. What makes heaven, heaven, is that the Lord will be there. Cf. John 14:2b, 3 where we read, "I go to prepare a place for you..." Also remember 2 Cor. 5:6 and 8:

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that,
whilst we are at home in the body,
we are absent from the Lord...
We are confident, I say, and willing rather
to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

And after Paul described the rapture of the church in 1 Thessalonians 4, he said that we will

...be caught up together...to meet the Lord in the air:
and so shall we ever be with the Lord (v. 17).

And why does He want us there? Listen to His words: "That they may behold my glory."

That is what we are to be doing now. But now we see Him through a glass darkly. Then "we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

You know, I think we have a suggestion of something very important in these words of our Lord. We are inclined to think that when we get to heaven all of the purposes of God will be accomplished, and so there will not be any more for us to do. But that evidently is not the case. I am speaking now of things not revealed in Scripture, so I want it to be clear that I am speculating.

If the Lord wants us in heaven so that we can see Him, then it must mean that He will do more for us, and even more in us, even after we are in heaven. Maybe, and I say, maybe, this explains how we will catch up with each other spiritually. When people go to heaven, they go at different stages of spiritual growth. Some grow very little. Others are very mature in the faith. We all are going to be like Christ, but it may be that there will be differences among us depending upon how diligently we have sought the Lord from day to day here in this life. I really don't know. But I am sure that no one is going to be bored in heaven, and I am equally sure that we will delight ourselves in the Lord Jesus then more than we ever have here on earth.

Let that be as it may. The secret things belong to the Lord, don't they? But I can say this: If the Lord wants us in heaven so that we can behold His glory, then it must be very important for us now to be looking at Him and learning of Him and seeking to be like Him. Where do we see the Lord now? Just in one place: in the Word.

We have a good example of what we all need to be doing by what the Lord did with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and then did with the apostles later. What did He do? Do you remember how confused those Emmaus disciples were? What did the Lord do to give them peace? Listen to Luke's words in Luke 24:27. This tells us what the Lord did.

And beginning at Moses and all the prophets,
he expounded unto them in all the scriptures
the things concerning HIMSELF.

And what did those disciples say about their time with the Lord after the Lord was taken from them. Listen again to Luke's report in Luke 24:32:
And they said one to another,

Did not our heart burn within us,
while he talked with us by the way,
and while he opened to us the scriptures?

It was just a short time after that when the Lord was with his apostles that He reminded them that He had told them about His death and resurrection before. Listen again to His words.

These are the words which I spake unto you,
while I was yet with you,
that all things must be fulfilled, which were written
in the law of Moses, and in the prophets,
and in the psalms, **concerning me** (Luke 24:44).

And then Luke said,

Then opened he their understanding,
that they might understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45).

What is it that makes the Word of God come to life for us? It is when we see Christ in the Word--in all of it, Old Testament and New Testament. And it is when we see Him in the Word that we will grow. That is the reason I

believe that, since the Lord wants us in heaven so we can see His glory, that He will have more to do for us up there.

I think that it was Oswald Chambers who wrote My Utmost For His Highest who asked the question in one of his books, "When I read the Bible am I just a wool gatherer, or am I like a man looking for His Lord?"

Illus: Dr. Mitchell's advice to a missionary going to Japan.

How do we sit at the Lord's feet? By taking our Bible, reading it, and trusting the Holy Spirit to show us the things of Christ, which He was given to us to do, and which He delights to do.

What assurance do we have that we will be in heaven with the Lord some day? Our Lord gave us two reasons in this verse:

- 1) First, because He said, "Father, I will..."
- 2) Second, because He said to the Father, "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

The Lord has always found His greatest delight in His Son, has always loved Him, and will never fail to grant a single request that the Son makes of Him. Therefore we are as sure to have a place in heaven as it is that the Father loves the Son. And so nothing could be more secure.

But now let us go to the last two verses and the last request the Lord made for us and for all who believe.

C. About love (John 17:25, 26).

Matthew Henry said that when the Lord prayed for the sanctification of His people, He called Him, "Holy Father." When He prayed for the glorification of His people, He called Him, as He does here, "O righteous Father."

17:25 Note that the Father is righteous even though the world does not know Him. But the Son knows Him, and the people of God have known that the Father sent the Son. Six times in His prayer our Lord refers to the fact that He was sent by the Father. Cf. vv. 3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25. It was our Lord's prayer that there would still be those in the world who would believe that the Father had sent Him. This is why they were to be one in practical experience. The Son was sent to reveal the Father, was sent to do the Father's will which included His suffering and death for the salvation of the world.

7:26 This verse sounds a lot like verse 6. The Lord Jesus had made the Father known to His own, and He would continue to do it. And the purpose was "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them."

We learn a great deal about the ways of the Lord from John 17. Most believers are convicted because they do not love as they should--love each other, love the people of the world so as to want to see them saved, and most of all because they do not love God and Christ and the Holy Spirit as they should. What is the remedy? How can our love grow, our love in the Lord?

It is as the Father's Name is made known to us in a greater way. When the Lord said that He had declared the Father's Name to His disciples, He meant that He had told them of the Father. He had been revealing to them all along various things about the Father. And it is through learning of God

as taught by the Lord Jesus, and later by the Holy Spirit, that our love increases, and our fellowship with the Lord becomes more of a vital part of our lives.

To know God is to love Him. To know God one must know Christ. And to know God is to be drawn into a more intimate fellowship with Christ which is the one, true basis for our oneness with Christ and with each other.

It is very significant that the last words of our Lord's prayer were, "And I in them." He had mentioned this in verse 23. Our perfection is only possible through our union with Christ. This takes us back to the illustration about the vine and the branches that the Lord gave to His apostles in John 15. It is only as we abide in Him that there can be any oneness. It is only as we abide in Him that there can be any holiness. It is only as we abide in Him that there can be any testimony to the world. It is only as we abide in Him that there can be any love. All that we need is to be found in Christ, and only in Christ. It is only through Christ that we can know God. It is as Paul stated it in his letter to the Colossian church, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27b). We need to know Christ. We need to love Him. We need to trust Him. We need to obey Him. We need to walk with Him. All that God has for us to fit us for service here and for heaven above is in Christ. Let us pray that the Lord will teach us more of what it means to abide in Him.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 18, 19 -- Part 1
January 20, 1992
John 18:1-14

Intro: We come in chapter 18 to the fifth major division of the Gospel of John. The outline we have been following is:

- I. THE INTRODUCTION (John 1).
- II. THE LORD'S PUBLIC MINISTRY IN THE WORLD (John 2-12).
- III. THE LORD'S PRIVATE MINISTRY TO THE APOSTLES (John 13-16).
- IV. THE LORD'S HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER (John 17).
- V. THE LORD'S ARREST, TRIAL, DEATH, AND BURIAL (John 18, 19).
- VI. THE LORD'S RESURRECTION (John 20:1-10).
- VII. THE LORD'S POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES (John 20:11-21:23).
- VIII. THE CONCLUSION (John 21:24, 25).

The outline of the fifth division is:

- V. THE LORD'S ARREST, TRIAL, DEATH, AND BURIAL (John 18, 19).
 - A. The Lord's betrayal and arrest, taken before Annas (John 18:1-14).
 - B. The Lord before Caiaphas and Peter's denial (John 18:15-27).
 - C. The Lord before Pilate, condemned to death (John 18:28-19:16).
 - D. The Lord's crucifixion and death (John 19:17-37).
 - E. The Lord's burial (John 19:38-42).

It is important to note that the style of John's Gospel changed at this point. Before, very few details were given about biography of our Lord. John gives us a selected group of His miracles and the effect which they had upon His disciples and people who saw them. And then John has given us much about the Lord's teaching. But at this point John became very concerned about the details of what the Lord Himself was going through.

18:1 The events in this section took place in Gethsemane, although John did not record how the Lord prayed in the Garden as Matthew, Mark, and Luke did. But it is important to see what a major part prayer had in the closing hours of our Lord's life before His crucifixion. Matthew Henry pointed out that our Lord was here carrying out His work as our Great High Priest. The priest had three functions, and we see in these chapters, beginning with chapter 13, how our Lord performed all three: teaching, praying, and offering a sacrifice. And it is clear that when He had finished praying for His apostles, He wasted no time in going on to deliver Himself into the hands of His enemies. His hour had come! However, in considering the following events we need to remember what our Lord said in John 10:17, 18. His enemies were not in charge; He was!

"The brook Cedron," or Kidron, runs through a valley at the east of Jerusalem between Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. It seems certain that the Garden of Gethsemane was on the lower portion of the Mount of Olives where it was easily visible from Jerusalem.

18:2 We learned in John 13:30 that, after Judas had received the sop from the Lord, He left the Upper Room. He went to arrange with our Lord's enemies for the betrayal. It is interesting that He knew where He could find the Lord "for Jesus oftentimes resorted thither with his disciples." It seems pointless to think, as some do, that the Lord had any other purpose in going to Gethsemane except to pray--which would have been His usual purpose in going there with His disciples.

There is not instance in the Gospels to indicate that our Lord ever engaged in a prayer meeting with His disciples where He would pray, and they would

pray. It does seem that John 17 was prayed in their presence, as the Lord may have prayed many times before. But it is probably more likely that when the Lord "resorted," or assembled, with His disciples, that He may have taught them, and then withdrew from them to pray by Himself. Or it may have been that they went there often just for prayer, but separately.

Whatever may have been their practice, Judas knew where he would be able to find the Lord.

Notice two things in particular about this verse:

- 1) It is important for us to see the place that prayer had during the closing hours of our Lord's earthly ministry. And, as it has often been said, "If it were important for the Lord to pray, how much more should it be for us." In this our Lord is our Example, as in so many other things. He truly was "touched with feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15).
- 2) It is important to note also that Judas knew where he could find the Lord. How many of our friends would expect to find us praying? It is very evident that prayer occupied much of our Lord's time while He was here on earth, much more even than is indicated in the four Gospel records.

18:3 What Judas did at that time and in that place, is an indication of how insensitive he was to the Lord. There is nothing truly sacred to a man like Judas. He was a thief, and so intent on getting what he wanted that he would intrude upon the Lord in the Lord's communion with the Father at such a time as this.

Note also that Judas had without doubt heard the Lord say that no one could take His life from Him, and yet he seemed intent here to prove that the Lord was wrong. He and the Lord's enemies seem intent on making sure that the Lord would not possibly get away.

The "band of men" were, in all likelihood, Roman soldiers. From the Greek word that is used here it has been supposed by some that as many as five hundred men were involved in what Judas was doing--possibly even more than that. So here we have Gentiles and Jews united in their opposition to our Lord. They made sure with the lanterns and torches that the Lord would not be able to escape in the darkness. They also had their weapons to use if the apostles tried to defend and protect their Lord.

18:4 The purpose of John's Gospel was to show, mainly from the miracles that our Lord performed, that He was the Son of God. That purpose is obvious at this point in the record.

John declared the omniscience, the foreknowledge, of the Lord. Cf. John 13:1; 19:28. He was not taken by surprise. He did not try to escape--which He could have done. Cf. what He did in John 5:13; 8:59. Notice also the account which Luke gave in Luke 4:28-30. But in this instance, the Lord, knowing all that was ahead of Him, faced His enemies and identified Himself. (John does not mention the kiss which Judas gave to Him.)

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We see in these events how willingly the Lord submitted Himself to the will of the Father in giving Himself into the hands of sinful men. And we must remember that it was not just at this moment that the Lord knew, but He had known all things from the beginning--therefore, surely throughout His life

on earth. When we read the passages in the Gospels where the Lord sought to tell His disciples about His death, we must recognize that He not only knew that He would die, but how he would die, and the terrible sufferings that He would endure both at the hands of men and of God.

Bishop Ryle made this comment in his commentary on John (II, 465):

The best of martyrs, like Ridley and Latimer, did not know for certain, up to the moment of their deaths, that something might not occur to alter the mind of their persecutors and save their lives. Our Lord knew perfectly well that His death was sure, by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.

And then Ryle quoted another writer, saying that

..."what rendered Christ's sufferings most terrible was the perfect knowledge He had of the torments He should endure. From the first moment of His life He had present to His mind the scourge, the thorns, the cross, and the agonizing death which awaited Him. Saw He a lamb in the meadow or a victim in the temple, the sight reminded Him that He was the lamb of God, and that He was to be offered up a sacrifice (Ibid.).

This was an aspect of our Lord's sufferings that we do not have. Solomon taught, and we know it is true, that we do not know "what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1). We do not know when we will die, nor how, nor the sufferings we may have to endure before we die. The Lord has graciously withheld all of that from us. And He has promised sufficient grace as we meet with the unexpected trials of our lives. Life would be unbearable for us if we knew all that was ahead. But our Lord knew all that was ahead, spoke of it to His disciples from time to time, and then, when His hour came, He delivered Himself into the hands of the very people who would not be satisfied until He was dead. Let us remember this when we think about our Lord.

I remember hearing missionaries speak years ago of the trauma that children in some parts of the world go through when they find out that some day they will die. We all know that. But what if we knew how we would die? Dr. Mitchell used to tell me that Dr. Sutcliffe, the first president of MSB, would often say that he did not mind going to heaven, but how he would get there, was the thing that gave him concern.

When the enemies of the Lord came, the Lord had already sweat great drops of blood. As He approached His enemies, we can surely assume that His blood was upon Him.

Our Lord did not wait for His enemies to speak; He spoke first. He was in command. And so He said, "Whom seek ye?"

Matthew Henry wrote,

When the people would have forced him to a crown, and offered to make him a king in Galilee, he withdrew, and hid himself (ch. vi. 15); but, when they came to force him to a cross, he offered himself; for he came to this world to suffer... (V, 1171).

18:5 Their answer to His question was, "Jesus of Nazareth," or Jesus, the Nazarene. To identify Him with Nazareth was to cast reproach upon Him. Yet it seems that they did not know Him when they saw Him. That was probably the reason that Judas had promised to identify Him with a kiss.

The Lord's response was a simple, and yet glorious, "I am" (as the Greek

text has it. By His answer our Lord was claiming Deity, claiming to be the One Who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. Cf. Ex. 3:14 where God spoke to Moses saying, "I AM THAT I AM." And this name, too, would recall to the minds of the apostles those great teachings of our Lord which John has recorded for us in this gospel:

- 1) "I am the Bread of Life."
- 2) "I am the Light of the world."
- 3) "I am the Door."
- 4) "I am the Good Shepherd."
- 5) "I am the Resurrection, and the Life."
- 6) "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."
- 7) "I am the True Vine."

The eternal Son of God was standing before them in human flesh, covered with His own blood, and mere creatures suppose that they had the right and the power by human authority to lay their hands upon Him, and put Him to death. By our Lord's response He was "despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2).

18:6 Notice the power of the words of our Lord.

When we record the miracles of John's Gospel, we do not usually record this event. But there is no way to explain what happened except to say that it was a miracle. To put a mere human explanation on it is to miss the whole point of this event. The Lord was displaying His divine power to men who were not able to identify Him. Again let me quote Bishop Ryle (II, 467):

It was an exercise for the last time of that same Divine power by which our Lord calmed the waves, stilled the winds, cast out devils, healed the sick, and raise the dead. And it was a miracle purposely wrought at this juncture, in order to show the disciples and their enemies that our Lord was not taken because He could not help it, or crucified because he could not prevent it; but because He was willing to suffer and die for sinners... The effect of the miraculous influence put forth by our Lord, seems to have been that the party who came to seize Him were for a little time struck down to the ground, like men struck down, but not killed, by lightning, and rendered so helpless that our Lord and His disciples might easily have escaped.

Was this not a fulfillment of what David said in Psalm 27:2?

When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes,
came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

Augustine said this, quoted by Ryle (II, 467):

What shall He do when He comes to judge, who did this when about to be judged? What shall be His might when He comes to reign, who had this might when He was at the point to die?

Matthew Henry commented (V, 1172) that the Lord's enemies did not fall forward as being submissive to Him, but backwards, as overcome by Him. The words, "I am," which were intended to comfort the apostles, were words which demonstrated to our Lord's enemies the almighty power of His Word and His Name.

18:7 How long those men were on the ground, we do not know. Do not think of just a few men, but, as mentioned before, probably several hundred men. What a sight that must have been! With all of their weapons, it was very evident that our Lord by Himself was far greater than they were.

But that they might not be turned aside from their purpose, as well as to show that their exposure to divine power would not change their plans, our

Lord asked the same question a second time, and got the same answer. This is further proof that it takes more than a display of divine power to change the hearts of men. Pharaoh's heart remained unchanged through all of the plagues, and even today people will continue to reject Christ and His truth even though we have all of the evidence that we do that He was the Son of God with power as He claimed to be.

18:8 In our Lord response to His enemies, we may have the main reason for such a display of His power at this time. It was for the protection of His apostles. He repeated His "I am," but this time they did not fall backwards. However, He issued a command, not a request: "Let these go their way." Thus we see further evidence that the Lord was in charge.

And the fact that the soldiers and the Jews who were with them, did not arrest the apostles was, as Augustine remarked, as great a miracle as the casting down to the ground which our Lord's enemies experienced.

When the Lord said, "Their way," speaking of the apostles, He was indicating that His way and their way at this point in history, were not the same. He must go to Cross alone. They could not go with Him, but would be with Him again after His work was completed. But at this point their paths were divided.

As the apostles thought in later years of what the Lord did for them at this point, they must have been overwhelmed with the love of their Savior. The same would have been true of Abraham. God spared Abraham's son, Isaac, from death, but He did not spare His own Son.

18:9 In this verse the Apostle John gave to the words of the Lord Jesus the same authority, truthfulness, and certainty, that he had given to the statements of OT Scripture in other places. It is impossible for the word of our Lord to fail. This particular quotation is from our Lord's prayer, John 17:12.

18:10 It seems clear from this verse that Peter had failed to get the message of the events which had just transpired before his eyes. The Lord did not need Peter's protection; Peter needed His.

We cannot help but admire Peter's courage at this point even though it was misguided courage. And yet, how quickly his courage would give place to fear when he would deny His Lord. Peter acted independently of the Lord. He was resisting the authorities. He was endangering himself as well as all of the other apostles. But probably what is the most lamentable of all was that his action showed that he still did not understand the mission of our Lord. When Peter gave that wonderful testimony to the Lord concerning what he believed about the Lord ("Thou art the Christ..."), he followed it with a strong rebuke against the Lord when the Lord spoke of His suffering and death. See Matt. 16:13-23. Peter understood Who the Lord was, but he did not understand what the Lord had come to do. And at this point it is evident that he still did not understand.

Thus, we have the Lord's rebuke of Peter in the next verse.

18:11 Much time can be spent in teaching any one of the four Gospels by comparing what one wrote which the others did not write, and vice versa, but our primary task in teaching any book of the Bible is to explain what is in that book. We may, or may not, be able to explain the differences, e.g., why John did not record what took place when our Lord

prayed in Gethsemane, or that the Lord healed Malchus' ear. But we learn several important things from this verse.

We see the amazing patience of our Lord as He sought once more to teach Peter truth which he had not yet comprehended. We can also see here that what a person believes will determine the course of action that he will take.

We see that the kingdom of God is not advanced with the use of the sword. Paul told the Corinthian church in 2 Cor. 10:4,

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,
but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.

Matthew quoted some additional words which the Lord spoke to Peter. They are found in Matt. 26:52 where He said that "all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword."

One more thing we learn from our Lord's words is that the struggle He personally faced in the Garden of Gethsemane was over, and the Lord was now completely submissive to the Father's will. He was determined to drink the cup, i.e., to go to the Cross, to complete the work that the Father had given Him to do. May we also be determined that nothing shall turn us aside from doing what is His will for us.

January 27, 1992

18:12 The event described in this verse tells us about the first time in our Lord's ministry when He was not free. It seems strange that our Lord, Who a moment ago had by the power of His presence knocked the whole band of His enemies backward to the ground, is now taken without offering any resistance. However, as John Calvin pointed out long ago, we can learn two things from what took place after our Lord's enemies arrived in the garden:

- 1) That He was not taken because He was helpless to resist. He had shown them that His enemies were powerless in His presence. But even if the Lord had been unable to defend Himself, we need to remember what Matthew recorded of our Lord's comments to Peter when Peter attacked Malchus with his sword. He said,
 Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father,
 and he shall presently give me
 more than twelve legions of angels? (Matt. 26:53).
- 2) That He willingly submitted Himself to His enemies. He refused to do what He could have done because the hour had come for Him to accomplish what the Father had sent Him to do.

John expressed himself in this verse to show emphatically how impressive the forces were who had come to take the Lord.

They "bound him." This probably means that He was handcuffed and chained. They wanted to do all that they could to secure Him as a prisoner, but they also wanted to humiliate Him. Many have seen a parallel here between the binding of Isaac, the binding of Joseph when he was cast into prison, and even the binding of Samson. Our Lord's binding was to lead to the Cross. It was necessary that our Lord be bound that we, who are by nature bound by sin, might be set free.

18:13 John is the only one who tells us that our Lord was taken before Annas prior to His being taken before Caiaphas. Why this was done, we do not know. Many suggestions have been made. What we do know is that

the high priesthood had been corrupted in our Lord's day and that, contrary to the Mosaic Law, both Annas and Caiaphas, his son-in-law, were looked upon as high priests at the same time. Cf. Luke 3:2. It seems most likely that the Lord was taken before Annas to humor the old man. Caiaphas as a son-in-law certainly had no claim to the priesthood, and therefore was beholden to Annas for the position that he had, and the power he was able to exercise.

Bishop Westcott in his commentary said that Annas was "one of the most remarkable figures in the Jewish history of the time" (p. 254). He and four of his sons held the priesthood in succession. Although some disagree, it seems quite certain that instead of the high priests holding their position for life, they were elected, possibly annually. This, too, was contrary to the Mosaic Law. It is interesting to see how superficial these men were in their zeal for the Law when they did so many things which were contrary to the Law.

What happened when our Lord was taken before Annas, we do not know. It is very possible that some kind of an examination took place then. On the other hand, it might have been that Annas was just curious to see this One Who had caused such a stir in Israel by the miracles He performed, and by the messages which he had proclaimed to the people.

18:14 The incident to which John referred here is recorded for us in John 11:47-54. (Read.)

Let us remember that the prophecy which Caiaphas uttered he spoke "not of himself" (John 11:51), nor did he himself mean what he had been constrained by the Spirit of God to say. Calvin called Caiaphas foul-mouthed, wicked, and treacherous. (Cf. Vol. XVIII, pp. 197, 198.) Caiaphas meant that by killing the Lord the nation of Israel would continue in Rome's favor, but his words meant far more than that as the Apostle John explained in recording the incident in John 11.

And so we can see that our Lord was in the hands of a man who had condemned Him even before He was tried. He had determined long before that the Lord Jesus "must die."

When we see the injustice and indignity with which our Lord was treated, it should remind us of those words of our Lord given in His Sermon on the Mount. See Matt. 5:11, 12:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you,
and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely,
for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad:
for great is your reward in heaven:
for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

We need to remember, too, that it was just a short time before this that our Lord had told His disciples,

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 your's also.
But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake,
because they know not him that sent me (John 15:20, 21).

Therefore, the treatment that the Lord was beginning to receive at the hands of men, held little comfort for the apostles (if they remembered what the Lord had said to them). Now we are ready for the next section.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 18, 19 -- Part 2
January 27, 1992
John 18:15-27

Intro: We are now in the section of John's Gospel in which he recorded for us the arrest, trial, death and burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the first fourteen verses we learned about how Judas betrayed our Lord, after which our Lord was arrested and taken before Annas.

In verses 15-27 we learn about:

B. The Lord before Caiaphas, and Peter's denial (John 18:15-27).

In the first section of this chapter we are told that, after our Lord was arrested, He was taken before Annas. But we are told nothing about what happened there. We can only guess at what did happen there. But throughout this section our Lord was before Caiaphas. However, we can see that much of this section is given over to Peter's denial of the Lord. It is an interesting study to contrast Judas and what he did with Peter and what he did.

18:15 John did not mention what we learn from the other Gospels, that when our Lord was arrested, all of the disciples forsook the Lord, and fled. Cf. Matt. 26:56. It may have been that he and Peter did not go very far away, and then returned. Although we cannot say for certain that the one mentioned here as "another disciple," or the other disciples, was John, yet there is no other reasonable explanation. We see practically the same expression in John 20:2, 3, 4, and 8. I believe it was John. So we know that John was an eyewitness to the Lord's trial before Caiaphas. How and under what circumstances John, a lowly fisherman, had become acquainted and was on friendly terms with the high priest, again we have to say that we do not know. But the Apostle John had been a disciple of John the Baptist, and had perhaps gained some prominence at the time. Besides, being a devout man (which John surely was), it is not unlikely at all that he could have sought from the high priest what he ultimately found in the Lord.

18:16 It seems that John had been admitted into the high priest's chamber, but Peter was detained at the door. However, after speaking to the woman that kept the door, John went out and brought Peter in.

As we approach this sad episode in the life of Simon Peter, we need to reflect upon what had gone on before in Peter's relationship with the Lord. But as we think about Peter, let us think about ourselves and how the same failures which we can observe in his life may also be found in our lives. The Spirit of God has not told us about Peter to bring shame upon his name, but to warn us and to teach us about the very real possibility that Peter's problems may be our problems. They may be my problems, and they may be your problems.

In the first place we see that Peter had a lot of self-confidence--which is just another name for pride! That came out very clearly when the Lord announced to His disciples that the Shepherd would be smitten (as prophesied in Zech.13:7), and the sheep would be scattered. Peter responded by saying that although everyone else would be offended because of the Lord, he never would. And then he followed that up by saying that even though he would die with the Lord, he would not deny Him. And the other disciples said the same thing. See Matt. 26:30-35.

Luke recorded our Lord's comments that Satan had desired to have Peter to

sift him as wheat, but the Lord had prayed for Peter that his faith would not fail. Peter responded by saying that he was ready to go to prison and even to death with the Lord. Cf. Luke 22:31-34.

One of the worst things about self-confidence is that it is always, without exception, accompanied by a lack of trust in the Lord--always! That was Peter's problem. In fact, he was so confident of himself, that he believed he could stand even though the others would fall. And there is no evidence that he expressed gratitude to the Lord for praying for him. We can even say that Peter was so sure that he could take care of himself that he did not fear the sifting of Satan.

Peter surely must have known Zech. 13:7, and yet he declared that he would be an exception to what Zechariah had predicted by the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Peter also must have known what Solomon had written so many years before, and which was illustrated over and over again in OT times. I refer to Prov. 16:18,

Pride goeth before destruction,
and an haughty spirit before a fall.

The other problem that Peter had was a failure in prayer. It is impossible for us to know the place that prayer had in his life, but his behavior in Gethsemane was not a good indication of a strong prayer life. He slept while he should have been praying, and he did not respond to the rebuking of the Lord each time the Lord came to him, and James, and John. We can say that all of the disciples had the problem that Peter did, but the focus was upon Peter. And that was probably because of the place of leadership that he had with the disciples. He was certainly targeted more by the Devil than any of the others were, and his failure was far greater than anything that he felt that he could ever do. When John brought Peter into Caiaphas' chambers, the exposure began.

What a lesson this is for us! We are foolish ourselves to recognize that we have the same problems that Peter had, and yet not do anything about it. Sin has made all of us proud. Pride is what caused the downfall of Satan himself. And there is probably nothing that contributes more to human problems than human pride. Does it have a grip on our lives, or are we concerned about it, and seeking to walk humbly with our God?

And what place does prayer have in our lives? Do we rotely repeat our prayers with little fervency and little faith? Do we pray just if we feel like it, and if we have time for it, or does it have #1 priority with us? These are questions that we all need to ask ourselves, and continually be asking the Lord to help us so that we will, by His grace, be able to stand up against the temptations and trials that come our way. Peter ought to be a very important person to us because we are all so much like him. There is no question but that Peter loved the Lord, loved Him dearly. But he failed to recognize what his problems were, and so he failed the Lord terribly. And no one was more grieved than he was.

Let us see what happened when Peter got inside the door.

January 28, 1992

18:17 Peter was in strange surroundings. The question which was proposed to him was completely unexpected. As it was stated in the Greek, it

anticipated a negative answer. And Peter responded as the question suggested. He said very briefly but emphatically, "I am not"--only two words in the Greek. Apparently his relationship with John had caused the maiden to ask the question.

How quickly Peter's supposed strength was shown to be nothing but weakness. As Calvin suggested, even without any threat, Peter threw down his arms. Remember that this encounter which appeared to be perfectly harmless was, nevertheless, the beginning of Satan's sifting. Peter, who would draw his sword and attack Malchus, fell before a simple question asked him by a young woman.

18:18 "The servants and officers" referred to here were the Jewish men who accompanied the Romans soldiers when the Lord Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. Apparently the soldiers had returned to their barracks, but "the servants and officers" were waiting to see what would happen as a result of the examination our Lord was going through before Caiaphas.

It probably is wrong to attach blame to Peter at this point. The night was cold. He was there with the intention of standing by his Lord, and the only people who were around were men who by their position, at least, had taken sides against the Lord. It was a very difficult place for Peter to be, one that would not have given him any strength for the additional trials that he would face, but it seems wrong to bring accusations against Peter for what he did according to this verse.

18:19 The scene shifts in this verse from Peter to what was taking place with our Lord who had been brought before Caiaphas, the high priest.

The high priest quizzed the Lord about "his disciples, and of his doctrine."

It seems that the high priest was concerned about the extent of the influence that our Lord had among the people of Israel. Perhaps he was asking for names, occupations, addresses, etc. And then concerning our Lord's teaching, the high priest was apparently seeking to determine if the charges of heresy which had been brought against Him were true. A prophet who taught contrary to the Law of God was, according to Deut. 18:20, to die.

18:20 The Lord passed over the question about His disciples, probably to protect them (which was one of His great concerns at this time). But, with respect to his doctrine, He spoke very emphatically. In the Greek text the pronoun "I" is used along with the verb when He said, "I spake openly...I ever taught..." The Lord had taught where the people were, in the synagogues and in the temple (as well as in other places). He had made no attempt to be secretive about the message He had come to proclaim. He never engaged in deception, nor did He ever encourage His disciples to be deceptive. In fact, the words that are used for preaching the Gospel indicate that the preaching is to be public--whether to an individual, or to a small group, or a large crowd. The Lord never changed His message when He saw that scribes and Pharisees were present. He often denounced them, but He never compromised with the truth. The Lord never taught anything in secret which He was not willing to teach publicly.

18:21 In defence of His words in verse 20, our Lord challenged the high priest to call to witness any person who had heard Him to confirm

the claim that He had made. The language our Lord used here indicated that there were those present who had heard Him, and who could verify or deny that what He said was in fact the truth.

18:22 We see in this verse an expression of the hatred which the leaders of Israel felt toward the Lord. The Lord was being examined, but He had not been pronounced guilty. Therefore, the action of this officer was completely inappropriate. The high priest could have rebuked the Lord if he had felt that a rebuke was needed. The officer was contributing to the humiliation and suffering which the Lord experienced throughout His trial and in His death at the hands of unbelieving Jews.

18:23 The Lord asked the officer if he had said anything that was wrong, or anything that was inappropriate for such an occasion. Or instead, had He told the truth and done it properly. If it were the latter, as it was, then why was He struck? Obviously the Lord knew that He had done nothing wrong.

18:24 The action of the officer was even more despicable because Annas had sent the Lord to Caiaphas in chains, and He was still in chains. Therefore, He was unable (humanly speaking) to defend Himself in any way.

At this point the emphasis shifts back to Peter and to two other times that he denied the Lord.

18:25 At this point Peter is still where we left him in verse 18. He was there, not to converse with "the servants and officers" (v. 18), but he was there to warm himself until he knew more about what would happen to his Lord.

However, even though he was not talking to them, they noticed him. And they asked him if he were not one of the Lord's disciples. But Peter denied it again with the same two words that he had used in verse 17. It is clear that Peter did not want to discuss the matter.

But we see that some were not satisfied with Peter's answer.

18:26 At this point a relative of Malchus spoke up and said, "Did I not see thee in the garden with him?"

18:27 But again, and for the third time, Peter said that he was not a disciple, that he did not know the Lord. "And immediately the cock crew."

The God of creation had that rooster crow at the very time that it was needed to bring home to Peter's heart that he had sinned, that he had done the very thing that he had said he would not do, or better, that he would never do.

The Apostle John dropped the story at this point. Matthew recorded that when this happened,

And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him,
Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.

And he went out, and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75).

The bitterness of Peter's tears was increased because of his great love for the Lord Jesus Christ. One who did not love as Peter loved would not have been so deeply affected as Peter was. He was deeply grieved. The word

"bitterly" suggests that he sobbed with deep repentance and regret that he had failed the Lord as he had.

Most Christians have had times when they have denied the Lord in one way or another. Perhaps it has been by failing to do what he or she knew ought to be done. Even the Apostle Paul expressed his great concern for himself when he wrote to the Roman church, "...to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18b).

Such experiences are designed to show us how insufficient we are in ourselves, and how much we need the Lord. They also show us that while we must never overestimate our own powers, neither should we underestimate the power of Satan to pull us down into shame and defeat.

I think that we can be sure that Peter gave himself more to prayer as a result of this experience. He did not kill himself, as Judas did, but ultimately was restored to the Lord, stronger than ever, to take up the work that the Lord had called him to do.

May the Lord enable us to learn from Peter's experience that we may not have to go through the bitter time of knowing how miserably we have failed the Lord.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 18, 19 -- Part 3a
February 3, 1992
John 18:28-40

Intro: We come now to our Lord's trial before Pilate. This is the longest section in John 18 and 19 where we read John's account of the events in the closing days of our Lord's life on earth. He had been before the Jewish authorities; now He was to be judged before the representative of the Roman government: Pilate, the Roman governor. John did not mention our Lord's appearance before Herod. We are indebted to Luke for that episode in the trial of our Lord. Why John did not include it, it is impossible to say.

18:28 This is a case of what Alfred Edersheim, in his work, The Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah, has called "unscrupulous scrupulosity and unrighteous conscientiousness" (II, 565). The Jewish leaders were very careful not to defile themselves. To do so would have kept them from observing the Passover. However, they were determined in their hearts to see the Lord put to death even though they had been unable to bring any charge against Him that would stand. They hated Him because of His popularity with the people. They hated Him also because in their eyes He had broken the Sabbath again and again. But they hated Him as well because He claimed to be the Son of God. That fact comes out clearly in chapter 19 where we are told about the title that was put over the Lord on the Cross. That was the way the Romans had of telling why a particular prisoner was put to the death. The Jewish leaders were a perfect example of the truth of Jer. 17:9. It has not been unusual at all, throughout history, for men to conceal evil behind a religious mask.

Calvin charged the Jewish leaders with two heinous faults:

- 1) He said that they "do not consider that they carry more pollution within their hearts, than they can contract by entering any place however profane" (Vol. XVIII, p. 205).
- 2) He said that "they carry to excess their care about small matters, and neglect what is of the highest importance" (Ibid.).

And then Calvin referred to Tit. 3:15:

Unto the pure all things are pure:
but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure;
but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

He then added this charge:

But these hypocrites, though they are so full of malice, ambition, fraud, cruelty, and avarice, that they almost infect heaven and earth with their abominable smell, are only afraid of external pollutions. So then it is an intolerable mockery, that they expect to please God, provided that they do not contract defilement by touching some unclean thing, though they have disregarded true purity (Ibid.).

How true were the words of our Lord which He spoke just shortly before His arrest, and recorded for us in Matthew's Gospel:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter,
but within they are full of extortion and excess.
Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup
and the platter, that the outside of them may be clean also
(Matt. 23:25, 26).

Matthew Poole remarked, "Nothing is more ordinary, than for persons over zealous about rituals, to be as remiss with reference to moral duties (Vol. III, p. 374).

What a lesson this is for all of us! We are all hypocrites by nature, and it is only by the grace of God that we can be cleansed within, and then kept clean!

18:29 The Jews should have brought their charges into "the judgment hall, but Pilate agrees to humor them, and so he went out to them. He naturally asked for them to produce their charge against our Lord.

In the book of Acts, where Paul was on trial before Festus and Agrippa, Festus reminded Agrippa of what Roman law said:

It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have license to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him (Acts 25:16).

This is what Pilate asked them about their charge against our Lord.

18:30 Note their insolent response. They were very sure of themselves. And they charged the Lord with being "a malefactor."

By using that term they were indicating that our Lord was a doer of some particular evil which was well known. They also meant that He had been convicted of evil doing by Jewish law. Now they wanted Pilate to do the same by Roman law.

Matthew Henry said about this charge:

He an evil-doer who went about doing good! Let those be called whom he has cured, and fed, and taught; whom he has rescued from devils, and raised from death; and let them be asked whether he be an evil-doer or no. Note, It is no new thing for the best of benefactors to be branded and run down as the worst of malefactors (V, 1183).

John did not record their full response. Bishop Ryle thinks that John felt that the full answer was well known by the time he wrote his Gospel record. Luke tells us that they said this:

We found this fellow perverting the nation,
and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar,
saying that he himself is Christ a King (Luke 23:2).

Matthew tells us that the Jews had accused our Lord of blasphemy because He had claimed to be the Messiah. Cf. Matt. 26:65. And this is when they condemned Him to death. But the Jews would not make this the basis of their accusation because Pilate would have told them, as they feared he would, and as the next verse tells us that he did, that such a charge was not within his jurisdiction. Therefore, he would have felt that the Jews should have taken care of the charge according to their law. What they did want Pilate to think was that the Lord was a threat to Roman rule in Israel.

18:31 And so we read here that Pilate said that because of the nature of the charge they had laid against the Lord, He ought to be judged according to their law.

They objected by saying that the Roman government had taken away from them the right to put anyone to death. This statement has been questioned, and we have only to cite the death of Stephen so very soon after our Lord was crucified, as an instance in which the Jews could put people to death.

18:32 This was another instance in which men were contributing to the fulfillment of Scripture without knowing that they were doing.

We do not know why the Jews were so anxious for the Romans to put our Lord to death, but Matthew Henry has given four very likely reasons. This is what he said:

- 1) For the Romans to crucify the Lord would have made it legal in the eyes of people. That would have been much better than for a mob to kill the Lord. That might have gotten the Jews into trouble with their captors.
- 2) The Romans could have killed the Lord more safely. There would have been less likelihood of an uproar among the people who were sympathetic with the Lord if the Romans put Him to death.
- 3) If the Romans killed Him, there would have been greater reproach upon our Lord. To be crucified was not only permanently degrading for the one who died such a death, but it was degrading for the family of the person who died such a death, and that humiliation continued for several generations afterwards.

Paul wrote in Gal. 3:13,

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law,
being made a curse for us: for it is written,
Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.

That was written in Deut. 21:23.

- 4) If the Romans killed the Lord, it would bring less reproach upon the Jews. Matthew Henry said, "Thus many are more afraid of the scandal of a bad action than of the sin of it" (V, 1182).

One place where it was written that our Lord would die on a Cross, is John 12:32, 33. Another is Matt. 20:18, 19 where our Lord predicted exactly what eventually happened. We could even cite what happened to the brass serpent in Num. 21:8, 9, the incident to which our Lord referred in John 3:14, 15.

The Lord Jesus said in Mark 14:49 that "the scriptures must be fulfilled." And often the Lord makes the wrath of men to praise Him. IF THE JEWS HAD PUT THE LORD TO DEATH, THEY WOULD HAVE STONED HIM; THE ROMAN METHOD OF EXECUTION WAS BY CRUCIFIXION. Thus, it was providential that the Jews handed the Lord over to the Romans.

18:33 All of the Gospel writers have recorded the fact that this was the first question that Pilate asked our Lord: "Art thou the King of the Jews?" This would have been of major importance to Pilate because there were always rumors, sometimes confirmed, of the rising up of men who claimed to be Israel's Messiah.

18:34 Our Lord certainly did not need Pilate to tell him how he heard about this. Our Lord knew all things. But it seems to me to be clear that our Lord was seeking to minister to Pilate, to awaken in Pilate the importance of knowing who He was and what His mission was in the world.

The Apostle Paul was very much like his Lord in this. When Paul was standing before King Agrippa, Agrippa said to him (whether sincerely or in jest, we do not know), "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28). Paul responded by saying,

I would to God, that not only thou,
but also all that hear me this day, were both almost,
and altogether such as I am, except these bonds
(Acts 26:29).

While we know that only the elect are going to be saved, we learn from these incidents that we are to witness to all, whoever they may be, because we never know when and how the Lord may see fit to use his Word. Solomon wrote in Ecc. 11:6,

In the morning sow thy seed,
and in the evening withhold not thine hand:
for thou knowest not whether shall prosper,
either this or that,
or whether they both shall be alike good.

In the darkest hours of our Lord's life on earth, we see His concern for the spiritual welfare of the Roman governor. Very possibly in the years that followed Pilate thought often of his conversation with our Lord. The meaning of the Lord's question was, "Are you asking me because you want to know, or is this the charge that has been placed against Me?"

Our Lord's response shows that He came to seek and to save Gentile sinners as well as Jewish sinners.

18:35 Pilate's response indicated that he was not being ministered to by the Holy Spirit. He had no idea that the One standing before him had anything to do with Gentiles. But he went on to indicate that this was the charge that was laid against our Lord by the Jews.

18:36 The Lord's response did not mean that He would never rule upon this earth. The word "kingdom" is sometimes used of a literal, earthly kingdom; sometimes it is used of salvation. Here He was obviously speaking about the latter, as He had spoken to Nicodemus. And His comments would have prompted other questions if the Spirit of God had been dealing with Him. They prompted questions from Nicodemus. (Go back and review that passage in John 3.)

The kingdom of God is not advanced by force. Nor do the people of God defend themselves in the ministry of the Word with swords and spears, or today, with guns. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 10:4,

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,
but might through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

And in Eph. 6:12 we have these words:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood,
but against principalities, against powers,
against the rulers of the darkness of this world,
against spiritual wickedness in high places.

You may remember that in our Lord's prayer in John 17:14 He said, "I am not of this world."

Paul exhorted Timothy in later years with these words found in 1 Tim. 6:13:
I give thee charge in the sight of God,
who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus,
who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession.

18:37 Pilate's question is slightly different here. He did not say, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" as he said in verse 35, but simply, "Art thou a king then?"

He must have taken from our Lord's response that he did not consider that our Lord was an insurrectionist, trying to take Israel away from Caesar. But he really wanted to know what kind of a king the Lord was.

The Lord admitted here that He was a King, which was the equivalent of admitting that He was the Messiah. And then He told Pilate the purpose of His mission in the world. Pilate probably did not pay any attention to our

Lord when He said, "For this cause came I into the world." Or Pilate could have taken it as a synonym for being born. But we see also in these words our Lord's claim to Deity, His claim to pre-existence. And so it seems that the Lord was declaring His true humanity in this statement, as well as His Deity.

Our Lord gave to Pilate one of those special statements which He made on other occasions in which He declared what His mission was. Here it was that he came to "bear witness unto the truth."

I agree with Bishop Ryle when he said that we need to take the words, "the truth," in their widest sense as they relate to the truth of God. He has told His disciples in the Upper Room, "I am...the truth" (John 14:6). He was the embodiment of His message. The truth enlightens darkened minds. The truth set men free from their sins. The Lord Jesus had said earlier, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). He had prayed in His prayer in John 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (v. 17). So the truth cleanses us from sin, and keeps us from sin. The truth was hardly known when the Lord was here on earth. The Jews had mixed the truth with their traditions to the point that it was practically impossible for people to know what the truth of God really was. When the Lord finished what we call, The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew made this comment in Matt. 7:28, 29,

And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings,
the people were astonished at his doctrine:
For he taught them as one having authority,
and not as the scribes.

The Lord taught the truth about God, about man, about sin, about salvation, about the end times. All that He taught was the truth. After 400 years of silence in which the revelation of the OT had been practically, as Ryle said, buried, the Lord revived the truth, and introduced the period in which not only do we have His words of truth, but the NT was given to us.

The last statement is a clear indication of the sovereignty of God in salvation. There are some who are "of the truth"; there are others who are NOT "of the truth." And the Lord said, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." This is similar to our Lord's words in John 10:26-28,

But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep,
as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice,
and I know them, and they follow me:
And I give unto them eternal life,
and they shall never perish,
neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

How thankful to God we should be that we have heard His voice! It is from His voice, and His alone, all through the Word of God, and only in the Word, that we can be sure that we are hearing the truth. Never have any doubt about the truthfulness of the Word of God.

18:38 It seems that Pilate's question is the question of a skeptic, or perhaps more correctly, an agnostic. He seems to have convinced himself that there is no absolute truth. The Lord had thrown the door wide open for Pilate to hear the truth, but Pilate quickly shut it. Then he went out to the Jews again saying that he found "no fault in him," but it was equally true that he had not found anything in the Lord Jesus Christ that he wanted. Perhaps we could say that Pilate found no fault in the Lord, but nothing good that he wanted either. Again, there are millions of

people today who are just like Pilate. Some people despise the Lord, and would try to put Him to death again if He were to return as He was before. But there are many who are indifferent. If some people need Christ, let them have Him, they would say. But it is not for them. There is nothing more tragic that a person can do than to do what Pilate did, and that is to turn away from Christ.

18:39 At this time Pilate was most interested in getting rid of the problem that he was facing with the Jews. It was the custom of the Romans to release a prisoner at the time of the Passover. And so he asked them if they wanted their King. This remark also seems to have been offered in contempt.

18:40 This caused an uproar among the people. They did not want the holy Son of God to be released to them; they wanted Barabas. They did not want the One against Whom they could bring no charge worthy of death; instead, they wanted one who deserved to die because he was not only a robber, but an insurrectionist, and a murderer. He was all that the Lord Jesus was not!

Cf. Acts 3:13, 14.

We must recognize as we come to the end of chapter 18 that we have in the choice that Pilate made, and that the Jews made:

- 1) A portrait of the sinfulness of the human heart. We, too, are living in a day when sin is not only excused, but justified, and often legalized, while righteousness is condemned. Such practices contributed to the downfall of Rome, and they are contributing to our downfall as well.
- 2) A picture of the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ. How clear it is that Christ died in the place of Barabas.

Concl: What a solemn chapter this is, both for the saint and for the sinner. We see the terrible treatment given to our Lord, knowing that it was all a part of what He had to endure for our salvation. How humbling it ought to be for us, and yet, at the same time, how provoking of the deepest praise from our hearts which have been cleansed by the precious blood of our Savior.

On the other hand, we see men like Judas, Annas, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Barabas who were (with the possible exception of Barabas) in the very presence of the Son of God, and yet who, as far as we know (Judas for sure) went into eternity totally unprepared to meet God.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 18, 19 -- Part 3b
February 10, 1992
John 19:1-16

Intro: This first part of chapter 19 continues and concludes our Lord's trial before Pilate. (The record of the trial began in John 18:28.) Pilate had already declared his verdict concerning the guilt of the Lord. We have it in 18:38b: "I find in him no fault."

However, it was immediately apparent that the Jews were not going to be satisfied with his verdict. Pilate tried to get them to take our Lord as the One Who would be released at this Passover time, but the Jews cried out for Barabbas instead. As chapter 19 begins we soon realize that Pilate was still of the opinion that the Lord should go free, but, as we know, all of his efforts failed. Calvin said in his commentary that we should see in this "the decree of Heaven, by which Christ was appointed to death" (Vol. XVIII, p. 214). But in Pilate's decision we have a confirmation that our Lord was guiltless, that He did not deserve to die, meaning that He was dying as an innocent victim, bearing the sins of others "in his own body on the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24). The hand of God in all of this became more apparent by our Lord's words in 19:11, as we shall see when we get to that point.

19:1 The chapter begins with our Lord being scourged in spite of the fact that Pilate was convinced that He had done nothing worthy of death. Twice he said again, "I find no fault in him" (vv. 4, 6). And as late as verse 16 Pilate said, "Shall I crucify your King?"

That raises the question, Why did Pilate scourge our Lord if he believed our Lord was innocent? The answer can only be that he hoped to appease the crowd short of having to put the Lord to death. Luke recorded Pilate's words, "I will therefore chastise him, and release him" (Luke 23:16). Pilate was a man who was governed by fear. He feared Caesar, on the one hand, but he feared the people on the other hand. So he walked the path of compromise.

It is a simple thing to say that the Lord was scourged, but it was a most terrible thing to go through. It was so severe that it often resulted in the death of the prisoner.

Marcus Dods, in the Expositor's Greek Testament (p. 853) gives this explanation of the scourging:

The victim of this severe punishment was bound in a stooping position to a low column...and beaten with rods or scourged with whips, the thongs of which were weighted with lead, and studded with sharp-pointed pieces of bone, so that frightful laceration followed each stroke. Death frequently resulted.

When we add this torturous beating to what the Lord had already experienced in the Garden of Gethsemane where He sweat great drops of blood, we can see how weakened the Lord must have been, how greatly He was already suffering, and how it must have been very difficult for any person to look at Him. Isaiah said in Isa. 53:3,

He is despised and rejected of men;
a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief:
and we hid as it were our faces from him;
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

But this was not all that was done to our Lord at this time.

19:2 He was mocked by the Roman soldiers--and this had to be with the approval of Pilate. Criminals were often made up to represent the charge that was placed against them. The Lord claimed to be a King, and so they mockingly gave Him the attire of a King: a crown and a purple robe. But the crown was "a crown of thorns." This, too, would have added to His suffering since the thorns were driven through the skin on our Lord's head, causing an additional loss of blood.

Bishop Ryle quoted Bishop Lightfoot who said about this:

It was a must unquestionable token that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, when He was crowned only with thorns and briars, which are the curse of the earth (Ryle, II, 526).

He was referring to the curse which was placed upon the earth because of Adam's sin. The Lord told Adam,

Cursed is the ground for thy sake;
in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life:
Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee.

In all of this there is not the slightest evidence in all that was done to our Lord that He put up any resistance. This ought to remind us of what Isaiah wrote in Isa. 53:7,

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth:
he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb,
so he opened not his mouth.

And this did not finish what the soldiers did to our Lord.

19:3 They mocked Him with their mouths, hailing Him as the King of the Jews. And then "they smote Him with their hands." Matthew 27:29, 30 tell us that the soldiers struck the Lord with a reed. So we probably are to understand that they did both. Hitting the Lord in the face or on the head would have added greatly to the pain that He was already experiencing.

Let us all keep in mind that every bit of the suffering our Lord experienced was what He had to endure in order that we might be saved from our sins. Isaiah had said,

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 (Isa. 53:5).

19:4 Then it was that Pilate again declared his verdict that he found "no fault in Him."

As I have mentioned, Pilate said this to the Jews at least three times. Cf. John 18:38; 19:4, 6. The Apostle Peter said that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). And later in that same epistle Peter wrote that our Lord "did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when, he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Pet. 2:22, 23).

The writer of Hebrews said,

For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled,
separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens;
Who needeth not daily, as those high priests,

to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins,
and then for the people's: for this he did once,
when he offered up himself (Heb. 7:26, 27).

In 2 Cor. 5:21 we learn again of the absolute moral purity of our Lord Jesus Christ:

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

And the Apostle John added his testimony when he wrote in 1 John 3:5,
And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins;
and in him is no sin.

We should not need to be reminded that it was absolutely essential for our Lord to be "without sin" (Heb. 4:15) if He were to become our Saviour. That is the reason it is important to believe in His virgin birth and in His perfect life here on earth. He was the Son of God Who became man in order to provide salvation for sinners.

Although the testimony of people is not as powerful as that given to us by the Spirit of God through the Apostles, yet it adds to the evidence that our Lord was never guilty of any sin:

- 1) We have already noticed Pilate's repeated statement that there was no fault in our Lord.
- 2) When the officers were sent to arrest the Lord Jesus, they came back saying, "Never man spake like this man" (John 7:46).
- 3) Pilate's wife said to her husband,
Have thou nothing to do with that just man:
for I have suffered many things this day in a dream
because of him (Matt. 27:19).
- 4) Judas said, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood" (Matt. 27:4).
- 5) The centurion who stood by the Cross, said, "Truly this man was the Son of God" (Mark 15:39).

So the evidence was really overwhelming that the Lord Jesus had done nothing that was worthy of death. But He had been appointed to die, and there was nothing that could stand in the way of that taking place.

19:5 Evidently in verse 4 Pilate came out and said that he was bringing the Lord back to them with the intention of letting Him go. And so he said to them, "Behold the man!"

Probably no one but the Lord Himself knew what was in Pilate's mind when he said, "Behold the man!" He probably was anxious to show that they had no reason to be fearful of what such a Person could do. There our Lord stood in a most shameful condition, weakened by a tremendous loss of blood, and thoroughly humiliated by His enemies. We would hope that there might have been some degree of pity in what Pilate said, but that does not seem very likely.

And yet what tremendous advice he gave to those Jews and to the Roman soldiers. The Son of God stood before them as a Man! He stood there as the incarnate Son of God. Perhaps this statement reminds you, as it did me, of Paul's words to Timothy in 1 Tim. 2:5,

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus.

There were many in the early days of the Church who doubted the real humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Pilate did not deny it; he confirmed

it. The Jews did not doubt it; they wanted to believe that He was no more than a Man. But to behold the Lord is the one way of salvation. We have those familiar words in Isa. 45:22,

Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
for I am God, and there is none else.

We could also mention those words of our Lord in John 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 everlasting life.

To look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ is to be saved. In a sense, Pilate was preaching the Gospel to that angry crowd, but neither he nor they realized the importance of what he was saying. Perhaps there was a day when many of them did remember. It is possible that some who were there that day were among the hundreds who were saved when Peter preached so powerfully on the Day of Pentecost.

19:6 Notice that the Apostle John said following this, "When the chief priests therefore and the officers **saw** him..." They "saw" Him, but not as they needed to see Him. They did not see Who He really was. They did not understand what was going on. Their hearts will only filled with such hatred for Him that nothing would satisfy them but His death by crucifixion.

It seems important to notice that at this time the people had not gotten into the act, so to speak. It was the religious leaders who were practically hysterical in their desire to see the Lord Jesus put to death. Bishop Ryle (II, 530) said,

It is a painful fact that in every age, none have been such hard, cruel, unfeeling, and bloody-minded persecutors of God's saints, as the minister of religion.

And then he quoted a man by the name of Burkitt who said,
Hypocrites within the pale of the visible Church may be guilty of such monstrous acts of wickedness, as even the consciences of heathens without the Church may boggle at and protest against (II, 531).

By this time Pilate's patience with the crowd had been exhausted. And so he told them in so many words that if the Lord were to be crucified, they would have to do it! He found no fault in the Lord.

19:7 At this point, apparently feeling that their cause was in jeopardy, the Jews came up with a charge out of their Law which Pilate would not have considered in saying that he found no fault in the Lord. Their charge was that He ought to die because He had claimed to be the Son of God.

This takes us back to John 5:17, 18. (Read.) In the minds of the Jews, for the Lord to claim to be the Son of God was the equivalent of claiming Deity--which is really what our Lord meant to be saying. If He made the claim, and were not the Son of God, He did deserve to die. But if He were the Son of God (as He was, and is), then not only did they have no case against Him, but they were putting themselves in a position of opposing God.

We have the same claim made in John 10:30-33.

19:8 It seems quite clear that Pilate had been tremendously impressed by

our Lord, and that seems evident here because when he heard this latest charge, the Apostle John said that "he was the more afraid." So he had been fearful of the Lord, and fearful of condemning Him to death, but with this charge he was more afraid than ever, much more afraid.

It is an interesting insight into the human heart that a man like Pilate, who evidently saw more in the Lord than the Jews had seen, would not submit himself to the Lord, or seek added light. Instead, he just wanted to get out of the situation as fast as he could, and never get back into it again.

Listen to these words from Bishop Ryle:

As a Roman he (Pilate) had doubtless heard and read many stories, drawn from the heathen mythology of Greece and Rome, about Gods coming down to earth, and appearing in human form. Perhaps the prisoner before him was one! The idea raised new fears in his mind. Already he had been made very uncomfortable about Him. Our Lord's calm, dignified, and majestic demeanour had doubtless made an impression. His evident innocence of all guilt, and the extraordinary malice of His enemies, whose characters Pilate most likely knew well, had produced an effect. His own wife's dream had its influence. Even before the last charge of the Jews the roman judge had been awe-struck, and secretly convinced of our Lord's innocence, and anxious to have Him set free, and actually "afraid" of his prisoner. But when he heard of His being the "Son of God," he was made more afraid (II. 533).

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19:9 Evidently our Lord had gone back into the judgment hall, and at this point Pilate went back in, too. And when they away from the crowd, Pilate said to the Lord, "Whence art thou?" That is, Where did you come from? "But Jesus gave him no answer."

It seems that Pilate was more responsive to the possibility that our Lord might have been some heathen deity than to the actual truth that He was the Son of God. And so the Lord, Who had been responsive to all that Pilate had asked Him, now refused to answer. Pilate knew that the Lord was innocent. The Lord had claimed to be Israel's King, i.e., her Messiah. The Lord had claimed pre-existence, and had told Pilate why He had come into the world, i.e., to bear witness to the truth. But Pilate had scornfully responded by saying, "What is truth?" He did not even want an answer to that question. Therefore, it becomes clear when we come to this verse that the Lord was no longer dealing with Pilate's soul.

For the Biblical explanation of what was going on, please turn to Prov. 1:20-33.

The situation with Pilate became like that of Pharaoh when God was dealing with him through Moses. We learn that even for God there is "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak" (Ecc. 3:7b). There is a time when God deals with the soul, but if that soul does not receive the truth, there is also a time when the Lord no longer deals with that soul. Of course, we cannot overlook the sovereign purposes of God with regard to any person, but we can clearly see in God's dealings with Pilate that he was personally responsible for the truth which was given to him. He will never be able to say that he did not have the truth given to him.

Years ago, I think it was while I was in high school, I came across a verse of poetry that expresses what we have here. It goes like this:

There is a line by us unseen, it crosses every path;
it is the boundary between God's patience and His wrath.

Illus: Some of you have heard me tell about a man I was asked to visit in the hospital. He was very seriously ill, and the doctors were afraid that he did not have long to live. He was not a Christian; his sister who asked me to go see him, was a Christian. The Gospel had been given to him many times, but he had always said that when he got older he would become a Christian. When I saw him, he was probably in his sixties. I had not met him before, and so as I entered the room I told him who I was, and that his sister had asked me to come to see him. Although he was hooked up to all kinds of equipment, it did not take him long to let me know where he was spiritually. He told me what his sister had told me, what he had always said about becoming a Christian. But then he said this (and I am repeating the gist of what he said, if not the actual words): "Now that I am old, I couldn't care less about becoming a Christian. So, preacher, you are wasting your time talking to me, and you might as well leave." That is what I did. Several days later he died, and there was no evidence whatever that he ever changed his mind.

It is clear from Scripture that Pilate did not have the authority to choose when God was going to deal with his soul. He had authority to do other things, as we shall see in a moment, but not the power to control God. None of us has that kind of power. Therefore, we need to act today on what the Lord is saying to us. And we need to warn others that "today is the day of salvation," not tomorrow. Many people have found that God, Who has been speaking to them, suddenly stops speaking, and speaks no more.

I do not overlook, as I have said, the sovereign purpose of God for Pilate, but we have to be concerned with the human scene. And when we look at Pilate we see a man who was exposed to a lot of truth in the very presence of the Son of God. He rejected the light that was offered him, and, all of a sudden, the light was turned out. There is no worse time in a person's life than when he comes to the place when God no longer is dealing with him.

19:10 When the Lord did not respond, Pilate was obviously irritated with Him, and probably also quite amazed. The Roman rulers were accustomed to having prisoners falling on their knees and begging for their lives. Our Lord never did this, and this undoubtedly was disconcerting to Pilate. And so this verse tells us what Pilate said to Him.

The word "power" the two times it appears in this verse is the Greek word for authority. This meant that Pilate felt he had absolute authority to do with the Lord Jesus Christ whatever he was pleased to do. This shows how blinded Pilate was to the truth. As great as his authority was (the power of Rome supported him), he did not know, as Paul told the Roman church, that "the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1). And there Paul used this same word: authorities. So the power of Rome was delegated authority. The power of the President of the United States is delegated authority. The power of every human authority is power that has been delegated by God. What Pilate needed to know was what the Lord told His disciples just before He ascended back to heaven: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18)--the same word: authority! Pilate was in the presence of the Lord of the universe, but he did not know it. He spoke as a custodian in a large corporation would speak to the President and CEO!

Then it was that the Lord did speak. He broke His silence. He never spoke more majestic words than what we find here.

19:11 Pilate had his power from Caesar, but Caesar had his power, his authority, from GOD! And the Lord said so. Pilate had no authority except within that which God had given to him. He could not do anything that God had not willed, but it is also true that he had to do everything that God had willed.

Notice the last words of this verse: "Therefore..." These were the last words that our Lord spoke at His trial. It is clear that the One Who was being judged was actually the Judge.

The last statement of this verse is an interesting statement relating human responsibility and divine sovereignty. The one who had delivered the Lord over to Pilate was Caiaphas. But behind him stood the chief priest, scribes, and officers of Israel--the religious leaders of the nation. It would seem that the religious leaders possessed a higher authority than did even Pilate because they were divinely appointed messengers of the truth. They were ready to kill the One Who is "the truth," thus violating their responsibility before God. And so their sin was even greater than that of Pilate.

Note that there are degrees of sin, and the implication is (and it is true) that the greater the sin, the greater the punishment. It seems doubtful that the Lord was thinking of Judas here, although Judas sin was great, too, in the light of the position he had held as an apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ. We need to remember that when any God-given authority fails to exercise the power that God has given it, that authority falls under the judgment of God! Governments fall when they fail to exercise their authority in keeping with God's purpose for governments.

19:12 Here we see an illustration of the limited authority of Pilate. He wanted to do one thing; the Jews wanted him to do the opposite; the will of the people prevailed because it was in the plan and purpose of God for the Lord Jesus to die. Things are obviously out of Pilate's control from this point on. The people were warning Pilate that if he failed to judge the Lord, he would have Caesar to deal with.

19:13 We need to notice the statement with which this verse begins. We had it also inverse 8: "When Pilate therefore heard that saying..." Pilate was actually a weakling who was not guided in his decisions by what was right or wrong; he was governed by what he heard, especially from the Jews who were before him.

He brought the Lord out again, and Pilate took his place on the Judgment Seat, the place from which his verdict would be declared.

19:14 From the Judgment Seat Pilate said, "Behold your King!" This was done with the greatest sarcasm. This was the charge that the Jews had brought against the Lord in the preceding verse. They were claiming that for the Lord to continue to live was a threat to Caesar's power, and that if Pilate did not condemn the Lord, he was being a traitor to Caesar.

19:15 The Jews responded by calling again for the crucifixion of the Lord. When Pilate asked them if he should crucify their King, they responded by saying one of the most damaging things that ever came from the lips of any Jew. They renounced Christ, and put themselves under the

authority of Caesar. Matthew recorded that they also said just before Barabbas was released to them, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matt. 27:25). Subsequent Jewish history shows that the Lord took them at their word.

19:16 The trial was over, and the Lord was condemned to die. The people prevailed over Pilate, and yet it was the will of God which was actually being accomplished. The Lord had not actually been proven guilty of any crime, yet He was condemned to die as the worst of criminals. Again we see the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies:

And he made his grave with the wicked,
and with the rich in his death;
because he had done no violence,
neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Notice the word **"delivered."**

Peter told the Jews in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:23), speaking of our Lord,

Him, being **delivered** by the determinate counsel
and foreknowledge of God, ye gave taken,
and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.

Paul was speaking of what God had done when he wrote in Rom. 4:25,

Who was **delivered** for our offences,
and was raised again for our justification.

Cf. also Paul's words in Rom. 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.

The prophet Isaiah had written long before this,

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows:
yet we did esteem him stricken, **smitten of God**, and afflicted.

(If there is time, read Isa. 52:13-53:12.)

No one can ever, if he knows why Christ was subjected to such suffering and humiliation, minimize the awfulness of sin. We are reading not only about what the Lord suffered, what He was willing to suffer, but what He had to suffer, if you and I were ever to be forgiven of our sins. How full of praise our hearts should be for all that our Savior did in providing salvation for us as a free gift, and as an eternal possession.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 18, 19 -- Part 4
February 17, 1992
John 19:17-37

Intro: In our outline we are dealing with the fifth major division of the Gospel of John:

V. THE LORD'S ARREST, TRIAL, DEATH, AND BURIAL (John 18, 19).

We have seen how the Lord was arrested and taken before Annas in John 18:1-14. After that we have the record of our Lord's trial before Caiaphas and his denial by Peter in John 18:15-27. Both of these trials were before the religious leaders of the people of Israel. After being led out from his appearance before Caiaphas, our Lord was taken before the governmental leader, Pilate. The account of His trial before Pilate is in the latter part of chapter 18 and the beginning of chapter 19. Cf. John 18:28-19:16. Last week we concluded that section. Now we are ready to proceed to the fourth division of this section:

D. The Lord's crucifixion and death (John 19:17-37).

The Apostle John has given us certain information about our Lord's crucifixion which are not included in the other three Gospels:

- 1) The fact that He bore His cross as He was led to Golgotha (John 19:17).
- 2) The title above our Lord was written in three languages: "In Hebrew, and Greek, and Latin" (John 19:20). Luke also recorded this (Luke 23:38), but he did not say that the Jews objected to that title as John did in John 19:21, and what Pilate's response was in verse 22.
- 3) The three sayings of our Lord when He was upon the Cross. These are generally considered to be His third, fifth, and sixth sayings:
 - a) "Woman, behold thy son!" and "Behold thy mother!" (John 19:26, 27).
 - b) "I thirst" (John 19:28).
 - c) "It is finished" (John 19:30).Luke gives us three different sayings from those recorded by John out of the seven that are recorded in the Gospels; Matthew and Mark each give one, the same one in both Gospels.
- 4) Only John tells us of the soldier piercing our Lord's side with His spear, and that blood and water came out (John 19:34).

Just this past weekend I was reading a comment by Leon Morris about the writing of Luke in Acts. The same applies to his Gospel. Dr. Morris was for many years the Principal of Ridley College in Melbourne, Australia, and is well-known for his writings. This is what he said about Luke's writings, both in his Gospel and in the book of Acts. You and I can make the application to John's Gospel:

Luke did not dwell on this suffering; it is not as though he was carried along by a morbid interest in the pains of others. Indeed, it is striking that not only he but all the New Testament writers make no attempt to harrow their readers' feeling by dwelling on the pains that Jesus endured. Crucifixion was one of the most painful methods of execution ever devised, and it was preceded by a flogging that was so severe that it sometimes brought about death itself. On the cross the body of the crucified person was contorted, his lungs were constricted so that he could not breathe in all the air he needed, and he might linger on his cross for days. Reville speaks of it as "the acme of the torturer's art: atrocious physical sufferings, length of torment, ignominy, the effect on the crowd gathered to witness the long agony of the crucified...tortured, the pillory, degradation, and certain death, distilled slowly drop by drop." Luke deals with all this in one word.

He was not concerned to play on the feelings of his readers; his aim was to bring out the meaning of it all. Jesus' death was the way to life for all believers (quoted in Tabletalk, February 1992, p. 34).

We would have to admit that it would be easy to get caught up in the torturous sufferings our Lord endured, but to overlook why He died as He did.

There is no doubt but that this is the most important part of our Lord's ministry on earth. He came to die! As He had told Pilate earlier,

To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth (John 18:37).

He came to bear witness to the truth of the righteousness of God, of the utter sinfulness of man, of the grace and love of God, and much, much more. His death stands forever as a testimony concerning the truth, and if people would know the truth, they must come to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. We learn from John (and the other writers of the NT) that the death of Jesus Christ is an historical fact. The Lord showed by His life on earth that He was qualified, and He alone, to be our Savior. He showed by His teaching what was the way of righteousness. But it was by His death, and by His resurrection, that He saves.

Now let us turn to the text.

19:17 Since John is the only Gospel writer who referred to the fact that the Lord carried His cross, or at least a part of it (as was the custom), we must not think that there is a contradiction here with the other Gospel writers who tell us that Simon of Cyrene carried our Lord's cross. It seems that the Lord began by carrying His cross, but was not able to continue because of His weakened condition. There was a type of this in the account of Abraham going to offer up his son Isaac. Genesis 22:6 tells us, "And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac, his son..."

The Lord was taken to "the place of a skull," so called because the rock formation of the hill gave the appearance of a skull.

19:18 Notice how briefly John recorded the crucifixion. (Read.) Godet, in his commentary, mentioned that sometimes the prisoner was nailed to the cross when the cross was laid out on the ground. At other times the cross was set in the ground, and then the prisoner was lifted up by cords and his hands were nailed to the cross. Which was done with the Lord, we do not know. Godet also mentioned that there is some evidence that the prisoner straddled a board which was inserted into the vertical part of the cross to keep the weight of the body from tearing the hands after they were nailed. There is a question about whether or not the feet were nailed, but it is generally thought that the Lord's feet were nailed. Although Thomas did not mention the Lord's feet when he spoke of putting his finger into the print of the nails. See John 20:25.

Evidently most prisoners died within twelve hours, but some were known to live in this terrible condition for as long as three days.

How simply we have stated the most important event in all of human history: "Where they crucified him..." John was emphasizing, as the other three Gospel writers did also, that our Lord was nailed to the Cross, and that this would, in a short time, lead to His death. Although there was approximately six hours between our Lord's crucifixion and His death, yet

the two are inseparable. The one would inevitably lead to the other. It was clear to all that for the Lord to be crucified meant that He would die. When the NT tells us that our Lord was crucified, we are to understand that He died, and that the means of His death was crucifixion. Paul told the Corinthians, "We preach Christ crucified" (1 Cor. 1:23). This is a fact of history, and it is important that this truth be believed.

19:19,20 It was usually the case that the crime for which the prisoner was being crucified was written and attached to the cross for everyone to see. But there was probably an attempt to get back at the Jews for the pressure that they had put upon him that Pilate wrote this in three languages. (Read the verse.)

The three languages were Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Hebrew was the language of the Jews. Greek was the language spoken by most of the people of that day. Latin was the language of Rome. Without know it, Pilate was declaring the Gospel for all men to hear and understand. Our Lord came to the Jews, but the throne upon which He will reign some day will make Him King over all of the earth.

19:21 John alone tells us of the strong object of "the chief priests." They probably realize that Pilate was getting back at them, and tried to make him change the sign to say that this was our Lord's claim, but that in fact it was not true.

19:22 Pilate refused to make any changes.

19:23 At this point John recorded how a prophecy of the OT was fulfilled.

It was obvious in such a case that the person being crucified would no longer need his clothes. And, according to Roman custom, the soldiers who crucified the prisoner, whoever he might be, had first claim upon his clothing. And so the soldiers divided our Lord's garments among themselves, apparently indicating that since there were four parts, there were four soldiers who crucified our Lord.

But when it came to our Lord's outer garment, his coat, they all agreed that it was too nice a garment to be torn in pieces. It was a special coat, woven without any seam. Where the Lord got this, we do not know. It could have been made for Him by His mother, or by one of the women who accompanied Him, and ministered to Him.

19:24 It was agreed that they would not tear it into four pieces, but that they would cast lots for it. The winner would be the new owner of the coat. It is a commentary on the spiritual blindness of the soldiers that they wanted the Lord's garment, but were not interested in the Lord Himself.

All four the Gospel writers mention this because it was so important. It marked the fulfillment of a prophecy that had been written by David one thousand years before this event took place. Cf. the prophecy in Psa. 22:18. What an evidence of the sovereign power of God! It is safe to say that the soldiers knew nothing of Psalm 22. They were not doing it on their own to fulfill Scripture; God moved upon their hearts to decide not to tear the garment, but to cast lots for it. This also should encourage us to believe that all of Scripture will eventually be fulfilled.

Perhaps there is a message even in what these soldiers were doing. We have seen how the Lord became a substitute for Barabbas--a picture of salvation. Now let us think of what was written by Paul in 2 Cor. 5:21,

For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin;
that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

The garment which our Lord had worn was henceforth to be worn by one of those soldiers. It is a picture of our being clothed in the righteousness of God through Christ. He went to the cross for us that we might be clothed eternally in His righteousness.

19:25 Beginning with this verse, and going down through verse 27, we have one of the most thoughtful incidents in all of Scripture. It was our Lord making provision for His mother. As I mentioned before, it seems that this was our Lord's third saying from the cross. Let me give them to you in their probable order:

- 1) "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).
- 2) "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).
- 3) "Woman, behold thy son!...Behold thy mother" (John 19:26, 27).
- 4) "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (Matt. 27:46; Mark 15:34).
- 5) "I thirst" (John 19:28).
- 6) "It is finished" (John 19:30).
- 7) "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46).

What are we to learn from those words spoken by our Lord to His mother, Mary, and to His beloved disciple, John? (Read vv. 25-27.)

February 18, 1992

There were four soldiers who crucified the Lord Jesus; there were four faithful women who stood by the Lord to the very end. Commentators are divided as to whether there were three women, or four. But since it is unlikely that the parents of our Lord's mother would name two of her daughters, Mary, it seems best to take the expressions, "his mother's sister" and "Mary the wife of Cleopas" as referring to two people, not one. Bishop Ryle made the comment that "women...were the last at the cross and the first at the tomb" (II, 569). We can tell from these verses that John was there. In his characteristic modesty he did not mention himself by name, but only as "the disciple...whom he (the Lord) loved." The Gospel writers do not indicate that any of the other apostles was there. The devotion and love for Christ which believing women have always shown toward the Lord Jesus is a continuing example for all believing men to follow.

Look at Luke 23:27-31 to see what our Lord said to these women (and possibly other women) who followed Him as He made His way to the place where He was to be crucified.

Matthew Henry commented,

We may justly admire the power of divine grace in supporting these women, especially...Mary, under this heavy trial. We do not find his mother wringing her hands, or tearing her hair, or rending her clothes, or making an outcry; but, with a wonderful composure, standing by the cross, and her friends with her. Surely she and they were strengthened by a divine power to this degree of patience; and surely...Mary had a fuller expectation of his resurrection than the rest had, which supported her thus (V, 1199).

However, we must not minimize the grief which our Lord's mother must have

experienced. Simeon had predicted, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also" (Luke 2:35), and there is no doubt but that this was what Mary was experiencing.

19:26 There seems to be no doubt but that Joseph, Mary's husband, was no longer living. It would also appear that Mary had been cared for by our Lord. And so, when He saw her standing by the cross, and John perhaps even standing with her, He, during the last hours of His life, made provision for the care of His mother. From that moment on she was to consider John as her son, and John was to love her and care for her as though she were his mother. And I believe we are correct in assuming that John did this as long as Mary lived. Mary was probably in her late forties or early fifties by this time.

We have no indication in Scripture that John was financially prepared to take care of Mary. Peter was undoubtedly speaking also for John when, as they went to the temple after our Lord's ascension, he told the man who had been lame from birth, "Silver and gold have I none." But the Lord from heaven would surely provide for both of them. The Lord's clothing had been taken from Him. He had no house nor property to leave to His mother. But He gave her much more than anything else He could have done: He left her in John's care.

It would be a mistake not to notice that it was to the disciple whom Jesus loved that He committed the care of His mother. Devotion to Christ qualifies us for ministries which others are not given. Perhaps John's mother had died by this time, his mother who mistakenly, but devoutly, had sought a place for her sons at the Lord's right hand and left hand when He would establish His kingdom. But we can only speculate about this. However, our Lord was establishing a pattern for all future sons who would precede one or both of their parents in death. They must be honored by having some provision made for their care. In the midst of our Lord's terrible suffering and agony, He noticed His mother, and committed her to John for her future care. One historian says that Mary lived with John in Jerusalem for eleven years, and then she died. Cf. Matthew Henry, Vol. V, p. 1200.

We must not feel that when our Lord called His mother, "Woman," that He was in any sense being disrespectful. This is what He had called her at the marriage in Cana of Galilee. Cf. John 2:4. Westcott said, "The address is that of courteous respect, even of tenderness." It was an expression by which the Lord was recognizing the humanity, the frailty, of His mother, and her need for care. This is an beautiful example of our Lord's strength being perfected in His mother's weakness.

Some also have seen in this expression that our Lord was indicating that His mother had no preference in grace because she was His mother. It was not her relationship to Christ according to the flesh that brought her salvation, but her faith--just like everyone else who ever has been or ever will be saved. By our Lord's words He would strike a death blow at the teaching of those who say that we should worship Mary.

19:27 Although our Lord did not mention John by name, there was no question as to the one to whom the Lord had directed this statement. And we need to notice that John made no delay in doing what the Lord had told him to do. "And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home." How wonderful it would be if our obedience to the Lord were always that immediate and complete!

19:28 Cf. the opening words of this verse with John 18:4 and, before that, John 13:1.

In this case we see again that fulfilled prophecy is one of the greatest evidences we have of the divine origin and authority of Scripture. Psalm 22:15 gives us these words:

My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
and thou has brought me to the dust of death.

We also read in Psa. 69:21,

They gave me also gall for my meat;
and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

It is very apparent from this verse that our Lord was fully conscious until the moment of His death. He was also aware of the predictions made in Scripture concerning His death. And so, as He and the Father are always mindful of what They have given us in the Word, He said, "I thirst." But it was not until He was satisfied that all that He had come to do was accomplished. The Lord's death was voluntary, even to the very time that He would die. He had said in John 10:17, 18,

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life,
that I might take it again.
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.

We have no power over the time of our death, but the Lord Jesus did. And, as incomprehensible as it is to us, He even had the power, the authority, to raise Himself from the dead. But He did not die until He knew that the will of God was fully accomplished.

Although we do not know the hour of our death, nor do we have anything that we can do to determine that hour, yet it should be the great desire of our hearts that the will of God is fully accomplished in our lives. We read of David in Acts 13:36,

For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God,
fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption.
Paul had the confidence at the time of his death, as he said, "I have finished his course" (2 Tim. 4:7). And so the most important thing for us to be concerned about is that the will of God is fully accomplished in us.

19:29 Instead of giving the Lord water, or wine (as the custom seems to have been), they gave Him vinegar--the product of "sour grapes." And so instead of relieving His thirst, this would have increased it. But He took it that He might drink the last drop of the cup which the Father had put in His hand.

19:30 After drinking the vinegar, we have our Lord's last words from the Cross: "It is finished." (In the Greek it is one word.) And with that He released His spirit. The work that the Lord Jesus had come to do was "finished." It was completed. There was nothing left to be done. His enemies had done their worst, and there was no way that they could touch Him any more. The righteousness of God had been satisfied. The spiritual needs of all who would be redeemed had been met. The prince of this world had been judged; his doom was sealed. Every prophecy concerning the sacrifice of Christ had been fulfilled. The many OT types of redemption now had their perfect antitype. The wrath of men had been made to praise the Lord. Truly the Lord could say, "It is finished." The only salvation

available for guilty sinners was provided and offered to all who would believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The statement that our Lord made is an indication also that the work He did on the Cross will never be repeated; in fact, it never needs to be repeated. He died once-for-all. Paul wrote to the Roman church,

Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more;
death hath no more dominion over him.

For in that he died, he died unto sin once:

but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God (Rom. 6:9, 10).

And the book of Hebrews teaches us,

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands,
which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself,
now to appear in the presence of God for us.

Nor yet that he should offer himself often,
as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year
with the blood of others; For then must he often have suffered
since the foundation of the world: but now once
in the end of the world hath he appeared
to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:24-26).

The people of God in the OT looked ahead to the cross for their salvation. Those who have been saved since Christ died, look back to the cross as the place where an atonement was made for our sins. There is only one Savior. There was only one sacrifice for sin. It will never, and can never, be repeated. Therefore, our Lord was making a proclamation of victory over sin when He said, "It is finished." Our hopes for salvation rest on the fact that His words were true then, and they will be true for all eternity.

February 24, 1992

As I have pointed out to you, the words, "It is finished," are the translation of one Greek word. Listen to Spurgeon's comment on it:

In the original Greek of John's Gospel, there is only one word for this utterance of our Lord. To translate it into English, we have to use three words; but when it was spoken, it was only one,--an ocean of meaning in a drop of language, a mere drop, for that is all that we can call one word. "It is finished." Yet it would need all the other words that ever were spoken, or ever can be spoken, to explain this one word. It is altogether immeasurable. It is high; I cannot attain to it. It is deep; I cannot fathom it. "Finished." I can half imagine the tone in which our Lord uttered this word, with a holy glorying, a sense of relief, the bursting out of a heart that had long been shut up within walls of anguish. "Finished." It was a Conqueror's cry; it was uttered with a loud voice. There is nothing of anguish about it, there is no wailing in it. It is the cry of One who has completed a tremendous labour, and is about to die; and ere he utters his death-prayer, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he shouts his life's last hymn in that one word, "Finished" (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, p. 25).

In our Lord's high priestly prayer He said, speaking to His Father,
I have glorified thee on the earth:
I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do
(John 17:4).

The Apostle Paul also said in his last epistle,
I have found a good fight, I have finished my course,
I have kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

To the Ephesian elders Paul had said earlier when he referred to the warning that the Holy Spirit had given him that "bonds and afflictions" were waiting for him,

But none of these things move me,
neither count I my life dear unto myself,
so that I might finish my course with joy,
and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus,
to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24).

We are guilty of starting many things which we never finish. Or we finish what we are doing, but it is far from being what it ought to be. We have never given to the Lord a perfectly finished work. But the Lord Jesus did! And He knew it! And He gloried in it! And if we could only know half of all that was in His heart when He said this, our knowledge of the Word of God would be infinitely greater than it is now.

Lifted up was he to die, "It is finished!" was his cry:

Now in heaven exalted high: Hallelujah, what a Saviour!

Whatever men may say about the sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, here we have the truth. He had done the will of the Father perfectly. He had accomplished everything that the Father had sent Him to do. And so from the Cross He made the grand declaration: "It is finished." All that had been required to cleanse the vilest of sinners, had been done. All that was necessary to get hell-deserving sinners into heaven for all eternity, had been done. The glorious salvation which had been planned before the world ever was, was now completed. It was sufficient for every sinner who ever had turned to the hope of a promised Redeemer, and sufficient for every sinner who ever will turn to the Lord to the end of time. "It is finished." It would have been wonderful if angels had declared it, but it is glorious beyond words that it was our blessed Lord Jesus Christ Who announced His victory for His people.

"It is finished" is the same word that John used in verse 28 where he said that Jesus knew "that all things were now **accomplished...**" His work on earth was done.

Having said "It is finished," John tells us that our Lord "bowed his head, and gave up the spirit." Men did not take it from Him; He gave it up of His own will because He had received this authority from His Father. While our Lord was certainly the Victim, He was also the Victor!

19:31 The cruelty of the Jews could hardly have been shown more than it was when, in such a moment as this, they showed their heartless concern for our Lord when they requested to Pilate that the legs of the men on the Cross might be broken, to hasten their deaths, so that their bodies could be removed before the Sabbath.

What hypocrites they were! Calvin said that they direct their attention to small matters, and yet pass by the greatest crimes without hesitation; for, in order to a strict observance of their Sabbath, they are careful to avoid outward pollution; and yet they do not consider how shocking a crime it is to take away the life of an innocent man (Vol. XVIII, p. 238).

And yet we see the sovereignty of God even in this. Remember the words of our Lord in John 2:19 where it is recorded that He had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." And John explained in verse 21 of that same chapter, "But he spoke of the temple of his body."

We also have the prediction which the Lord made which is recorded for us in Mark 8:31:

And he (our Lord) began to teach them,
that the Son of man must suffer many things,
and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes,
and be killed, and after three days rise again.

These predictions meant that the Lord must be raised three days after He died. So it was essential that He be buried on the day that He died.

19:32 Pilate granted their request, and the soldiers began by breaking the legs of the two malefactors who had been crucified on each side of the Lord.

19:33 "But when they came to Jesus," this verse tells us, they "saw that he was dead already," and so they did not break His legs.

19:34 However, one of the soldiers took his spear and drove it into our Lord's side. Blood and water came out.

There have been various attempts to explain what was done by the Roman soldiers. Alfred Edersheim, in his work, The Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah, Vol. II, p. 613, says that the breaking of the bones did not hasten death, but that it was always followed by the thrusting of the spear into the side of the one who had been crucified. The breaking of the bones was added punishment for the shortening of the torturous death by crucifixion by the use of the spear. So the spear is what actually killed the one who was hanging on the cross. Evidently spears were used on the two criminals although it is not said that they were. The soldier who drove his spear into the Lord's side may have done it for spite, or to make doubly sure that the Lord was really dead. We do not know why he did it.

It does seem that there was significance to the fact that blood and water came out of the Lord's side.

That would certainly show that He had not been dead for very long. And in addition to whatever physical explanation there might be, blood and water have special significance in Scripture with regard to salvation.

There is an interesting passage in the First Epistle of John which probably has some bearing upon this part of the death of our Lord. I am referring to 1 John 5:6-8. And it must be significant that John, the only Gospel writer who mentioned the blood and water which came out of the Lord's side, should bring up these two things again in the writing of his First Epistle. What did he have in mind?

The passage in 1 John in which reference is made to the blood and water is a passage having to do with salvation--with being born of God (v. 1), with believing in the Son of God (v. 5). And John mentioned "the Spirit, and the water, and the blood," as three witnesses that are in perfect agreement with each other, apparently with reference to salvation. The Spirit has a major part in our salvation because we are born of the Spirit. Cf. John 3. But we are "redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). And water represents the Word of God because Paul told the Ephesian church that we are cleansed, sanctified, "with the washing of water by the Word" (Eph. 5:26). Personally, rather than limit the blood of Christ to our justification, and saying that the water refers to our sanctification, I believe that John would tell us that the Spirit and the water and the

blood are a threefold testimony as to the genuineness and effectiveness of our salvation since the Spirit, the Word, and the blood have to do with our justification, but they also are very active and important in our sanctification. There is certainly a lot of wonderful truth for us to meditate on as we think of the water and blood which came out of the Lord's side.

Augustus Toplady, who lived back in the 1700's, was both a great theologian and an outstanding writer. He wrote the hymn, Rock of Ages. He expressed what he thought was the meaning of the water and the blood in the first stanza of that hymn. It goes like this:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me, Let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood, From thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure, Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

Some see in the water and the blood a reference to baptism and the Lord's Supper. This also is a possibility.

19:35 John did not write from what others told him. He was an eyewitness of the sufferings of our Lord. His record is true not only because he was a careful witness, but because he was writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit. John was firmly convinced himself that all of the facts that he had recorded about the death of the Lord were absolutely true, not only as facts of history, but as to the reason His Lord had to suffer as He did. However, his main purpose in writing, as he would say again in the last two verses of John 20, was that people might believe.

John's purpose should help us to see what is vital to a witness that will be used by the Holy Spirit to draw others to Christ. We need to tell people about the Lord Jesus Christ, about His death as well as His life, pointing out that the reason He died was to provide salvation from sin.

19:36 In this verse, and in the next (37), we see why the soldiers did not break our Lord's legs, and why the soldier threw his spear into the Lord's side. Both were predicted in the Word of God, and the Scriptures cannot be broken. The first speaks of what was NOT done; the second speaks of what WAS done. And it is to the glory of God's sovereignty that both of these things were in the hands of Roman soldiers. But they unconsciously did the will of God.

The quotation in this verse is taken from Ex. 12:46. With respect to the eating of the Passover lamb it was said, "Neither shall ye break a bone thereof." And, by the way, this is one passage which proves that the Passover lamb was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His death.

19:37 The quotation in this verse is from Zech. 12:10. It is interesting that Zechariah's prophecy really speaks of the time when the Lord will come again, but He will still bear the scars of the nails and the sword. The soldier acted on behalf of Israel, and so Zechariah referred to it as having been done by the Jews.

And so again we see how God was working all things out according to His Word, and that He used unregenerate men to do it.

When our Lord appeared to His disciples after His resurrection, Luke tells us that the Lord Jesus said to them after showing them His hands and His feet,

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you,
that all things must be fulfilled, which were written

**in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms,
concerning me (Luke 24:44).**

One thing that the Apostle John was very anxious to do (as we can tell from his writings) was to increase our faith in the absolute reliability of the Word of God. It also should cause us to think with great comfort upon the providence of God. Without any coercion, and time after time, people who did not know the Lord voluntarily did exactly what the Scriptures said would be done. The Lord makes the wrath of men praise him. Cf. Psalms 76:10. Bishop Ryle quoted a man by the name of Rollock who said,

If God have ordained and said anything, it lies not in the hands of any man to disannul it. If God shall say, "There shall not be one bone of my anointed broken," great Caesar and all the kings of the earth...shall not be able to do to the contrary. So, in the midst of fear and danger, let us depend upon the providence of God (II, 596).

And so we come to the end of the Apostle John's account of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the focal point of all history. Nothing ever happened of greater importance than all that took place between the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and His ascension back to the Father in heaven. But as wonderful as the Lord was (and is) as a Person, no matter how perfect His life was, regardless of the surpassing excellence of all of His teachings, and the marvelous nature of His miracles, if the Lord had not died and risen again, we would be still in our sins, without God and without hope. The Apostle John summed it all up when he wrote in 1 John 4:14,

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

The Apostle Paul was in total agreement with the Apostle John because he wrote,

But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:23, 24).

The record of the sufferings of our Lord, not only in John's Gospel, but also in the other three, are passages that deserve our constant meditation and prayer.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 18, 19 -- Part 5
March 2, 1992
John 19:38-42

Intro: Bishop Ryle said that we should have a peculiar interest in these five verses, for three reasons:

They introduce us to a stranger, of whom we never heard before. They bring in an old friend, whose name is known wherever the Bible is read. They describe the most important funeral that ever took place in the world (II, 596).

The stranger is Joseph of Arimathaea. The friend is Nicodemus who has been mentioned twice before in John's Gospel, and only in John's Gospel (John 3:1, 4, 9; 7:50). The funeral service was for our Lord Jesus Christ. These five verses give us John's record of the burial of the Lord.

What took place here was predicted by the prophet Isaiah in that chapter to which I have already referred several times: Isaiah 53. The verse is 9:
And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death;
because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

19:38 The Spirit of God has honored Joseph of Arimathaea because he is mentioned in all four Gospels. Cf. Matt. 27:57-60; Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-53. However, he is only mentioned in connection with the burial of our Lord--never before, and never afterwards! Matthew tells us that he was a rich man, and a disciple. Mark tells us that he was "an honourable counsellor" and that he waited for the kingdom of God. This means that he was a member of the Sanhedrin, that ruling body of the Jews which had condemned the Lord to death. Luke also mentions that Joseph was "a counsellor...a good man, and a just," but that he not agreed with his fellow-members of the Sanhedrin in their condemnation of the Lord, nor in what they had done in crucifying the Lord. John tells us that Joseph was "a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews."

Therefore, it is clear that Joseph was a believer, but he had never declared Himself to be a disciple of our Lord until after our Lord's death. It is interesting that Luke called him "a good man, and a just" (man). And so we are to take from those terms that he, in his character and in his behavior, was the person he professed to be. He was what we can call a secret disciple, but he was a disciple! A true believer may try to conceal his identity as a Christian, but it will only be a matter of time until he will make his faith known. He did this at a time when it would have been particularly risky for him because our Lord's popularity (if we may call it that) with both Jews and Gentiles was at an all-time low! Joseph was probably one of those "chief rulers" mentioned in John 12:42 who believed in the Lord, but did not confess Him because they were afraid that the Pharisees would have them put out of the synagogue. His fear was quite suddenly turned into boldness as he went to Pilate beseeching him for permission to take the body of our Lord away, i.e., for burial.

The location of Arimathaea is unknown. Luke called it "a city of the Jews," which probably means that it was a small town, possibly in the suburbs of Jerusalem, or not too far away, a city of Judaea. However, its location is unknown today.

John's choice of words here in describing the request that Joseph made of Pilate is the same word that he used in verse 31 where the Jews "besought Pilate that their legs," i.e., of our Lord and the two malefactors, "might be broken." It is a verb which Archbishop Trenchard said describes the request of one to another who are somewhat equal in stature, and who are

even known to each other. That would fit verse 21, and it is interesting to see that it is the word that John used here. It means that Pilate knew Joseph, and that Joseph was a man of great influence among the Jews. And so when Joseph made his request, it was done with a certain amount of authority which Pilate would be reluctant to turn down. It seems that Joseph's request was granted immediately. Mark tells us in his Gospel that Pilate made sure that the Lord was really dead. Calvin mentioned that, if Joseph had not taken the body of our Lord, it "would have been exposed to the lawless violence of the soldiers" (XVIII, 243). It is easy to see the sovereign hand of God moving upon Joseph to ask for the body of the Lord as Joseph would only have done this by the grace of God.

For those who deny that our Lord actually died, we would point out that the soldiers were convinced that He was dead. Pilate was certain of this also. And we can be sure that Joseph and Nicodemus would not have buried Him if they had been at all uncertain about His death.

19:39 The old friend which Bishop Ryle mentioned in connection with this passage was Nicodemus. When John refers to him as the one "which at the first came to Jesus by night," he was obviously referring to Nicodemus' visit with the Lord which is recorded in John 3.

Nicodemus brought "a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight." This would indicate that Nicodemus, like Joseph, was a man of some means. There has been much discussion about whether or not this was an extravagant gift. To settle the dispute we only need to go back to John 12 where we have the record of what Mary of Bethany did in anointing the feet of the Lord with "a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly." Judas objected saying that it was wasteful, and should have been sold, and the money given to the poor. In reality, he did not want it for the poor; he wanted it for himself. He was a thief. The Lord told Judas to leave Mary alone, etc. We can then take what Mary did, and what Nicodemus did, as well as what the other women attempted to do when they went to the tomb early on the morning of our Lord's resurrection. They were expressing their love for the Lord, which He accepted and rejoiced in. People who do not know the Lord, and, unfortunately, some who do know Him, cannot understand the love for the Lord that causes people to give so sacrificially to the Lord.

We may not know exactly when Nicodemus was saved, but it is clear at this point that he was a true believer in Christ. When we think of Nicodemus perhaps those words of the prophet Isaiah come to mind:

A bruised reed shall he not break,
and the smoking flax shall he not quench... (Isa. 42:3a).

Another reading for the word "smoking" is dimly burning. The Lord knew when He kindled the light in Nicodemus' soul, and He made sure that the light, as dim as it was did not go out. And, in the Lord's time, the light began to burn brightly. What assurance this is that, having begun that good work of salvation in the hearts of His people, He will continue the work until it is finally finished and perfected in the day of Jesus Christ. Cf. Phil. 1:6.

19:40 The "they" here would mean Joseph and Nicodemus. Together they lovingly applied the spices to the body of the Lord Jesus, and then wrapped His body tightly in the grave clothes. We cannot blame them if they were not thinking of resurrection. Not even His apostles had understood that He would rise again from the dead. It would be interesting if we could know what their thoughts were. All we know is that they were

concerned that our Lord would have an honorable burial at the hands of those who had loved Him secretly, but at last were given boldness to show that their faith was in Him.

There is one point of special interest regarding what Joseph and Nicodemus did in comparison with their Jewish brethren who would not go into Pilate's judgment hall lest they be defiled and be unable to observe the Passover. Cf. John 18:28. And they wanted to get the body of the Lord down from the Cross before the Sabbath. The Law said very plainly in Num. 19:11,

He that toucheth the dead body of any man
shall be unclean seven days.

What Joseph and Nicodemus did, therefore, would have excluded them from observing the Passover. They were defiled by the loving care that they gave to the body of our Lord, but their faith in Him, and their love for Him, meant more to them than the observance of the feast which was set aside by the One Who came in fulfillment of all that the Passover meant. Did this mean that Joseph and Nicodemus had their eyes opened to truth which the apostles did not yet understand? We cannot say for sure, but the evidence points to the fact that this may have been the case. Once people have come to the Lord, they cannot be satisfied any longer with the types and shadows which pointed ahead to His coming. There are many interesting thoughts which come to us out of this brief record of the burial of our Lord Jesus Christ.

19:41 We are told here that the Lord was crucified where there was a garden, and that in the garden there was a tomb, a new tomb, "wherein was never man yet laid." Matthew tells us that this was Joseph's "own new tomb" which he had quite evidently prepared for himself. Cf. Matt. 27:60. It was customary for people with wealth to do such a thing. And it was a matter of distinction for a man to have prepared his own tomb. Joseph gladly gave up the honor that he had made for himself so that the Lord would have the honor of a special tomb just for Himself. Joseph had no idea when the tomb was cut out that it would one day house the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

19:42 With this the funeral service was completed. It was finished in time to have been in full accord with the coming of that special Sabbath.

Let me quote from Bishop Ryle again:

Thus ended the most wonderful funeral the sun ever shone upon. Such a death and such a burial,--so little understood by man and so important in the sight of God,--there never was, and never can be again. Who need doubt the love of Christ, when we consider the deep humiliation that Christ went through for our sakes! To tabernacle in our flesh at all, to die after the manner of a man, to allow His holy body to hang naked on a cross, to suffer it to be lifted, handled, carried like a lump of cold clay, and shut up in a dark, silent solitary tomb.--this was indeed love that passeth knowledge. What true believer need fear the grave now? Solemn as is the thought of our last narrow bed, we must never forget that "it is the place where the Lord lay." (Matt. xxviii. 6.) "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. xv. 56, 57.) (II, 610).

So far we have the evidence of what Paul was to write later:

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received,
how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

And that he was buried... (1 Cor. 15:3, 4a).

The next two chapters complete the Gospel for us:

And that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

And that he was seen...

The proof that He died is that He was buried; the proof that He was raised is that He was seen. Without the death and resurrection of the spotless Lamb of God, sin would not have been taken away. There would have been no salvation. But because He died "who knew no sin," there is hope and forgiveness and heaven for the chief of sinners. "Hallelujah, what a Savior!"

While we can wonder at how slow Joseph and Nicodemus were to declare their faith in Christ, yet let us see that when they did, they surpassed most of us in declaring their love for the Savior of their souls.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 20 -- Part 1
March 3, 1992
John 20:1-10

Intro: Although John began his Gospel, and wrote it, in a different fashion from the other Gospel writers, yet he finished in the same way. He gave the account of the trial, death, and resurrection of the Lord. However, we say this with one important exception: John spent much more space to the appearances of Christ to His disciples after His resurrection. Luke is the only one who came close to what John did by his account, unique to his book, of the Lord's appearance to the two disciples who were returning from Jerusalem to Emmaus. And so we can say that John seemed especially intent on proving to his readers that the Lord Jesus actually did rise from the dead.

John is the only one who told in detail about Peter and John going to the tomb when they heard from Mary Magdalene that the body of the Lord was not in the tomb. Luke did say that Peter went to the tomb, saw the grave clothes, and then went away, "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass" (Luke 24:12). So we are indebted to John for telling us that he and Peter went to the tomb, what they did when they got there, and how they reacted to what they saw.

John's account begins with Mary Magdalene.

20:1 John did not report that there were at least two other women with Mary Magdalene. Nor did he say anything about an angel being there who had come down from heaven to roll the stone away from the mouth of the tomb, as Matthew did. Nor did John say that there was "a young man" dressed in white apparel sitting in the tomb when the women got there, as Mark did. Luke mentioned "two men."

These are not discrepancies in the reports of the four writers; they only show a different emphasis. There must have been two angels who appeared as men (as they did in Gen. 18 when we are told that three men came to visit Abraham). Hebrews 13:2 suggests that it was not unusual for angels to appear on earth as human beings.

Concerning Mary Magdalene, only Mark mentioned in his account that Mary Magdalene was the one out of whom the Lord "had cast seven devils," or, more correctly, seven demons! Cf. Mark 16:9. In mentioning Mary Magdalene for the first time, Luke, in Luke 8:2, wrote the same, i.e., "Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils." However, there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that she was ever a prostitute, as many have said. This idea probably arose from the fact that there was a sinful woman mentioned in Luke 7 who anointed the Lord's feet with her tears and with precious ointment. But she and Mary Magdalene were two different people. Nevertheless, Mary Magdalene had a very great love for the Lord because of what He had done for her, and, the longer she knew the Lord, the greater her love for the Lord grew. She was among the last at the Cross, and among the first at the tomb.

She came to the tomb on "the first day of the week." This would have been Sunday, the day after the Jewish Sabbath. This is why the Church has always, met on Sunday, rather than on the Jewish Sabbath. Sunday worship commemorates the resurrection of Christ. And in that connection it is important for us to notice that there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that the Sabbath was ever changed to Sunday. Scripturally it is not accurate to call Sunday, the Sabbath. Dr. Chafer used to commend the

Seventh Day Adventists as people who know what the Sabbath is, even though he did not agree with their teaching about the Sabbath. Acts 20:7 mentions that the believers in Troas came together "to break bread" on "the first day of the week." And in 1 Cor. 16:2 Paul told the believers at Corinth to give on "the first day of the week." No special emphasis is placed upon the day as though believers are under a legal obligation to observe Sunday as the Jews had observed Saturday, but we know from early Church history that the early Christians met together on Sunday, not Saturday. We have the exhortation regarding our gathering together in Heb. 10:25. The child of God who does not meet regularly with the Lord's people is sinning against the Lord. It is important for us to see that the change was made in recognition of the resurrection of Christ. The religious world remembers the resurrection of Christ once a year; true believers remember that triumphant event every Lord's Day.

I personally am satisfied that the Lord was crucified on Friday, and raised from the dead on Sunday. The Jews would count any part of a day as a day, so that would satisfy the requirement that the Lord was in the grave for three days and three nights. While He would not have been in grave for three nights, that was an expression not to be taken as a total of 72 hours, but a general expression which could be satisfied with any part of three days.

John simply recorded about Mary Magdalene that when she arrived she found "the stone taken away from the sepulchre."

We need to remember that the stone had to be removed for the followers of our Lord to get into the tomb, not for the Lord to get out! The Lord appeared and disappeared after His resurrection. It was not held in by the walls of a house, nor by a stone at the mouth of His tomb. That is one of the characteristics of the resurrection body.

20:2 She immediately ran to tell Peter and John. We have her words to them recorded for us in the latter part of this verse. (Read.) We should note that Mary was not even thinking of resurrection; she was only suspicious that the Jews had done something with the Lord's body--and this was in spite of the fact that the angels had told her and the other women that the Lord was risen from the dead. Resurrection was probably no more in her mind than it was in the hearts of the apostles. And so she went to get help from Peter and John.

20:3 Peter and John were just as surprised about this information as Mary Magdalene had been to receive it. And so they left to get to the tomb as fast as they could get there.

20:4 It is generally thought that John outran Peter because he was a younger man, and that is probably the reason that John got to the tomb first.

20:5 At this point I would call your attention to the way in which John used some verb for seeing or looking in verses 5, 6, and 8. In the original we have three different verbs used in these verses, and all are correctly translated to see. I am indebted to G. Campbell Morgan for pointing this out to me as he did in his commentary on John. He was Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones predecessor at Westminster Chapel in London. Since then I have seen the same interpretation in the writing of Bishop Westcott who is well-known as an authority on the Greek New Testament. And my friend, Bishop Ryle, recognized the special way in which Spirit of God led John to

use three different words which are all translated, to see.

Actually the expression "stooping down, and looking in" is the translation of one Greek verb. The same verb is used in John 20:11. It emphasizes the position that one takes to look at something. The word that I want you to notice is the one which is simply translated "saw." It is the Greek verb _____. And it means no more than that John looked in and saw that what Mary had said was true; the body of the Lord was not there! He did not notice any of the details; he simply saw that the Lord's body was there.

It is like we would notice something, but not pay any particular attention to it. It is like you might see a strange car parked in front of your neighbor's house. You did not stop to think about why it was there. It could have been the car of a thief who was robbing them. It could have been their own new car. It could have been that it belonged to a friend visiting them. And yet if someone asked you later if you saw the car, you would say, "Yes, I did." But you did not go beyond the actual sight as far as the significance was concerned.

John tells us that he did not go in, possibly feeling that Peter was older and something of a superior to him. And so he felt that he should wait for Peter to go in first.

20:6 When Peter arrived shortly afterwards, he "went into the sepulchre, and **seeth** the linen clothes lie." We need the next verse also to understand what it was that caught Peter's attention.

20:7 He saw that "the napkin," which was a cloth used for wrapping the head of the deceased in preparation for burial, was still folded as it had been about the Lord's head, and separate from the linen clothes which had been around his body.

The verb for "saw" in verse 6 is _____. This is a verb that might be used of governmental examiners who are looking carefully into all of the evidence that they can see regarding the wreckage of a plane that has crashed. Or, it could be illustrated by what my teachers would have us do when I was in school. We were asked to look at some painting, to write down every detail that we could see in the painting, and then come up with some explanation as to why the painter had done what he had done.

Peter looked at the grave clothes of our Lord. He looked with great intensity, trying to figure out what it all meant. What he saw was the grave clothes laid out exactly as they had been around the body of the Lord, and the head cloth lying, folded also, just as it had been wrapped around the head of the Lord Jesus. The grave clothes were not unwrapped, and thrown on the ground. It was just as though the body of the Lord had been mysteriously slipped out of the grave clothes without disturbing them at all. They were lying flat because the body of the Lord was not there, but they were still wrapped just as Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus had wrapped them. Peter looked long and silently at what he saw, trying to figure out what it all meant. He had never see or even known of such a thing happening before. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he came forth "bound hand and foot with graveclothes" (John 11:44). And the Lord told Mary and Martha, "Loose him, and let him go." But that was not the case here. No one, not even the angels, had loosened the Lord's grave-clothes so that He could get out. The graveclothes were undisturbed, but the body of the Lord was gone. Peter "saw" all of that, but he did not understand.

20:8 Then John went in. And he recorded about himself that "he saw, and believed." The verb that he used here is _____. John saw the evidence, and it seems that like a flash of lightning the truth dawned upon his soul. The meaning here is that John realized what it meant, and he suddenly "believed" that the Lord Jesus had been raised from the dead. And so it appears that the Apostle John was the first one of all of the followers of the Lord to believe that the Lord had been raised from the dead.

20:9 Bishop Ryle suggests that this verse could be paraphrased,
Up to this time these two disciples,
like all of the rest of our Lord's followers,
had not fully understood the meaning of the Scriptures,
which taught that Christ must rise again from the dead,
after dying for our sins (II, 629).

"They knew not" is lit., they had not known. This was a case where John was not convinced by Scripture, but by seeing the evidence that what the Lord had predicted was true.

We come again in this verse to the word **"must."** As we have seen it speaks of something which is a divine necessity because it is a part of the plan of God. It was just as certain that the Lord Jesus would rise from the dead as it was that He would die. Nothing that the power of Rome nor the schemings of the Jews could possibly have prevented it. "Must" is a word which declares the absolute sovereignty of God in all of His works.

For the verses where "must" appears in John's Gospel, cf. John 3:7, 14, 30; 4:4, 24; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9.

20:10 What Peter and John may have said to each other, we do not know. Even what their thoughts were, we do not know. They evidently felt that they should go back home to wait for further developments even though the angels had told the women to remind the disciples that the Lord had said that He would see them in Galilee.

What follows in John's Gospel is a series of events in which our Lord appeared to His disciples (never to unbelievers) as further confirmation that He had really been raised from the dead.

It is just as important for us to believe in the resurrection of Christ as it is to believe in His death, and the reason for it. The doctrine of the resurrection is fully developed in the epistles. It is our guarantee that the Father was satisfied with the work of His Son, and that our Lord had done everything necessary for the salvation of any and every sinner who had ever, or would ever, put their trust in Him. Let us make sure that, but the grace of God, and like John of old, we, too, have seen, and have believed.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 20 -- Part 2
March 9, 1992
John 20:11-23

Intro: In our outline we come to the seventh main division of the Gospel of John:

VII. THE LORD'S POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCES (John 20:11-21:23).

The appearances are as follows:

- A. To Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18).
- B. To His disciples without Thomas (John 20:19-23).
- C. To His disciples with Thomas (John 20:24-31).
- D. To seven of His disciples (John 21:1-23). The latter part of this section gives us our Lord's special ministry to the Apostle Peter (vv. 15-23).

There were other appearances in addition to these, but these seemed especially appropriate for John's Gospel. For others, cf. 1 Cor. 15:5-8.

The last division of John's Gospel is:

VIII. THE CONCLUSION (John 21:24, 25).

First, then, we learn about our Lord's appearance:

- A. To Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18).

20:11 John Mark recorded in his Gospel the following words:

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

And so, even though Paul did not mention her in 1 Cor. 15, it seems clear that our Lord's first appearance was to Mary Magdalene. John tells us that she "stood without at the sepulchre weeping." Peter and John left probably not noticing that Mary Magdalene had come back.

As she wept, she looked into the tomb apparently to make sure that she had not been mistaken, or that perhaps the Lord's body had been returned.

20:12 The Greek verb translated "saw" is the same that John used of Peter in verse 6. This means that she was bewildered by what she saw, and was not quite able to figure out what it meant. In fact, John did not mention the grave clothes except to imply that they were there because the angels were sitting, one where the Lord's head had been, the other where His feet had been. They had not been there when she had first come to the tomb; at least she had not noticed them.

20:13 They asked her why she was crying, and she told them. (Read.) The body of a departed loved one is very precious, and it only added to Mary's grief that the Lord's body was not there. Probably many fears filled her heart as to what could have happened to it.

The angels certainly must have know why Mary was crying, but they wanted to hear her express it. Possibly this also was to make the reason for Mary's grief even clearly Mary herself.

Verse 10 tells us that Peter and John had gone back home, but Mary returned

to stay until she could find out where the Lord's body had been taken.

Bishop Westcott quoted Augustine in his commentary who said about Mary, "A stronger affection riveted to the spot one of a weaker nature" (p. 291). Westcott also observed that what Mary did was an illustration and fulfillment of Prov. 8:17 which reads,

I love them that love me;
and those that seek me early shall find me.

We see this in the following verses.

20:14 Mary, for some reason, did not wait for any response which the angels might have given her. Instead she turned around and "saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus." It seems that at this point Mary experienced that which happened to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus when the Lord first appeared to them: "But their eyes were holden that they should not know him" (Luke 24:16). It means that the Lord kept them from recognizing Who He was. And He kept Mary from recognizing Who He was. It may have been that His resurrection body had something to do with her inability to tell that it was the Lord.

20:15 The Lord asked her the same question that the angels had asked, and then added, "Whom seekest thou?"

The Lord's words indicate that He wants us to tell Him when we are seeking Him, and that He is delighted with the kind of love and devotion that Mary alone was showing by being in tears at the tomb. Perhaps Mary's actions should remind us of David's words in Psalm 63, verses 1 and 2:

O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee:
my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee
in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
To see thy power and thy glory,
so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

It is so easy for us to seek the Lord in a formal way just because it is a habit, or it is expected of us. But to seek Him because we love Him, and to seek Him because we want Him, not just some blessing--this is what pleases the Lord. The Lord wanted to hear Mary say what she was doing. He knew why she was there, but He wanted her to tell Him.

She thought he was the one employed by Joseph of Arimathaea to take care of the garden, and so she responded to the Lord in the words at the end of the verse. (Read.) She would not blame him, nor ask him why he had taken the Lord's body away. She only wanted to find the body, and she would assume the full responsibility of giving Him a proper burial.

20:16 This has to be one of the most heart-moving verses in all of the Bible. The Lord did not say, "I am," as He had said to the men who came to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. He called her by her name, saying, "Mary." I have always wished that I could have said it like the Lord said it. But perhaps it was not so much the tone he used as the fact that He knew her name, and she recognized His voice.

You will remember that the Lord had said earlier, and it is recorded for us in John 10:3b-5,

...and he calleth his own sheep by name,
and leadeth them out.
And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them,
and the sheep follow him: **for they know his voice.**

And a stranger will thy not follow, but will flee from him:
for they know not the voice of strangers.

Mary may not have known that it was the Lord, but the Lord knew Mary, and He knew her by her name.

There is an incident in the OT that is very similar to this, and it had to do with Moses at the burning bush. It is recorded in Ex. 3. Moses was taking care of his father-in-law's sheep one day as he did every day, and he noticed a bush on fire which was not being burned up. Moses writing about his own experience said,

I will now turn aside, and see this great sight,
why the bush is not burnt.

And then he added this interesting word:

And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see,
God called unto him out of the midst of the bush,
and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.

At that point the Lord told Moses what He wanted him to do.

Do you see the point?

It was to Mary who was seeking the Lord that He first made Himself known in His resurrection body. It was to Moses who paid attention to the unusual thing that the Lord was doing, that God spoke. It was to those two disciples who were confused, but concerned, about what had happened to the Lord, and were talking about it, that the Lord made himself known.

I can add another illustration from a recent SS lesson we have had here at Trinity. It had to do with the visions that Peter had when the great sheet was let down from heaven with all kinds of animals and creeping things in it, things a Jew was not supposed to eat. Peter could not understand what it all meant. But then we read this in Acts 10:19:

While Peter thought on the vision,
the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

I am sure that we often miss great blessings in reading the Word because we are not paying careful to what we are reading. We read our Bible hurriedly, but we do not think about what we are reading. We are seeking to learn truth, but we are not like Mary, seeking the Lord. Mary got a blessing that none of the other disciples received. And she delighted the heart of her Savior in what she did. Mary never could have forgotten that moment when, for the first time, she realized that her Lord was alive! That is the reason she could not find Him. He had conquered death. He had conquered the grave. He had conquered Satan and sin. He was alive after having accomplished all that the Father had sent him to do.

How did Mary respond?

She said, "Rabboni." This means "Master," as John went on to explain for his Gentile readers. "Master" is the translation of the Greek word for teacher. Mary Magdalene loved the Lord for many reasons, but preeminent among her reasons was the fact that He was her beloved Teacher. And in calling Him "Rabboni" she was giving Him the highest possible honor as a teacher. He had set her free from the demons, and had filled her heart with the precious truths she had heart from His lips.

20:17 At this point it seems that Mary must have fallen at the feet of her Lord, and grasped His legs around His ankles. It is recorded in

Matthew's Gospel that as the women went to tell the disciples that the Lord was alive, the Lord "met them." Then Matthew tells us that "they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him" (Matt. 28:9). The Lord did not tell Mary not to touch Him, but not to hold Him back. Mary's actions clearly expressed that now that she had found the Lord, she was never going to let Him go again. It seems that she wanted to take up her relationship with Him where she had to break it off when He died. However, the Lord's words indicated that what Mary had experienced at this moment was not the way things were ultimately to be. His earthly relationship with her and with all of His people was coming to an end. He had come from the Father in humiliation; He must return to the Father in glory. And, although it is not stated here, His return to the Father would lead to His present ministry of intercession for His people. And, seated at the Father's right hand, He would await that day when He would come again, not to die again, but to rule as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Perhaps the truth that the Lord was expressing to Mary here in this verse is the truth which Paul expressed to the Corinthian church in 2 Cor. 5:16 where we read,

Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh:
yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh,
yet now henceforth know we him no more.

I doubt if there is any child of God who has lived since Christ was here on earth who has not wished that he or she could have been to see the Lord, to hear His wonderful teaching, and to have seen Him perform His miracles. And that truly must have been wonderful. But the Scriptures indicate that our relationship with the Lord today, and ever since Christ's ascension, is more wonderful than people had when the Lord was here on the earth. He is now our risen, ascended, triumphant Savior. He is not limited by His body to one place at one time, but He dwells within all of His people. And He has added to His ministry on the Cross, His ministry on the throne where today "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). And, as the Lord had earlier indicated to His disciples, His departure was to mean the coming of the Holy Spirit.

When we studied together the sixteenth chapter of John, we had those amazing words which are found in verses 7 through 15. Those words ought to help us to understand why Mary was told not to try to hold the Lord back, not to try to retain what she had before the Lord died. Greater blessings were to come than had been experienced in the past.

How wonderful are those words, "...my Father...your Father...my God...your God"--unbelievably wonderful! The writer of Hebrews said,

For both he that sanctifieth
and they who are sanctified are all of one:
for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

20:18 Although Mary may not have understood all that the Lord had said, yet she hurried to tell the disciples that she had seen the Lord alive, and she also told them what He had said to her. And so it would seem that the men first learned about the resurrection from the women. Cf. Matt. 28:8.

From these verses we can see how very important it is to the Lord, and how important it ought to be to us, to be devoted to the Lord. There is nothing that opens our hearts more to the truth of the Word of God than for us to love the Lord with all of our hearts, souls, minds, and strength.

Cf. Mark 12:29, 30. A Mary Magdalene will know the Lord better and His Word better than the most highly trained theologian who only has an academic knowledge of the Lord and of the truth. Let us make sure that we love Him, and keep loving Him, and that we show our love by daily, careful, loving obedience to His eternal and unchanging Word.

March 16, 1992

Now we are ready to consider our Lord's appearance:

B. To His disciples without Thomas (John 20:19-23).

The actual proof of the resurrection of Christ was that "He was seen." Luke, in writing the book of Acts, said of the apostles and our Lord,
To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion
by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days,
and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God
(Acts 1:3).

The Lord appeared to the disciples on the same day that He was raised from the dead. Luke 24:33 and following seems to indicate that the two disciples from Emmaus had returned to Jerusalem. They went where the apostles were, and Luke spoke of "them that were with them." So it is very likely that a small group of the Lord's followers had gathered together. We do not know where that was. It may have been in the Upper Room where they had met to observe the Passover with the Lord. But this is only speculation.

We know why they were there. It was "for fear of the Jews," i.e., the Jewish leaders. The same fear that had caused them to desert the Lord, was still in their hearts. It shows that the apostles were not supermen, but were like we are. Fear so quickly can fill our hearts when we find ourselves in situations over which we have no control. However, when we think of the apostles, we wonder that anything at all came of the work of the Lord. The success of the Gospel certainly was not due to any natural courage that the apostles had, because they had none!

When we read that "the doors were shut," we must assume that they were also locked! But that did not keep the Lord out. He "came and stood in their midst."

We have seen that when Peter and John went to the tomb earlier that day, they found the grave clothes wrapped like they had been around the Lord's body. He did not need for them to be unwrapped for Him to get out of them in His resurrection body. Nor did He need the stone to be rolled away from the entrance to the tomb for Him to get out. And so we see here that locked doors could not keep Him out. This is simply something to recognize. We cannot explain it.

His first words to them were, "Peace be unto you."

When we think about those words, we have to recognize that they were more than just the customary greeting. Listen to what Bishop Ryle wrote about these words:

"Peace," and not blame,--"peace," and not fault-finding,--"peace," and not rebuke,--was the first word which this little company heard from their Master's lips, after He left the tomb (II, 656).

Peace was really a keynote of our Lord's ministry. His birth was heralded by the angels with the both "fear not" (Luke 2:10) and "on earth peace" (Luke 2:14). It is true that He said,

Think not that I am come to send peace of the earth:

I came not to send peace, but a sword (Matt. 10:34).

But He was speaking of the turmoil that would be caused in a family when some were saved but others were not. The message of the Gospel is a message of peace. "Therefore being justified... (Rom. 5:1). "Be careful for nothing... (Phil. 4:6, 7). "But the fruit of the Spirit is... (Gal. 5:22). Peace with God and peace of heart are the fruit of the Gospel. And it is especially significant that the Lord's first words to His disciples after His resurrection were, "Peace be unto you." How it must have calmed their fears to know that the Lord was not displeased with them!

Perhaps our Lord's words to them at this time caused them to remember what He had said to them in John 14:27 and John 16:33.

20:20 There seems to be a real connection between our Lord's words to His disciples, and what He did afterwards. "He shewed them his hands and his side." His death and His resurrection were the foundation of their peace--their peace with God, and the peace of God in their hearts. There He stood, the Mighty Conqueror. He was the Victor over death, over the grave, over sin, and over all of His enemies. As Spurgeon once said, He stood there as "the firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18). Others had been raised from the dead before, but only to die again. The Lord Jesus came out of the tomb as the first one ever raised never to die again. "Death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9b). What the Lord said, and then what He did, were enough to bring peace to the hearts of the fearful disciples! It is no wonder that Paul wrote those great words in Gal. 6:14:

But God forbid that I should glory,
save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

It is not surprising that John concluded this verse with the words, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." He had told them on the way to Gethsemane,

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 (John 16:20).

Wherever you find true peace, you will find true joy, and vice versa. Isaiah said long before this that peace can be maintained by keeping our minds stayed upon the Lord. What an illustration of Isa. 26:3 is this event in the lives of our Lord's followers.

20:21 Then the Lord repeated those four words (two in the original Greek), "Peace be unto you." Bishop Westcott wrote, "The first "Peace" was the restoration of personal confidence: the second "Peace" was the preparation for work" (p. 294).

The resurrection did not mean the end of their ministry; it was the beginning of a larger and greater ministry than any of them had known previously. The Lord did not promise them a life of ease, free of trouble. He did not promise them popularity with great success. But He did promise them peace. They were to be the possessors of peace and the dispensers of peace. The false prophets of Jeremiah's day were saying, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14b). But the servant of the Lord is a messenger of the only true peace. And so it is not by chance that the

common greeting in the early church included both "grace" and "peace."

And then He said, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Our Lord's commission to come into the world was a divine commission. In the same way the commission of the disciples was a divine commission. They were not going "on their own." It was not merely an opportunity for them which they could take or leave. They were under the orders of the Son of God, the risen Lord, to go just as the Lord was sent by the Father. Their mission was a continuation and extension of the Lord's mission.

We are not to wait for people to come to us; we are to go to them. If the Lord had waited for people to come to Him, He would have waited in vain. "There is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11b). He not only came to save the lost, but, according to Luke 19:10, He came "to seek and to save that which was lost."

The disciples were not sent into the world to educate sinners. They were not sent to improve the living standards of sinners. They were sent on the same mission that brought our Lord Jesus Christ into the world. He came as the Savior; we go as messengers of Christ. There is much that can be learned from our Lord's words if we will think about those words "as" and "even so."

20:22 At this point the Lord did a very unusual thing. He "breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit." What are we to learn from this?

In the light of what had gone on before, we have to say that what the Lord had given them, "peace," and what He had told them to do, go, were only available and possible through the Holy Spirit. If we only knew how dependent we are on the Holy Spirit, we would quit talking about our training, our experience, our gifts, and our achievements. All of our best efforts (and none of them is very good) are worthless without the Holy Spirit. "Peace" is a part of the fruit of the Spirit, and power for ministry comes only through the Holy Spirit. And just as the Holy Spirit came upon those early disciples to equip them for ministry, He is the One Who qualifies us to serve the Lord. But we are seeing today that the more we talk about self image and self esteem, the less we hear about the Holy Spirit.

We also need to recognize that this bestowal of the Holy Spirit was a special instance, and was not repeated for every believer even in those days. I take it that from that moment on the Holy Spirit came to indwell those to whom the Lord was speaking at the time. It could have been limited to the apostles; we have no way of knowing.

What the Lord did is not to be confused with the baptism of the Spirit, or even with the filling of the Spirit. They were simply told to receive the Holy Spirit. The words would indicate no more than indwelling.

I will always be grateful to dear Dr. Chafer who helped more than anyone else to understand the ministries of the Holy Spirit with believers, especially for this present age in which we are living. Let me point out what those main ministries are:

- 1) Convicting (John 16:8-11).
- 2) Regenerating (John 3:5, 6).
- 3) Indwelling (John 14:16, 17; Rom. 8:9).
- 4) Sealing (Eph. 1:13, 14).

5) Baptizing (Acts 1:5; 1 Cor. 12:13).

6) Filling (Eph. 5:18).

The first takes place before we are saved. The next four are once-for-all works of the Spirit with every believer, and are never repeated. The last is practical, addressed to us, is meant to be continuous, but where it is not, it can be repeated. We are regenerated once. We are indwelt once, and the Spirit of God never leaves us after that. We are sealed once. We are baptized once into the body of Christ. But we can be filled more than once, although the command indicates that we are to be continually filled with the Spirit.

As the work of the Lord spread from place to place in the book of Acts, the apostles prayed and laid hands on believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit, i.e., receive the Spirit. However, those instances only took place when Gospel went to various groups for the first time. But nowhere are we taught to seek the indwelling of the Spirit. Not even the disciples who were with the Lord at the time our text is telling us about, were told to seek the indwelling of the Spirit. The Lord breathed on them, and told them to receive the Spirit. And they did! But this was a special case, and we are not to believe from this that the Holy Spirit is always given in this way. The Holy Spirit came to indwell us when we were saved. He was in us before any of us knew that He was there.

I trust that this will be helpful. There is a great deal of confusion today about the ministries of the Holy Spirit. If people would only read their Bible (including a lot of preachers), and let Biblical terms mean what they say, there would be less confusion and more blessing. Let us not worry about whether or not we have the Spirit. We do. And let us not worry about whether or not we have been sealed and baptized. We have been. What we need to be concerned about is being filled with the Holy Spirit. That comes through submission to God, obedience to the Word, and trusting in the Lord.

20:23 After the Lord told them to receive the Holy Spirit, then He gave them the amazing truth that is found in this verse. (Read.)

To "remit" sins means to forgive them. To "retain" sins means that they are not forgiven.

The Catholic Church has taken this verse as authority for their priests to be able to forgive sins. But since they consider Peter as the first Pope, let us see what Peter understood these words to mean. Please turn to his message in Acts 2. Look with me at verses 37 and 38. (Read and explain.)

Peter did not claim to have the right to forgive sins--neither here, nor anywhere else! Forgiveness, the remission of sins, comes only through Christ. We believe in Christ as evidence that our sins have been forgiven, and that is why we are baptized. In baptism we are not seeking forgiveness; we are declaring that we are forgiven through the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.

To summarize what we have seen in these verses, our mission is the same as that which brought our Lord to the earth: the salvation of sinner (in its fullest sense). Our enablement for such a ministry, fraught as it is with many difficulties and much opposition, is the Holy Spirit. And we bring about the forgiveness of sins through the preaching of the Gospel. Cf. what Paul said about the Gospel in Rom. 1:16. For this ministry we need peace, and preach peace, trusting the Holy Spirit to give peace to sinners.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 20 -- Part 3
March 23, 1992
John 20:24-31

Intro: In this section we have the third of the post-resurrection appearances of our Lord. The first was to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18). The second was to the disciples without Thomas (John 20:19-23). The third was:

C. To His disciples with Thomas (John 20:24-31).

Thomas is mentioned eight times in this Gospel of John--five times here in the latter part of John 20, once each in John 11:16, John 14:5, and John 20:2. In all of the passages except John 14:5 he is also referred to as Didymus. Why this name was used is not certain. It means is a Greek word which means twofold, twain, or twin. It may mean that Thomas was a twin. Or it simply could be his surname. We can only speculate as to what it meant. I am inclined to think that he was a twin. Some think that he was called Didymus because there seemed to be two side to Thomas. On the one hand, we see him in John 11:16 encouraging the other disciples to stay with the Lord. On the other hand, he told the Lord in John 14:5, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" In the passage before us, Thomas was brought to acknowledge that the Lord had really been raised from the dead; in the next chapter he went fishing. Actually we all have two side, don't we? Sometimes we appear very devout; at other times it seems that we are overwhelmed with unbelief. Whatever the reason may be for referring to Thomas as Didymus, we can't say for sure.

20:24 All this verse tells us is that Thomas was not with the other disciples when the Lord appeared to them. Why he was not there, is another detail we do not know. However, one things seems apparent. At a time when he needed the fellowship of the other disciples, he was not there. And not being with them, he had missed that special appearance of the Lord.

In one of Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones books (I have forgotten which one) he commented on people who stay away from church because they do not particularly like the one who is to speak. And Dr. Lloyd-Jones said that this is an indication that they think they know more about what they need than the Lord does. Many have been like Thomas in this, and have missed a special blessing because they were not where they should have been. Let us all make sure that we know how important it is for us to meet with the Lord's people as often as we can. Remember that in the early church they were together every day!

20:25 It is interesting that the ten disciples did not rebuke Thomas for his absence. They simply told Thomas that they had seen the Lord. This was not done with an air of superiority, but, linking their comment with verse 20, we must believe that they said this with a feeling both of great relief and great joy. And they wanted to share their joy with Thomas. The ten were doing immediately what the Lord would charge them all to do, and that was to bear witness to His resurrection.

Thomas was not prepared to accept their testimony. A moment's thought will show us that this was a big mistake for Thomas to make--and for several reasons:

- 1) He was rejecting the testimony of at least ten men, and maybe more. Plus there had been the testimony of Mary Magdalene. Thomas surely knew that the Law had taught them that facts were established by the

testimony of even two witnesses. So in rejecting the testimony of the disciples, he was saying that he would not abide by what the Scriptures had declared as a sufficient testimony.

- 2) He was rejecting the prophecies of the OT which spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, notably Psalm 16 which Peter used in his message on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. And there were other passages as well.
- 3) He was rejecting the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ Who had said repeatedly that He would rise from the dead.
- 4) He must have been closing his mind to the testimony of his own conscience because He surely knew that the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, could not remain in the tomb.

So Thomas was responding almost as an unbeliever when he said, "Except...I will not believe." He was very determined that there was only one thing that could change his unbelief into belief.

Spurgeon made it very clear when he spoke on this text that Thomas was not only wrong in saying that he would not believe, but he was wrong in declaring the conditions which must be met if he were to change his mind. We really have no right to tell the Lord what He must do before we will accept the truth. It is true that the Lord had shown Himself to the ten, but they had not demanded that He do that before they would believe. And so there was a difference in what Thomas demanded.

There are many people even today who are just like Thomas. They seek special revelations in addition to the Scriptures. It is usually felt that if a person has some kind of a vision, that marks him, or her, out as more spiritual than others. Actually it shows that they are more immature. Even more than Thomas, such a person shows that he is not satisfied with the testimony of Scripture, but must have something additional before he is willing to believe. This is an affront to the sufficiency of Scripture.

20:26 Eight days later the disciples were together under the same conditions as before. They had their doors locked, we would assume for the same reason as before: "for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). And that seems confirmed because the Lord greeted them the same way that He had greeted them before: "Peace be unto you." The Lord had appeared in spite of the fact that the doors were locked, and without breaking down the doors or disturbing them in any way. But the difference between our Lord's previous appearance to His disciples and this one, was the fact that this time Thomas was "with them."

20:27 A second appearance would give added assurance to the ten that the Lord was really alive. However, it seems that the Lord lost no time in directing His attention and His words to Thomas.

How loving and gracious the Lord is. He was not justifying Thomas' attitude, as we can clearly see from verse 29, but He was willing to overlook what Thomas had said in favor of ministering to Thomas. This must have touched Thomas' heart deeply. We can only speculate as to why the Lord waited "eight days" before He appeared to Thomas, but one reason may be that He wanted Thomas to have time to think about what he had said. There have been many times when I have had to tell the Lord that I have been sorry for the things that I have said to Him and/or the things that I have thought. The Lord has a way of bringing us around by letting some time go by. We would like to call back our words, but they have been said. When the cock crowed, you will remember that Peter went out and "wept bitterly." Both Matthew and Luke record this for us. Cf. Matt. 26:75;

Luke 22:62.

The Lord condescended to Thomas without being condescending. He did what Thomas wanted Him to do. He told him to look at His hands, and to put his hand in the place where the soldier had thrust His spear. And then the Lord said to Thomas, "And be not faithless, but believing." Lit. He said, "And do not become faithless, but (become, [understood]) believing." The Lord was not saying that Thomas was completely "faithless." If that had been the case, Thomas would not have been saved. Instead, the Lord was saying that the way we respond to the truth will determine whether our faith becomes stronger, or whether it continues to get weaker.

Everyone has their doubts. Doubts about the Lord seem to assail us when we are going through a trial ourselves. Perhaps we question the love of God, or the goodness of God, or the wisdom of God, and sometimes even our relationship to God. I have tried to show you that Thomas' demand in expressed in verse 25 showed that he had really been struggling not only with the teaching of Scripture, but with the teaching of the Lord as well. We need to feed our faith, not our doubts! And we have to say, in spite of Thomas' attitude, that he was looking in the right place for peace of heart. Perhaps that is one reason the Lord said to him and to the others, "Peace be unto you." There is nothing that will calm our hearts and strengthen our faith more than to think about the scars our Lord has, how He got them, and why.

We can't do what Thomas did. We can't see with our natural eyes what the other apostles saw later. The next time you read 1 Corinthians 15 where, speaking of our resurrected Lord, Paul wrote, "And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve" (1 Cor. 15:5), think of John 20. They not only saw the Person of our Lord, but they saw the scars made by the nails and by the soldier's sword. And they knew what those scars meant. They were undeniable proof of the great love of God, and the love of Christ. They were evidence of the awfulness of sin for our Savior to have to die as He did. But they were also evidence of a finished work, a work that would never have to be repeated, a work that was sufficient to save all who had ever or would ever believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Augustine, in dealing with the death of Christ and with reference to the Bible, used to tell people in Latin to take it, and read it! And Spurgeon used to tell his people to read the record of the death and resurrection of Christ in the four Gospels, not just once, or occasionally, but over and over again. He told them to read great chapters like Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22--to read them until the truth of it all was written upon their souls. We need to look at those scars for ourselves. We need to dwell on these Scriptures until we begin to feel that we were there behind those locked doors, looking at the Lord, and especially at the scars which He bore.

Do you remember something very wonderful that Isaiah said about the Lord's scars? You will find it in Isa. 49:16. The Lord was assuring His people that He could not forget them. And the proof that He gave was this: "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands." When Thomas saw the scars, He recognized the Lord. But when the Lord looks at His scars, He thinks of us! As far as we know, throughout eternity the Lord Jesus is the only One Who will bear any scars in His body. In the Cross we find our peace--our peace with God, and the priceless possession of the peace of God. Again I would remind you of what Paul said in Gal. 6:14. (Quote.)

20:28 How did Thomas respond to what He saw? We are not actually told

that Thomas touched the Lord. But his heart was overwhelmed in him, and those wonderful words poured out of his mouth: "My Lord and my God." This is another expression that I wish I could say like Thomas said it. If we were inclined to have any doubts about Thomas' salvation, these words should remove those doubts forever! He not only testified to the Deity of the Lord and to His sovereignty, but he said, "He is **my Lord and my God.**" It was just as though there was no one else in the room. It was as though Christ had died for Thomas and no one else. It was as though He was primarily and preeminently Thomas' Lord and Thomas' God! What a marvelous moment that was for Thomas, and for the Lord.

20:29 Then it was that the Lord said a very significant thing.

Thomas was blessed--greatly blessed--when He saw and recognized the Lord. I am sure that none of us can imagine how much he was blessed. We have often thought, haven't we, how wonderful it would have been to see the Lord. We would love to have seen Him before His death as well as after His death. But, on the authority of our Lord, let me tell you that our place today is even more blessed than was that of the apostles. We have never seen the Lord, but we know Him. He is our Lord and our God, too. His death was for us too. And in His scars we see the foundation of our peace with God and the everlasting proof that "God **so loved** the world that..."

Matthew Henry says that this not only applies to those of us who have believed since the Lord died, but it applies as well to those who believed before the Lord came to the earth. It seems that Abraham and Joseph had an easier time in believing in the resurrection than Thomas did.

Why are we more blessed if we have not seen, and yet have believed?

Matthew Henry gives two reasons:

- 1) It shows a better attitude of heart in those who believe without seeing. While we can be very sympathetic with Thomas, yet it is very clear that he had some spiritual heart trouble.
- 2) To believe without seeing shows greater evidence of the power of divine grace. And this means more glory for God because He has enabled us to believe without the physical evidence that was given to others.

Spurgeon says that those who have not seen and yet have believed give evidence that they are new creatures. They show that their hearts are right with the Lord. They are blessed because believing without seeing is most pleasing to God. They are blessed because such faith is comforting faith. (See Spurgeon's Sermons, Vol. 47, pp. 162-166.)

We need to remember that "without faith it is impossible to please Him" (Heb. 11:6). And so it must follow that He takes great delight in our faith. Oh, how important it is that we believe the doctrines of Scripture, the promises of Scripture, the warnings of Scripture! How important that we believe all that it tells us of Christ--His character and His work. We need also to believe Him in our trials, and to continue to believe Him when we are enjoying peaceful days.

The Lord Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. And our faith will be strongest when we keep looking "unto Him" (Heb. 12:2). Thomas may not have known it but he was speaking the language of the world when he said that he would not believe unless he could see. This is the attitude of the carnal believer. The language of the believer echoes the words of the Lord Jesus when He said to Martha,

Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe,
thou shouldest see the glory of God (John 11:40)?

Paul reminded the Corinthians of the lesson the Lord taught Thomas when he wrote in 1 Cor. 4:18,

While we look not at the things which are seen,
but at the things which are not seen:
for the things which are seen are temporal;
but the things which are not seen are eternal.

The Apostle Peter spoke of Him, "whom having not seen," we "love" (1 Pet. 1:8). The Apostle Paul in writing Hebrews said, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). And Paul also linked faith and hope in those wonderful words in Rom. 8 where he said in verses 24 and 25,

For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope:
for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?
But if we hope for that we see not,
then do we with patience wait for it.

May the Lord enable us to be a people who please Him because we believe Him just because of Who He is, and because we know that He has never been guilty of one instance of unfaithfulness. The evidence is overwhelming that we must believe God.

March 30, 1992

20:30 This verse is usually taken today to refer to the purpose which the Apostle John had in writing this Gospel. The "signs" which are referred to would then point back to the miracles which are recorded by John. And there certainly is no question but that one of the chief purposes of the miracles was to confirm the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, there are a couple of problems which we need to face if we are to apply these verses to the whole book of John.

First, it seems very abrupt and almost out of place if we make these verses a statement of purpose for the whole Gospel. If that were the case, It really should come at the end of chapter 21, not here.

Second, one of the basic rules of all exposition is that we interpret verses in the light of their context, i.e., fitting it in with the verses which precede as well as with the verses which follow. What is the meaning of these two verses if we seek to do that?

You will notice that verse 20 begins with the word, "And." This seems to suggest that it is a continuation of what John had just be saying.

And then, when we look at the beginning of chapter 21, we find words which seem to be a continuation of chapter 20: "After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias..."

Therefore, we can say that verses 20 and 21 seem to be tied in quite strongly with verse 19 of chapter 20 and with the first verse of chapter 21. If this is the case, then how can we arrive at a true understanding of what these two verses mean?

It will help us to look into the meaning of the word "signs."

If we are speaking about a person, (and we are in verses 20 and 21), a sign is anything that distinguishes that person from all other people. It is

true that the miracles of our Lord were credentials which pointed to the fact that He was the Son of God. We saw in John 3 how it was through the miracles that Nicodemus sought out the Lord Jesus. He said, "No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2b). Nicodemus was not ready to say that the Lord was God in the flesh, but he was having trouble in his own mind dealing with those miracles. To Nicodemus they indicated that there was something very unusual, very special, about our Lord. And it is very possible that through the miracles Nicodemus was finally brought to realize that Jesus of Nazareth was God manifested in human flesh.

However, there is something else about this thirtieth verse. It is in those words "in the presence of his disciples." This seems to refer to "signs" which the Lord displayed when He was with His disciples and no one else. I have pointed out to you several times that, as far as we can tell from the Word of God, our Lord never showed Himself to any unbeliever after He was raised from the dead. So this phrase would seem to point to those times when the Lord was with His disciples by themselves, signs which He showed only to them. A sign is some evidence that a person is the one he claims to be, or the one that we think he is.

We deal with "signs" like this all of the time.

Yesterday Lucille and I were in a store where we made a purchase, and I wrote out a check. The young lady did not know me, and so I said to her, "What kind of ID do you want?" She said, "Your driver's license." I showed her my driver's license, she wrote the number of my license on the check, and gave us the merchandise that we had purchased. My license was a sign that I was Dwight Custis.

Let me give you an illustration that is closer to our text than the one I have just given you. When I was a young man I applied for a job with the government which required positive identification. The one who was examining me asked me if I had any scars on my body by which I could be identified. I had not had any surgery, so that was out. But I did have an accident when I was a small child that left me with a scar on the right side of my nose, down across my upper lip, and under my chin. I was sitting on a table where my mother had placed me, drinking a cup of hot chocolate. I was so young that I don't even remember it. But I fell off of the table, and the cup broke against my face, leaving me with those scars. The years have practically erased them, but the man who was examining me took that as "signs" by which I could be identified.

If this verse has to do with ways that the Lord Jesus identified Himself to His disciples after His resurrection, what "signs" could He have been referring to?

I can think of several:

- 1) What about the scars He had in His hands, His feet, and His side? He showed them to His disciples when He was with them without Thomas, and later He showed them to Thomas. They were, as we sometimes say, "proof positive," to Thomas that the Lord was really the Lord! These were His signs. These were His marks of identification. They were proof that He was the One Who had died on the Cross. The thieves who were crucified with Him had nail prints in their hands and feet, but no scar on their sides.

I can think of another sign.

- 2) Think of the way He appeared to His disciples twice, behind closed

doors. He was locked out just like everyone else. And yet without knocking the door down, He suddenly was standing in the presence of His disciples. His body had different characteristics from what it had before He was raised from the dead. This was a sign to His disciples.

I can think of a third sign.

3) What about the way He breathed on them and told them to receive the Holy Spirit. Our Lord had said to them in the Upper Room,

And I will pray the Father,
and he shall give you another Comforter,
that he may abide with you for ever;
Even the Spirit of truth... (John 14:16, 17a).

The gift of the Holy Spirit was a sign that Christ had really been raised from the dead.

Let me give you one more sign.

4) What about the grave clothes? It was when the Apostle John saw them, and realized what had happened, that he believed! That was added confirmation to him that the Lord was the Lord, and that He had been raised from the dead!

Perhaps we could add the difficulty that Mary Magdalene and the two Emmaus disciples had in identifying the Lord Jesus until He revealed Himself to them.

And John said here in this verse that there were many other "signs" which the Lord "did in the presence of his disciples" which were not recorded in His Gospel. He wrote enough to give adequate evidence that the Lord really had been raised from the dead.

When Paul wrote to the Roman church, he started his epistle like this:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle,
separated unto the gospel of God...
Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord,
which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
And declared to be the Son of God with power,
according to the Spirit of holiness,
by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:1, 3, 4).

And Peter, speaking about our Lord to Gentiles in the house of Cornelius, said,

Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly;
Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God,
even to us, who did eat and drink with him
after he rose from the dead (Acts 10:40, 41).

Luke, in his introduction to the book of Acts also speaking about our Lord, said that after His resurrection and before His ascension He gave "commandments unto the apostle whom he had chosen,"

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion
by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days,
and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

I believe those "many infallible proofs" were the signs to His disciples that He was alive, raised from the dead.

But let us go on to verse 31.

20:31 As far as I can remember, this is the only time in this entire Gospel when the Apostle John spoke to his readers. There were many other "signs" which John could have included, but he recorded the ones he

did because he had a very special purpose. He was not writing a biography; he was writing a Gospel. He was one of those who had received the Holy Spirit so that he could go into the world proclaiming a message that had to do with the forgiveness of sins. John was a man greatly burdened for the salvation of sinners. And he was not just thinking about his own generation, but he was thinking of all generations which were to come up to the end of time. He wanted to see people saved.

Let us remember, too, that this Gospel was written long after the Lord had died, been raised again, and then had gone back to heaven. John's conviction about the resurrection had become even stronger, and his burden for sinners even greater. If he had been following "cunningly devised fables" (2 Pet. 1:16), his enthusiasm would have died out long ago. But it had not died out. He was the last of the apostles, and yet was just as fervent as He had been in those days immediately after the ascension of Christ.

He has given us here the essentials of the Gospel, the message of salvation.

First, there must be an acceptance of the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ and the work which He came to do.

"Jesus" is the Name given to Him when He was born. It is the Name which tells us that our Lord became a man. He was a genuine human being, with the one exception that He was not a sinner. He was not a sinner by nature; He was not a sinner in practice. This Name indicates that His mission to earth was for the salvation of sinners. Joseph was told by the angel of the Lord, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS, for he shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

"Christ" means Messiah. He was the Anointed One. He is the One Whose coming was predicted all through the OT. He was the promised Redeemer.

"The Son of God" speaks primarily of His Deity. This was one of His claims which caused the Jewish leaders to hate Him the most. This meant that He was equal in Deity with God, the Father. We saw this in John 5:18. It was essential that our Savior be Deity or He would have needed salvation Himself. It was necessary for Him to be a Man in order that He might be a substitute for sinful men.

Let us always remember that we are not preaching the Gospel unless we are telling people about Christ.

But believing in Scripture is more than a mental acceptance of what the Scriptures teach about Christ as a Person, or even an acceptance of the purpose for His death. A person can believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He died on a Cross almost 2,000 years ago, but that alone does not provide us with eternal life. We must trust Him to be our Savior! By nature we are dead in our sins. We need eternal life, and that is the eternal possession of those who are trusting in the death of Christ as a sufficient sacrifice for their sins.

When John said at the beginning of this verse, "But these are written," he was not only speaking of the purpose he had in writing this book, but he was speaking of the purpose of all of Scripture. The Bible is a book about salvation, salvation from sin's penalty, salvation from sin's power so that it is possible for the child of God to walk in newness of life, and life

like a new creature in Christ. The Bible tells us also that salvation includes our final deliverance from sin itself when we are conformed to Christ and unable ever to sin again. This latter part is our glorification, but it will not take place completely until the Lord returns.

In concluding this twentieth chapter of John, let us make sure that we know the Lord. I am convinced that there are thousands of people who attend church every week, but are not saved. It is fairly certain that people who would come to a Bible Class during the week must know the Lord, but not completely certain. Our hearts can deceive us. What we need to look for in our own lives as well as in the lives of others, is the evidence of a changed life. The Lord showed "signs" that He was alive; the Bible also gives us "signs" to look for in our own lives which are our credentials that we are the children of God. The world has a right to expect that if we claim to be the children of God, we can show them our spiritual ID! I am not talking about a certificate of membership in some church, but I am talking about a changed life, the evidence that we are new creatures because we have experienced the new birth.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 21 -- Part 1
March 31, 1992
John 21:1-14

Intro: In our outline we are considering the seventh division of the Gospel of John:

VII. THE LORD'S POST-RESURRECTION APPEARANCE (John 20:11-21:23).

Following this division we have on the conclusion of the book remaining.

In this division we have come to the last section which gives us our Lord's appearance:

D. To seven of His disciples (John 21:1-23).

This has two parts to it:

1. His appearance to the seven (John 21:1-14).
2. The Lord's ministry to two of the seven: Peter and John (John 21:15-23).

We are now ready to deal with:

1. His (our Lord's) appearance to the seven (John 21:1-14).

21:1 Here the scene has changed from Jerusalem to Galilee. The Lord had told them before His death that He would go before them into Galilee. See Matt. 26:32. The angel of the Lord had told the two Marys at the tomb on that resurrection morning that they were to remind the disciples that the Lord had told them He would meet them in Galilee. See Matt. 28:7.

Twice in this verse we have the expression "shewed himself." This means more than a simple appearance. It means that the Lord by words and deeds gave them further convincing proof that He was the risen, glorified Son of God.

21:2 Five of the seven disciples are mentioned here:

- 1) Simon Peter.
 - 2) Thomas.
 - 3) Nathanael, mentioned before in John 1:45-51. He may have been the one who is called Bartholomew in other lists of the Apostles.
 - 4) The sons of Zebedee:
 - a) James.
 - b) John.
 - 5) The two who are unnamed are generally thought to be:
 - a) Andrew.
 - b) Philip.
- These are only guesses, but it seems reasonable that Andrew would be with Peter, his brother, and that Philip would be with Nathanael because he was the one who brought Nathanael to the Lord.

21:3 Evidently they were waiting for the Lord to get there, but He had not yet arrived. And so Peter said that he was going fishing. The others said that they would go with him. Matthew Henry said on this verse that (1) they were to be commended for staying busy; (2) they were also to be commended that they were seeking to supply their own needs instead of being dependent upon someone else.

21:4 The next morning the Lord stood on the shore, but even though they had been with Him on two previous occasions, they did not recognize Him. Bishop Ryle pointed out that John used the same words here that he used in speaking of Mary Magdalene's failure to recognize the Lord: "They knew not that it was Jesus."

21:5 However, a whole night of fishing proved to be fruitless. John tells us, "That night they caught nothing."

This ought to remind us of a similar time which took place earlier when the same thing happened. See Luke 5:1-11. On that occasion Peter, James, and John were present--and possibly Andrew, although he was not mentioned. That was a time also when they fished all night without catching anything. Then the Lord simply told them to put their nets back into the water; here He told them put their nets on the other side of the boat. He also promised them that they would find fish.

21:6 The Lord told them to cast their nets on the other side of the ship. When they did, their nets became so full of fish that they were unable to draw their nets in.

Up to this point the disciples had not recognized the Lord, but there surely must have been some ways in which Peter, James, and John at least, were reminded of that former occasion. It must also have been true that some kind of inner constraint caused them to get their nets into the water again to try one more time. We must not overlook the hand of the Lord in all that was being done here.

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21:7 It was at this point that the Apostle John recognized that it was the Lord. Perhaps he suddenly remembered that event recorded in Luke 5:1-11. And then, in addition, he knew that "it could not have been of man, for it is out of man's reach to have accomplished such wonders" (Spurgeon's Sermons, Vol. 8, p. 199).

What Peter did was characteristic of him. Bishop Ryle described Peter as "fervent, warm-hearted, impulsive, impetuous, affectionate, thinking nothing of consequences, acting on the spur of present feeling" (Vol. II, p. 7:10). It is interesting in view of what Peter had done in denying the Lord, that he did not try to avoid the Lord. Instead, it is clear that he could not wait to be with the Lord again. Without any hesitation, he picked up his upper, outer coat, and jumped into the water to wade to the shore to be with the Lord Jesus. It seems rather ridiculous to think of him swimming ashore, or, as some claim, that he walked on the water. The water there was shallow enough for Peter to walk ashore. Nothing else seems to be indicated by John's record of what Peter did.

21:8 The mention of "a little ship" would seem to indicate that the disciples had a large ship out of which they fished, but a smaller boat in which they could move their net around, and go ashore if that were necessary. In fact, this verse tells us that the small ship came in "dragging the net with fishes." Peter did not wait to use the smaller ship, but John did. John, though younger, was probably more thoughtful knowing the since the Lord had come, and with their nets full of fish, their fishing was over for the day, and they needed to bring in what they had caught.

21:9 Although the disciples had not planned on what the Lord had done, they must have been thankful to see that the Lord had prepared a meal for them. We are not told where the Lord got the fish and the bread. It could have been provided by the Lord in many ways. He had fed 5,000 on one occasion with loaves and fish, and 4,000 on another occasion. This also seems to have been a miracle. Therefore, it was no problem for the Lord to provide for His seven hungry apostles. However, it would have given the apostles greater assurance that the Lord was thinking about their needs, and had provided for them.

21:10 The Lord hastened to tell them to bring the fish that they had caught. He would not have them think that what they had done was not necessary, nor important.

21:11 Good fishermen know how many fish they have caught. And so we are given the number: 153. It seems very likely that the number of fish that the disciples caught when the Lord told them what to do, was much greater than the number of fish which they usually caught. These fish probably were sold, and the money could have been used to help with the expenses our Lord and the apostles would have in getting back to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. This is at least a reasonable possibility.

Miracles are multiplied here. The catch was a miracle. The Lord's provision for them on the shore, was a miracle. And the fact that the nets did not brake, was a miracle. These are all signs intended by the Lord to give added conviction to the disciples that He was the Lord, raised from the dead. These were miracles that they would expect the Lord to perform, not foolish, meaningless miracles, but timely and abundant.

21:12 The Lord had not prepared a feast, but He had prepared breakfast (as the Greek word used here indicates). None of the apostles needed to ask the Lord Who He was; they knew! They were convinced beyond any doubt. "There is a conviction of reality which (in a sense) precludes certain forms of investigating as unfitting" (Westcott, p. 302).

21:13 This verse should remind us of that verse, Mark 10:45, which says that "even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister..."

In Luke's account of the time in the Upper Room when the disciples got into a heated argument about who was the greatest, among other things our Lord said the following:

For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth?
is not he that sitteth at meat?
but I am among you as he that serveth (Luke 22:27).

IT SEEMS THAT THE LORD WAS DOING TWO THINGS WITH HIS DISCIPLES WHEN THEY WERE TOGETHER BY THE SEA OF TIBERIAS (which is another name for the Sea of Galilee and the Sea of Gennesaret):

- 1) He was giving further evidence of His resurrection.
- 2) He was exposing them to many lessons to train them for the work that He had called them to do. We have seen the evidence of the resurrection, but I want to mention more about the training for service in just a moment.

21:14 This part of the Lord's post-resurrection ministry of our Lord to His disciples is concluded with John saying that this was the third time that the Lord had appeared to His disciples after He rose from the

dead. And John has included all of them in his Gospel. He obviously was very concerned that his readers would be able to see through the written Word the same evidence that the apostles saw that the Lord Jesus Christ had really been raised from the dead. Of course, no one can come to this conviction except by the working of the Holy Spirit. However, once convinced of this, any person would also have to realize that the death and resurrection of Christ demand a response. This is what John meant in John 20:31 when he said, "...and that believing ye might have life through his name."

 Before we go on to the latter part of this chapter, let me point out that this chapter holds many important lessons for us with regard to the work of the Lord.

The Lord had called these men to serve Him. The work and ways of the Lord are not like the work and ways of men. Isaiah made that clear 700 years before the Lord Jesus came to earth as a human baby. Cf. Isa. 55:8-11. If the apostles were to be useful servants of the Lord, and if we are, then it is essential that we know the ways of the Lord and know how the Lord intends that we serve Him.

In the Luke 5 passage to which I have referred, comparing it with this incident in John 21, our Lord made this comment after He had given Peter and James and John so many fish in their nets that their nets broke and their boats began to sink--He said this: "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men" (Luke 5:10b). The Lord was very clearly drawing a parallel between fishing for fish and fishing for men. Therefore, this comment makes both of these incidents (Luke 5 and John 21) very instructive as we consider the work of the Lord. Let me make some suggestions about the Lord's work. I am indebted for some of these to Mr. Spurgeon, and for others to Bishop Ryle.

First, these events teach us that the work of the Lord is just that: WORK! The expression Peter used in Luke 5:5 to describe what they had done was the word "toiled." This is a word which means that they had worked so hard that they were worn out!

Second, let me point out that they persevered. They were not quitters. They worked hard "all night."

But third, such toiling would not be so bad if it had produced results. But in neither instance had they caught fish. Peter said in Luke 5:5 that they had "taken nothing." John said about their fishing in John 21 that "that night they caught nothing" (v. 3b).

Now these men were not novices. They were men who had spent their lives doing this very thing. They were experienced fishermen. They knew how to handle their nets. They knew when it was most likely that the fish would be there. And they knew where they could usually find them. Yet neither their training, nor their experience, was of any help to them on those particular nights.

These have their parallels in the work of the Lord.

The work of the Lord is hard work. It is hard physically, and it is hard emotionally. And the servant of the Lord soon learns that the results are hardly ever in proportion to the time given to study and to prayer. In fact, not just one night, but day after day and night after night the

servant of the Lord can work and, as far as he knows, without success. A servant of the Lord can come out of seminary with the finest training that it is possible to get, and spend years getting valuable experience, only to learn that these by themselves are not sufficient! There is always a special weariness connected with fruitless labor.

But it was right at this point in both incidents that something wonderful happened. The Lord took over the work of those fishermen! It seems that there has to be failure before we can understand how much we need the Lord. The Lord had told His disciples as they made their way to Gethsemane from the Upper Room, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). Many of us have been memorizing and reviewing that verse, but I wonder how many of us really know deep down in our souls how true that is! With all of our knowledge (which is never what it should be), and with all of our experience (which may include many times when we have been trying to do the right thing in the wrong way), we are utterly helpless and fruitless without the help and blessing of the Lord!

The next thing that we see is that the Lord did not ignore the importance of instruments. He did not make the fish jump into the boats. He could have done that, you know. Neither did the Lord tell them that they needed a different kind of net, or possibly a new boat. He sent them out in the same boat in which they had spent a fruitless night, and told them to let down the nets they had used all night.

So often we think that what we need is a new boat, or a new net, or just a new place for fishing. We start thinking about the building we meet in, and how it could be improved. Or we think of new methods which we see producing "results" for others. Or maybe we need more music, more contemporary music, and less preaching. Maybe we need some well-known person to come who can draw a crowd. Or maybe the preacher needs to go back to school to get some more training.

What we do not realize is that the One we need is the Lord. The Lord needs to have a greater place in our lives, and in our ministry. He needs to be the preeminent One in our teaching. We need to trust HIM, not ourselves, nor our training, nor our experience, nor any gifts which we might have. Without the blessing of the Lord, all that we can contribute is worth nothing. It is good to be well-trained, but good training does not guarantee blessing.

Fishermen do not like to say that they didn't catch anything. That is humbling, and we are never comfortable with that which humbles us. We claim that we would like to catch a lot of fish so we can give the Lord the glory, but it is so easy for us to feel that we deserve some of the credit. It is hard to say that you are not seeing people saved. It is hard to say that your work is not growing. And yet it seems that this is one way the Lord has of making us work harder, of making us pray more faithfully, of making us realize that the work does not need us, but that we need the Lord. How wonderful are those words in John 21:4, "But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore..." Where the Lord spent the night, we do not know. Maybe He was traveling from Jerusalem up to Galilee. He probably had been up all night, too. Psa. 121 tells us that the One Who keeps us never slumbers nor sleeps. The Lord knew that His disciples were having a hard time, and He came to them. The discouraging night was over, and a new day had dawned, and the Lord was there.

Now I have said that it is hard not to be able to give a glowing report

about your work when people ask you how things are going. But how much harder it is when the Lord asks you! He knows, of course. But He knows that it is good for us to tell the truth when He says, "Children, have ye any meat?" That is, "Have you caught any fish?"

Notice what He called them: "Children." Now the Lord was not trying to make fun of them, or to make light of their efforts. This word was a term of endearment, and yet it was a word which you would use with immature children who still have a lot of growing up to do. You see, when we are fruitless, we want to think about the work, and how the work could be done in a better way. But the Lord wants us to think about ourselves, and about Him. He wants us to see that while we want to see fruit, He wants us to see how much we need Him.

And so when the Lord said, "Children, have ye any meat?", all they could say was, "No!" Their answer in the Greek was exactly like it is in our English language: just one word! "No."

What did the Lord do then? Did He say, "We are not going to use boats? Or, "We are not going to use nets?" Or, "We are not going to use fishermen?" He didn't say any of that. God uses instruments, especially human instruments. They may be like little children who are immature, but He knew that when He called us. Most of us, when we come out of Bible School or Seminary, are still spiritually little children. And sometimes that immaturity hangs around longer than it should.

What did the Lord do? He brought these fishermen back to His own Word. He spoke to them. And this is what He said to Simon Peter:

Launch out into the deep,

and let down your nets for a draught (Luke 5:4).

I love Peter's response. Listen to what he said:

Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing:

nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net (Luke 5:5).

The word that Peter used here for "Master" means a superintendent, or an overseer. It identifies the One Who is in charge. It was as though Peter was saying, "It doesn't sound to me like it will make any difference, but because You are telling me to do this, and You are in charge, I will do what You say." When Peter called the Lord "Master," he was acknowledging that the Lord was sovereign over His work.

You see it was the same boat, the same net, the same water, the same fishermen, but the difference was that there was a new Master, a new Overseer. Peter had been in charge before, but now he was doing what his Master told him to do. The result in Peter's case was many fish.

I am not saying, nor do I think that the Lord was saying, that if He is really in charge, we will catch a lot of fish. The results are always in the Lord's hands. But the important thing for me and for you is to realize that the work is His. He is the Master. When He called Peter and Andrew, He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). Presumably He said the same to James and John.

You see, the Lord does not follow us; we follow Him. You and I are not in charge; He is the Master. And the Lord often lets us work hard and long, and pray until it seems that we can pray no more, until we learn that it is not our work that makes the difference. Nor is it our prayers that determine how the work of the Lord will go. It is the Lord. The work is

His. We are His servants. We are to do His will. We are to obey His Word. He may tell us to go back and do just what we have been doing, but there will be a difference when we know that it is the Lord. It made Peter so excited to know that the Lord had come that he jumped out of the boat.

I hope we are learning some of the lessons that the Lord taught His apostles long ago. The Lord's work is not easy today. We spend many days and nights in which appears to be fruitless labors. They are designed to humble us, to show us that we are not sufficient in our selves. But they must also teach us that it is not new facilities, nor new methods, nor new people, that we need. What we need is a new realization of the sovereignty of the Lord over His work, and of our absolute and continual dependence upon Him.

There is nothing more important for any of us to learn than the lessons of Luke 5 and John 21. May the Lord keep us from missing a single lesson. The results will certainly be experienced in our hearts, and possibly, by the grace of God, in our work as well.

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THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 21 -- Part 2
April 13, 1992
John 21:15-23

Intro: This is actually the last section of John's Gospel. The last two verses give us the conclusion to the book, but verses 15-23 are the final part of John's message. In our outline this is the last part of the Lord's post-resurrection appearances.

VII. THE LORD'S POST RESURRECTION APPEARANCES (John 20:11-21:23).

- A. To Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-18).
- B. To His disciples without Thomas (John 20:19-23).
- C. To His disciples with Thomas (John 20:24-31).
- D. To seven of His disciples (John 21:1-23).

This section is divided into two parts:

- 1. To the seven (vv. 1-14).
- 2. To Peter (vv. 15-23).

This ministry to Peter will occupy our attention now, in John 21:15-23.

21:15 This section has to be one of the most important, the most moving, the most heart-searching, of all of the passages in the Word of God. None of the commentaries which I consulted given any opinion as to where the Lord spoke to Peter. Was it at the table with all of the other apostles listening? I do not think so. It does not seem to me that the Lord would put Peter in such a stressful situation. It is more like the Lord to take Peter aside to speak privately to him. But I think that there is proof in verse 20 that the Lord was speaking privately to Peter. That verse tells us that Peter turned and saw John "following" them. So I would take this to mean that the Lord and Peter were walking alone, probably going back to a nearby town, and that the other apostles were doing the same. Probably some were ahead of the Lord; others were following. But somehow the Lord had indicated that He wanted to speak to Peter alone. And the others gave Him that opportunity.

So I would say that there are several things about the timing of this conversation that the Lord had with Peter which are important for us to notice:

- 1) The Lord did not try to speak to Peter the first time He got together with him after His resurrection. This was at least the third time that the Lord and Peter had been together, possibly more than that. But the Lord waited for the right time.
- 2) The Lord waited until after Peter had eaten. The apostles had been fishing all night. They were tired, and hungry. And so the Lord waited until Peter had eaten, and had been revived physically.
This might seem like a minor point to make, but actually it is very important. What Peter had done in denying the Lord must have taken its toll on him physically already; the Lord did not want to add to the strain that Peter had been going through. So He gave Peter a meal first. This could be the reason that verse 15 begins with the words, "So when they had dined..."
- 3) The Lord spoke to Peter alone. There is always something wrong with a person who talks about another person's faults or failures in the presence of others. And so the Lord has given us a lesson in that which is proper when dealing with another person who has failed in some way.

We have to remember, too, that we are talking about what the Lord did. This does not mean that it is our responsibility to speak to any and every-

one who has failed in some way. We will get ourselves into trouble if we do that. The Lord had called Peter to serve Him. The Lord was Peter's Savior and Peter's Lord. Therefore, it was to be expected, and it was just like it should have been for the Lord to speak to Peter.

So get this picture, if you will. The Lord and the seven apostles were walking down the road, heading back to town. John may have been walking with his brother James, and with Andrew. Thomas, Nathanael, and Philip may have formed the other group. But there they go, Peter and our Lord walking together.

Remember that the Apostle John is the one who wrote the report of our Lord's talk with Peter. I doubt very much if John heard what the Lord said, so he could not have reported as a witness to the conversation. It is entirely possible that the Holy Spirit revealed to John what went on between the Lord and Peter. However, John learned about it, we can be sure that the Holy Spirit directed John in what he wrote here. But I like to think that Peter told John about his talk with the Lord. I may be wrong, but I don't think that I am. Peter, James, and John were very close, and I am inclined to think that Peter told them what the Lord said to him.

I would not be surprised at all if the Lord began talking to Peter with the words of this verse. He would not have engaged in small talk first, but got right to the point: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

Notice that the Lord used Peter's old name: Simon. The Lord did not call him Peter (from the Greek), nor Cephas (the Aramaic equivalent of Peter), but Simon.

You may remember that when the Lord told Peter that Satan had asked to be able to sift him as wheat, that the Lord addressed Peter then as Simon. Cf. Luke 22:31.

Simon is not a bad name. It actually means a hearer. It would have been good if Peter had even lived up to that name. But more significant than the meaning of the name is the fact that Simon, being his original name, represented what Peter was by nature. F. B. Meyer said in his commentary on John, "In addressing him our Lord called him by his old name, Simon Bar Jonas, not by his new name, Peter; as if to remind him that he had been living the life of nature rather than of grace" (Vol. II, p. 241).

The Lord was certainly teaching Peter that although he had become a new man in Christ, there was always the possibility that he could still act on occasion like a person who had never been saved. And this is true of all of us, and should be a warning to us. That is the reason that we need to avoid all self-confidence and be sure that our trust is in the Lord. As surely as we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think, we are destined for a fall.

Now there are many things that the Lord could have said to Peter. He could have said, "Why did not deny that you knew me? Why did you do it three times? Why did you curse to try to prove that you were telling the truth when you were lying?"

Or the Lord could have said, "Why did you not listen to me when I told you that you would deny me?" Or He might have said, "Do you think that I can ever trust you again to be faithful to Me?" Or, "I am going to have to

change my plans for you because it is apparent that you do not have what it takes to be a spiritual leader."

There are many things that the Lord could have said. But He did not say any of those things. Instead, He simply said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?"

Now let me say something in defence of Peter on this question of loving the Lord. It is this: If there were a disciple, an apostle, who manifested that he loved the Lord, it was Peter. Throughout the Gospels this is very clear. That was the reason that Peter thought it would be impossible for him to deny the Lord. That is why Peter spoke up so quickly when the Lord spoke of dying. Peter was ready to take on the whole Roman army plus the Sanhedrin in order to defend his Lord. And think of how the aging Peter ran to the tomb. And remember how he jumped out of the boat when John said about the Man Who spoke to them from the shore, "It is the Lord." Peter had left all to follow the Lord Jesus. There is no question but that Peter loved the Lord. That is why he "wept bitterly" when he realized what he had done in denying His Lord. Those tears were the tears of a broken heart, that he could deny that he knew that One Who was his dear Friend.

Why, then, did the Lord ask Peter this question?

Let me call your attention to the fact that "lovest" is in the present tense. The Lord did not say, "Simon, did you really love Me when you denied me?" Nor did He go on to say, "If you loved me, how could you have done such a thing?" The Lord was not talking about the past; He was talking about the present: "Do you love me now?"

We don't know what all went through Peter's mind during those days following the death of the Lord, but you can be sure that his mind went along the same channels that ours would have if we have been in his place. Would the Lord remove him from being an apostle? If the Lord kept him as an apostle, would he still be the one who was to lead the apostles? Was he washed up as a servant of the Lord? Would he have to go back to fishing again? Did the Lord still love him?

Can you see that the big question was not, Did the Lord love Peter? The big question was, Did Peter love the Lord at that very moment? It was not, Did you love Me then? It was, Do you love Me NOW?

Will you be sure to note that this is the primary qualification for service--whether or not we love the Lord? And will you note also that the Lord evidently wants to hear us tell Him that we love Him? And beyond that, be sure to note that the Lord does not go back to try to reconstruct the reasons for Peter's failure; He simply asked Peter to express in words where he stood in his relationship with the Lord at that very moment!

The Lord obviously knew Peter's heart, but He wanted to hear Peter say that he loved Him. We can change in our love for the Lord, but He will never change in His affection for us.

Please turn to Jer. 31. Let me read the first nine verses of this chapter to you. It is nothing short of amazing that the Lord would still love Israel the way He expressed Himself here. The Lord's love for His people is an everlasting love. It is without beginning, without ending, without change. Oh, there have been many times in my life when the Lord would have been justified in taking His love from me, but He never has! And what's

more--HE NEVER WILL!

Turn also to those wonderful words at the end of Romans 8--verses 38, 39. (Read.)

So the question was not, Did the Lord still love Peter? The question was, Did Peter love the Lord? And what a message is here for all of us! This is what concerns the Lord about each one of us. If we really love the Lord, that takes care of everything else.

In the Bible husbands are commanded to love their wives. Why? Because if a husband really loves his wife, his wife will never have to worry about other women, or anything else. If she has his love, she has him. The greatest security we can give our children is to love them, and let them know that we love them. This was the greatest commandment in the Law, wasn't it? It is the commandment that includes all of the other commandments. If the Lord has our love, He has us!

But let me go on.

The Lord's question did not stop there. He said, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me **more than these?**"

I guess that ever since John wrote these words people have discussed and wondered and even argued about what the Lord meant by "**more than these.**" "These" what?

Well, let us go back to our picture of what was happening when the Lord spoke to Peter. You will remember that they caught 153 fish. There were eight apostles and the Lord walking down the road. That means there were eight men in all. They may have eaten some of the fish that they caught, but if they still had all most of the fish left it meant that every apostle, as well as the Lord, could have been carrying from 15 to 20 fish!

So, do you suppose that the Lord was talking about the fish?

Peter and the others evidently loved to fish because that is what they decided to do while they were waiting for the Lord. The Lord had called Peter away from the fishing business when He called Peter to follow him. Up to that time fishing had been Peter's life. He loved fishing. That was all that he knew how to do. His father had been a fisherman, and probably his grandfather. It was something that they really loved.

Can you think of the Lord carrying fish in a sack of some kind, and holding it out as He spoke to Peter, and saying, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than **these?**"--these fish? He was asking Peter if at that moment he was sorry that he had left the fishing business to serve the Lord.

Lucille and I were speaking to our son, Dwight, Jr., on the phone just a few nights ago, and he was telling us about some trouble that they were having in their church down in southern California. He is an elder in the church, and there are a few people in the church who are very vocal who want to change the church to make it more acceptable to people in the world. In Dwight's job during the week he is over quite a sizeable group of people. And he made the remark while we were speaking that he gets along better with the people at work, than he does with those agitators in the church. Right now it is more pleasant for him to go to work than to go to church.

I think that the Lord may have been speaking to Peter along this line. We have no record that Peter humiliated himself as a fisherman the way he did as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was confronted with testings and temptations as a Christian that he never had as a fisherman. And remember that as the Peter and the Lord were speaking, Peter had just gotten back from fishing. So the Lord was saying, "Do you ever regret, Peter, that you left fishing for fish to become a fisher of men?" Fish won't get you into trouble like people will. There are some, as I think I may have mentioned to you when we were in the first part of this chapter, who believe that when Peter said, "I go a fishing," that he was saying, "I am going back to my boats and nets." There are many men out of the ministry today because of the pressures and trials connected with the work. The Devil wouldn't have bothered Peter if he had not been such a key man in the plans and purpose of the Lord. So one way Peter could have found relief would have been to get out of the work.

But I think that the Lord may have been thinking also about something else.

Peter had declared at one time that the Lord could count on him even if all of the others would forsake Him. He would not be offended at the Lord even if the others were. Cf. Matt. 26:33. He said that he was ready to go to prison and death with the Lord. Cf. Luke 22:33.

Was the Lord saying here, "Simon, ahead go Thomas and Nathanael and Philip. And behind us are James and John and your brother, Andrew. Do you still claim to love me 'more than these'?" Or, in other words, the Lord was asking Peter if he still loved Him as much as He used to love Him.

Our trials can become very severe at times--so much so that sometimes we think things about the Lord, and even say things about the Lord, that we afterwards regret. Asaph, in one of his Psalms wrote, "I remembered God, and was troubled" (Psa. 77:3a). Isaiah says that God will keep us in perfect peace when our minds are stayed on Him. Cf. Isa. 26:3. But Asaph said that he was "troubled." The Lord was really probing into the heart of Peter so that Peter would understand what was going on in his own heart.

There is also another possibility.

The Lord may have been asking Peter if he loved Him, that is, the Lord, more than he loved Andrew, James, John, and the other apostles. There could have been many facets to the question the Lord asked, and I am not wise enough to say that it is one more than it is another.

Now before we go on to Peter's answer, let me comment on the word "love" that the Lord used in asking Peter this question. It is the verb _____. And we will see that in Peter's response he did not use _____, but _____. Let me discuss _____ first.

_____ speaks of the kind of love that carefully reasons things out. You see a person. You may not be attracted to him or her at first, but then, as you get to know that person, you love him, or her, as the case may be. You see in him that which makes you realize that he is worthy of your love. And so by a deliberate choice you love that person. It would speak of loving a person by choice, deliberately, and choosing that person above all others.

This is what the Lord was asking Peter: "Right now do you love me more than anything else, and/or more than you love anyone else?"

We are called upon in the Word not only to love the Lord, but to love Him preeminently, to love Him more than we love anything else, or anyone else. That is what the Lord was asking Peter. The past could not be changed; what about the present?

Peter's response was, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee."

How this must have delighted the heart of the Lord, just to hear Peter say it! He did not say, "If you will give me another chance, I'll prove it!" He did not talk about what he was going to do to show his love for the Lord, like he did before. His answer contained those wonderful words, "Thou knowest." Everything here is in the present tense.

Fanny Crosby, in her hymn, Rescue the Perishing, wrote words about sinners which are actually more appropriate for saints. I refer to this verse which I am sure many of you will remember:

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness,
Chords that are broken will vibrate once more.

The Lord was touching those broken chords in Peter's heart to get them in tune again. When our actions do not manifest what is in our hearts, how wonderful it is to be able to say, "Yea, Lord, **thou knowest**!" What confidence Peter had in his Lord. How wonderful it is to know in such cases that the Lord knows what is in our hearts.

But then Peter went on to say, "Thou knowest that I love thee."

The Lord used the word _____; Peter responded with _____. Why did he do this? Archbishop Trench in his valuable book on New Testament Synonyms, said this:

At this moment, when all the pulses in the heart of the now penitent Apostle are beating with a passionate affection toward his lord, this word [_____, my addition] on that Lord's lips sounds far too cold... He therefore in his answer substitutes...the word of a more personal love" (pp. 42,43).

That word was _____.

Peter's answer meant, "Lord, you not only know that I love you, but I deeply love you. I love you more than I ever have before." Peter did not regret any words of love that he had spoken to the Lord before. He would say them all again, only not with the confidence in himself that he had demonstrated before.

The Lord's response indicates that the Lord knew that Peter's words were a true expression of what was in his heart. He did not ask Peter to go into a time of probation to prove it. Peter truly and deeply loved the Lord. He loved Him more than anyone else, and He was not sorry that he had left his fishing business to follow the Lord.

And so what did the Lord say? "Feed my lambs."

Just as the Lord and Peter used two words for love in this passage, so we have two words for the work of taking care of the sheep. The one used here is _____. It is used again in verse 17. It is a word which simply means to feed.

"Lambs," of course, are young sheep. The fisherman was appointed to be a

shepherd. And this word "feed" indicates that this is the main thing that the shepherd needs to be concerned with: feeding the lambs. They need food in order to be strengthened, in order to grow. That was really Peter's greatest need. And he will do the best job of feeding the lambs who is most conscious of his own need, and who himself feeding on the Word and upon Christ. The shepherd does not babysit the sheep. He does not entertain the sheep. He is to "feed" the sheep. And, if he is not doing this, he is failing in the work that the Chief Shepherd has called upon him to do.

Notice that the Lord was speaking of "my lambs." How gracious the Lord is to entrust the spiritual care of His flock to men like Peter. And the one who is the most qualified to feed the lambs is a shepherd who really loves the Lord. Let us remember that as pastors, as parents, as SS teachers, as church leaders, as friends. What great evidence there was in what the Lord said to Peter that He was getting Peter pointed in the right direction, and carrying on the work of grace which was so needed in Peter's heart.

21:16 It seems that the question and answer of verse 15 were quite adequate, leaving no more to be said. Why, then, do we have a second question, and then a third?

April 20, 1992

Undoubtedly there is a connection between the three denials of Peter, and our Lord's three questions. Spurgeon says that it was a form of discipline in which the Lord was probing the depths of Peter's heart. Each time the Lord asked Peter this question it would have cut more deeply into his heart. If we have ever tried to convince someone we love very much, but toward whom we have acted in some unloving way, only to have them question us even more, then we know some of the feeling that Peter must have experienced each time the Lord asked the question.

However, when we think of the Lord's discipline, we need to remember that He ate with Peter prior to this, and it was at the Lord's invitation. So there was the greatest tenderness in what the Lord did. He was not trying to humiliate Peter, but Peter probably was brought lower and lower as the Lord asked the second question, and then the third. And it would tend to emphasize in Peter's mind the supreme importance of his love for the Lord.

Spurgeon made a comment about our Lord's questions which we all would do well to consider. Listen to what he said to his people at the Metropolitan Tabernacle back on October 15, 1882:

Let us, dear friends, as we think over this sad incident of Peter's sin, and of our Lord's gracious way of restoring him to his former office by a gentle act of discipline, put ourselves through a little heart-searching. It may be that, thanks to the restraining grace of God we have not sinned as Peter did; but we have sinned in some other way. We have all of us sinned quite enough to make us say, "Lord, do we love Thee?" Instead of waiting for him to put the question to us, we will ask it of ourselves,--Do we really and truly love the Lord? Let us also believe that our Lord, as he stands at this moment among us, and walks from pew to pew, bows his head over each one of us, and says, "Lovest thou Me?" (Vol. 46, p. 158).

We ought to read this passage thinking about ourselves. What have we done to cast doubts upon our love for the Lord? I feel sure that none of us will be able to point an accusing finger at the Apostle Peter if we take

the time to search our own hearts in the presence of the Lord. The Lord does know all things, and He knows our hearts right now! What does He see when He looks there?

What did the Lord say this time?

The Lord asked exactly the same question this second time that He did the first time, but he omitted the words, "more than these." He called Peter by the same name. He used the same verb, _____. And he used the same tense: the present. So again the Lord was asking Peter about his love at that very moment!

There is evidence that the Lord had been working in Peter's heart when he did not respond to the Lord's words, "more than these." Before he sinned he was not hesitant at all to say that he was more faithful and dependable than all of the others. But here it seems that he was no longer going to set himself above the others.

Did the second question mean that the Lord did not believe Peter's first answer? I do not think so. The Lord wanted Peter to give careful thought to what he had done, and to what the Lord was asking him. One commentator (Hendriksen, p. 487) suggested that the Lord had noted that Peter did not claim to love Him more than the others did, and so the second question was directed more strongly to Peter himself. This would be hard to prove, but it is an interesting suggestion, and very well may be true.

Peter responded in exactly the same words that he had used in responding to the Lord's first question. Again he called Jesus, "Lord." As Spurgeon said, "Peter was no Unitarian" (Vol. 46, p. 159). He firmly believed in the Deity of his Lord. The Apostle John also believed in the Deity of Christ. Thomas believed in His Deity. So did Mary and Martha. Don't miss this message in the Gospel of John. And make sure that you follow the apostles and the early Christians in this conviction.

Then after calling Him, "Lord," Peter went on with his response. He did not change a single word. He again used _____ instead of _____. He was seeking to tell the Lord not only that he loved Him, but how much he loved Him, how deeply he loved him.

Many have pointed out that the love expressed by _____ is deeper and more solid, while the love expressed by _____ is perhaps more expressive and outgoing. It is not always the case that the person who acts and talks like they love the Lord, really does love Him. Whereas the quiet person may have a very deep and growing love for the Lord. However, the Lord did not seem to have any problem with Peter because he did not respond with _____. The love that Peter expressed by _____ was a genuine love, a deep love, an exuberant love.

At this point the Lord did change what He had said at the first. After Peter answered Him the first time, the Lord said, "Feed my lambs." After Peter's second answer, the Lord said (if I can express it more accurately), "Shepherd my little sheep." However, _____ is often used elsewhere of sheep. The word translated in the KJV, "feed," here in verse 16 includes all that a shepherd does for the sheep, not only feeding them, but guiding them, protecting them, caring for them. The word used in verse 15 is "the narrower term," more restricted in how it describes the work of a shepherd. The word here includes the shepherd's full oversight of the sheep. Cf. Thayer, p. 104.

If the Lord had doubted Peter's answer to His first question, He certainly would not have told Peter to feed the lambs. And it is even clearer here in verse 16 that the Lord believed Peter when He gave him the full oversight of even the more mature sheep. Again, notice that the Lord said, **"My sheep."** This ought to remind us of what the Lord had said in John 10 about Himself as a shepherd and His people as His sheep. Sheep are very defenseless. And I have been told that they are not very smart--although I have heard some people take exception to that. But it is certainly true that sheep are one animal which would not be able to survive by themselves. They need the shepherd. How amazing it was that the Lord would entrust Peter with the care of His sheep! If a pastor today were to curse and deny with oaths that he even knew the Savior, how many churches would want him as their pastor? And yet that is the situation that we have here. In the Lord's perfect knowledge, Peter, though he had failed so miserably, was fully qualified to shepherd the Lord's sheep by his love for the Lord.

April 21, 1992

21:17 Then the Lord asked Peter the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" But in the original language there was a difference in the Lord's question. Instead of using _____, our Lord changed to the verb that Peter had been using: _____. The Lord, it seems, was asking Peter to step up a little higher in the declaration of his love. There are many people who will be very outspoken about their love for the Lord, but enthusiasm is not always genuine. That is one mistake that many charismatics are making. They think that the noisier they are, the more spiritual they are. But that is not the case. It is often true that the person who says the least, loves the most.

However, when the Lord changed to use the verb for love that Peter had been using, it was as though the Lord was saying, "All right, Peter, but do you love Me as much as you say that you love Me?"

I doubt if any of us can fully understand why Peter refused to use the word _____, but I have a suggestion to make. It seems that at this point Peter's self-confidence was at an all-time low! And that was good! Before he had been very confident of what he would do when the time came that he was put to the test. But he was not so sure any more. He knew that he loved the Lord, and, as I have been saying, loved Him very much, very deeply. Yet he was very hesitant to say that he loved the Lord the way he needed to love the Lord. But when the Lord responded with _____, He was asking Peter to be sure even about the way that he thought that he loved the Lord.

Let us take this third question to heart. There is probably not a person here today who would not respond immediately to these questions the way Peter did. And we probably would respond without giving it much thought. But let us think about our answer for a moment. We say that we love the Lord, but do our lives show that we do? Remember that each time Peter said to the Lord, "Thou knowest." Peter knew that his behavior had indicated that he did not love the Lord. But he said, "Thou knowest," meaning that although he failed to show that he did, and had failed miserably, yet the Lord knew that Peter was telling the truth. Peter was experiencing what Paul described in Romans 7 when he said,

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not:

but the evil which I would not, that I do (Rom. 7:18, 19).

Peter's problem had been the problem which we all have: pride. We can take pride in our knowledge of the Bible. Perhaps we can quote many verses from memory. We look around and see others who are not as knowledgeable about the Bible as we think we are. And so we begin to feel that we are above most professing Christians. But there may be a lot of hypocrisy in our hearts. There may be a lot of pride. Remember what Jer. 17:9,10 says. (Quote.) Jeremiah was talking about my heart, and about your heart. Jeremiah was talking about his own heart. Those words were descriptive of Peter's heart.

And so let us ask ourselves the question, "Do I really love the Lord as much as I think that I do?"

What is the measure of our love?

The Lord had answered that question for the apostles when He was with them in the Upper Room. Cf. John 14:21-23. (Read.) In these verses the Lord used _____. We cannot truthfully say that we love the Lord as we should if we are not living according to His Word.

Judas (not Iscariot) seems to have completely missed the point of what the Lord had said to them. His response to the Lord indicated that he was thinking more about how the Lord was going to do what He had said that He would do, instead of thinking about what he needed to do to show his love for the Lord.

But let us go on.

It was not of much comfort to Peter that the Lord asked, basically, the same question three times. In fact, John tells us that Peter **"was grieved because"** the Lord had said to him "the third time, "Lovest thou me?"

Thayer, in his Greek lexicon, says that this is the most comprehensive of the words for grief in the NT. It describes every pain of body and soul. A. T. Robertson, in his work, Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament, Vol. V, p. 321, says that with these words our Lord cut Peter to the heart. It grieved Peter like he would have been grieved over the death of a loved one. Nothing could have affected Peter in a worse way than for the Lord to continue to ask essentially the same question.

The Lord was not seeking to be cruel. The Lord was simply bringing Peter to the place of true sorrow over what he had done. The Lord wanted Peter to be grieved so he would understand in a better way how deeply the Lord had been grieved by Peter's three denials.

At this point Peter could have gotten very angry. He could have felt that this was too much. He had told the Lord twice before that he loved Him, and now a third question comes. How do we take rebuke? Do we begin to defend ourselves, or do we accept it and seek to profit from it?

Let me try to clarify the nature of Peter's grief. Peter was not cut to the heart because of how he was hurt; Peter was grieved to the heart because he was beginning to see how deeply he had grieved the Lord. It is easy for us to be grieved because our pride has been wounded. And it is easy for us to be grieved because we are experiencing the consequences of our sin. But it is entirely a different thing when we are grieved, cut to

the heart, because we have grieved the Lord! When we are grieved because we have grieved the Lord, we can be sure that God has granted us true, godly repentance. It is this same word that Paul used when he wrote to the Ephesian church and said,

And **grieve not the holy Spirit of God,**
whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption (Eph. 4:30).

We need to see that while we can and do sin against ourselves, and we sin against others, yet all sin is primarily against God. And we cannot truly be repentant until this is our main concern. When David confessed his terrible sins against Bathsheba, and against her husband, Uriah, and against his people for his unfaithfulness as their king, yet in his confession it is easy to see that what grieved him the most about his sin was that he had sinned against God! Listen to what he wrote:

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned,
and done this evil in thy sight:
that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
and be clear when thou judgest (Psa. 51:4).

When Nathan brought David's sin to his attention, David's response was, "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:13a).

When Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph to commit adultery with her, what was it that kept Joseph from doing it? She very likely was a beautiful woman. He didn't want to sin against her. He didn't want to be faithful to the trust that Potiphar had placed in him. But the main part of his response to her was, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9b).

Even earlier than that, when Abimelech had take Sarah not knowing that she was Abraham's wife, the Lord appeared to him in a dream to tell him what he had done. Fortunately Abimelech had not touched Sarah. But in explaining to Abimelech why he had not committed sin with Sarah, the Lord said, "For I also withheld thee **from sinning against me:** therefore suffered I thee not to touch her" (Gen. 20:6b).

This is why Peter was grieved. He realized more than ever that his sins were against the Lord. It will be a new and better day in all of our lives when we see our sin that way.

Let me repeat. We sin against ourselves when we sin. We often hurt others with our sin. But our greatest offense when we sin is that we sin against the Lord!

How did Peter respond? In anger? No. In self-defense? No. In humility? Yes. With a broken heart? Yes. In true repentance? Yes.

However, this time he did not say, "Yea," or yes. He added a little to what he had said before. He said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."

Let us remember Peter's words when we think about the confession of our sins. The Lord did not ask Peter to explain each denial. He did not ask Peter to reflect in his mind why things went with him as they did. He probably would have had a difficult time explaining it all. Don't we often say, "I don't know why I did what I did!" The Lord was more concerned about where Peter was at that very moment in his relationship with Him, the Lord.

Peter said, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." Peter knew that there was not a detail of his sins which the Lord did not know. The Lord knew what was in Peter's heart at the time. The Lord knew why he had failed. The Lord knew about Peter's bitter tears afterwards. The Lord knew Peter's good intentions but also how spiritually weak he was. Peter recognized that the Lord knew it all, and he was content to cast himself upon the mercy of God.

William Featherstone caught the spirit of Peter's words to the Lord when he wrote the following lines. Note the present tenses.

My Jesus, I love thee, I know thou art mine;
For thee all the follies of sin I resign.
My gracious Redeemer, my Saviour art thou;
If ever I loved thee, my Jesus, 'tis now.

Then it was that the Lord re-commissioned Peter for the third time. In doing so the Lord used the verb "feed" that He had used in verse 15, and the word for "sheep" that He had used in verse 16.

When the Lord first told Peter about his denials, He concluded His comments about Satan's desire to sift Peter as wheat (see Luke 22:31, 32), He concluded by saying,

But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:
and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.

Please turn to those words in Luke 22, and let us look at them in the light of the Lord's dealings with Peter in John 21, and the Lord's purpose for Peter for the remainder of Peter's life.

The Lord referred to this testing of Peter's faith as a sifting time. Wheat was sifted to separate the chaff and the wheat. In other words, it was to be a purifying time, a sanctifying time. That was not Satan's purpose, but that was the Lord's purpose. That was the Lord's purpose in granting Satan the right to attack Peter. By the grace of God Peter would come out of that sifting time better, and not worse.

We can see this improvement also in the experiences of Job in the OT. He was the godliest man in his day before his trials came upon him, but he was even godlier at the end of the book. God does not allow Satan to tempt and try us in order to destroy us, but to make us better, better Christians, more like our Savior.

However, notice that Peter's testing time was for our Lord a praying time. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." With all of the humiliation that Peter experienced, why did he not commit suicide like Judas did? Because the Lord was praying for him. Oh, how thankful we all should be for the intercessory work of the Lord Jesus! That is His ministry for us right now at the right hand of the Father. Cf. Heb. 7:25. His prayers turn our defeats into His victories.

But notice that there was a prophetic word given to Peter: "And when thou art converted..." Peter's trials would turn him temporarily in the wrong direction. But he would be turned around, i.e., turned back in the direction that he should be going. This is what it means to be converted. We can only be saved once, but we will be converted as many times as it is necessary. Peter turned away from the Lord, but afterwards Peter turned back to the Lord. God's work in the hearts of His people may suffer setbacks, but it will never be abandoned.

And then there was another good word: "And when thou art converted, **strengthen thy brethren.**"

Peter's failures would not put an end to his ministry, but would make him even more effective as a servant of the Lord. This does not mean that we should treat our trials lightly. But it is intended for our encouragement that, when we do fail, this does not mean an end to our usefulness.

It is interesting to note that Peter used this same word, "strengthen," in the conclusion to his first epistle. Cf. 1 Pet. 5:10. His ministry to his "brethren" was to be a strengthening ministry. That would be accomplished as he turned his brothers and sisters in Christ away from trusting in themselves or others to trust in God. He needed to teach them. To warn them. To minister to them in their failures. To show them by his own life how to trust the Lord in every time of need.

And so, returning to our text, the Lord said to Peter, "Feed my sheep." Feeding the sheep makes healthy sheep. It makes contented sheep. It causes sheep to grow. Never do sheep outgrow their need for food. And so it is with the Lord's people. How encouraging and instructive these words of our Lord for Peter should be for all of us.

Let us notice also that this word to Peter, "Feed my sheep," was a command. And Peter's obedience to this command was to be a further evidence that he really loved the Lord Jesus Christ. If we truly love the Lord, we are going to love the people of God. And if we truly love the people of God, we are going to do everything that we can to benefit them spiritually. The words of the Lord to Peter, are words that have their application to each one of us. So let us show our love for the Lord by our obedience to His Word, and by tireless efforts to minister with blessing to His people.

April 27, 1992

Before we leave these three verses (John 21:15-17) we might ask ourselves the question which Matthew Henry raised in his commentary: "But why did he (meaning, our Lord) give this charge particularly to Peter?" See Vol. V, p. 1232. In answering this question I am using some suggestions which Matthew Henry made with at least one of my own.

The first reason seems to be that the Lord was reassuring Peter that he would not lose his place as an apostle. It amounted to a re-commissioning. This must have been both a great relief to Peter, and yet quite amazing also. It had to be a time when Peter came to a greater understanding of the grace of God. He deserved to be put out, but God's purposes for us are not altered even by our sins.

A second reason had to be because Peter was to continue on as the leader of the apostles. Not only was he kept on as an apostle, but he maintained his position over them. This was a double portion of grace.

Third, as the leader of the apostles it was imperative that he know exactly what their work was. They were to care for the sheep--to do everything that shepherds would normally be expected to do for them: to feed them, to guide them, to protect them, to provide shelter for them.

Now let me point out something that is very important about the whole work of the church.

We have noted that when the Lord originally called Peter and Andrew, He said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). That, obviously, is evangelism. At this point, shortly before our Lord's resurrection, He said, "Feed my sheep." This is edification, or sanctification.

So the church has a twofold responsibility:

- 1) To seek the salvation of sinners through the proclamation of the Gospel.
- 2) To build up the people of God in their faith.

Fourth, it seems that the Lord was seeking to stir Peter up with the urgency of the task to which he was appointed. As we have noted, the verb the Lord used in each of the three cases in verses 15-17 were present imperatives. In using them the Lord was not only saying, "Do this," but He was saying, "Do this now!"

The assignment was not only for Peter, but it was for all of the apostles, and for church leaders after them. We need to know what our work is, and then do it, not tomorrow, but NOW!

The urgency with which the Lord spoke was given further emphasis by what followed in verse 18.

21:18 Here we have the last of the times that our Lord said, "Verily, verily..." -- at least as far as the Gospel of John is concerned. There are twenty-five of them in all, and would make a very worthwhile study in themselves. We have learned that they indicate something that is both very important and very true. It amounted to underlining what the Lord was going to say before He said it. Or, as Matthew Henry stated it, it speaks of something very weighty which is undoubtedly true. Everything that the Lord Jesus said was important, and all that He said was true. But there were certain times when He emphasized both of those aspects of what He said.

This was a message especially for Peter. Peter was probably quite a bit older than the Lord. The Lord's words, "When thou wast young," would indicate that he was not young when the Lord said these things to him. But neither was he old. He was some place in between young and old. But the Lord told him that at that time he did what he wanted to do. He could go and come as he desired. However, the last words did not just speak of the limitations of old age, but, as we learn from verse 19, they spoke of Peter's death. Others would decide for Peter then, and he would not particularly like what they would do.

Historical tradition tells us that Peter was crucified either in the late 60's, or sometime in 70's, A.D. Some say that he requested that he be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to be crucified like the Lord was crucified. Some take our Lord's words about Peter stretching forth his hands as an indication that he would die by crucifixion.

However, in the first part of verse 19 John gave us a commentary on the meaning of verse 18:

21:19 "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God."

We might not have gotten that out of the verse, but the Holy Spirit has given us the explanation.

Therefore we can see that the Lord knew when Peter would die. He knew where Peter would die. He knew how Peter would die. And, in addition, we have the confirmation in these words that Peter would die. Peter is not with us today; he has been gone a long time.

This is not very happy talk, but it is true, and it is important. Our Lord's "verily, verily," suggested that. The tendency that all of us have is to live like we are going to be here forever, and yet we know that we are not. But the point that the Lord was making was that we need to do today, if it is at all possible, what we know we ought to be doing. The time is coming when we will not be able to do it. The Lord knows when that will be for each one of us, but we don't! And so we need to live each day just like we would if we knew that it was our last day on earth.

However, will you notice that the Lord said that Peter, by his death, would glorify God. Peter, as we have seen, did not always glorify God in his life, but the Lord said that he would glorify God in his death.

When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian church from his confinement in Rome, you may remember that he said this:

According to my earnest expectation and my hope,
that in nothing I shall be ashamed,
but that with all boldness, as always,
so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body,
whether it be by life, or by death (Phil. 1:20).

He said practically the same thing in his first letter to the Corinthian church. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:9. Let me read it to you in the NASB.

Therefore also we have as our ambition,
that whether at home or absent,
to be pleasing to Him.

By "at home" he meant at home in the body; by "absent" he meant absent from the body, or dead!

Although these were very solemn words that the Lord was speaking to Peter, yet it must have been encouraging to him to know that, when it came time for him to die, he would glorify his Lord, not deny Him again.

Now look with me at the last part of verse 19. (Read.)

The Lord's will for Peter was clear. Some day, known to the Lord, but unknown to Peter, he would glorify God by his death. But for the present the main thing that he needed to be concerned about was following the Lord. He needed to be concerned about his personal fellowship with the Lord, and he needed to be concerned about his obedience to the Lord. This is what it means to follow the Lord. But it also means, if we are to follow the Lord, that we do not run ahead of the Lord. It is easy to do that in the work of the Lord--to run ahead of the Lord. Abraham did that when he went down into Egypt because of the famine in Canaan. King Saul did that in his day. Perhaps you can think of other examples in Scripture. Possibly, too, you can think of times in your own life when you ran ahead of the Lord. It is easy to do. We get impatient. We try to get results even when the Lord has not given them. It is very common among us as believers to be running ahead of the Lord. Peter simply needed to learn what the Lord said to him when He called him to follow Him. There is a far greater possibility that we will run ahead of the Lord than there is that we will fall behind Him in what He is doing.

Then we see that without giving what the Lord had said to him a great deal

of thought, Peter acted like Simon again.

21:20 He turned around and saw John following them. But John in writing about what happened did not refer to himself as "John." He described himself in two ways:

- 1) As "the disciple whom Jesus loved."
- 2) As the one who "also leaned on his breast at supper."

This is the description also that John gave of himself in John 13:23. No one else, at least in Scripture, ever called John "the disciple whom Jesus loved. But this is what John called himself. We have it five times in his Gospel:

- 1) John 13:23.
- 2) John 19:26.
- 3) John 20:2.
- 4) John 21:7.
- 5) John 21:20.

When we first think about this, and ask ourselves, "Why would John describe himself in this way?", we might feel that he was boasting about his relationship with the Lord. It sounds like he was claiming to be the Lord's favorite apostle.

But that certainly cannot be the reason. That would have been completely out of character for the Apostle John. He was probably a young man in his early thirties like the Lord was, but we can't believe that John, even though he was young, was trying to set himself above the other apostles. It is true that he and his brother James wanted the seats at the right and left of the Lord when He entered His kingdom, but that was because of the intense desire they had to be with the Lord and to be of service to Him.

Nor can we think that the Lord loved John more than He loved the other apostles. One person can enter more deeply into a bond of fellowship with the Lord, but the Lord does not have any favorites in His family. He loves us all the same.

How, then, can we explain the fact that John would speak of himself in that way?

Well, instead of thinking about it as an expression of pride, think of it as an expression of his humility. We do not know how John found out about our Lord's conversation with Peter which we have just considered, but we do know that the Lord was asking Peter if Peter loved him. John turned that around and spoke of the Lord's love for him, as though that was John's chief claim to a living relationship with the Lord. And remember that although the event we are talking about here in John 21 took place when the Apostle John was a young man, yet John was an old man when he wrote all of this down. And so he was saying in his old age that he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." And the Apostle John was the one who wrote in 1 John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us." So it seems that John used this expression marveling that the Lord would love him.

Another indication that this was an expression of John's humility rather than his pride was that he did not try to make his own name well-known, and even famous! In fact, John never once referred to Himself by his name in this entire Gospel which carries his name. He just wanted to be known by that title which gave him his guarantee of heaven. He was not saved because he loved the Lord (although he did); he was saved because the Lord loved him, and had given Himself for John.

In this respect John the Baptist and John the Apostle were alike. When the Jews from Jerusalem asked John the Baptist who he was, he did not say, "I am John the Baptist." He said, "I am the voice..." (John 1:23). John the Baptist and John the Apostle would have joined in heartily in singing that children's song, "I am so glad that our Father in heaven..." And then it concludes with the words, "Jesus loves even me."

Paul said that the Lord "loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). May the Lord keep us from ever getting to the place where those words no longer have a special charm for us. When we get to heaven, if we have to explain why we think that we should be admitted, just tell the gate keeper that you are one whom the Lord loves. That will get you in.

John certainly enjoyed a very intimate relationship with the Lord. When Peter wanted to find out who the betrayer was, he asked John to ask the Lord. The fact that John wrote such a title for himself here, and that the Holy Spirit actually directed him to do so, probably relates this expression also to John 14:21 and 23 which we have discussed before.

21:21 But Peter seeing John said, "Lord, what shall this man do?"

This has been interpreted in several different ways.

Some feel that this question was asked out of a genuine love and concern which Peter had for John. There were, after all, very close friends.

Others feel that it was mere curiosity on Peter's part. It was like Peter was saying, "Lord, you have told me what is going to happen to me. I would like to know what is going to happen to John." Some who hold this view feel that Peter, the older man, was concerned also about what would happen to the work of the Lord with the younger generation.

Still others feel that Peter's question suggested too much of a concern for John, and not enough for himself. This is probably the view that is closest to the truth. Maybe we could describe it as Peter speaking more like Simon than like Peter (referring back to what we have seen in verse 15 through 17).

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The Greek, lit. translated, is, "Lord, and this man, what?" Westcott said that Peter was asking, "What of him? What shall he suffer or do? what shall be his lot?" (p. 305). It is apparent from this passage that the Lord does not tell us His will for others, and that is not to be our main concern. We can want to be sure that others have their difficulties, too, that we are inclined to overlook the importance of what the Lord has for us. One significant thing about Peter's question is that it shows that he believed the Lord knows what the future holds for all of us.

21:22 Here we have the Lord's answer to Peter's question. (Read.)

There is a special emphasis in the latter part of this verse on the pronouns "thee" and "thou."

"If I will" -- This statement shows that the Lord not only knows the future, but He is the One Who determines what the future will be. God is working out "all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11). Things do not happen to us by chance, or by good luck or bad luck. Things

happen according to the will of God.

The Lord's statement here seems to suggest that if it had been His will for John to live until the Lord returned, John would still be alive today! Do you and I really believe this? If we do, then we will also believe that what happens in our lives does not happen because the Lord is not paying attention to us, or does not care for us--especially if it is something that we do not like. The course of our lives is laid out by our God and our Savior for Their glory, and for our highest good.

This does not mean that we should not pray about our problems, or have a sense of futility or fatalism about them. The Lord does not lay out His plan for us the way He did for Peter. He did not even tell John as much about his future as He said to Peter about his future. And so we all look to the Lord for the unfolding of His plan for us, trusting Him for His grace to face each trial, and trusting Him to work out His will in our lives.

Peter was right in recognizing that the his future and John's future were subject to the will of God, but he was wrong in thinking that the Lord would tell him what His plan for John was. "What is that to thee?" Or as the Greek says very pointedly, "What to thee?"

And then the Lord repeated His command to Peter which He had given to Peter in verse 19, only this time He made it more emphatic by adding the personal pronoun "thou." It is three words in the Greek as it is in the English translation: "You follow Me!" How easy it is for us to forget what the Lord has told us to do in our concern that others have at least as much difficulty as we are going to have.

The Apostle Paul had to deal with this problem in the Corinthian church. And he said something that is very important for all of us to know, and to remember. Listen to 2 Cor. 10:12:

For we dare not make ourselves of the number,
or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves:
**but they measuring themselves by themselves,
and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.**

The Lord's purposes for each of us are never exactly alike. And we get ourselves into trouble when we act on the basis that they are the same. We need always to remember that the main concern for each one of us is that we are following the Lord and doing what He has appointed for us--not worrying about whether or not He is using someone else more than He is using us, or if they are having as hard a time as we may be having.

There is not only an important message here for us as individual believers, but for our churches. We as churches today are on a stretch doing everything that we can to follow each other. Leaders of big churches are going around holding seminars for the leaders of smaller churches so that the smaller churches can become big churches. It is true that we are to be of help to others in the work of the Lord, but before I follow some man, regardless of who he may be, I want to know who he is following. We are all, in some sense, following someone else. And I know from my experience that there are many church leaders today who are more concerned about what works in the world than they are in following the teaching of Scripture. Oh, they would deny this, but go to their services and you will find that they are more concerned about entertaining their people, making their people like what they hear so they will come back, than they are about preaching the truth for the "reproof, correction, and instruction in

righteousness" of those who hear. Every church leader needs to ask himself, "Who am I following?"

The Apostle Paul set the pattern for all of us when he wrote to the Corinthian church, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Somewhere in the writings of A. W. Tozer I read that he said that before he listens to any man he wants to know if that man knows God, and if he does, how well does he know God! He wasn't concerned about his degrees, nor his ability as a speaker, nor about how much in demand he was. He was concerned about his knowledge of the Lord and his fellowship with Him. Before you and I follow anybody, we need to make sure that they are following the Lord. And you can tell if they are following the Lord by whether or not they are living and working in agreement with the Word of God.

When we see contemporary music invading our churches and crowding out the ministry of the Word of God, who are we following? When you go into a church and see drums and all kinds of electronic equipment costing hundreds of dollars, ask yourself the question, "Who are they following?" What does the Word of God say about the relationship between the Christian and the world, or the church and the world? Where has the idea come from that the pastor is to be an entertainer? And how many are there of our Christian singers who have started out to serve the Lord, and have then moved on into the world? Who are we following? There may be a lot going on in some churches today, with many people attending, but are they being edified? Is holiness of life a priority among the Lord's people? Are we as concerned about pleasing the Lord as we are about pleasing people? Who are we following?

That question needs to be followed up with another question. It is this: What does it mean to follow the Lord? It is easy to talk about something without really knowing what we are talking about.

Before we look at some Scripture, let me read to you what F. B. Meyer wrote on this important subject. F. B. Meyer was also a contemporary of Spurgeon, and who also ministered in London. In commenting upon what it means to follow Christ, he said,

But what is it to follow Christ? It is not to live an oriental life beneath these northern skies, nor wear an eastern garb, nor speak in the Hebrew tongue. A man might do all these, and in addition wander like Him, homeless and outcast, through the land, and yet not follow in His steps. No! Following Jesus means our identification in the principles that underlay His life, in His devotion and prayer, in His absolute compliance with God's will, in His constant service of mankind, in the sweetness and gentleness and strength of His personal character. There is no legitimate duty into which we are called to go, in which He does not precede; for when He putteth forth his own sheep, He goeth before them, and his sheep follow. As of old, his disciples saw Him going before them ascending up to Jerusalem, and they followed Him; there is no path of arduous duty and suffering in which He does not still precede (Meyer, F. B., Love to the Uttermost, Expositions of John XIII-XXI, p. 251).

There is more said in the Synoptic Gospels about following Christ than we find in John's Gospel, but there is no question but that this was the message of our Lord to His disciples while He was here on earth. And although we do not have the physical Person of Christ with us today, yet we, too, need to follow the Lord. John 10:27 indicates that one way we can identify a child of God, one of the Lord's sheep, is that he follows the

Lord.

To follow the Lord is to stay close to Him. It is to enter into fellowship with Him, to commune with Him. It is to listen to His teaching, believe what He says, and do His will. Following Christ will usually involve suffering. It may not mean physical abuse such as many of the Lord's servants have experienced, but it can verbal abuse and separation from those who are not following the Lord.

Perhaps it would be a good idea to consult the writings of the man to whom the Lord spoke the words which are before us today: the Apostle Peter. Please turn with me to 1 Pet. 2:21. (Read verses 21-23.)

Notice that verse 21 begins with the word, "For." This links it with what Peter had been saying before that. And then when we get to the beginning of chapter 3 we find the word, "Likewise." This links what follows with what had preceded.

What was Peter doing in these verses? He was telling the people of God how they should live. To follow Christ is to live like He lived, and to obey what He taught. It does not take a profound knowledge of the Gospels to be able to see that the Lord Jesus Christ refused to follow the religious leaders of His day. In fact, He denounced them in the strongest possible terms. And history will show that if we follow the popular trends of the day among those who claim to be Christian, we will have to depart from the plain teaching of the Word of God. What about all of this teaching today among Christians about self-worth, and self-esteem? Where do you find that in Scripture? You can't find it any place. Instead we see in Scripture that man's idea of his own worth and esteem is already too high, and is the reason that he has so many other problems. Where is the emphasis upon humility? Upon patience? Upon submission? Upon faith? Upon trusting in God rather than taking matters into our own hands? Let the worldlings do the best that they can. That is all that they have. But those of us who have come into a vital relationship with Jesus Christ have access to the real answers which the world knows nothing about. Long ago the Apostle Paul said that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. We have forgotten that. And we are in the strange position today of using the world's music and the world's ways to attract people into the church so that, supposedly, the Holy Spirit can work on them.

When we are following the Lord we are keeping our eyes on Him. That is where they need to be. And when we do, we are not going to be worried if the Lord deals without someone else in a way that is different from the way He deals with us. We will be able to rejoice in His blessings upon others as much as we do when His blessing is upon us.

Note the prayers of the Psalmist and the promises of the Lord regarding our need to know the Lord's ways. Cf. Psalms 25:4, 5, 8, 9, 12; 27:11; 32:8. What we need today is not human philosophy and human psychology, even though it comes camouflaged with verses of Scripture scattered here and there. What we need is the simple teaching of Scripture which ought to come to us "without money and without price." The Lord's people are paying big money these days to learn things that will lead them away from the Word of God, and away from a life of trusting God. We need to do what the Lord told Peter to do when He said, "Follow me." If you and I are following the Lord, we cannot go wrong.

Bishop Ryle said on this subject,

In any case, the words "Follow Me: should always teach us that our first duty in religion is to look to our own souls, and to take heed that we ourselves follow Christ, and walk with God. Whatever others may do or not do, suffer or not suffer, our own duty is clear and plain (Vol. II, p. 747).

21:23 Isn't it amazing how quickly and how completely the Word of the Lord gets corrupted, so that people say that the Lord said things which He never said. The Lord did not say that John would not die. He just said that if He wanted John to live until He came, that should not be Peter's problem, nor anyone else's problem.

Many who have written on this passage have pointed out that this was one of the first of the traditions which began to circulate "among the brethren." But it was a false tradition. But John indicated here that it had a wide circulation; it "went abroad among the brethren." And yet it was false, entirely false! And the statement would seem to indicate that many of the brethren believed it. They evidently thought that John would experience something which no other child of God had ever experienced--a long life without death. Only Enoch and Elijah escaped death, but not to live longer on the earth. They were transported to heaven.

We ought to see in this statement some things that will help us to abide by the truth. One is, as Matthew Henry (V, p. 1236) pointed out, "The aptness of men to misinterpret the sayings of Christ." Men will take something that Christ said, or something that is stated somewhere in the Word of God, and misinterpret it completely so that it no longer means what it actually does mean. And so we also should see how carefully we ought to examine by the Scriptures themselves all of the teaching that we hear, regardless of where we hear it. A false interpretation of Scripture can probably do more damage than something that is very clearly false. And the most powerful systems of error are those who use the Word of God, especially if it is partially true. Be sure in your reading of the Scriptures that you notice how often we are warned against false teachers. The Devil is a Master Deceiver, and you will remember from our Lord's temptation that the Devil did not hesitate to use the Word even with our Lord! Therefore, we need to be extremely careful. The charismatic movement which is so strong today, and growing stronger all of the time, has some truth, but much error. And people are being deceived every day because the Scriptures are used, and because the movement is, humanly speaking, so successful. This report was obviously included by John in his Gospel to serve as a warning to all future generations as to how quickly and completely the Word of the Lord can be changed. And so let us beware.

Before we leave this section, notice the Lord's reference to His coming. We are still looking for that grand and glorious event. He has not come yet, but He is coming. We are closer to His coming than any generation of the Lord's people ever has been. But until He comes, we need to keep on following Him.

The Gospel begins with the emphasis upon our Lord's first coming; it ends with a reference to the promise that He is coming again.

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN
John 21 -- Part 3
May 4, 1992
John 21:24, 25

Intro: The last two verses of this chapter give us the conclusion to the Gospel of John. Perhaps his words having to do with the authenticity of his Gospel were prompted by the report to which he had just referred which was a false report.

21:24 With characteristic humility John did not mention his name. But he wanted to make it clear that, as the writer of this Gospel, he was declaring that he wrote what we have here, and that his record was absolutely true from start to finish.

Notice a similar statement in John 19:35. The other three Gospels, which we call the Synoptics because of the way in which they correspond very closely with each other. John's Gospel is different in its form, but not different in its truth. Perhaps he may have felt that some would not be inclined to accept it because it is different. The first three Gospels had been in circulation for a long time before John wrote this Gospel in his old age, and near the end of the first century. His Gospel is more theological nature, and, at the same time, evangelistic. So John wrote for the edification of believers and for the salvation of those who had not yet believed in the Lord for eternal life. Therefore, he considered it of the greatest importance that his readers know that he had written the truth.

John made a similar declaration concerning the truthfulness of his writing in 3 John 12 where we read,

Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself:
yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true.

Such statements from John were not made in a boastful way, but from the certainty in his heart that he was speaking the truth, and nothing else. Perhaps he knew also that he was an instrument of the Holy Spirit in giving the written Word of God to the world.

Let us be just as careful as John was that we give the truth of the Word when we claim to speak about the things of God. John had written earlier those words of the Lord Jesus Christ, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). John also knew those words of the Lord Jesus Who said, "I am...the truth" (John 14:6). And here it is good to remember what John himself had said in John 20:30, 31 as to his purpose in writing this Gospel.

John had been an eyewitness of Christ and His ministry. And it is especially important to see that John's convictions regarding Christ had not diminished through the years, but had actually become more confirmed in his mind and heart. He would agree wholeheartedly with the Apostle Peter who had been closely associated with John during the days of the Lord's ministry and into the early history of the church. We find Peter's words in 2 Pet. 1:16:

For we have not followed cunning devised fables,
when we made known unto you the power and coming
of our Lord Jesus Christ,
but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

But even greater than the fact that John and Peter were eyewitnesses of the things they wrote about, is the fact that they were men used by the Holy Spirit to give us the Word of God. And so we need have no fear regarding

the Word of God. In standing upon the truth of the Scriptures, we stand upon a solid rock. Many have tried to destroy it, but God's Word will not pass away.

21:25 After examining what the Apostle John wrote in verse 24, I will have to say that I was shocked when I read again his words in verse 25. I don't believe that I have ever noticed the connection between the two verses before. What shocked me was that in verse 24 John sought to impress upon his readers that he was telling the truth, and then it seems that in verse 25 he states an exaggeration which is not true. If everything that the Lord did, and everything that he said, while He was here on earth, were written down, of course the world could contain them! Obviously our Bibles would be so large that it might be a real chore to carry them around, but I have no hesitation in saying that thousands of copies of such a book, yes, hundreds of thousands of such a book, could be printed, and they wouldn't crowd us on earth at all! We hear a lot these days about credibility problems with our governmental leaders. Do we have a credibility problem here with the Apostle John? Was he such an old man at the time that he wrote the Biblical books that are attributed to him that we do have to be careful about what he said? What do you think?

Well, let me relieve your mind: I don't think that we have a credibility problem with the Apostle John. I believe that he spoke the truth just as much when he wrote the 25th verse as when he wrote the 24th verse. The problem is in the translation.

What did he mean by the word "contain"?

I checked the NKJV, and the NASB, and they both say the same thing that the regular KJV says. I looked at the NIV and it translated it this way: "I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." And so I realize that I am taking issue with many Greek scholars when I say what I am about to say, but I want to defend the credibility of John, and I don't think that I can if he actually meant what the translators say that he meant.

I went to my Greek New Testament and looked up the word which is translated in our Authorized Text, "contain." And I found that there are other ways of translating it. It can be translated to make room for. Or it can mean to turn one's self to. Another translation could be to receive with the mind and the understanding. Still another translation is, to received into one's heart, or to make room for something in one's heart. All of these are possible translations suggested by Thayer in his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, p. 674. Or this verb is sometimes translated in the NT as simply meaning to receive.

Now, if we take any of these suggestions, what was it that John was saying? Was he saying that the world would not be able to hold the books, or find space for the books, that would be written, if everything that the Lord did were written down. I do not think so. What he was saying was this:

There are many other things which Jesus did, which, if I had included them all in this book, I am of the strong opinion that the world would not receive the complete record concerning the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus if they will not receive the book which I have written.

When I think of this verse, I am reminded of a parable that our Lord told on one occasion about "a certain rich man." Please turn with me to Luke

16. I would like to read to you verses 19-31.

We often feel that if something spectacular would happen to show the world that Jesus is the Christ, then we would see multitudes turn to the Lord--like some person coming back to life who had died. Or to emphasize what John said, if our Bibles only told more, if they gave us a complete record of all that the Lord did when He was here on earth, then more people would be saved.

But what did the Lord Jesus say?

He said that if people will not believe the Word of God (in the case that we have just read about, the OT Scriptures), then they will not believe if some one came back from the dead. And so John was saying that if people will not receive and believe what I have written, they would not believe if my book were ten times larger than it is--or however much longer it would have to be to include everything.

I hope we believe what John was saying. I hope we believe what the Lord Jesus was saying. But there are many professing Christians today who don't believe it. I know of a very prominent preacher who believes that you give people the Word after they have come to Christ, but you bring them to Christ in other ways. And so he puts on great entertainments to get people to his meetings, but he does not draw them in with the Word of God.

Churches are doing that today, aren't they? I know of a pastor who complained to his men because they had so much music in their services that he was only given twenty minutes to speak. A lot can be said in twenty minutes, but when you give forty minutes to an hour to music, you can see where people are placing their emphasis today.

God has given us enough in his Word to save the worst of sinners. He could have made the Bible longer, but a longer Bible would have been no more convincing, no more regenerating, than the Bible that we have. This is the Book the Lord intended for us to have. This is the Word by which, through the work of the Holy Spirit, we have been born again. This Word which tells us of Christ, is used by God to prepare us for heaven. We need nothing more; we need nothing less.

What a wonderful conclusion to a wonderful book! The message is true, and it is sufficient to accomplish in our hearts all that it will take to make us like the One Who loved us, and gave Himself for us.