

THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP
John 10:1-10

Intro: John 10 calls for a brief review.

So far in John's Gospel we have had 6 miracles -- but there is no miracle in John 10.

Instead, we have more of our Lord's teaching -- and there are two things in our text this morning which we need to notice:

1) Two times in our text we have, "Verily, verily." See vv. 1, 7.

Previously we have learned that John uses this word in its double form 25 times -- never just, verily.

The word "verily" has a twofold meaning:

- (1) Something which is absolutely true, beyond any doubt.
- (2) Something which is very important.

When the word is doubled, both of these ideas are intensified! These are #15 and #16 out of the 25.

2) In John 10 we have two more of the I am's taken by John from our Lord's teaching:

- (1) "I am the door." See John 10:7, 9.
- (2) "I am the good shepherd." See John 10:14, 16.

Previously we had:

- (1) "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35; cf. vv. 41, 48, 51).
- (2) "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12; cf. 9:5).
Cf. also 12:46.

And then we have the two in John 10 -- followed by 3 others in John 11:25; 14:6; 15:1, 5.

These expressions must be related to the "I AM" of the OT -- Jehovah, the eternal, unchanging, covenant-keeping God.

As we relate this to our text this morning when the Lord said, "I am the door," it means that He was the door then, He always has been the door, and He always will be the door!

The same is true of all of the other I am's.

There are three parts to the 10 verses we are going to consider:

- 1) The parable, or figure of speech -- in vv. 1-5.
It is not the common word for parable, but is a word which speaks of figurative or symbolic teaching. Our Lord uses the word again in John 16:25, 29.
- 2) We have a problem, according to v. 6: They did not understand. Verses 19-21 makes it clear that the Lord was speaking to the same kind of a crowd (and maybe the same crowd) here that He was speaking to in John 9.
- 3) The beginning of the explanation in vv. 7-10. The message continues down through v. 18.

Let me begin by speaking of:

I. THE PROBLEM (John 10:6).

This is the problem that we face (1) every time we read the Word, and (2) every time the Word of God is taught.

This is our problem this morning -- some of you will understand, all may understand, but some probably will not.

Even the Lord's parables did not solve this problem.

Modern translations of the Bible will not solve the problem.

The problem exists because of the spiritual condition of man's heart, and it is explained for us in 1 Cor. 2:14.

You can get further light on the Lord's use of parables by reading what He had to say in Matt. 13:10-17.

What is the solution? It is twofold:

- 1) In what is written. If you cannot understand verses 1-5, go on reading -- go on to the explanation given by our Lord.

This is always important in understanding the Bible. One part will explain another. It may not be right where you are reading, but keep reading; you will come to the explanation.

- 2) The ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We are coming to this in John 14, 15, 16. Nobody ever really gets the meaning of even the simplest truths of Scripture without the help given by the Holy Spirit. Even as I speak to you, if the Holy Spirit does not use me to help you, you will not understand this passage of Scripture which we are considering.

SO -- the solution to our problem is in the words of the Lord Jesus in verses 7-10, and in the ministry of the Spirit Who is here to guide us into an understanding of the truth.

But let us look at

II. THE PARABLE (John 10:1-5).

Notice: "Verily, verily, I say unto you" -- very important and very true (dependable) because of the One Who is doing the speaking.

Let there be no question in any of our minds by that what we are reading is true, and that we need to pay careful attention to every word.

Note how it starts -- with

- A. Thieves and robbers trying to get to the sheep (v. 1).

Why the two words: thieves and robbers?

Because the Lord was seeking to convey two ideas about the opposition which "the sheep" face.

Both are intent on taking that which does not belong to them, but "a thief" does it secretly and deceitfully; "a robber" does it openly, violently, brazenly. Wycliffe called the first one a night thief; the other, a day thief!

And the picture is not one of taking something from the sheep, but of taking the sheep away from the fold and away from the shepherd.

This is what the Pharisees were seeking to do. This is what false teachers always seek to do. This is what Satan is intent on -- to get us away from Christ, "the good shepherd"!

Take special note of that -- AND BEWARE!

Next, notice how the Lord pictures Himself,

B. The shepherd.

What a wonderful picture of Christ! It has its roots in many OT passages -- not the least of which is the 23rd Psalm.

We will deal more with this next Lord's Day.

But third

C. The porter, or door keeper -- whom we do not need to identify. He was a man who watched the sheep when they were in the fold -- to make sure that no strangers or enemies got in. Sometimes there might be several flocks of sheep in one fold.

D. The sheep.

And what a wonderful picture this is of the people of God.

Matthew Henry (Vol. V, p. 1028) gives some interesting insights into this expression. He speaks of

"the good qualities of sheep, harmless and inoffensive as sheep; meek and quiet, without noise; patient as sheep under the hand both of the shearer and of the butcher; useful and profitable, tame and tractable (which means manageable and teachable -- my notes), to the shepherd, and sociable one with another, and much used in sacrifices."

We see much of this also in Psalm 23 -- what the Lord does to us, and what He is making us.

Think about this in its relationship to your own life.

And then notice the wonderful truth about the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep in vv. 3-5 -- what He does, and that which the sheep can always be counted on to do. There is a double negative in v. 5. The first "not" could be translated, never.

After the observation in v. 6 which we have already noted, then we have the beginning of the Lord's explanation of what He had been saying.

III. THE BEGINNING OF THE EXPLANATION (John 10:7-10).

Here again, "Verily, verily, I say unto you."

Our Lord's words combine teaching and warnings and promises.

A. The teaching: "I am the door."

He is not a door, one of many, but the one and only door.

B. The warnings against thieves and robbers:

1. How to detect them (v. 8). "Before" has the idea of someone coming in preference to another, or in place of another -- as well as "before" in time.

Not all who came "before" Him in time were thieves and robbers because many came, like John the Baptist, preaching Christ!

2. What they will do -- always (v. 10a): "to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."

C. The promises -- three of them:

1. Salvation: "by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (v. 9m).

2. Safety: "and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (v. 9b).

3. Satisfaction: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (v. 10b).

Concl: Have you entered in by the Door -- the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only Door, the true Door. All other ways are false.

Comment on abundant life -- from the story of Joni.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD

John 10:11-21

Intro: We come this morning to the second part of our Lord's message in John 10:1-18.

In the first part He emphasized that He was, and is, and always will be, "the door of the sheep," or, to state it in other words, the gate by which the sheep enter the sheepfold.

This claim He makes exclusively for Himself -- He is the only door for the sheep; there is no other.

Beginning with verse 11 our Lord changes the figure of speech, and twice in our text for today He says, "I am the good shepherd," or, to bring out the emphasis of the original language, I am the Shepherd, the good One.

This He also makes as an exclusive claim -- that He is the only Shepherd, and that there never has been nor will there ever be another Shepherd like He is. (Comment on "I am.")

And so by these statements the Lord once-and-for-all eliminates all other religions, indicating that He is the one-and-only way for men to come to God -- that any teaching which in any way contradicts these claims is false teaching!

It is not surprising that we read in verse 19 there was a division among the Jews because of the words the Lord Jesus Christ was using as He taught them! (John has mentioned two other times when the crowd had been divided: John 7:20; 8:48, 52.)

But let us look at our text: vv. 11-21.

There are four things for us to consider here:

- 1) The Shepherd and the hireling (vv. 11-13).
- 2) The Shepherd and the sheep (vv. 14-16).
- 3) The Shepherd and the Father (vv. 17, 18).
- 4) The Shepherd and the Jews -- where we see their reaction to His teaching (vv. 19-21). I would like to make some observations as to why they were divided, why some thought that He was demon-possessed.

I. THE SHEPHERD AND THE HIRELING (John 10:11-13).

Here the Lord draws a sharp contrast.

The difference between the Shepherd and the hireling is in the expression, "whose own the sheep are not," or as the NIV translates it, "The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep."

"The hireling" is actually a person who does what he does because he gets paid for it. Take away his pay, and he will not do the work. (This is probably a thrust at the Pharisees.) Thus, when his life is endangered by wild beasts, "the hireling" will be more concerned about himself than he will about the sheep -- and so he "fleeth" for his life.

Contrast this with what the Lord says about Himself: "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

What a marvelous and comforting description of the Lord Jesus Christ! Even though we may not know a lot about sheep and shepherds, this strikes a responsive chord with the people of God!

Bishop Westcott says that this passage is a commentary on Isa. 53.

What does it mean that the Lord is "the good shepherd"? It means that, ^{He is capable} of doing everything that a shepherd needs to do for His flock.

And this is to be seen first and foremost in the fact that He has given His life for the sheep. This is mentioned two times in the passage (see v. 15), and it is implied a third time (see v. 17).

SO THE EMPHASIS IN THIS PASSAGE IS THAT, WHEN THE LORD DIED, HE WAS DYING TO ACCOMPLISH SOMETHING SPECIFICALLY FOR HIS SHEEP. Literally, it was on their behalf that He died -- and the Lord clearly emphasizes this.

Actually for a shepherd to die for the sheep would ordinarily leave the sheep at the mercy of the wild animals, but in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ, this was the means of not only bringing the sheep life, but eternal life, abundant life!

We are warned several places in Scripture that there will always be wolves, called "false prophets" in Matt. 7:15 who come in with their false teaching, to carry away and to rob the sheep if they possibly can.

Cf. also Acts 20:29 -- Paul's parting words with the Ephesian elders.

How good it is to notice again the words, "I am the good shepherd," and our Lord's earlier words, "a stranger will they (the sheep) not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers." Note how the issue is the teaching of one as compared with that of the other.

II. THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP (John 11:14-16).

Here are great words of blessing for every child of God,
and for every servant of the Lord.

We not only hear again that our Lord is "the good shepherd,"
and that when He died He was actually accomplishing some-
thing for His sheep, but here we read that:

- 1) He knows who His own are.
- 2) They know Him.
- 3) And the relationship between the shepherd and the sheep
is a reflection of the relationship that exists between
the Father and the Son!

And what is more -- we find that the Lord clearly has in
mind what He will do in the future!

Read verse 16 carefully.

Note how the Lord speaks in the present tense of those "other
sheep" which still must be brought to the fold. He says
that He already has them, that they are already His sheep --
not because they were already saved, but because, as Spur-
geon once said,

"We say Christ so died that he infallibly secured the
salvation of a multitude that no man can number, who
through Christ's death not only may be saved, but . . .
must be saved and cannot by any possibility run the haz-
ard of being anything but saved."

Look at these positive words:

"And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold;
them also I MUST bring, and THEY SHALL hear my voice."

This is what promises success in evangelism. This is why we
know that our missionaries are not on the fields of the world
in vain.

The Lord is bringing His sheep to Himself. He knows them.
And they will come when they hear His Word.

Do you remember how the Lord encouraged Paul to stay in
Corinth, and to believe that his work would not be in vain.
Listen to these words from Acts 18:9, 10:

"Then ^{spoke} the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not
afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; For I am with
thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I
have many people in this city."

Oh, I know that my ministry is being slandered because I
believe that God is absolutely sovereign in the salvation of

men, but is this not the teaching of Scripture? We are here that the Lord might use us to reach the unreached sheep which He is bringing -- a work that is guaranteed. It does not eliminate evangelism; it requires evangelism. It does not eliminate the fact that men must believe; it guarantees that they will believe.

Illus: The other day I heard of a well-known preacher who in his commentary on a certain NT book said that, if He could, God would save the world. This means that God wants to do something but He can't do it because man won't let Him do it! DO YOU BELIEVE THAT???

Or do you believe, as I do, that God is doing exactly as He has planned that He would do from the foundation of the world, and that there is going to be a host of redeemed in glory which no man can number who are there because they have been turned to God by His infinite grace in spite of their natural unbelief and hatred of God?

Oh, what glory will be God's when we praise Him throughout eternity for this amazing work of salvation!

But I must hurry on.

III. THE SHEPHERD AND THE FATHER (John 10:17, 18).

What a marvelous, incomprehensible picture we have here!

Do you need greater proof of the absolute sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ?

He did not have to die. He chose to die.

Men did not take His life from Him. He laid it down.

And He also had the power to raise Himself from the dead!

You and I cannot understand the cross of Christ unless we understand verses 17 and 18 of John 10! Meditate on these statements until the Spirit of God writes them forever upon your heart. No wonder that Paul wrote those words found in Gal. 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory . . ."

How was all of this received? Look with me finally at . . .

IV. THE SHEPHERD AND THE JEWS (John 10:19-21).

"There was a division . . . again among the Jews for these sayings."

Here is an illustration of what the Lord had said in vv. 3, 4, 5, 8, 16.

Perhaps you find it in your heart to reject "these sayings," or to argue about them. I hope not! I trust that you have heard and have received this message.

Concl: Why do you think that there are always those who do not accept the Gospel when you look at it from a purely human point of view?

Let me suggest four reasons:

- 1) Our Lord states it in v. 6: "They understood not."
If you understood it, you would not only believe it, but love it. But man does not like to look at things from God's point-of-view -- and even some of the Lord's people are like that.
Don't reject this passage on the basis of your own prejudice. This is the truth.
- 2) They would not like our Lord's exclusivism -- that He is the only "door" and the only "good shepherd."
- 3) They did not like what He had to say about His relationship with His Father. This made Him like His Father -- Deity.
- 4) They did not like what He had to say about His own death and resurrection.

What about you? Will you be like those mentioned in v. 21? Even more, having heard our Lord's words, may you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and be saved. Only through Him can you come to God. Only through Him can you have eternal life.

"REMEMBER . . . FORGET NOT"
Selected Passages from Deuteronomy

Intro: As Moses prepared to leave the children of Israel, he gave them three messages (some say, four) which are recorded for us in the book of Deuteronomy. Throughout these messages he told them that there were certain things they should remember; sometimes he stated it negatively: "forget not."

Spiritually this is a great advantage. It suggests that often our problem is not ignorance; IT IS A FAILURE TO REMEMBER.

We see this emphasis in the Lord's Supper.

We see it also in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Cf. John 14:26.

As both of the above are directly related to the Lord, the same is evident from Moses' comments in Deuteronomy. It is always the Lord in relation to certain things. Let us consider some of these this evening.

- I. THE LORD AND HIS WORD. Cf. Deut. 4:9; 8:11.
- II. THE LORD AND HIS WORK. Cf. Deut. 5:15
6:12
7:18
15:15
- III. THE LORD AND HIS WAYS. Cf. Deut. 8:14, then v. 2.
- IV. THE LORD AND HIS WRATH. This is followed by His mercy. Cf. Deut. 9:7, 8.

We actually need to read on into chapter 10 to see how the Lord answered Moses' prayer by giving Israel the Law a second time.

- V. THE LORD AND THE WORLD. Cf. Deut. 8:18-20.

Concl: What would these produce in the lives of the Lord's people?

- 1) Obedience.
- 2) Faith.
- 3) Humility.
- 4) Praise.
- 5) The Fear of the Lord.

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST'S WORKS

John 10:22-42

Intro: One thing that is apparent in the Gospel of John is that it contains a great deal of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Who has not rejoiced in the wonderful truth that is found in this Gospel?

BUT IT IS ALSO APPARENT THAT not everyone accepted His teaching.

In fact, in our text this morning we are told in v. 31 that there were some who were very unhappy with Him -- so much so that "the Jews took up stones again to stone him."

Not everyone who hears these truths today is happy about it. Not everybody at Central Bible Church enjoys these truths. As far as I know the opposition has not gone as far today as it did against the Lord, but you can be sure that you are going to hear from some people if you begin to talk about election, about the sovereignty of God, about the fact that salvation is a work of God from start to finish! People are going to object to it.

I am not ignorant of what is going on -- that there is a very vocal minority who are seeking to discredit this teaching and to make as many of you as they can feel that I am not teaching the truth.

I want to make one thing absolutely clear this morning: I AM NOT GOING TO BACK DOWN ON ANYTHING WHICH I BELIEVE TO BE THE TEACHING OF THE WORD OF GOD. I am responsible to God, not to you. Some day I am going to stand in the presence of God and give account for my ministry -- and I know that! If I am wrong, I will answer to Him. And I can assure you that there is nothing I am more concerned about in my ministry than that it be in total accord with the Word of God.

There is another thing that I want to make clear this morning -- it is this: MY OBJECT IN TEACHING IS TO LEAD EACH OF YOU INTO A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE TRUTH. I want that for myself; I want it for you.

Because of this I have carefully avoided using certain terms that would be offensive -- unnecessarily offensive. I am not promoting any system. That is the reason I have not spoken about Calvinism as such. I have not tried to divide us into Five-pointers, or Four-pointers, or One-pointers. Nor have I even sought to split us up into Calvinists and Arminians. I have hardly referred to election by name. Nor have I used the term, limited atonement. I don't particularly like that term.

And yet what has happened around Central Bible?

These terms are being circulated, often without any explanation, for the purpose of discrediting the teaching that you are receiving from me -- and a lot of discord is being sown which is very, very displeasing to God.

There are many things that John Calvin taught which I believe need to be taught today -- not because John Calvin taught them, but because they are the teaching of Scripture. But there are many things about Calvinism as such that I do not accept.

But, in an attempt to clear the air this morning, I want to appeal to you this morning concerning several points:

- 1) Pray that your heart will be open to all that is in the Word of God. Test what you hear by Scripture. If you see it there, believe it and rejoice in it. If my teaching, or anybody else's teaching is contrary to Scripture, reject it.
- 2) Do not reject any truth just because you have not heard it before, or because it might have some unfortunate associations for you. Again -- test it by Scripture. Nobody knows all of the Bible. Maybe the doctrine of election is something that you have missed.
- 3) Do not reject any truth because you cannot explain it, or because you do not understand it. There are many things in the Bible that I do not understand the way I would like to -- and I may never understand them until I get to heaven. *We are not all going to agree on everything.* For example, I do not fully understand how the Lord could emphasize election to these Jews, and yet hold them 100% responsible, **BUT HE DOES!** *Or why He goes on to exhort them to believe.*
- 4) Beware of anyone who comes to you to make you suspicious of your Pastor, or of the Church's ministry, or to divide us in our relationship with each other. God is going to deal with any and all who are sowers of discord. Prov. 6:19 makes that clear! I am here to teach the Word. If I am wrong I want to know it. We are not going to agree on every point, but my door is open. Come to me and let's talk about it. But don't come just to tell me that I am wrong. Come with your Bible and let's examine the Scriptures to see what the truth is. But let me sound a warning to anyone who is seeking to disrupt the ministry of Central Bible. Such a person has the Lord to deal with.

Remember:
 1) *Share the*
evangelistic
 2) *Share the*
missionary

One objection that has been raised to my teaching is that the doctrine of election should not be mentioned before people who do not know the Lord. Let me answer that objection this morning by showing you from this passage that the Lord did more than to mention it; HE TOLD SOME OF HIS HEARERS THAT THEY WERE NOT ELECT! See v. 26.

I can't go that far, nor can you, because we do not know the

hearts of men -- BUT THE LORD DID, AND HE TOLD THEM WHY THEY WERE NOT BELIEVING.

And yet, at the same time, look at the many ways in which He indicates that they were responsible for the way they reacted to the Gospel message. We have:

- 1) Christ's words (v. 25a).
- 2) Christ's works (vv. 25b, 32, 37, 38) -- a special emphasis is here in this passage.
- 3) The Old Testament (vv. 34-36).
- 4) Christ's appeal for them to believe (vv. 37, 38).
- 5) Christ's ministry -- greater than that of John the Baptist: "John did no miracle" (v. 41a).
- 6) John's words (v. 41b).

And what was the result of this teaching: "And many believed on him there." (See v. 42).

So we not only have the Lord speaking about election to the unsaved, but we have many coming to Christ in faith as a result of His teaching.

But let us look in greater detail at the text.

The first thing we have is:

I. CHRIST'S TEACHING REGARDING SALVATION (John 10:22-31).

This was on a special day -- "the feast of dedication,"
 in a special place -- "at Jerusalem . . . in the
 temple,"
 in answer to a special request.

The Lord told them that He had already told them, and that His works could not be explained in any other way. In v. 25 we see our Lord's emphasis on human responsibility. Otherwise, why would He teach, and why would He have performed His miracles.

But then notice God's sovereignty in v. 26.

Note what the Lord does NOT say by reversing the first two phrases of the verse.

Our Lord has already shown that the sheep are His chosen ones. And so the Lord seems to indicate that the big question is not whether or not He is the Messiah, but who are the sheep?

And so first we have:

A. Two things the sheep do (v. 27). These show that they

1. "My sheep hear my voice." The human side.
2. "And they follow me."

Note the place that Christ has in both of these statements.

- B. Two things that the Shepherd does (vv. 27m, 28a).
 1. "I know them."
 2. "I give unto them eternal life." The divine side.
- C. Three things the Shepherd promises (vv. 28b-30).
 1. "They shall never perish."
 2. "Neither shall any man (lit. any one) pluck them out of my hand."
 3. "No man (again, no one) is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

This is our security, our assurance -- that the Lord who gives life to us, keeps us.

The reaction of the Jews in v. 31 is proof of what the Lord had said.

And so, not backing down, the Lord asks them about the most apparent witness of His Messiahship.

In vv. 32-39 we have:

II. CHRIST'S ANSWER TO THEIR CHARGE (John 10:32-39).

He does not originate some statement on His own (which He would have had a perfect right to do), but He cites from THEIR Law (which they supposedly accepted) His answer: See Psalm 82:6.

Going from the lesser to the greater, if this could be said about redeemed men, why should it be surprising that it would be said about "him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world . . . ?"

What a lesson on the authority of the Word -- and yet they did not accept it even though they supposedly believed it!

And so, what happened? Without any favorable response, the Lord departed. But is that the end of the story? NO! Look at the last three verses:

III. CHRIST'S MINISTRY BEYOND JORDAN (John 10:40-42).

Three things of importance are here:

- 1) This brought to people's minds the ministry of John the Baptist -- and the tremendous success he had had.
- 2) But a moment's comparison between John and our Lord made people realize that, with all of John's teaching and preaching, he had not performed a single miracle. The Lord, on the other hand, had done "many good works" (v. 32a).
- 3) They realized, too, that "all things that John spake of this man were true." This added weight to all of the evidence already mentioned in the chapter.

What happened?

"And many believed on him there."

Why did they believe? For two reasons:

- 1) Because they were sheep.
- 2) Because they were convinced by the evidence that had been presented to them through the ministries of our Lord and of John the Baptist.

Concl: Does the doctrine of election render the preaching of the Gospel unnecessary? Does it mean that we do not plead with people to receive Christ?

No -- to both questions!

Preaching is a vital part of God's redemptive plan. Election does this: IT GUARANTEES THAT THERE IS GOING TO BE A RESPONSE -- just as you have it here.

The opposite is true: If God had not chosen people for salvation, NO ONE WOULD EVER BE SAVED!

Do you believe? If not, will you believe? Let me close with our Lord's words to the Jews in John 10:37, 38.

THE LORD WHO WAS NOT THERE
John 11:1-44

Intro: Miracle #7 -- in some ways, the greatest of all,
because He not only restored life to a dead body, but
to one that had started to decay!

The point that John seems to want to emphasize in this chapter
with regard to our Lord is the fact that He was not there --
and also, that when He heard about Lazarus' illness, He did not
come right away! See John 11:6, 15, 21, 32.

Everyone who has known the Lord for any time at all has exper-
ienced what some have called, the mystery of God's silence.

The people of God are often discouraged by this.

Those who are not the people of God are often deceived by this
-- and they continue on with a brazen openness in their sin!

Some examples in Scripture: Abraham's 25 years of waiting;
see Gen. 15:1, 2.

Joseph's 13 years of waiting.
Isa. 40:27,

"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way
is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from
my God?"

Isa. 49:14,

"But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord
hath forgotten me."

Both David and our Lord;
see Psa. 22:1.

Wicked men, with respect to the
coming of the Lord, see
2 Pet. 3:3, 4,

"Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days
scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where
is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell
asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning
of creation."

And there are many others which could be mentioned.

The question we are concerned with this morning is this: WHY
DOES THE LORD DEAL WITH HIS PEOPLE THIS WAY? Or, thinking of
the unregenerate, or even sinning believer's, WHY DOES THE LORD
USUALLY DELAY HIS JUDGMENT?

We can understand in Lazarus' case during the earthly ministry
of our Lord, why the Lord would not be there, BUT WHAT IS HARD
TO UNDERSTAND IS, WHY DID HE NOT COME RIGHT AWAY WHEN HE HEARD
THAT LAZARUS WAS SICK? WHY DID HE WAIT FOR HIM TO DIE? AND WHY
DID HE EVEN WAIT FURTHER UNTIL HIS BODY HAD STARTED TO DECAY?

And another part of that WHY is this: WHY DID HE WAIT IF HE REALLY LOVED LAZARUS? See the emphasis on our Lord's love for Lazarus in John 11:3, 5, 35, 36.

What help does John give us in answering these questions?

Not all of the answers are here, but there are enough to help us tremendously during those times in our lives when the Lord seems to be busy with other things, or
to be far away, or
to be totally unconcerned about what is happening to us!

Here are John's answers in John 11!

I. ANSWER #1: SO THAT WE WILL PRAY (John 11:3).

Both Mary and Martha "sent unto him." That is what we are doing when we pray.

Their prayer was not a long prayer. In fact, it was very simple. They believed so confidently in the fact that the Lord would help them that all they said in their prayer to the Lord was,
"Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick."

What a tragedy it is that many of us never learn to pray until there is a crisis which is too big for us! But that is the way we are -- so cursed with the false feeling of our own sufficiency!

This is one reason for God's delays and God's silence.

II. ANSWER #2: FOR THE GLORY OF GOD (John 11:4).

The greater the problem, and the worse it becomes, the greater the glory for God and for the Lord Jesus Christ when they do come to our aid!

We do everything we can to keep a problem from becoming worse, and certainly from becoming impossible, but the Lord deliberately lets it become impossible so that we will be able to see that He is a God who not only can do the impossible, but that He delights to do it -- for His own glory!

Cf. Eph. 3:20, 21.

III. ANSWER #3: THAT WE MAY SEE THAT THE LORD IS ABSOLUTELY SOVEREIGN OVER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES IN HIS DEALINGS WITH US (John 11:9, 10).

These rather strange verses contain some wonderful teaching.

Do you see all of the problems the Lord was facing?

- not only was Lazarus ill with what turned out to be a fatal disease,
- but he was in a place of extreme danger for the Lord. Bethany was only 2 miles (or less) from Jerusalem where in chapter 10 the Jews wanted to kill the Lord.

What did the Lord mean by his words in verses 9, 10?

- 1) Let us notice the obvious meaning first.
- 2) Then go back to our Lord's statement in John 9:4, 5.
- 3) In the application to the situation which the Lord faced we need to ask,
 - Who makes the day?
 - Who sets the limits of the day?

Thus, the obvious meaning is that the God who made the day would extend the day as long as necessary for the fulfillment of His own purposes. Our Lord had declared that "This sickness is not unto death," and the Father was in absolute control to see that these words would be fulfilled.

All of the hatred and power of the Jewish leaders could not stand in the way of the fulfillment of God's purposes.

Neither can any man stand in the Lord's way today!

IV. ANSWER #4: FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF OUR FAITH (John 11:15).

Note that the Lord did not begin this way. Compare the difference with the first miracle of John's Gospel where the Lord responded immediately to the need!

But more and more the Lord brings us to the place where we believe His Word even when we get no encouragement from our circumstances.

However, note His gracious "nevertheless." He tests our faith, and we might feel that He strains it, but He never goes beyond the limit that we can bear. Cf. 1 Cor. 10:13.

Illus: One time when I was in Dallas, Texas on a visit I noticed on a sign out in front of a church,
 "If thou faint in the day of adversity,
 thy strength is small" (Prov. 24:10).

And that is right! It is never because the Lord lets the battle get too great.

V. ANSWER #5: SO THAT WE WILL LEARN TO WORSHIP THE LORD (John 11:32).

Have you noticed that both Martha and Mary said identically the same thing to the Lord -- in vv. 21, 32? They must have said this to each other before the Lord came. BUT THERE IS

ONE MAJOR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO VERSES. IT IS THIS: Mary said what she said only after she had fallen at the feet of the Lord Jesus.

It was Dr. Mitchell who taught me from the Gospel of John when I was in his class at Dallas Seminary that every time you read of Mary of Bethany in the Gospels when she is with the Lord, she is always at His feet!

She was just as confused as Martha was, but she was in the place where she could learn.

Possibly our trials would not last as long if we got down at His feet faster than we do!

But there are three more that I want to mention -- and they all have to do with Christ:

VI. ANSWER #6: THAT WE MAY SEE THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST (John 11:35, 36).

What unfathomable mysteries surround verse 35! Who can expound that?

But is it not interesting that it was the unbelieving Jews who attempted an exposition of what the Lord did? They said, "Behold, how He loved him!"

Go back to verse 5. Get that truth in your heart as you read through this chapter. It is all based on that.

Then turn to John 13:1b,
" . . . having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end."

Write this over your trials. " . . . whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). Write this over your sorrows. Write this over your disappointments. Write this over those impossible situations in your life.

You may know about the compassion of Christ before you are tried, but nothing will make you really understand it like seeing it when the winds of testing are blowing their worst!

VII. ANSWER #7: THAT WE MAY KNOW THE INTERCESSION OF CHRIST (John 11:41, 42).

Do you suppose at this moment someone said, "Quiet everybody because the Lord is praying"? Or, do you suppose that someone even suggested that they might take off their sandals because the Lord had made that ground before Lazarus' tomb holy ground?

How wonderful it is to be able to pray for each other! There is nothing more wonderful that people can say to you than, "I want you to know that I am praying for you." BUT THINK WHAT IT MEANS THAT THE LORD IS PRAYING FOR US! In fact, "he ever liveth to make intercession for" us! (See Heb. 7:25b.)

Cf. also John 17:20. Also read Romans 8, and the book of Hebrews. And go back to the words of our Lord to Peter in Luke 22:31, 32.

VIII. ANSWER #8: IN THIS PARTICULAR CASE -- THAT WE MIGHT HAVE A CLEARER UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

My whole message could be devoted to this, but let me briefly mention the important points:

- A. We see in the dead Lazarus a picture of the spiritual state of every sinner -- dead, "dead in trespasses and sins." Cf. John 11:14.

Lazarus could not help himself. Mary and Martha could not help him. His case was hopeless apart from the Lord.

- B. The promise of the Lord -- His own unchanging Word (John 11:25, 26).

- C. The personal call -- which was an effectual call (John 11:43, 44). Cf. John 10:3b.

Do not ask me how a dead man can hear, but he did! When Christ calls, men always hear -- and they come out of spiritual death into spiritual life.

Christ called Lazarus personally, and Lazarus alone came forth.

The call is made through the Word of God.

- D. The nature of salvation -- a resurrection (John 11:44).

This is why it can never be a human work; it has to be a work of God. Cf. John 11:25, 26. Have you believed?

Concl: What does this all add up to? It means that the Lord does not forget us. He does not forsake us. When He delays the answer to our prayers, it is always with a purpose -- even many purposes! He may seem to hide Himself for a time, but He knows all that is going on. He is in control of everything. And in His own time He will make Himself known as our Lord and as our Deliverer.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LAZARUS

John 11:20-44

Intro: When I use the title, The Gospel According to Lazarus, I do not mean to imply that Lazarus wrote a book like the Gospel of John -- because, as far as I know, he did not.

Neither do I mean that Lazarus became a preacher of the Gospel. He may have given witness to what Christ did for him, but he was not one of the evangelists of the early Church.

Nor do I mean that The Gospel According to Lazarus was a different Gospel from the Gospel we have in the Gospel of John. It is the same Gospel. If it were different, it would be false.

BUT WHAT I DO MEAN IS . . . that the Lord has given us the Gospel in the circumstances of Lazarus' life which are given to us here in John 11.

Lazarus is not actually responsible for it because throughout most of the chapter he is either sick or dead.

In fact, there is not recorded in the chapter even one word which Lazarus spoke.

It all has to do with what happened to him,
 what the Lord did for him,
 and how all of this gives us a picture
 of the Gospel.

We must keep in mind that, when we are dealing with historical circumstances like this, or with types, or even with parables, not every detail may apply -- BUT AS FAR AS THE OVER-ALL PICTURE IS CONCERNED there is no doubt but that we have the Gospel clearly presented in this particular circumstance of Lazarus' life.

Now let us look at the details which picture for us the Gospel.

I. LAZARUS WAS DEAD (John 11:14).

The hopelessness of this condition is very apparent. While Lazarus was still alive, Mary and Martha wanted the Lord to come. Their feelings are expressed by some of the Jews in v. 37. But after Lazarus died, everybody felt that it was too late. Martha, in v. 39, even protested at the grave of her brother when the Lord said, "Take ye away the stone."

If we understood what it means that men, all men, are spiritually dead, we, too, would see how hopeless salvation is from the human point-of-view. And that is exactly what we are supposed to understand. Lazarus could not help himself. His sisters could not help him. No one really believ-

ed that even the Lord could do anything. Lazarus could not hear them. He could not see them. He could not talk. He could not respond. IF HIS DEATH TEACHES US ANYTHING WITH RESPECT TO THE GOSPEL IF TEACHES US THAT LAZARUS WAS TOTALLY UNABLE TO HELP HIMSELF.

Spiritually this is a picture of every person born into this world (with the exception of our Lord).

Cf. Gen. 2:16, 17;
Rom. 5:12 and 1 Cor. 15:22;
Rom. 6:23;
Eph. 2:1 and Col. 2:13a.

If we believed these verses, we would see what a hopeless condition man is in, a hopeless^{ness} which is only made more hopeless by the statement that Lazarus had been dead 4 days!

This is where we must start in considering the Gospel of Christ -- man's utterly hopeless condition in his sin.

II. THE ONLY HOPE FOR LAZARUS WAS TO BE FOUND IN THE WORDS OF CHRIST (John 11:25, 26).

Lazarus' condition was so desperate that nothing short of a special work by the Son of God could bring him back to life!

But the Lord claimed to be able to do just that -- even though Lazarus had been dead for 4 days!

Read those two verses carefully. Let your mind dwell on what the Lord says about Himself, and then you will have no trouble with what He says He can do.

The Bible is full of promises that have to do with salvation, but not one of them places the responsibility for the work on man; all of them point to the Lord as the only Saviour -- not just a Saviour.

III. LIFE CAME TO LAZARUS THROUGH THE CALL OF CHRIST (John 11:43).

There are many questions that are left unanswered here, but we must confine ourselves to what is revealed.

Two things can be said about this call:

- 1) It was a personal call: "Lazarus, come forth."
- 2) It was an effective call: "And he that was dead came forth . . ." (v. 44a).

This is what happens every time anyone is truly saved. He is called by Christ -- and he comes!

Note the heavy emphasis that both Paul and Peter place on this:

- 1) Paul in Gal. 1:6, 15, 16;
 2 Tim. 1:9;
 2 Thess. 2:13, 14;
 1 Thess. 2:12;
 1 Cor. 1:9.
 See also Rom. 9:23, 24 and Eph. 4:4.
- 2) Peter in 1 Pet. 2:9 and 5:10.

The Lord did not raise everyone -- in this case, just Lazarus! And this shows His sovereign will in salvation. He is not forced to call anyone, but He calls whom He will, when and where He chooses to call them.

And there is no doubt in a person's mind when he is being called by the Lord through His Word!

This is why we preach the Gospel, and this is why we teach the Word. Cf. Isa. 55:10, 11, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow . . . : So shall my word be that goeth . . ."

We are guaranteed success when the Word of God is proclaimed!

And may I arouse your curiosity a little from our text? Will you notice that there are some things here that remain a mystery here -- how the Lord made Lazarus hear the call, and that there had to be the impartation of life before Lazarus could obey?

But let me come to my final point this morning:

IV. WHAT CAN WE SAY ABOUT LAZARUS AFTER HE CAME OUT OF THE GRAVE -- THINGS WHICH WOULD HELP US IN UNDERSTANDING SALVATION?

- A. He was changed -- changed drastically (John 11:44).

He had been dead; now he was alive. His body had even started to decay, but there was nothing wrong with it now.

Cf. this teaching in 2 Cor. 5:17.

See also Rom. 6:4, ". . . that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

- B. He was changed permanently -- as seen in v. 26 -- "shall never die."

I know that Lazarus died again, but you do not read of

it in the Bible. Why? One reason is this: So that nothing will mar the picture that we have here of salvation.

See also John 10:27-30.

Another thing that we can see in John 11 is that:

C. Lazarus was free: "Loose him, and let him go" (v. 44).

Do you remember one of the verses we had back in John 8 -- verse 36. It reads like this:

"If the Son therefore shall make you free,
ye shall be free indeed."

The loosing of Lazarus' graveclothes is a picture of our deliverance from death,
from sin,
and eventually from the grave -- THROUGH THE POWER OF CHRIST IN THE GOSPEL! Cf. Gal. 5:13.

What a glorious liberty this is! Cf. Heb. 2:14, 15.

Finally . . .

D. All of this was done for the glory of God (vv. 4, 40).

It was not primarily to make Mary and Martha happy -- although it did that!

Nor was it just to meet Lazarus' need -- although it did that, too!

It was first and foremost FOR THE GLORY OF GOD!

Oh, how this note needs to be sounded out in our preaching and teaching today. Many never look beyond the human side of the picture. But it is the divine side that is really important. And we will never see why the Lord has chosen to act in salvation as He has until we see this.

Concl: As I close let me take you back to the great truths of vv. 25, 26 -- and ask you to notice the word, believe. (Read them.)

See also vv. 15, 40, 42, 45, 48.

You have seen the picture of salvation in the story of Lazarus -- THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LAZARUS. Do you believe it? Do you believe that spiritually you are just as hopelessly dead as Lazarus was physically -- but that there is hope in Christ? Let me urge you to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is only in Him.

THE PROPHECY OF A PRIEST
or
THE RESULTS OF OUR LORD'S GREATEST MIRACLE
John 11:45-57

Intro: The 13 verses which come at the end of chapter 11 clearly indicate the immediate results which followed the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

They are different from what we would expect.

It is hard for us to imagine anything less than that all of the people who saw the miracle would turn to the Lord and believe on Him -- but they did not! Instead, there was a division -- a sharp division -- a division which ultimately was going to result in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

We will see more about this in a moment.

We can also say that there are some things missing here which we might expect to see -- if it were not for the fact that God's ways and thoughts are different from ours. Bishop Ryle points out two things in particular:

- 1) John is strangely silent about Lazarus. We are not told what he said, if anything, about the time that he was dead. Nor are we told anything about what eventually happened to him. We love the sensational things, but the Lord closes the door on all of that.

Cf. what He did with Paul in 2 Cor. 12:4 -- "How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

- 2) John is strangely silent about Mary and Martha -- their reaction to the resurrection of their brother!

Why?

Bishop Ryle makes this suggestion:

"The veil is drawn over their joy, though it was not over their sorrow. Affliction is a more profitable study than rejoicing" (Vol. II, p. 119).

What can we say about what John does record for us in these verses?

- 1) It seems that the prophecy of Caiaphas has his main emphasis. This is in vv. 49-52.
- 2) In vv. 45-48 we see what led up to that prophecy.
- 3) In vv. 53-57 we see what followed that prophecy.

I. THE EVENTS WHICH LED UP TO CAIAPHAS' PROPHECY (John 11: 45-48).

There are two that we need to notice:

- 1) The twofold effect of Lazarus' resurrection on the people - in vv. 45, 46.

- 2) The deliberation of the Sanhedrin (vv. 47, 48).
- A. The twofold effect of Lazarus' resurrection on the people (vv. 45, 46).
 1. "Many . . . believed on him," i.e., the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 45) -- but not all believed.
 2. "But some went their ways to the Pharisees . . ." (v. 46).

This second group was definitely out to cause trouble for the Lord -- which they did!

Observations:

- 1) You usually find this division concerning the Lord.
- 2) John makes an emphasis here which is well-worth our attention. It is in the words, "had seen," in v. 45.

It is the Greek verb θεάομαι, and one Greek scholar interprets it as indicating

"careful and deliberate vision which seeks to interpret its object. It refers, indeed, to physical sight; yet, it always includes a plus, the plus of calm scrutiny, contemplation, or even wonderment. It describes the act of one who does not stare absent-mindedly nor merely look quickly nor necessarily perceive comprehensively. On the contrary, this individual regards an object and reflects upon it. He scans it, examining it with care. He studies it, viewing and considering it thoughtfully (1:32; 4:35; 11:45; Acts 1:11)" (Hendriksen, William, The Gospel of John, p. 85).

The verb is used also in John 1:14.

Application: Let me encourage those of you who do not know the Lord to do the same thing which led "many of the Jews" to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are too many people who give only a passing thought to Christ. They hear the Word, or they hear a story such as the resurrection of Lazarus, but then they never give it another thought. Some of you will spend more time today with the Sunday paper or watching television than you will reading the Bible and thinking about what you are reading.

But let us go on to the next effect which John mentions:

- B. The deliberation of the Sanhedrin (vv. 47, 48).

Will you notice three very serious mistakes that they made?

1. They completely set aside the obvious evidence of what the Lord had done: "This man doeth many miracles."

They did not try to deny them; and, therefore, it is ridiculous for us to try to say they did not take place.

What an evidence of spiritual blindness! And this is where 2 Cor. 4:3, 4 helps us to understand the situation.

2. They had the idea that the outcome of these events was determined by them -- but not by God.

Note "we" in vv. 47, 48.

They did not believe in the sovereignty of God; **THEY BELIEVED IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF MAN.** Their whole idea was that THEY had better do something!

Cf. Psa. 2:1 ff.

3. They figured that they knew what was going to happen IF they did not do something (v. 48).

They were engaging in a little prophesying themselves!

They were like Caiaphas (and like men generally are) -- they are not concerned with what is right, especially right in the sight of God, right according to the Word of God, but merely what seems to be "expedient" at the moment!

It is apparent that all of the God-given courage was gone out of Judaism -- the courage that made the people of God stand up against overwhelming odds in the past.

Matthew Henry says, "When men lose their piety, they lose their courage" (V, 1062).

AND IS IT NOT INTERESTING THAT THE VERY THING WHICH THE JEWS FEARED CAME ON THEM IN 70 A.D. AS A RESULT OF WHAT THEY DID TO AVOID IT?

A very important lesson is here, and it is well-stated by John Calvin -- and in it you see the spirit of the reformers. Listen to his words:

"But the only godly and holy way to consider it

is this. We should first inquire what is pleasing to God. Then we should follow boldly whatever He commands, and not be discouraged by any fear, though we are beset by a thousand deaths. Our actions must not be directed by any gust of wind, but constantly by the Word of God alone. He who boldly despises dangers, or at least, rises above the fear of them and simply obeys God, will be successful in the end. For against all expectation, God blesses the constancy which is founded on obedience to His Word. Unbelievers, on the contrary, are so far from benefiting from their caution, that the more timid they are, the more snares do they get entangled in" (Vol. 5, p. 20).

It would be difficult to find a more important lesson for the child of God to learn when he is faced with the decisions that must be made every day!

But let us go on to look at . . .

II. CAIAPHAS' PROPHECY -- THE OUTCOME OF THE DELIBERATIONS (John 11:49-52).

What an example of the sovereign, overruling hand of Almighty God!

What an example, too, of man doing what he wants to do, and yet having that very thing fit in perfectly with the eternal plan and purpose of God Himself!

This illustrates Rom. 8:28!

A. The meaning and purpose of Caiaphas' prophecy (vv. 49, 50).

In his arrogance, his setting aside of that which was right, his cold-blooded call for the murder of our Lord, this hypocrite of hypocrites said that there was only one thing to do. Kill Jesus so that the whole nation would survive!

The words strike a significant note in our ears, but, in order that we will not miss the meaning of what he is saying, Caiaphas' prophecy is followed by . . .

B. The commentary of John, the Apostle (vv. 51, 52).

Caiaphas came out with his diabolical plan, but the full meaning of what he said was so far beyond anything

that Caiaphas could have known or would have said that John tells us, "And this spake he not of himself," i.e., not FROM himself.

Caiaphas was used by God to state the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not only as it related to Israel, but as it related to "the children of God," or, the sheep (ch. 10), or the elect, throughout the Gentile world for all time to come!

Caiaphas' diabolical purpose would succeed, but, in doing so, God's purposes for salvation would also be accomplished!

If anything can make us worship and trust God through all of the opposition that men put in our way, this should!

But, in conclusion, let us notice . . .

III. THE EVENTS WHICH FOLLOWED CAIAPHAS' PROPHECY (John 11:53-57).

- A. Humanly speaking, the death of Jesus Christ became the #1 objective of official Israel (v. 53).
- B. Again we have evidence of God's sovereignty -- in the seclusion of the Lord Jesus (v. 54).

We do not know where "Ephraim" was, but the point is that the Lord's time was not yet come.

How significant are the words, "and there continued with his disciples." Away from the multitudes in Jerusalem, the Lord ministered to His disciples.

But the last three verses deserve our special attention:

- C. The observance of the Passover (vv. 55-57).

This is another tragic mistake made by the Jews and their leaders -- thinking that by the ceremony of the Passover they might "purify themselves."

And, most amazing of all, if the prophecy of Caiaphas had a deeper, a God-given meaning, what about the Passover? The importance of the Passover was that it pointed to Christ. It was meaningless apart from Him! It taught, not self-purification, but divine salvation -- the most wonderful and complete picture of the death of Christ in all of the Old Testament!

The Jews had never brought Christ and the Passover together. Instead, as they observed it, they plotted

the death of the Son of God.

Concl: After completing John 11, do you have any question in your mind as to:

- 1) The blindness, the ignorance, the evil, that is to be found in the hearts of men -- even of religious men?
- 2) The sovereignty, the majesty, the glory, of God and of Christ?

Have you ever taken the time to see Jesus Christ as the people did who then "believed on him"?

Could He possibly have been anyone but the Son of God Who had also become a man?

Have you "believed on him"? If not, will you believe -- NOW?

For those of us who know the Lord -- how encouraging this story should be -- with everything apparently going the way ungodly men want them to go, and yet to see the sovereign hand of God overruling even in the very words that our Lord's enemies speak so we can see that God was in absolute control, working out the eternal counsel of His will for the salvation of men.

Let us worship Him. And let us continue to trust Him regardless of how severe the trials and opposition might be. He is in control, and He will not fail us!

WORSHIP
John 12:1-11

Intro: The end of chapter 12 marks a major transition in the Gospel of John. This is the last chapter in which John records our Lord's words to the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem. With the exception of a few words spoken to the Sanhedrin, to the high priest, and to Pilate in John 18, the words record in chapters 13 through 21 were spoken to the Apostles and to others who believed on Him.

Matthew Henry (V, 1066) points out that John, in chapter 12, gives

"us an account of the honour done to the Redeemer, notwithstanding all that reproach thrown upon him."

He indicates 7 ways in which the Lord is honored in this chapter:

- 1) By Mary's worship (vv. 1-11).
- 2) By the actions of the people when He entered Jerusalem (vv. 12-19).
- 3) By the Greeks who wanted to see Him (vv. 20-26).
- 4) By God the Father, when He spoke to His Son from heaven (vv. 27-36).
- 5) By John's quotations from the prophet Isaiah with reference to our Lord's ministry (vv. 37-41).
- 6) By the fact that many of the chief rulers believed on Him (vv. 42, 43).
- 7) By the claims He made for Himself and for His ministry (vv. 44-50).

This morning we are concerned with the first of these: Mary's worship!

Similar accounts are given in Matthew 26:1-13 and in Mark 14:1-9.

There are several explanations given for the differences that are found in these:

- 1) That our Lord was anointed twice during the week -- once at Lazarus' home; the second time at the home of Simon, the leper.
- 2) That these are accounts of the same anointing -- but with Matthew and Mark concentrating on different facts from those mentioned by John.

I prefer the latter. But we do not need to give our attention to these things this morning. The important thing in verses 1-11 is what Mary did.

Are you aware of the fact that there are three incidents in the life of Mary recorded in Scripture, and that in all of these she is seen at the Lord's feet? Each time she is there for a different purpose:

- 1) Luke 10:38-42 -- She was at the Lord's feet to hear His Word.
- 2) John 11:32 -- She was there for comfort.
- 3) In our text this morning, John 12:3 -- She is worshipping.

What an example for us!

At the Lord's feet she pictures for us both humility and faith.

But notice also the differences between Martha and Lazarus and Mary:

- 1) Martha is doing what she did in Luke 10, but the strain, the care, is all gone -- evidence of her own growth in the Lord.
- 2) Lazarus, sitting at the table with the Lord, is an illustration of Eph. 2:4-6,

"But God, who is rich in mercy,
for his great love wherewith he loved us,
Even when we were dead in sins,
hath quickened us together with Christ,
(by grace ye are saved;)
And hath raised us up together,
and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ
Jesus."
- 3) Mary, at her usual place -- this time to worship!

What are some of the things we are to learn from this story?

To bring out the lessons, let me ask and answer 6 simple questions:

- 1) Who? That is, Who was she?
- 2) When? That is, When did she worship the Lord?
- 3) Where? What were the circumstances?
- 4) How?
- 5) Why?
- 6) With what results?

I. WHO?

First of all, would you note that it was Mary, a woman? In these days when we hear so much about the liberation of women, would it not be wonderful if there were more women, more Christian women, like Mary?

And should this not bring shame to those of us who are men?

Why is it that we have so few illustrations of this that Mary did in Scripture? Why is it such a rare thing to find the Lord's people at the Lord's feet?

Spurgeon does say, "Mary among women is the counterpart of John among men" (Vol. 55, p. 591).

But perhaps the most important thing for us to notice about

Mary if we would follow her example is that this was a habit with her -- to be at the Lord's feet! (Refer to the two other instances recorded in Luke and John, showing the order and relating them to this one.)

II. WHEN? - Note the relationship to the Passover!

A text is always enriched when we look at the context.

This ought to be an encouragement to all who are going through times of testing.

Think of what Mary had been through in her relationship with the Lord:

- 1) Her disappointment with the Lord when she had sent for Him and He had not come; when He had stayed away even though He could have prevented Lazarus' death. This is an example of our unanswered prayers.
- 2) Her grief when Lazarus died.

But it was through her disappointment that the Lord was to teach her the most wonderful lesson of her life -- and this is WHEN, afterwards, that we see her coming to anoint the feet of her beloved Saviour and Friend!

Will we take encouragement from Mary this morning? Whatever your trial may be, continue to trust the Lord, and one of these days soon you will be back at His feet, too.

III. WHERE? What were the circumstances?

We tend to think of worship as more of a personal and private matter, than of something public. But with Mary it was public.

And yet there was no desire on her part to be seen of men.

She probably knew that she would be criticized because of the extravagance of her gift to the Lord, but that made no difference to her.

This event probably took place in Simon's home -- not in her own -- but that made no difference to Mary.

What we need to notice is that the presence of people did not stop her, and that she was at the Lord's feet, drying His feet with that which spoke of her glory. See 1 Cor. 11:15.

It was Mary's glory to be at the Lord's feet in this picture of submission, of loving adoration -- which go together to make up WORSHIP.

But let us ask our fourth question:

IV. HOW? How did she worship the Lord?

We have already noted that she was at His feet.

Will you also notice that it was NOT with words, but by what she did!

But the main thing that John emphasizes is mentioned in v. 3! Perhaps you are a little in agreement with the sentiment expressed by Judas and the other disciples (as indicated by Matthew and Mark). We might be able to understand Mary better if she had used only a part, but for her to use such an abundance -- was it a waste?

Why did she have this in the first place?

Obviously, it represented money, wealth -- a whole year's wages!! Judas was interested in it for its monetary value because he was a thief!

Here is a warning for us! What value do we place on money?

BUT -- can we overlook the obvious reason why a woman would have perfume? Even a godly woman like Mary would have it. But note that this was a real step ahead for her -- possibly an illustration of Psa. 90:17,

"And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us;
and establish thou the work of our hands upon us;
yea, the work of our hands establish thou it."

Mary achieved a spiritual beauty here that she could never have had if she had used all of the ointment on herself.

Perhaps Peter was thinking about this when he wrote to women in chapter 3 of his first Epistle -- vv. 3, 4,

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning
of plaiting the hair,
and of wearing of gold,
or of putting on of apparel;
But let it be the hidden man of the heart,
in that which is not corruptible,
even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,
which is in the sight of God of great price."

The important thing is not that we be beautiful before men, but that we be beautiful in the sight of God. And we obtain that beauty, at least in part, when we give our dearest treasures to the Lord in worship -- all that we are and have!

V. WHY? Why did she do it?

There are two obvious answers:

- 1) Because she loved Him so much.
- 2) In appreciation for all that He had done for her and her family, especially in raising Lazarus from the dead!

How often we forget to praise and to worship when the Lord pours out His blessing!

Finally . . .

VI. WITH WHAT RESULTS?

Were they all good? NO! Let me mention four:

- A. Opposition -- from Judas especially, but also from some of the other disciples.

See John 12:4-6.

There are always the critics around. There is no evidence that Mary paid any attention to Judas. She was doing this for the Lord not for Judas.

But remember that worship is one thing that even many believers do not understand and about which they have no experience!

- B. Approbation -- approval from the Lord.

See John 12:7, 8.

The Lord saw not only the outward act, but the devotion and the evidence of great understanding on Mary's part. At this point she probably understood more about the Deity of Christ and about His coming work on the Cross than any of the other disciples!

Are we concerned mainly about pleasing men,
or pleasing God?

- C. Satisfaction -- for Mary.

The text does not deal specifically with this, but we know that it is true. What difference does it make if no human being is pleased, as long as the Lord is pleased? There is no greater joy for the child of God than this.

And last, but not the least of the results . . .

- D. Permeation -- of the whole house.

See v. 3b.

Devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ is manifested without anyone saying anything about it -- "and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

And note: As Mary wiped our Lord's feet with her hair, the odor on Him was also upon her!

Two lessons from this:

1) 2 Cor. 2:14, 15a,

"Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ . . ."

2) Phil. 4:18,

"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."

Concl: Do you think that this is the kind of an impression people get when they come to worship with us -- the very fragrance of Christ, and of our love for Him, filling the place?

Is this true of you personally?

If it is not, it ought to be, and it can be! But it can only be produced by the Spirit of God as we, like Mary, sit at the Lord's feet, giving all to Him in loving adoration and worship.

(If time, sing #336 -- "My Jesus, I Love Thee.")

A PROPHECY FULFILLED

John 12:12-19

Intro: Our passage this morning gives the account of the event which is commonly called, The Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem.

Its importance is seen in the fact that it is recorded in all four of the Gospel records:

- 1) Matt. 21:1-16.
- 2) Mark 11:1-11.
- 3) Luke 19:28-48.
- 4) Our text in John.

We cannot help but be impressed with the difference we see here in our Lord's behavior. Previously He had sought to keep Himself from publicity; now He moves into Jerusalem at the time of the Passover when thousands of extra people were in the city, and He publicly does something which could not but increase the animosity of His enemies.

BUT IT WAS ALL DESIGNED TO SHOW THAT HE, NOT THEY, WAS IN CHARGE.

But we have another unusual thing here . . .

It has to do with the sovereign way in which the power of our Lord is displayed over the people.

Previously we have seen His power over diseases,
over the elements of nature,
over demons,
even over death!

Now we see His power over people!

This is brought out by Luke when he records (Luke 19:39, 40) that the Pharisees told Him to "rebuke" His "disciples." To whom He responded,

"I tell you that, if these should hold their peace,
the stones would immediately cry out."

By this our Lord meant that the speech of the people was a miracle of the same kind that they would have had if the stones had started to talk and to acclaim Him as the Messiah.

It is a very striking illustration of the power of God being exercised over the multitudes, and yet the people are apparently doing that which they chose to do, that which they wanted to do. Such is God's work in the hearts of men.

But let us look for a few moments at:

I. THE MEANING OF THAT WHICH THE PEOPLE DID AND SAID.

A. First, the "branches of palm trees" (v. 13).

History teaches us that there are at least four meanings attached to the use of palm branches:

- 1) Victory.
- 2) Peace.
- 3) The recognizing of a king.
- 4) A supplication to a conqueror for forgiveness.

All four have their place in connection with the ministry of our Lord -- especially with His approaching death. How important it is for us to understand this (a fact which not even the disciples understood at this time) as we approach the record in John's Gospel having to do with the death of our Lord -- not defeat, but victory!

- B. The use of two passages from the Old Testament -- Psalm 118 and Zechariah 9.

This is a confirmation of the truth of the Old Testament and specifically that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One particularly in view in both of these OT passages.

How important it is to see that the Word is absolutely dependable, and that the Word points us to Christ!

- C. The words that were used by the people:

1. "Hosanna" -- a Hebrew verb, an imperative, not translated into Greek, in order to preserve its meaning: Save, or, Save now, or, Save, I pray Thee.

In using this word which brought out the meaning of Psalm 118:26 they were declaring that salvation is not only the work of God, but that it is the work of God alone -- not a joint project between God and man!

2. "Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."

"Blessed" indicates that they were worshipping the Lord Jesus.

"The King of Israel" -- though not in Psalm 118, yet it indicates the meaning of Psalm 118 -- that the Lord Jesus was "the King of Israel," the Messiah, Who had come to bring salvation to His people.

3. "That cometh in the name of the Lord" means that He did not come on His own, but that He had come in the Father's Name, making the Father the authority for His words and His works. This was a divine mission!

D. The words which John quotes from Zechariah 9:9.

These also have to do with our Lord's approaching work of salvation.

1. "Fear not" -- because peace only comes through the Cross -- peace with God, and peace of heart.
2. "Daughter of Sion," or Zion -- indicating that the Lord had come to provide salvation for His people.
3. "Thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."

Since it was more common for kings to ride on horses, this indicates a king of a different kind.

Note that both vv. 13 and 15 indicate that the Lord is "King," thus portraying His power and His sovereignty. How important it is to keep this in mind in view of all that was to take place concerning the death of our Lord. He is the Victor. He is the King. He has come "in the name of the Lord."

What wonderful truth all of this is, and how important that it reach our hearts!

But let us look, secondly, at . . .

II. JOHN'S COMMENTS ABOUT THREE SEPARATE GROUPS WHO WERE PRESENT ON THIS OCCASION (John 12:16-19).

A. First, concerning our Lord's disciples (v. 16).

It is obviously that not even the disciples understood what they had done -- and they did not understand until after the Lord "was glorified" -- i.e., after His resurrection, and His ascension to the right hand of the Father.

This indicates two things:

1. That we all are continually learning -- and that our learning is according to the Lord's dealings with us.

Cf. John 16:12.

How important it is for us to have our hearts open to the Lord concerning the things that He is teaching us.

2. That we understand the ways of the Lord only as we

see them in the light of the Cross.

Then the Word becomes clear.

Then we understand even more about the human aspects of God's work in and through us.

B. Second, concerning the people (vv. 17, 18).

The term, "the people," as used in these two verses seems to refer to two different groups:

- 1) Those who saw Lazarus raised from the dead.
- 2) Those who heard about it from those who saw it.

This is what had attracted the attention and the hopes of the people generally. Cf. John 20:30, 31.

C. Third, concerning the Pharisees (v. 19).

The NIV renders this:

"See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him."

(And, by the way, this is an illustration of the limited use of the word, "world." As the following verse shows the Pharisees meant that not only were many Jews following the Lord, but there were Gentiles also!)

The Pharisees indicate their frustration,
their defeat,

but possibly also their intention to try again to overcome the Lord and His purposes.

Concl: What are the main lessons of the passage?

Let me mention three:

- 1) This amazing picture of our sovereign God -- working over man, in man, and through man.
How wonderful to know such truths as Eph. 1:11 and Phil. 2:13!
- 2) The total reliability of the Word of God -- right down to the literal fulfillment of the very words that are used.
Last Friday night several of us were at a Gideon Banquet down at the Sheraton Hotel in the Lloyd Center. One of the hymns that we sang was, Standing on the Promises. The second verse was a special blessing to me:
"Standing on the promises that cannot fail,
When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail;
By the living Word of God I shall prevail,
Standing on the promises of God."
- 3) The great truths of our salvation -- and the way in which the Lord unfolds greater depths of the same truths as He is ready for us to know them.

A SELF-PORTRAIT OF JESUS CHRIST

John 12:20-33

Intro: Have you ever wondered what Jesus Christ looked like?
Do you think that He was tall, or short? Was He slender, or heavy? What color was His hair? What complexion did He have -- light, or dark? Was He rugged in appearance, or frail? Did He look at all like His mother, Mary?

To bring it down to one simple question: What did the body look like that the Father prepared for Him? Cf. Heb. 10:5.

Or, let us think along another line: What kind of a disposition did He have? How would you describe His personality?

The Bible gives us more help in connection with His character than it does with His physical appearance.

John mentions that He "wept," but he does not tell us that our Lord laughed. Matthew quotes those words of our Lord where He said that He was "meek and lowly in heart." The very fact that parents sought to bring their children to Him, and that the children apparently did not hesitate to come, tells us a great deal about the loving, gracious character our Lord must have had.

There is no question as we come to the Scriptures that, with regard to seeing the Lord, the emphasis is upon His character, not upon His physical appearance.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

" . . . yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor. 5:16b).

And yet we know that the Lord was raised in His body from the dead, and that the "two men . . . in white apparel" (probably angels) said to the apostles after the ascension of our Lord that "This same Jesus . . . shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts 1:10b, 11b).

What do you have in mind when you read the words of John,

" . . . we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." See 1 John 3:2b.

Or, to look into our text, who were these Greeks John tells us about in John 12:21 who came to Philip and said,

"Sir, we would see Jesus."

We probably have a close parallel here with Zacchaeus in Luke 19:3 who "sought to see Jesus, who he was," and who "ran ahead, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him" (Luke 19:4).

It seems that these "certain Greeks" John mentions in our text

were proselytes, followers of the Jewish religion, who had come to observe the Passover, but whose greatest desire was to "see Jesus" -- to see this One Who had performed so many miracles, but also to hear Him, and to learn from Him.

It seems that we must interpret the following verses in the light of this request, "Sir, we would see Jesus."

Before I call your attention to the way the Lord granted their request, I want you to note two things:

- 1) It was the Lord who granted their request. V. 23 begins with the words, "And Jesus answered them . . ."
It shows our Lord's concern that men see what He wants them to see, that they see what they ought to see and what they need to see.
- 2) The emphasis is upon our Lord's word, i.e., what He said. See John 12:24a, "Verily, verily, I say unto you . . ."
John does not mention that these Greeks were brought to Christ to see Him (although I believe that we are safe in assuming that they did come and that they saw Him), but the emphasis is upon what the Lord said in response to their request, "Sir, we would see Jesus."
What a lesson for us! If we desire to see Jesus, we are to look into the Word of God. That is where He is to be seen.

May I ask you if you have ever come with this request -- "Sir, we would see Jesus"? Is this why you are here this morning? I hope so. What a delight it will be to speak to you if this is why you have come -- to learn about Him, and to hear what He has to say to your own heart about Himself.

Let me mention six things from the text which the Lord wanted these "certain Greeks" to see, and which He wants us to see:

I. HE WANTED THEM TO SEE, FIRST OF ALL, THAT HE WAS BOTH GOD AND MAN.

See both of these, His Deity and His humanity in v. 23 -- "Son of man" (our Lord's favorite title for Himself, used only by Him, with many meanings, but obviously indicating that He had a human nature); "glorified" -- the revelation of His Deity.

See also that He addressed God as His Father (indicating His Deity), but also that He was "troubled" (v. 27), pointing to His humanity.

Even the name "Jesus" indicates both.

Our Lord was eternally the Son of God; through the incarnation He became a man (although without any sin of His own). Do you see this?

- II. SECONDLY, THEY WERE TO SEE THAT JESUS WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE FATHER'S WILL, AND THAT WHICH WOULD BE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH HIS WILL.

Moreover, our Lord was concerned that His servants would live in the same way.

The Lord had eternity upon His heart.

See those marvelous verses in John 12:23-27.

The Lord does not promise the "Greeks" an easy time. In fact, He sets before them the solemn possibility that to become one of His disciples might mean physical death.

Have these truths really gotten into our hearts, and are they to be seen in the way we live?

- III. THIRDLY, THEY SAW A TROUBLED JESUS (John 12:27).

It means that He was agitated. The verb form is a perfect passive indicative which William Hendriksen says

"indicates that this mighty disturbance in the soul of Christ had been doing on for some time and has now become very intense. The horrors of the impending cross were felt now as never before" (II, 198).

Here is a great message of comfort. Think about it for just a moment.

Do you fear dying? Do you wonder when you are going to die, and how you are going to die?

We can all appreciate the statement of the man who said, "If I knew where I was going to die, I would never go near the place."

Death comes to all of us -- at different ages, through different means (disease, accidents); with some it is slow and with others it is sudden -- lots of contrasts can be made.

But have you ever seen Jesus in connection with death -- how He suffered, although He was the One Person Who did not deserve to die?

Cf. Rev. 1:18. See also Heb. 2:18; 4:14-16.

We cannot go through a single trial but what we have the comfort of knowing that He knows exactly what we are going through, and He helps us!

IV. A PRAYING JESUS (John 12:27, 28).

Note that it seems that it was His troubled soul which resulted in His praying.

There is probably no teaching about prayer that should be more convincing of our need to pray than the fact that the Lord Jesus prayed -- continually, earnestly, often all night, usually in connection with special ministries, etc. If He prayed, and needed to pray (and who can understand this), then how much more should we be praying.

And note also the burden of His prayer: that the Father should be glorified, even though it meant His own death.

Have we seen the Lord Jesus as one who prayed? What great lessons there are for us here!

V. FIFTHLY, HE WANTED THE GREEKS TO SEE HIM IN HIS TRIUMPH OVER THE WORLD AND OVER SATAN (John 12:31).

The person who views the Cross as a victory for our Lord's enemies has missed the truth altogether. It was through their seeming victory that final judgment was accomplished both for the world and its prince, Satan.

VI. FINALLY, HE WANTED THEM TO SEE HIM AS THE DRAWING, SAVING CHRIST (John 12:32, 33).

We had our Lord's words concerning this in John 6:44.

John 1:11-13 also applies.

Obviously, we know that it does not mean that all men are drawn to Him in salvation -- because all are not saved.

We do not understand fully the Lord's work in the hearts of the unregenerate. We have some illustrations in Judas, Pharaoh, and the like.

The best explanation seems to be that Christ draws men of all kinds -- Gentiles (in context) as well as Jews, women as well as men, children as well as adults, uneducated as well as educated, poor as well as rich, and on down the line -- people of all kinds. The Lord draws them. This is why they come, and the only reason that they do come. The Lord wanted this to be clear to the Greeks. They must see Him as the Drawing One.

Concl: Next Sunday we are going to begin a conference and we will have the privilege of hearing from some of the Lord's servants whom the Lord has honored in the ministry of the Word.

This morning I want to call on one of the Lord's servants to close this service. Unfortunately he cannot be here in person because he is in heaven. Therefore, I am going to read what he said to his congregation in London 90 years ago on a Sunday evening service on the 6th of October.

I am speaking, of course, of Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

I do not turn the pulpit over to Mr. Spurgeon this morning because I believe that he has some special authority above others, but because he spoke on that Sunday evening in just the way I wish I could speak to you this morning.

Visualize, if you will, an auditorium over 4 times the size of ours. A balcony completely encircles the auditorium. Mr. Spurgeon is standing at his pulpit on the balcony level. The place is packed with 5,000 people who have come to hear Mr. Spurgeon.

Although he did not realize it at the time, Mr. Spurgeon had less than three years to go before the Lord would take him to heaven. Thus, this that I am going to read represents the mature understanding he had of the Gospel -- and yet his sermons indicate that this is what he believed all his life.

Listen as Mr. Spurgeon concluded his message on John 12: 31-33.

(Read pp. 596c-597, Vol. 39.)

Let me give you a literal rendering of what the Greeks said to Philip. It would go like this:

"Sir, we will to see Jesus."

How did they get to that place where their wills were exercised to see and to know and to trust Christ; especially in view of John 1:13?

It can only be explained by the drawing work of the Son -- HE draws men to Himself. Otherwise no one would ever come. But when He draws men, then you cannot keep those men away!

Oh, that the Lord Himself would let you "see" this about Himself this morning! To do so is to worship Him as never before as the One Who is solely responsible for your salvation. Perhaps others are being drawn at this very moment. Oh, come! Come now! Come to Christ! Believe on Him, and He will save you now!

"WHO IS THIS SON OF MAN?"

John 12:34-43

Intro: In the Gospel of John, chapter 12 marks the end of our Lord's public ministry!

The particular time is indicated by John in v. 36b:
"These things spake Jesus, and departed,
and did hide himself from them" (or, more literally,
was hidden from them).

Accordingly, verses 44-50 are not an addition, but a summary of our Lord's teaching. Note how v. 46 ties in with vv. 35, 36.

The atmosphere is hostile!

The question of the crowd which I have taken for my subject was uttered with the greatest sarcasm: "Who is this Son of man?"

Out of the approximately 80 times that this expression, "the Son of man," is used in the Gospels (11, and possibly 13, in John -- see Hendriksen, II, 204-206), this is the only recorded time when the expression was used by someone other than the Lord Jesus Himself.

The Lord had used it in v. 23 of John 12.

It was definitely a Messianic title.

The problem to the Jews came about when the Lord spoke of "the Son of man" being "lifted up"!

They knew that this meant that He would die, but they rejected it because it was their understanding that, when the Messiah came, He would stay! And so they said,

"We have heard out of the law (by which they probably mean the entire Old Testament Scriptures) that Christ abideth for ever" (v. 34m).

What had they done?

They had done what men commonly do with the Word of God -- they had taken one part of the truth without looking at all of the truth.

This is what many scholars do with the humanity of Christ, ignoring His Deity!

It is what people do with the love of God, ignoring His righteousness.

And there are other truths where men do the same thing!

It was true that there would be a time when the Messiah would come, and would stay! But the same OT Scriptures which spoke of His reign upon the earth, spoke of His death -- but the Jews did not want to hear that. They did not believe that. And so their hearts were closed to the truth about His death -- apart from which their could be no Messianic reign!

Application: Dear people of God, make sure that you are not closing your mind to some aspect of truth which is in the Word, and which God intends for you to know. If you do not see the whole truth, then you cannot possibly have a true understanding of the truth which you think you know!

But let us go on to notice how John answers this question: "Who is this Son of man?"

I. HE IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (John 12:35, 36a).

Cf. v. 46. Remember John 1:4, 5, "In him was life . . ." Also -- John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me . . ."

He is the only Light. All is darkness apart from Him.

But note the solemn words of our Lord and His appeal for the Jews to "walk" and to "believe" while they have the light with them.

The clear implication is that they will not always have the light -- the impressions, the impact, will not always be upon them as it was at this time!

This is brought out in v. 36b!

Unless people "believe in the light," they will never, lit., become the sons of light! Apart from faith in Christ, man remains in darkness and does not know "whither he goeth." And furthermore, he does not care!

Our Lord makes it very clear here that we do not control salvation; He does! There is no more important time in any person's life than when he is exposed to the light of the Gospel! To turn from it may result in eternal disaster! Man cannot blame God. He can only blame himself!

How ominous are the words,
"These things spake Jesus, and departed,
and did hide himself from them.

But, lest we think that this was a one time matter, note the second part of the answer that John gives us:

II. THIS SON OF MAN WAS THE GREAT MIRACLE WORKER (John 12:37).

We have heard a lot about signs ("miracles") in John's Gospel, but this is the last mention until we get to John 20:30, 31.

John records only 7.

But there were "many" more which had been performed before the people. There was no way in which this could be denied!

BUT . . . "they believed not on him," or, lit., they were not believing on Him.

Day after day He had performed His miracles, but, for the most of the people, the result was the same -- constant, increasing rejection of the Lord, and a refusal to trust Him for salvation!

Again -- God was not to blame for their unbelief; they were at fault, completely at fault.

Application: How many of you fit into this picture? You know a lot about the Word, and a lot about the Lord. You may even be considered to be a Christian -- by yourself, and by others. But you have never really trusted Christ as your Saviour. Look at all that God has done for you, the truth that you do know. If you ultimately are lost, the blame will be 100% your own!

But notice a third point:

III. THIS SON OF MAN WAS THE ONE ISAIAH WROTE ABOUT (John 12:38-41).

See v. 41.

(Incidentally, we have here positive proof that the same Isaiah wrote both parts of the prophecy of Isaiah since John quotes from Isa. 53 in verse 38, and adapts his statement in verse 40 from Isa. 6.)

Two things are clearly taught in these quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures:

- 1) The rejection of Christ by Israel did not take the Lord by surprise. The response which Isaiah received in his day was prophetic of the response the Lord Jesus would receive.
- 2) When men over a period of time (and God alone sets and knows that time) reject the Saviour, then God hardens

their hearts so that they cannot believe. See v. 39.

This awful truth is brought out in one of the oldest stories of the Old Testament -- the story of Pharaoh in Exodus, and the 10 plagues which God brought on Egypt!

God raised Pharaoh up to display His power against Pharaoh (that is the divine side), but God held Pharaoh absolutely responsible for his own reaction to the Word of God!

Application: The same is true today. God deals with men. All men are responsible to God. But, if there is continual rejection of the Gospel, the time comes when God Himself hardens their hearts in their unbelief -- and they cannot be saved.

Application: And, if you think hard thoughts about God because of this, note John's statement in v. 41: "These things said Isaiah, when he saw his glory, and spake of him."

How did He see the Lord? In His holiness. Remember: We may not understand all that we read in Scripture, but we never need to apologize for God. He is holy in all that He does!

Application: Note what Isaiah teaches us about preaching the Gospel:

- 1) Our rewards are not determined by results, but by our faithfulness in proclaiming the truth. Illus.: John Haldane who preached for 40 years in Morocco and never saw one Moslem receive Christ.
- 2) Our lack of results is never to make us change our message, or to depart from God's methods of dealing with men.

Finally . . .

IV. THIS SON OF MAN WAS ONE OF WHOM EVEN SOME BELIEVERS WERE ASHAMED (John 12:42, 43).

What is the trouble when the system becomes more important to us than the Saviour? Or, when we are more anxious to please men than we are to please God?

Oh, but you say, perhaps they were not true believers!

My response: Have you ever known Christians like this?
Or better, Have you ever had these feelings? And what
about Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea?

Application: Look at your life over the past week --
have you been motivated by the fear of God,
or by the fear of men?

Do you make excuses for God in the way you
handle the truth? Do you water down the
Gospel in order to make it more acceptable
to men?

Are their things in your life that are more
important to you than the Lord and His Word?
Are you actually ashamed of Jesus?

"Jesus, and shall it ever be,
A mortal man ashamed of Thee?
Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise,
Whose glories shine through endless days?

"Ashamed of Jesus! sooner far
let evening blush to own a star;
He sheds the beams of light divine
o'er this benighted soul of mine.

"Ashamed of Jesus! that dear Friend
on whom my hopes of heaven depend!
No; when I blush, be this my shame,
That I no more revere His name.

"Ashamed of Jesus! yes, I may,
When I've no guilt to wash away;
No tear to wipe, no good to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

"Till then, nor is my boasting vain,
Till then I boast a Saviour slain;
And O, may this my glory be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me!"

Concl: "Who is this Son of man?"

There is truth here for unbeliever and believer, isn't there?

- 1) For the unbeliever -- remember that you cannot trifle with
the Gospel. Delay may mean eternal disaster. Salvation is
of the Lord.
- 2) For the believer -- with what gratitude we ought to seek the
praise of God and the glory of God for all that He has done
for us in Christ!

THE MISSION AND MESSAGE OF CHRIST
John 12:44-50

Intro: As we come to the end of chapter twelve, we come to the conclusion in John's Gospel of our Lord's public ministry. We say public in the sense that it was directed to the unbelieving masses of the people.

From John 13 on to the end we have our Lord's private ministry to "His own" (John 13:1), i.e., those who had believed on Him, but especially to the twelve.

Consequently, in our text we have a summary and, in some respects, an introduction:

- a summary of what He had been teaching,
- an introduction to some of the things He would be teaching.

Throughout the Gospel of John we can find passages which are similar to the 7 verses we have here. Note the following:

- 1) For v. 44, see John 13:20 -- "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me: and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me."
- 2) For v. 45, see John 14:9. ---"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"
- 3) For v. 46, see John 8:12 -- "Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."
- 4) For v. 47, see John 3:17 -- "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."
- 5) For v. 48, see John 5:45-47 -- "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moseses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"
- 6) For vv. 49, 50 (which go together), there are several verses we could choose. See John 7:16 -- "Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." See also John 8:28 -- "Then said Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things." Or see John 14:24 -- "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."

There are other verses we could use for the 7 verses, such as: John 3:11, 16; 5:24; 6:63; 8:15, 16, 19, 26, 38, 51; 10:30, 37, 38; 14:10.

On Christ as the light, see John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 9:5; 12:35, 36.

Now let us look at our text: John 12:44-50. While the teachings of the passage are not confined to particular sections, the following seems to be the main divisions:

- I. The Messenger (vv. 44, 45).
- II. The Mission (vv. 46-48).
- III. The Message (vv. 49, 50).

I. THE MESSENGER (John 12:44, 45).

Our Lord makes two claims in these two verses that a mere man would never dare to make, if he were in his right mind. One is in v. 44; the other is in v. 45. Both of them show the very intimate relationship which our Lord has with the Father. And the two together give us the two main reasons that our Lord came.

This is ~~one reason~~^{why} we say that the truths of this passage are woven together. It is hard to speak of the Messenger without speaking also of His mission!

V. 44 deals with our Lord's mission to provide salvation for men -- and in v. 44 He speaks of the nature of true faith. The one who truly believes in Christ is one who believes also in the Father.

The Pharisees professed to believe in God, but they wanted to have nothing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord is telling them that that is impossible! The Father and the Son are distinct as Persons, but they are inseparable in the great work of salvation.

V. 45 deals with the other phase of our Lord's mission -- to complete that which had been going on throughout the Old Testament, namely, the revelation of the Father.

To see the Lord and to see the Father means to know them, to recognize Who They are! This is basic to everything else in the Word. You and I are going to love the Lord and to trust the Lord and to worship the Lord only to the extent to which we KNOW HIM.

Christ came to reveal the Father, and the Bible gives us the record of that mission and of that revelation. We may have innate (inborn, natural) knowledge that there is a God, and we may increase our knowledge of God through our observation of nature, BUT THE ONLY COMPLETE and FINAL REVELATION

OF GOD IS IN CHRIST!

Do you understand these two basic truths of Scripture which our Lord gives to us in these two verses at the beginning of our text?

If you do not see Who the Messenger is, you will not understand the importance of His Mission, nor of His Message.

II. THE MISSION (John 12:46-48).

Our Lord states it positively in v. 46.

He states it negatively in v. 47.

He did not mean that He would never judge the world, but simply that that was not the purpose of His first coming!

The world is a place of darkness -- which means a place of ignorance of God, and consequently a place of sin. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 4 that Satan has also blinded the minds of the people of the world. So you have double darkness: spiritually blinded people in a world of darkness.

The Father sent His Son into this world as "a light." This has to do again with Who He is and what He is! It is a prominent theme of John's Gospel -- in chapters 1, 3, 8, 9, and 12 especially.

BUT . . . His Mission also includes what He said. Note this emphasis in vv. 47, 48.

Man does not experience the final judgment now because he rejects the message of Christ, but ultimately, "in the last day," that message will be the basis upon which he will be judged.

Everything else will be unimportant then!

The most disastrous action ever taken by men is described in the first part of v. 48 -- "He that rejecteth ME, and receiveth not MY WORDS . . ." This is to set aside as unimportant that which God has declared to be His eternal purpose in sending His Son into the world.

If you turn your back on the Gospel, you need to realize that you are not through with the Gospel, nor are you through with Christ. You will meet them both again "in the last day," and then your doom will be sealed forever!

Oh, that we would all realize anew how absolutely important are both God's Messenger and His Mission.

But now let us look at . . .

III. THE MESSAGE (John 12:49, 50).

Here is also one of the amazing truths of the Gospel of John.

In these verses we are not told what the message is, but instead we are told where it came from!

And here I want you to notice an expression which has been used twice before in our text by our Lord, but now it is stated so that there is no doubt about what He means. It is the expression, "the Father which sent me."

Notice it at the end of v. 44, and again at the end of v. 45 -- "him that sent me."

Christ came willingly, but the main reason that He came was that He was "sent" -- sent by the Father.

If you were to read through the Gospel of John looking for this expression, you would find it over 40 times!

Obviously there are some great truths for us to understand in this expression. Such an emphasis is not accidental!

Let me mention two things that are important for us to know:

- 1) There is never a hint in the Gospel of John nor in any other book of the Bible, Old Testament or New Testament, that unregenerate man ever invited Christ to come, or even that ~~unregenerate~~ man wanted Him to come. In fact, John 1:11 tells us what happened when He did come.
- 2) This expression means that, since Christ came to provide salvation for the world, salvation was a work that was ~~initiated~~ by God Himself, and He is the One Who gets all of the glory for it!

Illus.: This past week I picked up a volume of letters I have written by George Whitfield who lived 200 years ago -- and I read one he had written to his sister in which he was speaking of salvation. He said this:

" . . . we love God, because he first loved us."

And then he went on to say,

"I can trace my conversion through its several steps, but cannot find one step I first took towards God."

(p. 17.5)

Isn't this what you would say? How thankful we should be for those words of the Apostle John in 1 John 4:14, echoing what he had written in his Gospel,

" . . . that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

But now notice where the Lord got His message. Note the concern that the Father had that we should get the truth as it was upon His own heart. If you want an amazing passage on the inspiration, the verbal inspiration, of the Word of God, here it is!

- 1) The Lord Jesus Christ did not speak on His own -- He did not originate His own message.
- 2) The Father did not just suggest, nor just give the ideas, but He commanded the Lord as to what He should say on earth.
- 3) And He gave the Lord the very words He was to speak.
- 4) And the Lord spoke exactly as His Father wanted Him to speak.
- 5) And all of this care was taken because of the object of our Lord's mission: "And I know (said our Lord, speaking not of what He had learned from others, nor from conjecture on his part, but by His own direct insight into divine things) that his (the Father's) commandment is everlasting life" (as its objective).

Concl: Can you explain this? I can't. But, thank God, we can understand it, and we can believe it.

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan!
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span -- at Calvary!

How we should thank God daily and worship Him with all of our hearts that He sent His Son,
that He provided salvation,
that He has preserved the truth in His Word,
that salvation is still being proclaimed by God's grace.

If you have not believed, trust Him today. Believe His Word.
There is no salvation, but in Christ!