

DIVINE INSIGHTS CONCERNING MAN
John 7:1-13

Intro: Whenever men set themselves against the Lord, we have the best opportunity to see what is in man. Men are always seen at their worst when compared with the One Who is the greatest of all.

Such is the picture of man which we have in our text.

Notice first . . .

I. The TREACHERY of the Jews (John 17:1, 2).

And concerning this, see

- A. The intensity of it. They wanted to kill Him. Can we really explain this, or imagine what it would be like to have such feelings in your heart toward the Son of God.

John does not mean that all men feel this way, but the capacity is there in every man!

- B. The continuation of it.

We first read of this attitude toward the Lord on the part of the Jews in John 5:18. To see how much time had gone by, we note in John 6:4 the mention of "the Passover" which was observed on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar.

John 7 has to do with the time of the Feast of Tabernacles -- which was observed on the 15th day of the seventh month.

And so for over 6 months the Jews had felt this way. It was an attitude which had not died away. And it had reached such a peak that it was no longer safe for the Lord to be in Judea.

- C. The center of it -- not only in Jerusalem, but also at the very place where the people would gather on their feast days to obey and to worship the Lord!

Thus we are taught that the Lord Jesus Christ is often hated the most among people who claim to be the people of God and among those who outwardly obey the teachings of Scripture! He often is hated the most where He should be loved the most!

II. The TESTING by His brothers (John 7:3-5) -- and observe very carefully the statement in v. 5: They did not believe!

Since when has the Lord asked men what He should do? Long before this Isaiah had raised the questions:

"Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? With whome took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding?" (Isa. 40: 13, 14).

Even real believers sometimes make this mistake -- thinking that we know what the Lord ought to do.

And actually this sounds like advice the Lord might get from some Christians today. His brothers suggest that He do two things:

- A. To do what His disciples would expect Him to do -- for their support and encouragement (v. 3).
- B. To do spectacular things which would impress the unbelievers (v. 4).

But when John tells us that His brothers did not believe in Him, he is telling us that this is the wisdom of men, spiritually blinded to the truth, unable to know the ways of the Lord -- and here they are telling the Lord what He ought to do.

Have you ever heard these suggestions from anybody? In many areas the Church operates on these two principles!

Undoubtedly the Lord felt the pressure -- as we often feel it today! But He refused to give over to them.

But notice another thing:

III. The TIMING.

Two times the Lord says:

- 1) "My time is not yet come" (v. 6).
- 2) "My time is not yet full come" (v. 8).

It is hard for us to learn that TIMING is important to the Lord -- so that it is not only important to know WHAT should be done, but WHEN!

It was not because the Lord was afraid of the Jews that He refused to go to Jerusalem at this time, but because the time was not right!

"Your time is alway ready." As far as men are concerned, the sooner the better. But there was in the Lord's heart

that realization that His every step,
 His every work,
 His every word,
 was directed by the Father --- and so (and this is important)
 He worked in Galilee while He waited for the Lord's time to
 go to Jerusalem.

The Bible tells us how various people have had to learn that
 God has His own time schedule, and that we cannot run ahead
 of it without causing great problems. Cf. Moses killing the
 Egyptian.

IV. The TESTIMONY of the Lord concerning "the world" (John 7:7).

Note how He identifies the Jews with the world! And He
 identifies His brothers with the world also. They do not
 hate each other.

Cf. John 15:18-25.

Why does the world hate the Lord -- even many religious
 people?

Because He talks about sin! Cf. John 3:19,
 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into
 the world, and men loved darkness rather than light,
because their deeds were evil."

And their deeds were evil because they were evil. Cf. Matt.
 7:17-20. This meant that their observance of the Feast of
 Tabernacles was completely unacceptable and even displeasing
 to God because their hearts had never been cleansed from sin!

The preaching of human depravity will never make you popular,
 but it will bring the blessing of the Lord.

Will you note again that the Lord did not change even though
 this would have been more acceptable to His own brothers?

V. The TUMULT (confusion, agitation) among the people (John 7: 12).

Basically there were two points-of-view -- two extremely
 different attitudes, and probably varying degrees in between
 the two.

A. Some said that He was "good" ("man" is not in the Greek
 text, but could be understood).

Remembering Matt. 19:16, 17, this could mean that some
 felt that He was God! Or, it could only mean that some
 liked Him because they saw the "good" which He did.

B. Others said that "he deceiveth the people."

This meant that they thought that He was a liar, out to lead them astray. And this, according to our Lord's words in John 8:44, would put Him in Satan's camp!

So some were saying the very best; others were saying the very worst! WHAT DO YOU SAY ABOUT HIM?

One more point:

VI. The TYRANNY of the Jewish leaders (John 7:13).

This probably reminds you of what happened in the early days of the Church when the apostles were "beaten" and "commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go" (Acts 5:40).

Our Lord also was to speak of this just prior to His death when He was denouncing the scribes and Pharisees by saying:
" . . . ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matt. 23:13).

What is there about even religious leaders that not only do they not want to hear about Jesus, but they don't want anyone else to hear about Him either?

You could start a real uproar today if you were to go into many churches and start talking about the Lord Jesus Christ and salvation through His precious blood!

Concl: What a lot of truth there is here for those of us who know the Lord -- and I trust that the Lord has been speaking to you through this passage this morning. We need to pray that our eyes will be opened to the truth, and that the Lord will teach us His ways.

But some are here today -- and perhaps you are without Christ as your Saviour. You have heard various things about Christ -- and maybe you are confused. Perhaps you have not even given much thought to Him. Learn from our passage this morning that He is the most important Person you will ever hear about in this world -- and that He is the only One through Whom you can be saved.

May the Lord turn your heart to Him today. Trust Him NOW!

THE UNJUST CRITICS

John 7:14-24

Intro: John 7 gives us the story of our Lord in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles -- which was the last of the annual feast days which the Jews observed every year.

It lasted for a whole week.

Our text begins by telling us that it was in the middle of the week that our Lord "went up into the temple, and taught" (v. 14b).

And, as was always the case, as He taught, people were making decisions. Vv. 12, 13 in the chapter indicate this. Some felt that He was "good," and others felt that He was bad.

The last verse of our text, v. 24, really speaks of these decisions. It indicates:

- 1) That the Lord wants us to make decisions about what we hear from the Lord and from His Word. All of us are doing this continually.
- 2) That it is a case of black and white, of right and wrong. This is where the word "righteous" helps us.
- 3) That our tendency is to make the wrong judgments -- to be UNJUST CRITICS. And this is because we judge on the basis of appearances.
- 4) That the Lord wants our decisions to be "righteous," i.e., true, right, as opposed to that which is false and wrong!

The Lord does not say in this passage why we make wrong decisions or how we come to the right decisions, but He simply states it as He does in v. 24.

The decisions we will make; we can trust the Lord to lead us to the right decisions, and to keep us from the wrong -- or He would not have spoken to the people and to their leaders as He speaks to them in this passage.

One thing that does help us is the fact that He was there in Jerusalem at the Temple TO TEACH. We can see from this that it is through the Word of our Lord that we will come to the right decisions.

Notice -- that our Lord is concerned here with two groups:

- 1) "The Jews," i.e., the leaders of the Jewish people -- the scribes, the Pharisees, the elders. Cf. v. 15.
- 2) "The people," the Jewish people, the multitudes who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles.

The same thing is stated about both groups: They "marvelled" (cf. vv. 15, 21). We will see as we consider the passage why

they "marvelled," but at this point let us simply notice the fact that they did marvel -- which means that they were amazed. There were things about the Lord that they had not seen in anybody else, things which they could not understand, AND THINGS ABOUT WHICH THEY WERE MAKING DECISIONS.

Our text points to five different areas in which, in spite of the fact that they "marvelled," they were making UNRIGHTEOUS JUDGMENTS.

What were they?

I. THEY WERE DECEIVED ABOUT THE LORD (vv. 15, 20).

"The Jews" did not deny that the Lord knew "letters" (which is a term pointing to the OT Scriptures), but they were willing to discount it all because the Lord had never been taught by the Rabbis; He had not come up through the system.

And "the people" went so far as to say that He had "a devil," i.e., that He was demon-possessed, because their leaders did not like Him!

What is your opinion of Christ?

There is no greater question that ever faces any of us!

And remember: You can be right, or you can be wrong -- because there is a right answer, and there is a wrong answer.

If you believe that He was the eternal Son of God Who became a man, you are right. If you think that He was only a man like we are, you are wrong. If you believe He was totally without sin, you are right. If you believe that He was a sinner like everybody else, you are wrong. If you believe that He was born of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, you are right. If you believe that Joseph was His father, you are wrong.

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

II. THEY WERE DECEIVED ABOUT THE LORD'S WORDS (vv. 16-18).

If you are deceived about the Lord, you will also be deceived about His teaching.

What do you believe about His teaching? What do you believe about the Bible? There is a right answer; and there are wrong answers.

What is the right answer?

Note:

A. Our Lord's claim about His teaching (v. 16).

This means that He spoke by divine revelation, that He did not from Himself.

Do you believe this -- not only about the teachings of Christ, but also about all of the NT and all of the OT?

If you do believe it, you are right. If you do not believe it, you are wrong.

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

And the Lord follows this with:

B. Two ways in which His teachings could be tested (vv. 17, 18).

1. The first has to do with the pupil (v. 17).

This is an indication of the way in which the Lord deals with men -- with respect to salvation. He makes known some truth to us. What do we do with it? If there is a willingness to act in accordance with what God has made known, then more truth is revealed.

This is a divine principle upon which God deals with men. Matthew Henry wrote:

"Those who improve the light they have, and carefully live up to it, shall be secured by divine grace from destructive mistakes" (Vol. V, p. 966).

Some of you have been impressed with many things about Christ and about His teaching, but you have never acted upon the light God has given to you -- and so He has not given you any more.

You see the problem is not with God, nor with Christ, nor with His Word -- BUT WITH YOU!

But there is another way to test the teaching of Christ.

2. The second has to do with the Teacher (v. 18).

V. 18 applies primarily to the Lord Jesus Christ, but in a limited sense it applies to every true teacher of the Word.

The issue is whether the Lord spoke "of himself" (which should be translated, from Himself), or whether He spoke from God.

How did the Lord demonstrate that He was true? And how can we do the same?

- a. He did not seek His own glory.
- b. He sought only to glorify God.

This obvious has to do with two things:

- 1) The content of the message.
- 2) The objective of the messenger.

Do you test everything you hear in these two ways? If not, you are certain to be deceived.

How carelessly we accept everything that we hear these days if a person claims to be a preacher and if he uses the Word of God!

But the questions are:

- 1) What is he saying? To whom does it give glory?
- 2) What about the preacher? Is he preaching for the glory of God, or to further his own reputation and his own projects?

Christians, beware! Those of you who are not Christians, beware! "judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment." If a man is full of pride, and if he seeks his own glory or the glory of anyone but God, he is a false teacher.

How satisfying the Lord is on both of these counts!

But let us continue . . .

III. THEY WERE DECEIVED ABOUT THEMSELVES (v. 19a).

Why was it that they were not receptive to the teaching of the Lord?

It was because they had Moses and the Law.

But -- were they obeying Moses? (The word "keepeth" in v. 19 is the same as the word "do" in v. 17.)

What did the Lord say? "NONE OF YOU keepeth the law?" The leaders were not keeping it; the people were not keeping it. They knew a lot about it, but they were not obeying it! And the proof of what the Lord was saying was to be seen in

the fact that they wanted to murder the Lord -- a violation of the sixth commandment!

What about you? Do you think that you are going to get to heaven on your own works when you know in your own heart that you have not even approached what you believe is necessary? Are you deceiving yourself by the fact that you know certain things about the Bible, or that you are a member of a church, or that you give your money to the church?

How many there are who are deceiving themselves on this very point!

"Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

IV. THEY WERE DECEIVED ABOUT THEIR LEADERS (v. 20).

Look back at John 5:16, 18 -- which was more than 6 months prior to the Feast of Tabernacles!

The people did not know this! They would have defended their leaders to the very end! But they were wrong! And there are countless numbers today who blindly follow blind leaders not knowing that their leaders are leading them to hell -- because their leaders do not know nor do they follow the Lord Jesus Christ!

"Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment."

V. THEY WERE DECEIVED ABOUT THE WORK OF THE LORD (vv. 21-23).

What to you is the important thing about the Lord's work?

Is it just attending ^{the} Sunday morning church service?

Is it going through forms and ceremonies -- like observing the Lenten season?

The big argument that "the Jews" had with the Lord was over the Sabbath. They said that He had broken the Sabbath by healing the man in John 5 who had been sick for 38 years!

And yet when the Lord brings up circumcision, they had to acknowledge that if the eighth day of a Jewish boy's life came on the Sabbath, they would circumcise him on the Sabbath Day -- which was right!

But (AND NOTICE THE REASONING OF OUR LORD) if they would be so careful about a rite, circumcison, which actually injured

a baby boy's body, would they, as He said,
" . . . be angry at me, because I have made a man
every whit whole on the sabbath day?"

What did the Lord mean by "every whit whole"? It means that
the Lord healed the whole man -- not just his body, but also
the inner man, his soul! This is evident from our Lord's
words to that man in John 5:14,

"Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a
worse thing come upon thee."

The Sabbath goes back to the time of creation -- at least
4,000 years B. C.

Circumcision goes back to Abraham's time -- 2,000 years B. C.

Both of these were shadows pointing ahead to Christ and to
salvation -- not through human works, but through the work
of Jesus Christ, and through that work alone!

What is the true work of God -- as taught in both the OT and
the NT?

It is the transformation of sinners into saints -- not by
the works of the Law, not by Sabbath observance, not by
circumcision, BUT BY THE SACRIFICIAL DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST
ON THE CROSS.

Concl: You see -- the issue is not religion (which depends upon
man, but the issue is Christ.

May I say it once more: "Judge not according to the appearance,
but judge righteous judgment."

You can be wrong, and you may be wrong in your ideas about Christ
and about salvation. BUT YOU CAN BE RIGHT IF YOUR HEART IS OPEN
TO THE WORD OF GOD! May God grant you the ability to see that
Christ and Christ alone can save you from your sins!

THE BOLDNESS OF CHRIST

John 7:25-36

Intro: In v. 26 John tells us that "some of them of Jerusalem" (v. 25) said, "But, lo, he (referring to our Lord) speaketh boldly."

This means that He spoke publicly, freely, fearlessly, confidently, and frankly.

This is what His brothers had urged Him to do in v. 4 (where the same word is translated, "openly").

This is what the people did not do according to v. 13 (where we have the same word translated, "openly," again).

John has gone to great lengths to picture for us the danger which our Lord faced in Jerusalem because "the Jews" were now intent on killing Him. At first even the Lord had refused to go to the Feast, even though His brothers had urged Him to do so.

But now He casts restraint aside. V. 14 tells us,
"Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught."

So here He is, in the heart of Judaism, standing in the Temple, surrounded by His enemies, speaking "boldly" -- fearlessly, confidently, frankly, publicly, freely.

And so we see, THE BOLDNESS OF CHRIST!

Later on, when He was on trial before Caiaphas, the high priest, and when Caiaphas had "asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine,

"Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said"
(John 18:19, 20).

This is a very important principle in the ministry of Christ. His was no underground movement. What He had to say, He said openly, boldly, for all men to hear.

There is another expression in our text which shows THE BOLDNESS OF CHRIST. It is in v. 28:

"Then cried Jesus in the temple as he taught . . ."

Very, very few times do the writers of the four Gospels say that our Lord "cried" out His message, i.e., that He lifted up the volume of His voice, and made certain that everybody could hear

what He had to say. He was not whispering; He was speaking in a loud voice.

These two expressions show that
 the Lord was not afraid of the Jews,
 that there was a sense of urgency in His heart,
 and that He wanted all of the people to hear what He had to say!

Now I want to ask and answer two questions from the text:

1) How could He afford to do this? He was surrounded by His enemies. They wanted to kill Him. Granted, He was the Son of God, but He was also a man. Was He not running too great a risk for His own personal safety to be speaking so openly in such a place?

That is the first question I want to answer.

The second is this:

2) Why was He so bold? What was the reason for all of the loud speaking, the urgency that is apparent in our Lord's behavior at this crucial time.

I. QUESTION #1: HOW COULD OUR LORD AFFORD TO BE SO BOLD?

There is one main answer to this question: As a man He could be bold because of the sovereign, providential power of God!

You can see evidence of God's providence in at least three ways:

A. Because of the obvious restraint which had been placed upon His enemies.

In spite of the fact that they wanted to kill Him, we read in v. 26,

"But, lo, he speaketh boldly, and they say nothing unto him."

Our Lord was teaching, and the Jews were not doing anything to stop Him.

It would be a very light, a very superficial view of such circumstances not to be able to see that the Father was protecting His Son in these dangerous circumstances.

But note also in v. 30:

"Then they sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him."

What a marvelous illustration of Psa. 91:9-12,

"Because thou ^hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall

any plague come nigh they dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

But there is a second reason as to why the Lord could afford to be so bold:

B. Because He knew that His time to die had not yet come.

See the latter part of v. 30 -- and then review vv. 6, 8.

The Lord knew that He was going to die. He had come into the world to die. But He also knew that no man had the power to put Him to death until the time appointed by the Father had arrived.

Both our first answer to this question, and this answer, have meaning for us, too, as is brought out in this quotation from John Calvin:

"From this^a general doctrine must be gathered; for though we live unto the day, the hour of everyman's death has nevertheless been fixed by God. It is difficult to believe that, subject as we are to so many accidents, exposed to so many injuries and dangers from man and beast, and liable to so many diseases, we are safe from all dangers until God wishes to call us away. But we must fight against our own mistrust. And first we should hold to the doctrine taught here and next to its object and the exhortation drawn from it -- namely, that each of us should cast his cares on God and serve in his own calling and not be led away from his duty by any fears. Yet no man must go beyond his own limits. Confidence in the providence of God must go no further than God Himself commands" (John, I, 193).

The third reason for seeing that the Lord was trusting in the providence of the Father is in v. 33:

C. Because the Lord knew that the purpose of God would be fulfilled in His life regardless of what His enemies might do, and that He would return to the Father -- raised and glorified!

The enemies of the Gospel and of Christ may rave and rant, but over all of their actions it is written that the Father "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11b).

Bishop Ryle gives us this comment:

"The doctrine before us, let us note, is full of comfort

to God's people. Nothing can hurt them except and until God permits. We are all immortal till our work is done. To realize that nothing happens in this world except by the eternal counsel of our Father, and according to His eternal plans, is one grand secret of living a calm, peaceful, and contented life" (Vol. I, p. 464).

But let us go on to the second question:

II. QUESTION #2: WHY WAS OUR LORD SO BOLD?

What was the reason for all of the loud, urgent, public teaching that our Lord was doing?

Our text suggests at least five answers to that question -- all of which have a direct bearing upon the ministry of the the Church today?

- A. The first answer: Because of the spiritual blindness, deafness, ignorance of the people -- all of them, the leaders as well as the multitude.

They did not know as much as they thought they did.

They did not know what they could have known.

See v. 27, and then vv. 35, 36.

There is no solution for the spiritual ignorance of people except in the teaching (v. 28) of the Word of God.

- B. The second answer: Because the Lord was fulfilling the work that the Father had given Him to do.

See vv. 28b, 29, and then v. 33.

This was constantly in the heart of our Lord. This was the great motivation in the Apostle Paul's ministry. It should also be in ours. Cf. John 20:21, ". . . as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

- C. The third answer: Because the Lord knew that He had but a short time with them.

And He knew that there time was short, too.

See in v. 33 the words, "a little while."

Men act as though they had forever to decide about salvation, but we only have today. Life at its best is short in comparison with eternity. The Lord knew all of this, and this explains His boldness. Cf. Prov. 29:1; 2 Cor. 6:2.

- D. The fourth answer: Because the Lord knew that salvation was not a matter that the Lord had put into their hands to decide whenever and wherever they wanted to.

Note v. 34.

Martin Luther wrote of these words,

"These are horrible words. I do not like to read them. But we have no alternative; these words must be proclaimed. When the Gospel vanishes, then the light, the proper understanding and knowledge of faith in Christ, als disappears. Then you will find one undertaking this, another that. Then they will all go in search of Christ, of forgiveness of sins, and of grace; but their search will be in vain" (Vol. 23, p. 261).

May this not happen to any of you who listen to my voice this morning! The only way to avoid that dreadful day is to believe in Christ NOW -- TODAY!!!

But there is one more, encouraging answer.

- E. The fifth answer: Because the Lord knew that in some lives, yes, in "many," the Word would be fruitful.

We cannot say how complete the faith of the "many" spoken of in v. 31 is, but it is there nevertheless.

The Lord knew Isa. 55:11, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth . . ."

The Lord did not come just to make salvation available or possible, leaving it up to men to decide how successful His work would be. He came to accomplish a work, to guarantee the salvation of those the Father had given to Him -- and no amount of opposition from the Jews or from all of the nations of the earth could ever keep the Lord from accomplishing that work.

Concl: Is it any wonder that the Lord spoke "boldly" and that He "cried" out to the people in the Temple who were deceived into thinking that salvation was a matter of rites and ceremonies, but who had never seen that it was by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?

Let this passage be an encouragement to us -- to believe that our sovereign God is at work today, accomplishing His purposes, controlling the evil in the hearts of men, using His Word, and bringing to Himself those whom He has chosen -- all to the praise of His own holy Name!

Let us be bold and faithful and confident in serving Him!

JESUS CHRIST, THE PROPHET
John 7:37-53

Intro: Our text is clearly divided into three parts:

- 1) In vv. 37-39 we have the words of the Lord Jesus, v. 39 being an explanatory word from the Apostle John.
- 2) In vv. 40-44 we have the words of the Jewish people.
- 3) In vv. 45-53 we have the words of the Jewish leaders.

It is clear that the question which has been raised is whether or not Jesus Christ is a prophet. See vv. 40, 52.

Scripture assigns to our Lord three offices which include all of His work with regard to salvation:

- 1) He is a Prophet.
- 2) He is a Priest.
- 3) He is a King.

John deals in a special way with all three of these offices, or ministries:

- 1) A prophet is one who speaks to men for God -- and, in the sense in which we are now speaking, such a prophet speaks by divine inspiration. We see this in all of the messages of our Lord which John records so faithfully for us.
- 2) A priest is one who represents the people to God -- the one who in OT times had his days taken up with the sacrifices of the people which were offered to God. The priest was a mediator, an intercessor. We begin to see this in particular in the prayer of John 17, and then on through the chapters which deal with the crucifixion and resurrection. The Lord Jesus is the priest of His people also in His present ministry in heaven at the right hand of the Father where He makes intercession for us -- as we learn so well in the book of Hebrews.
- 3) A king is one who reigns over the people of God (in the Biblical sense) -- and this we see of our Lord in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ where He is pictured pre-eminently as "the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Thus we see a certain time element in these titles:

- 1) Our Lord's prophetic ministry had to do with His time here on earth -- which is now past.
- 2) His priestly ministry began while He was here on earth and continues at this very moment in the glory -- and will continue until the Second Coming.
- 3) His ministry as King will begin at the Second Coming and will continue throughout eternity.

In one way He can be said to occupy all three offices from eternity past, but the unfolding of His work can be seen in time as I have described it.

But now let us think in terms of His prophetic ministry. Was He not only a prophet, but "the Prophet" -- a specific reference to Deut. 18:15-22? (Read.)

Well, notice the following passages in John's Gospel:

- 1) John 1:21.
- 2) John 4:19.
- 3) John 6:14.
- 4) John 9:17.

While it seems clear from our text that the people had not identified this "Prophet" with the Messiah, yet it does show that they had been taught about this Prophet from the OT, and that they saw in the words of the Lord Jesus (and in His deeds) that which made them feel that He was not only a prophet, but, in some instances, they thought that He was "that prophet that should come into the world" (John 6:14).

But let us now ask -- What did He claim with regard to His message? Look at:

- 1) John 8:26, 28.
- 2) John 14:10, 24.
- 3) John 17:7, 8.

Add to this:

- 1) What the Jewish people were saying according to our text in John 7:40, 41 -- and note especially the expression, "when they heard this saying," referring to vv. 37, 38.
- 2) What the officers of the Jews said in John 7:46, "Never . . ."

Thus, we are prepared to say that . . .

- I. JESUS CHRIST WAS NOT ONLY A PROPHET, BUT HE WAS "THE PROPHET" -- GREATER THAN ALL OTHER PROPHETS.

But let us notice secondly . . .

- II. THE EFFECTS OF HIS PROPHETIC MINISTRY (in this instance) AS SEEN IN:

- A. The Jewish people (vv. 40-44).
- B. The Jewish leaders (vv. 45-53).

In some respects the results were very similar with both groups -- interest,
division,
opposition,
support.

What a picture of how men will react when in the very presence of Him Who is "the light of the world"!

But in the midst of all of the turmoil, notice the evidence of God's sovereign, overruling power in:

- 1) What "many" people said: "Of a truth this is the Prophet" -- and they were right! Cf. v. 40.
- 2) "And some of them would have taken him; but no man laid hands on him" (v. 44).
- 3) What the officers said. Cf. v. 46.
- 4) The brightest spot in the whole account: **NICODEMUS!** He is only mentioned 3x in Scripture -- all in the Gospel of John (chs. 3, 7, 19) -- but what a lesson in the way the Lord often deals with people -- slowly, but certainly!
- 5) The final statement in v. 53.

But having seen all of these details, let us now look at the words of the Lord Jesus which brought all of this response:

III. THE MESSAGE OF THE PROPHET, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST (John 7: 37-39).

- A. When it was given: "In the last day, that great day of the feast" -- i.e., of the Feast of Tabernacles (v. 37a).

This was the last day of the last feast of the year for the Jewish people -- a very important day.

It was a day of rest,
but also a day of sacrifices. See Num. 29:35-38.

All of it pointed to Christ, but He stood there and would have been ignored by the people while they were occupied with the types and shadows.

- B. How it was given: "Jesus stood and cried." Cf. v. 37.

Remember from v. 28 how rarely it is mentioned in the Gospels that Jesus cried out!

- C. The words He used (vv. 37b, 38).

Note how simple they are!

By the parallelism, by the fact that this truth was not new (it was in the OT -- cf. Isa. 12:3; 35:6, 7; 41:18; 44:3; 55:1; 58:11; Zech. 14:8, 16), and the explanatory word given by John in v. 39, we can see the simple meaning of the message the Lord was seeking to get into the hearts of the people.

- D. The details:

1. Three conditions:

- a. "If any man thirst." What does it mean to thirst? Remember John 6:35?

Obviously the Lord is talking about spiritual matters, not just the physical. Did they thirst for God, for forgiveness, for hope, for peace?

What do you thirst for? What do you want more than anything else? What do you spend your energy and time and money for? Cf. Isa. 55:1.

- b. "Let him come unto ME" -- the exclusiveness of our Lord's teaching. It is not, Let him come to the Temple on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, nor is it, Let him come to church on Sunday, or on Easter, or on Christmas -- but "let him come unto ME . . . ME . . . ME!"

And then the third part:

- c. "And drink."

And this is explained as believing. See v. 38. See John 6:35 again. No one will ever be saved who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But let me let you in on a wonderful truth from the Gospel of John. Are you thirsty for salvation? Do you want to come to Christ, or have you already come to Christ? Are you ready to drink of the living water that is Christ, or have you already taken that life-giving drink?

Then listen: You did not do all of that for yourself because the Lord Jesus Himself said in John 6:44 that "no man can come (not just will come, but is able to come) to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." See also John 6:65.

So -- if you thirst, if you are coming to Christ (or have come), if you are drinking, ALL OF THE GLORY BELONGS TO THE LORD BECAUSE YOU AND I WOULD NEVER COME APART FROM THE DRAWING WHICH HE DOES WHEN HE MAKES US THIRSTY, MAKES US WILLING TO COME, AND GIVES US THE FAITH TO BELIEVE THROUGH HIS OWN WORD!

But there is one other thing before I close:

- E. The promise (vv. 38b, 39). Cf. John 4:14.

A drink from the Saviour results in an endless supply. What does this mean?

It means:

- 1) Complete satisfaction for you -- for:time and eternity.
- 2) That what you have started, you will continue to do -- coming and drinking, coming and drinking, coming and drinking (as the present tense suggests) -- not to be saved over and over again, but to find continuing satisfaction in Him. This is the first evidence of salvation.
- 3) The basis of evangelism -- from you will flow those "rivers of living water" by which the Lord points ahead to the coming of the Holy Spirit!

Concl: About the middle of the last century, Horatius Bonar of Scotland, penned the words which I want to read to you as I close. They are found in a hymnal I have at home, The Trinity Hymnal, under the heading, "The Lord Jesus Christ, His Prophetic Office." The words express in poetic form what the Lord said in our text and what I trust is your testimony this morning -- as it is mine:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say, 'Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one, Stoop down and drink, and
live.'

I came to Jesus, and I drank Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him."

GUILTY, BUT NOT CONDEMNED
John 8:1-11

Intro: Whatever translation of the Bible you are using, you probably have some notation to the effect that John 7:53-8:11 is not found in "the earliest and most reliable manuscripts" (NIV, p. 1421).

One writer has said,

"These eleven verses, together with the last verse of the preceding chapter, form perhaps the gravest critical difficulty in the New Testament" (Ryle, I, p. 498).

Those who object to it point out (in addition to the fact that some manuscripts leave it out) that:

- 1) It is different from the rest of this Gospel, and so was not written by John.
- 2) It must have been written later, and added -- therefore, it is not inspired writing.
- 3) It presents our Lord as being soft on sin, as ignoring the teaching of the OT Law.
- 4) Many of the Church Fathers have not commented on it, nor have they quoted it.

But on the other side are many who receive it as a part of the Gospel of John, and thus as a part of God's revealed Word.

Those who accept it point out that:

- 1) It is in many manuscripts, and that we do not possess enough of the "old" ones to make the argument against this passage conclusive.
- 2) While not all of the Church Fathers speak of this passage, yet some of them do.
- 3) It is not out of step with the rest of the Gospel, nor with the teaching of Scripture generally. The Lord does not excuse the woman's sin. The passage makes that clear.
- 4) The tactics employed by the Lord's enemies in this passage finds at least three parallels in a passage like Matt. 22.

When you look at the list of names in favor of this passage and compare it with the list of those who are opposed to it, the list in favor is far more impressive and convincing.

I, personally, accept it as genuine -- and I am going to treat it as the Word of God and as a part of the original Gospel of John. When we read it in the light of what we have in the rest of John's Gospel and of the other Gospels, this passage is rich in its teaching regarding every aspect of truth which it deals with.

We see the Lord in four different situations:

- 1) Jesus alone (John 8:1).

- 2) Jesus and the people (John 8:2).
- 3) Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees (John 8:3-9a). Incidentally, this is the only time in the Gospel that John mentions "the scribes."
- 4) Jesus and the woman (John 8:9b-11).

Let us take them in order.

I. JESUS ALONE (John 8:1).

Contrast this with John 7:53.

Was there not one person who would take Him into their home for the night? What did He do on "the mount of Olives"? Cf. Luke 21:37, 38.

It seems that it was precautionary, but it is also a safe assumption that our Lord was there to pray!

The Garden of Gethsemane was at the foot of the Mount of Olives. The Lord could look over the city of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. How full of instruction it is for us that our Lord would (1) follow up the day's work with a night of prayer, and (2) prepare for the following day's ministry by an extended time of prayer!

This is generally where we fail.

II. JESUS AND THE PEOPLE (John 8:2).

Early in the morning He was back in the city -- for what? "And He sat down, and taught them."

Have you ever noticed the morning verses in the Bible? There are many of them. The Lord loved the morning time (and He still does). Here He is in our text, in the early morning at the Temple teaching the people who "came to Him."

People have no greater need than to hear the Word of God!

What He taught, we do not know -- unless the word "again" in John 8:12 gives us a clue.

But let us learn from this brief reference -- two things:

- 1) We need the Word -- and there is no time like the morning to get at it.
- 2) People need the Word. And people will come to hear the Word. Let us be faithful in our conversation, in our gatherings, etc., to take advantage of every opportunity we have to talk to people about the Word of God. This is where the blessing will come from, and this is the instrument the Lord uses to bring people to Himself.

III. JESUS AND THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES (John 8:3-9a).

Notice:

A. Whom they brought: "a woman taken in adultery."

While the Lord was praying, she had been sinning. What a tragic situation this was. We have no other details. We do not know who the man was. We can assume that she was married. See the law in Lev. 20:10 and Deut. 22:22.

B. What they said -- and why (vv. 4-6a).

We have three things:

- 1) They brought the charge against her.
- 2) They repeated what Moses had said in the Law about such a case.
- 3) They asked the Lord's opinion -- "tempting him, that they might have to accuse him."

They were implying two things:

- 1) That the Lord would not necessarily abide by the Law.
- 2) That He might come out with some ruling of His own.

Either way the Lord answered He would be in trouble with the people.

The purpose of the scribes and Pharisees was evident when they came to the Lord instead of doing what they knew the Law told them that they should do!

Notice the total lack of concern for the woman -- and this, too, is in perfect harmony with what the Lord said about them in Matt. 23!

C. The Lord's response (vv. 6b-8).

1. What He did (v. 6b). And John tells us why: "as though He heard them not." This is not in all MSS, but it does seem to be the most likely explanation, especially since John does not tell us what He wrote. This is good advice for many questions: Ignore them.
2. What He said (v. 7) -- when they persisted in questioning Him!

Surely this is a verification of this incident, for who but the Lord could have given such an infinitely wise response!

And the context would seem to show that the Lord had

reference to the same sin that these religious leaders were charging the woman with.

According to the Law, they were to stone her because they were her accusers. But did they have the right to stone her when they were guilty of the same thing?

The Lord was the only One there who was "without sin"!

3. What He did (v. 8). He went back to His writing on the ground -- waiting for His words to take effect!

D. The reaction of the scribes and Pharisees (v. 9a).

They all left.

The oldest ones left first -- probably because they had more sin to account for.

They left because they were "convicted by their own conscience" -- that God-given acknowledgment in the heart of every person that there is such a thing as sin!

Bishop Ryle says, of the conscience,

"It has not power to save, or convert, or lead to Christ."

It takes the work of the Spirit for that.

"But it has a power to accuse, and prick, and witness" (I, p. 506).

What a tragic picture of Judaism in our Lord's day!
If the religious leaders live like this, how can there be any hope for the people?

The scribes and the Pharisees were afraid that the Lord would start talking, and telling what He knew! So they all left!

IV. JESUS AND THE WOMAN (John 8:9b-11).

We are not to think that everybody left, but simply that the scribes and Pharisees left -- all of them!

But it is significant that the woman did not leave. In view of all that we have been learning about salvation in the Gospel of John, is there not evidence here of the providential working of the Lord in the fact that this woman was found in her sin, and brought to the Lord Jesus Christ?

And there she stands -- charged by others, self-condemned by her silence, guilty before the Lord -- but not running; just standing!

What did the Lord say?

A. He asked her two questions (v. 10).

1. "Woman, where are those thine accusers?"
2. "Hath no man condemned thee?"

Her answer: "No man, Lord."

Why had they gone? Because their consciences told them that they were unforgiven sinners too, and that they had no right to bring any accusation against this woman.

Paul raised the question: "Who is he that condemneth?" His answer: "It is Christ that died . . ." The gist of his answer being that no one can bring a condemning charge against the Lord's own once they have entered into salvation.

But this was not all that the Lord said.

B. He made a twofold declaration. See it in v. 11.

1. "Neither do I condemn thee."

If the Lord will not condemn her, who can?

He is not excusing her sin, He is declaring that her sin is forgiven, that she is saved, that she has been born again!

You say, "But when did it happen?" Who knows? Only God does. Where had she learned of Christ? Again -- who knows?

But listen: She had to be saved, or the Lord would have been setting aside His own Law. Christ Himself would die for her sins, and on that basis (like with all OT saints) she was now saved!

But this was not all that the Lord said. Again -- He is teaching!

2. "Go, and sin no more."

NIV: "Go now and leave your life of sin."

NASB: "From now on sin no more."

He is not saying that she could not, but that she must not! The Apostle John says this also in 1 John 3:9.

The first mark of one who has been truly saved is that there will be a radical change in his life where sin is concerned. How gracious of God to allow this woman to be caught in her sin, and then to use ungodly men to bring her to Christ! Talk about the sovereignty of God -- how could you want a better illustration!!!

Concl: Let me close by reading a related passage from the Apostle Paul, found in 1 Cor. 6:9-11. There were some believers in Corinth who formerly had been like this adulterous woman. Note carefully these words:

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind . . ."

Let me read that last statement in the NIV:

"Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders . . ."

And then continuing with the KJV:

"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. AND SUCH WERE SOME OF YOU: BUT YE ARE WASHED, BUT YE ARE SANCTIFIED, BUT YE ARE JUSTIFIED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS, AND BY THE SPIRIT OF OUR GOD."

Are we excusing sin, closing our eyes to it, saying that it will all come out right eventually for everybody?

NO!

I am pointing to the remedy, and pleading with you to believe in Christ. He alone can declare you forgiven. He alone can set you free from the power of your sin. And it is all because He died for sin and for sinners. Put your faith in Christ today. He is your only hope for forgiveness and deliverance and eternal life!!!

Review the
I am's

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD
John 8:12-20

Intro: The subject of light is a prominent theme in the Gospel of John.

We come to it in the very first chapter -- vv. 4-10. Speaking of our Lord, the Apostle John writes:

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light,
that all men through him might believe.

He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of
that Light.

That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that
cometh into the world.

He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the
world knew him not."

Four verses down in that chapter we have another word for light.
It is the word glory. Listen to John 1:14,

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we
beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the
Father), full of grace and truth."

Going on to chapter 3, verses 19-21, we come to the subject of
light again:

"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the
world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because
their deeds were evil.

For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh
to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds
may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God."

John the Baptist is called "a burning and a shining light" in
John 5:35 -- and this is in connection with his witness concern-
ing Christ.

Our text in John 8:12 is next.

In John 9:5 we have the following words of our Saviour:

"As long as I am in the world,
I am the light of the world.

The last passages which apply are in John 12 -- first in vv.
35, 36. The Lord is speaking to the people around Him:

". . . Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come
upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where
he goeth. (Over.)

While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the sons of light. These things spoke Jesus, and departed, and did hide himself from them."

And then to conclude this reading, let me take one verse from
1 John 1, verse 5:

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

There are, of course, many other passages in the Bible which deal with the subjects of light and darkness, but these give us enough for us to see what the meaning of these terms is.

For the Lord Jesus Christ to call Himself "the Light of the world" means basically two things:

- 1) It means that He is righteous.
- 2) It means that He is the truth, and that He has come to reveal the truth.

By contrast we can see that for the Lord Jesus to call Himself "the Light of the world" means that the world is:

- 1) Ignorant of the truth.
- 2) Sinful.

While light describes the Lord, darkness describes men!

To add to man's darkness is the added teaching in Scripture that man is blinded, totally blinded, by Satan and because of his own sin.

You can see why the teaching of the Bible is not popular with men. The witness of the Scripture is:

- 1) That man is a sinful being living in a sinful world.
- 2) That man is in ignorance of his true condition, of God, and of spiritual truth generally.
- 3) That man is blinded so that he cannot see. Paul describes this in 1 Cor. 2:14,

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

What hope is there, then, for man?

This is where our text comes in. Long before this (in fact, about 1,000 years before) David wrote in Psalm 36:9b,

" . . . in thy light shall we see light."

Psalm 119:105, 130 are important, too.

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple."

From these (and other verses -- especially what we have been learning from John's Gospel) we are to understand that:

- 1) Jesus Christ came both to give us light and to give us sight.
- 2) Jesus Christ came not only to teach but to cause man to understand spiritual truth.

And note the evidence of spiritual darkness in the context of John 8:12:

- 1) The Jewish people had just observed all of the ritual of the Feast of Tabernacles, and yet there was such a mood of opposition against the Lord Jesus Christ that many of them would gladly have killed Him.
- 2) We have seen the woman taken in the act of adultery. Regardless of all of the unanswered questions in connection with her sin, she represents the vast majority of the human race which believes that sin is not to be shunned, but sought!
- 3) The appalling ignorance of the Pharisees (as seen in John 8:13-19).
 - a) They did not know the Lord Jesus.
 - b) They did not know God (even though they thought they did).
 - c) They did not know where the Lord Jesus had come from.
 - d) They did not know where He was going.
 - e) Consequently, they did not know why He was there before them.
 - f) They were even ignorant of the meaning of the Father's witness through the miracles that the Lord had performed. And these were the men who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people, the men who should have been teaching the truths the Lord Jesus was teaching.

Where is the hope, then, from this passage?

Look at

- I. OUR LORD'S VERY EMPHATIC CLAIM (John 8:12): "I am the light of the world." Ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου.

Our Lord is being very exclusive in this statement. It means "I" and no one but "I." No other religious teacher, no prophet, no apostle, NO ONE can make the claim that the Lord Jesus makes here.

Note also that the verb "am" is in the present tense -- which means, "I am" NOW,

I always have been,
I always will be,
the one and only "light of the world."

The idea is that if Jesus Christ is not the Light, then the world is held hopelessly in the grip of sin and ignorance --

AND THESE COMBINED MEAN DARKNESS!

Our Lord is "the light of the world" -- meaning all nations, all classes, in all periods of history, for all ages. There is only one "light" for any human being wherever he has lives and whenever he has lived!

Do you believe that? That is what you call dogmatic theology -- and people do not like for you to be dogmatic about God and the truth!

History will teach us some important lessons -- if we are open to learn them. Let me cite one example.

Back in 1880 in England, the Church of England appointed John Charles Ryle as the first Bishop of Liverpool. He was 65 when he became bishop -- and he held that position for 20 years.

Recently a series of his charges and messages to the clergymen of his Diocese have been published, and they provide fascinating reading for anyone who is interested in church history. Bishop Ryle speaks of things that encouraged him about the church, but he also speaks of the things that caused him alarm! One of the alarming things is mentioned many times in these addresses. He called it "one of the greatest dangers by which Christianity is assailed in our day. The danger to which I refer is the widespread decay of distinct doctrinal religion."

And then he continues:

"I am afraid of an inward disease which appears to be growing and spreading in all the Churches of Christ throughout the world. That disease is a disposition on the part of ministers to abstain from all sharply-cut doctrine, and a distaste on the part of professing Christians for all distinct statements of dogmatic truth. . . The hidden enemy within the camp is far more dangerous than the foe outside."

He said in this address that we "desire to have the fruits of Christianity without the roots, to have Christian morality without Christian doctrine.

He continues,

"I will not weary you with a catalogue of the strong and loose utterances which come incessantly . . . about inspiration, about the atonement, about the sacrifice and death of Christ, about the incarnation, about miracles, about Satan, about the Holy Spirit, about future punishment . . . The consequences of this widespread dislike to distinct doctrine are very serious. Whether we like it or not, it is an epidemic which is just now doing great harm, and specially among young people. It creates, fosters, and keeps up an immense amount of instability in religion. It produces what I must venture to call, if I may coin a phrase, a 'jelly-fish'

Christianity in the land: that is, a Christianity without bone, or muscle, or power. A jelly-fish, as every one knows who has been much by the seaside, is a pretty and graceful object when it floats in the sea, contracting and expanding like a little delicate transparent umbrella. Yet the same jelly-fish, when cast on the shore, is a mere helpless lump, without capacity for movement, self-defence, or self-preservation. Alas! it is a vivid type of much of the religion of this day, of which the leading principle is -- 'No dogma, no distinct tenets, no positive doctrine.'

And then let me conclude Bishop Ryle's comments with these words:

"And last, and worst of all, we have myriads of worshippers, respectable church-going people, who have no distinct and definite views about any point in theology. . . They think everybody is right and nobody wrong, everything is true and nothing is false, all sermons are good and none are bad, every clergyman is sound and no clergyman unsound. They are 'tossed to and fro, like children, by every wind of doctrine'; often carried away by some new excitement and sensational movement; ever ready for new things, because they have no firm grasp on the old; and utterly unable to 'render a reason of the hope that is in them.'

"Distinct and positive doctrine is at a discount just now. Instability and unsettled notions are the natural result, and meet us in every direction. Cleverness and earnestness are the favourite idols of the age. What a man says matters nothing, however strange and heterogeneous are the opinions he expresses! If he is only brilliant and 'earnest,' he cannot be wrong! Never was it so important for laymen to hold systematic views of truth, and for ordained ministers to 'enunciate doctrine' very clearly and distinctly in their teaching" (Charges and Adresses, pp. 48-54).

May the Lord have mercy on us if we dare to water down the truth of Scripture in any way. When our Lord say, "I am the light of the world," let us take it for what it means and teach it without compromising with it in any way.

Let us proclaim it and believe it.

But before I close note two more points:

II. THE EVIDENCE THAT WE BELIEVE THE CLAIM (John 8:12b).

John has already indicated a number of times that it is necessary for a person to believe in order to be saved -- or to receive Christ -- or to drink of the living water. They all mean the same -- and no person can possibly be saved who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But what does the Lord say here? Listen: " . . . he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Will you notice that you have a verb in the present tense, and then two verbs in the future tense?

What is the point?

We are not saved from darkness by following; we are saved by believing, and we manifest the reality of our faith by following! A person who truly believes will follow Christ in a life of obedience to His will, and the person who follows Christ will not walk in darkness. The person who walks in darkness is not following Christ, and the person who is not following Christ does not know Him as Saviour.

I am not saying a Christian cannot fail and fall, but I am saying that he will not live that way -- and that is what the Lord is saying here. Salvation and darkness cannot live together.

One other thing . . .

III. OTHER RESULTS OF BELIEVING THE CLAIM OF CHRIST.

- A. We know where He came from.
- B. We know why He was here.
- C. We know where He has gone.
- D. We not only know Him, but we know His Father.

We cannot know God except through Christ, and it is impossible to know Christ without knowing God.

Concl: The Jews had their religion. They had even the Old Testament. They had their ceremonies, and their place of worship. BUT THEY DID NOT HAVE CHRIST. Consequently, they did not have God, and they did not have either the light or the life.

What a picture this is of many, many people today! They go to church. They may even belong to a church. They even read the Bible occasionally. They may even give consistently to the church. But the question is: Do they have Christ? If not, they do not have eternal life -- and are still in ignorance and in sin.

Make sure today!

THE URGENT NEED TO BELIEVE

John 8:21-30

Intro: From the writing of John's Gospel it would seem that nothing infuriated men more than for the Lord to say that there was something they could not do!

Quotation in the Seven Star Diary: "If man will persevere, nothing will be impossible for him to do."

Even today we have a song which talks about "the manliness of God," and the counterpart of that emphasis is the godliness of man. It is very popular today to humanize God and to deify man. Consequently, we undergo a real shock when we come to the Scriptures, even to the words of the Lord Jesus, and find that God is still God, and that He is still absolutely sovereign over man.

In our text this morning the Lord says very clearly and very emphatically, "Whither I go, ye cannot come." (See v. 21.)

In fact, all through the 21st verse there is a contrast between our Lord and men, with the Lord saying very definitely what was going to happen to both! (Read.)

The reason for this statement is found in another statement which the Lord uses 3x in this passage. You have it once in v. 21, and 2x in v. 24. It is that "ye . . . shall die in your sins."

There is one significant difference between these three statements:

- 1) In v. 21 "sins" should be in the singular, sin.
- 2) In v. 24 both are in the plural in the original Greek.

There are two possible reasons for this:

- 1) That the Lord is referring first to the sin nature, and then to acts of sin.
- 2) That the singular has reference to the particular sin that the Lord is dealing with in this passage: the sin of unbelief.

Both ideas certainly could apply.

So, reading the latter part of v. 24, we can see:

- I. THE BASIC REASON FOR THE URGENCY TO BELIEVE -- if you do not, you will die in your sins (John 8:24b).

Note:

- A. The certainty of it -- being especially the words of the Lord Jesus.
- B. The awful finality of it. This is the worst that can

happen to man. And once it does take place, it is irreversible. There are no second chances after death!

We even know that this is the reason for death. If there had been no sin, there would be no death -- physically, spiritually, eternally, or any other way!

- C. Only one way of escape. You will die, but you will not "die in your sins."

This is the burden of what the Lord was saying. The fact that they were Jews was not enough, nor that they were religious Jews, nor sincere, nor zealous, nor anything else. There was only one hope offered to men, and that is expressed in our Lord's words, "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."

But, since it is important to believe, what does it mean to believe? (Note the controversy over v. 30 -- the possibility that this was not saving belief, or faith.)

II. THE REAL MEANING OF TO BELIEVE.

It is not just an acceptance of certain facts (although that is included, as we shall see in a moment), but it is placing our trust in that Person and in what He has done -- the One Who is the object of our faith, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ.

In other words, we believe that because He is Who He is, and because of what He has done, He has done everything necessary to satisfy God, and so we trust Him alone, and not anyone or anything else, to be our Saviour!

It is possible to believe facts about Christ without trusting in Christ. We need to do both. One without the other is not saving faith.

But now let us look at . . .

III. THE FACTS WE NEED TO BELIEVE IN ORDER NOT TO DIE IN OUR SINS.

There are mentioned here for us by the Lord Himself. Notice carefully what they are. It is only as you believe these, and trust Christ, that you can escape eternal judgment for your sins.

- A. We need to believe that there is an infinite difference between the Lord Jesus Christ and all other men.

See how it is expressed by the Lord in v. 23.

It is the difference between Deity and humanity,

between absolute perfection and total depravity,
between complete holiness and utter sinfulness.

You cannot possibly be saved as long as you believe that Jesus Christ is just another human being like you and I are! It is impossible for words to express the great gulf that exists between the nature of Jesus of Christ and the nature of any human being, even the greatest among men!

- B. We need to believe in that which is expressed in the words, "he that sent me is true" (John 8:26).

The Lord, according to John's Gospel, loved to speak of the fact that He had been "sent" by the Father!

I just want to pick up two truths from this -- which you must believe if you are not to die in your sins.

1. That He was a real human being.

Nobody in the crowd was denying that -- and neither can we! This is a miracle, but it is true -- and an essential part of our faith.

2. That He continued to be God even though He had become a man.

There was nothing about becoming human that changed in any respect the absolute Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. He was God in human flesh. Cf. John 1:14.

If you deny these, and if your heart is not changed before you die, you will die in your sins!

Let me mention another thing you must believe. It has to do with the things which the Lord Jesus taught.

- C. We need to believe that His Words were the Word of God -- and that He never taught anything that was not true, that His words are our final authority.

See vv. 26b, 28b.

In fact, we can extend this to all that He did while He was here on earth:

- 1) "I do nothing of myself" (v. 28m).
- 2) "I do always those things that please him," i.e., that please the Father.

Do you argue with the Lord? Do you think your opinion is as good as His, or do you think that there are others

who knew (or know) as much about life's problems as He did?

If so, how can you claim to believe Him, to be trusting Him? And, if you are not trusting Him, you will die in your sins!

There is one other thing that needs to be emphasized here:

- D. We need to believe that the solution for man's sin is to be found only at the cross of Jesus Christ -- when the Son of man was "lifted up" (John 8:28, 29).

Read these two verses, noticing how many things we "know" when we understand this about the cross!

When Jesus Christ died, it left nothing for man to do for his salvation. If Jesus Christ had not died, no man would ever have been able to do enough.

Salvation is not a cooperative work between God and man, it is a divine work, from start to finish, and Jesus Christ alone is the Saviour of men by virtue of His death for sins on the cross!

I have been reading a book this past week in which the author emphasizes that faith rests on facts, and that any faith which does not rest on facts is not faith, but fantasy!

Truer words were never spoken.

But I must deal with one other part of this text before I close. It is a very, very solemn part -- and it emphasizes even more the urgent need to believe.

It is found in v. 21.

- IV. IT IS URGENT THAT WE BELIEVE NOW BECAUSE THE TIME MAY COME WHEN WE WILL SEEK HIM, BUT NOT BE ABLE TO FIND HIM.

See John 8:21.

For any of you who are without Christ, I would like to frighten you with these words. I would like to frighten you until you would not be able to sleep, or eat, or concentrate on your work, or hide your fear in any pleasure. I would like to do that because I believe that is what the Lord was seeking to do here.

After all, you get frightened about a lot of other things, but you are not afraid of dying in your sins!

In our humanizing of God and our deifying of man we have given men the idea that you can:

- 1) Treat God any way you want to.
- 2) Decide to become a Christian when you are ready.
- 3) Make up your mind about God after you have done everything else that you want to do.

If you are concerned about your soul this morning, I know of nothing in Scripture to guarantee that you will feel the same way this afternoon. The Bible says, "NOW is the accepted time . . ."

Concl: Let me close by giving you two warnings from Scripture.

The first has to do with Felix, the Roman governor. See Acts 24:24, 25.

Do you notice how he treats God like he would treat any man less than himself? Did he ever have that "convenient" time? Do you think that these words are still ringing in Felix' heart -- down to this very hour?

The second has to do with Esau. See Heb. 12:14-17.

When Esau ate that pottage, he closed a door that he would never be able to get open again!

Do you think that your case will be any different? Why do you think these things are recorded in Scripture?

It is important for all of us to make sure -- that we believe these great truths, and that we are trusting the Lord Jesus Christ, and Him alone, as our Saviour, so that, when we die, we will not die in our sins!

TRUE DISCIPLES

John 8:31-36

Intro: Up to this point our Lord had been speaking to "Pharisees" and to "the Jews" who did not believe.

Now a change is being introduced.

Our text begins in v. 31 with the words, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him."

But even here we must make a distinction -- because the Lord makes a distinction.

By the words, "disciples indeed," or TRUE DISCIPLES, the Lord indicates that, while there are those who truly believe, it is also possible for some to make a good start, an apparently sincere profession of faith, who do not really believe.

We had this kind of a situation in John 6:66. (Read.)

Also, we had in our text of last week the clear statement of our Lord that some would seek Him who would not be able to find Him. See John 8:21.

But it is interesting to see how the Lord graciously responds to those who professed to believe. He begins immediately to minister to them. Even when they make a foolish claim about their relationship to Abraham, He does not reject their claim, but seeks to bring them to an understanding of the truth without flatly contradicting what they have just said.

Time is the vital element in testing faith. Let us not jump to conclusions when ~~men~~^{men} profess faith in Christ, but let us respond to them like the Lord did, and work with them like He did.

How can we identify true disciples? How can we be sure that we are true disciples?

In our text the Lord gives at least four marks of identification. They have to do with:

- 1) The Scriptures.
- 2) Sin.
- 3) Salvation.
- 4) The Son of God.

Let us look at each of these.

I. TRUE BELIEVERS AND THE SCRIPTURES.

This is the foundational evidence. The others grow out of this because it is in the Word that we are taught about sin,

about salvation, and about Christ.

A true disciple will not only make an initial response to the Word, but he will "continue." The Word will become his meat and drink. It will become his final authority. He will become conscious of his own ignorance, and of how much he needs to learn. After all a disciple is "a learner, pupil" (Thayer, p. 386).

Alford, in his Greek New Testament (I, 794) tells us what it means to "continue":

"Remaining in His word is not merely obeying His teaching, but is the inner conviction of the truth of that revelation of Himself . . ."

So continuing involves an acceptance of:

- 1) The doctrines of Scripture.
- 2) The teachings of Scripture as they relate to our daily lives.

Matthew Henry indicates that saving faith must be sound faith, and that it must "continue" until it becomes strong faith -- and that all true faith come from and is related to the Word of God!

This is the first evidence of a true believer. Nothing can take its place. You can never exhaust it, but you must "continue" in it if you are really a disciple -- a true believer in Christ.

And we have the Lord's promise that two things will result:

- 1) "And ye shall know the truth" -- not all at once, and never completely, but as you continue to search it and to believe it and to obey it, "ye shall know" it! We will learn more about knowing the Word before we finish the Gospel of John.
- 2) "And the truth shall make you free." The Word of God has a liberating effect on the lives of those who really believe. But what is the Lord talking about -- freedom from what?

This leads us to our next point:

II. TRUE DISCIPLES AND SIN.

The "They" of v. 33 must refer to "those Jews which believed on him," mentioned in v. 31. According to what we have said, some really believed; others only made an empty profession.

But this is where the Lord touched a sore spot. Man does not like to be told that he is, or has been, a slave -- that he

has been unable to help himself. Many who profess to be Christians despise the doctrine of depravity and they refuse to believe that ultimately things are not under their control.

They will show how they have given up certain sins, but they cannot show that they have given up sinning! And, to go back to our first point, the person who is not continuing in the Word is going to have a very inadequate idea of what sin is!

Look at the response of these who professed to believe in the Lord. (Read v. 33.)

They were talking about men; the Lord was talking about sin.

But even if you wanted to talk about men, had they forgotten about Egypt, about Babylon, and even then -- about Rome?

Notice this evidence of their blindness -- spiritual blindness!

But notice the gracious words, and yet very strong words, of our Lord in vv. 34-36.

He is not talking about bondage to men, but about man's bondage to SIN!

And so here is the second mark of a true disciple: He is free! Not free to sin, nor free from the possibility of sinning, but free from the slavery of sin. He no longer has to sin. The bondage is broken and removed. And this is only possible in Christ.

CF. REV.
1:5b.

Cf. 1 John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin . . ."

Do you qualify -- even in your attitude toward sin?

Let us go on to a third mark of a true disciple:

III. TRUE DISCIPLES AND SALVATION.

I want to look for a moment at two sides of of one truth related to the whole doctrine of salvation. It has to do with what we usually refer to as eternal security.

You have the doctrine in the latter part of v. 35 where "Son" should be spelled with a small s. Our Lord was responding to the objection of the Jews. He is not denying that they were in Abraham's house (as natural descendants), but He is saying that there were there as bond-slaves, not as sons!

If they wanted a permanent place in Abraham's house and to be heirs of the promises of salvation which God gave to Abraham, they had to be Abraham's sons -- his spiritual sons by faith.

The servant does not have a permanent place in the house, BUT A SON DOES! Once a son, you can never be anything else! You are secure in that relationship.

But remember: We are talking about true disciples and those who claim to be, but are not in reality. How are they different? Do people only have to claim sonship to be eternally secure?

Let us go back to the word "continue" in v. 31.

How can you tell that a person is truly saved, and thus eternally secure in Christ? It is because he continues. This used to be called THE PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS!

A true disciple, a true son, will "continue," he will persevere. He may have troubles. He may occasionally fall into sin. But he will not quit. And he certainly will not live in his sin. And by his perseverance he will show that he is a true disciple and thus eternally secure in Christ.

One more point -- the fourth and last:

IV. TRUE DISCIPLES AND THE SON OF GOD.

"My word" in v. 31 is not only the Word which the Lord gave, but it is the Word which speaks of Him.

Link this with "the truth" in v. 32, and then with v. 36.

When we continue in the Word,
 we learn more about sin,
 we learn more about salvation,
we learn more about the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you will never find a true disciple who will hesitate to say, "If the Son therefore shall make you free,
 ye shall be free indeed," truly free, actually free,
 not just pretending to be free.

And, at the same time, a true disciple will say, "If the Son has not made you free, you are not free -- because freedom from sin comes ONLY through Christ!"

Concl: Are you a true disciple? Are the marks of identification there? If not, your only hope is in Christ. Come to Him now, and believe with all your heart.

THE DEVIL'S CHILDREN
John 8:37-47

Intro: Every true Christian should read a passage like this with thanksgiving to the Lord -- for several reasons:

- 1) That we are no longer in the condition described here by our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 2) That God has seen fit to give us this kind of teaching in Scripture. We get it no place else (unless it is altered so as to be filled with error) --
 - a) That there is a "devil."
 - b) That he has children.
 - c) That his children can be identified by certain characteristics.
- 3) That such teaching makes it possible for us to tell others, so that we may see what Paul describes in the following words of 2 Tim. 2:25b, 26,

" . . . if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will,"

or as the NIV says,

"who has taken them captive to do his will."

Let us approach this passage prayerfully, with our dependence upon the Lord to protect us, and that He may see fit to open the eyes and hearts of any here this morning who need to know the Saviour.

Cf. Eph. 6:10-12.

Let us note from the passage before us, first of all . . .

I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DEVIL'S CHILDREN.

But before we speak of the characteristics, we need to clarify who we mean by the devil's children.

I see no need to identify them in any other way than that they are all of the people of the world who do not know the Lord Jesus as Saviour. Thus, at one time it would have included all of us.

We have a similar expression in Eph. 2:3b where Paul speaks of all men as "by nature the children of wrath."

So we are not talking about the members of some cult (although they would be included), nor are we limiting ourselves to those who have given themselves to Satanic practices of worship (although they would be included, too). But we are speaking of all who are without Christ.

The first thing that can be said is:

A. They are like their father (John 8:44a).

Spiritually the unregenerate people of the world owe their origin to the Devil.

Two things characterize him:

- 1) He is a murderer.
- 2) He is a liar.

Now we can thank God that we do not see these characteristics to the same degree in every person, but the possibilities are always there, the potential for the greatest possible sin. And there are hardly two sins which have been more characteristic of the human family than these: murder and lying.

Two of the ten commandments deal specifically with these.

B. The characteristics identified by the Lord:

Let us start at the beginning of our text, and move through it dealing with the appropriate verses.

1. They are inclined toward self-deception -- in at least two ways:

By saying, "We be Abraham's seed" (v. 33), they were . . .

- a. Showing their dependence upon their natural heritage.
- b. Showing their dependence upon religion and religious observances.

With the Gentiles it might be expressed in a different way, but the same tendency is there!

But the characteristics soon show themselves in another direction:

2. They reject the claims of Christ. See vv. 37, 42.

Thank God, again, man's rejection of Christ is expressed in varying degrees. It is not always that we see a desire to kill Him. Men often extoll His virtues, His teaching, His works -- but they deny His Deity, His mission to save, and certainly that He is the only way to God!

Consequently it should not be surprising to find another very important item on their rejection list:

3. They reject the word of God. See vv. 37, 38a, 40.

Here again they may praise certain parts of it. They may even say that the Bible contains some words of God.

But to accept the whole of Scripture with all of its teaching as the only infallible and unchanging Word of God -- that is going too far, and they will not accept it.

And note: They are deaf to it. See v. 43. Satan has seen to this.

2 Cor. 4:3, 4 tells us also about how the Devil has blinded the minds of men so that they cannot understand.

In addition we have all of the teaching of Eph. 2: 1-3 with its emphasis that people without Christ are spiritually dead.

How could the situation be more hopeless.

But then there are two other things which our Lord mentions in this passage. They have to do with the attitude of the people of the world toward the devil even though they may not be conscious of what is going on!

This is one of the reasons it is so wonderful that we have the Word of God -- it tells us not only things that we will learn from no other source, but we can also know that what it says is true!

4. They are willingly subject to the Devil -- and this is seen in two ways:
 - a. They are listening to him. See v. 38b. Many manuscripts have the word hear instead of "seen" in the latter part of the verse.

They do not listen to the Word, but they do listen to the Devil. And he does a lot of talking, just as he did in the Garden of Eden!

- b. They (lit.) will to do the Devil's will (which is the way v. 44a should be translated).

The world does not rebel against the Devil. It

wholeheartedly agrees with him. The human will is set in the Devil's direction, not in God's!

Do you wonder why so many people find pleasure in rejecting the truth and living in sin? It is because they are listening to a different voice from the one you listen to.

How would it be possible to present a more hopeless situation? Man is deaf to the Word of God. He wills to do what the Devil wants him to do. He really does not know what is going on. And he finds a deep, uncontrollable aversion to Christ and to the Word of God in his heart.

Is there anything that can be done?

YES, THERE IS! And the answer is to be found in the passage before us this morning.

II. THE DELIVERANCE OFFERED TO THE DEVIL'S CHILDREN.

Our Lord mentioned three things. In a sense we might say that they are things which are all bound up in one.

Listen carefully.

A. Hear the Word of God.

But, you say, haven't you just told us that the people of the world "cannot hear" (v. 43)?

Yes, I have!

But let me ask you a question: WHY DO YOU HAVE THESE STATEMENTS FROM OUR LORD?

- 1) V. 38 -- "I speak that which I have seen with my Father."
- 2) V. 40 -- "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God."
- 3) V. 43 -- "Why do ye not understand my speech? (The point is that He was talking to them.)"
- 4) V. 45 -- ". . . I tell you the truth."
- 5) V. 46 -- ". . . And if I say the truth. . . ?"

Why did the Lord give the truth to people who were deaf to it?

Because, by the miracle of His grace, His Word is the very instrument that He uses to open the ears of the deaf so that they hear and understand the life-giving Word of God!

This is why the Lord was speaking. And this is why we

"preach the Word." If people are ever to "hear," it will be as the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to get the truth into their ears and from there into their hearts!

Cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-5.

The second thing is this:

B. Believe it.

Notice vv. 45, 46.

"Faith cometh by hearing . . ." (Rom. 10:17).

Don't ask me how. That is not our business. But it does! That is a work which God does!

It is "the truth" (vv. 32 -- 2x, 40, 44 -- 2x, 45, 46). John uses the word "truth" in John 8 more than in any other chapter in the whole Gospel.

Have no doubt about it -- it is the Word of God! The devil will always lie to you; the Lord never will!

Cf. 1 Thess. 2:13,

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."

Oh, believe this morning that what the Lord is saying here is truth!

C. Love the Lord Jesus.

See v. 42. "If God were your Father, ye would love ME."

To love Him means that you choose Him, you are trusting Him, you hear Him, you will now obey Him and please Him, that you delight in Him, that you want to be with Him.

There is no other way to be freed from sin and freed from the Devil's family except through the redeeming work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Concl: May the Lord use His Word this morning to take those who hear out of the Devil's family and into the family of God.

ABRAHAM, OR CHRIST
John 8:48-59

Intro: The message of our Lord which we conclude this morning began back in John 8:12.

One of the most significant things about this message is that our Lord is interrupted 10 times!

Three of these are in our text today. Note the 10:

- 1) V. 13.
- 2) V. 19.
- 3) V. 22.
- 4) V. 25.
- 5) V. 33.
- 6) V. 39.
- 7) V. 41.
- 8) V. 48.
- 9) Vv. 52, 53.
- 10) V. 57.

The Lord's message seems to be gaining ground up to v. 30.

But after the statement of vv. 31, 32, the favorable attitude of the crowd seems to have deteriorated rapidly.

Note how it was the Lord's purpose to teach the truth, not to court the favor of men.

If we note the final three interruptions of the crowd in this last part of our Lord's message, and His response in each case, we have our divisions of this passage of Scripture -- with the conclusion in v. 59. (It is most helpful to see it in a red letter New Testament.)

So the three divisions are:

- 1) Vv. 48-51.
- 2) Vv. 52-56.
- 3) Vv. 57, 58.
- 4) The conclusion: v. 59.

All three sections have to do with salvation.

The first has to do with the way of salvation.

The second has to do with salvation in the Old Testament as compared with salvation in the New Testament.

The third has to do with the character of the Saviour.

Finally, we see the tragic response, quite in contrast with v. 30.

Let us look at these three sections under the headings:

- 1) A vicious accusation -- and our Lord's answer (vv. 48-51).
 - 2) A tragic distortion -- and our Lord's answer (vv. 52-56).
 - 3) A scornful rejection -- and our Lord's answer (vv. 57, 58).
- All of this is followed by the conclusion in v. 59.

I. A VICIOUS ACCUSATION -- AND OUR LORD'S ANSWER (John 8: 48-51).

A. The accusation (v. 48).

It is hard to imagine any words which could have shown greater contempt for our Lord.

They charge Him with what, to them, was the worst:

- 1) On the human level -- corrupters of the Word of God, and outcasts from salvation: "a Samaritan."
- 2) On the Satanic level -- that He was demon-possessed.

B. Our Lord's answer (vv. 49-51).

He does three things:

1. He rejects their charge: "I have not a devil," or demon (v. 49a).
2. He clarifies two points about His ministry:
 - a. "I honour my Father" -- and then He adds, "and ye do dishonour me" (v. 49b), indicating that He was seeking God's glory, and that they, in dishonoring Him, were actually dishonoring the Father!
 - b. "And I seek not my own glory" -- and then He reminds them that it is the Father Who uses us as He sees fit: "there is one that seeketh and judgeth (v. 50).

Note how both of these are patterns for us in the ministry today!

3. He reaffirms the way of salvation in the strongest possible way, limiting it to the message He had given (v. 51).

Three times in this message the Lord says, "Verily, verily." In vv. 34, 51, 58.

"My saying" obviously refers to all of His teaching regarding the Gospel. To "keep" means to accept, to trust, and to obey.

This all led to our second point.

II. A TRAGIC DISTORTION -- AND THE LORD'S ANSWER (John 8:52-56).

David, in the Old Testament, wrote in Psalm 56:5,
 "Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts
 are against me for evil."

Our Lord enemies were continually doing this to Him. This passage is one continual attempt to accuse Him of saying things He was not saying, and to ignore what He was saying.

A. The distortion: interpreting our Lord's statement of physical death alone (vv. 52, 53).

This is the Jews longest interruption. Obviously they think that they have something here.

It is clear that the Lord was not talking about physical death -- although it is true that faith in Christ helps us even there.

But He is talking about eternal death, the second death, about hell -- and that there is only one way of escaping that!

But the Jews raised the question of Abraham and the prophets, feeling that at last they have Him in a corner from which He will not be able to escape.

B. The Lord's answer (vv. 54-56).

He really does not explain what He meant by "he shall never see death" (v. 51b), BUT HE GOES ON TO SHOW THAT THEIR RESPONSE SHOWED TWO THINGS:

- 1) They did not really know GOD.
- 2) They did not know how Abraham was saved. See v. 56.

THIS IS ONE OF THE GREATEST PASSAGES IN THE GOSPELS TO SHOW THAT SALVATION IS THE SAME IN THE NEW TESTAMENT THAT IT WAS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT, THAT IT IS ALWAYS THROUGH CHRIST, AND THAT OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS WERE SAVED BY FAITH IN CHRIST, LOOKING AHEAD TO HIS COMING!

"My day" speaks of the time of the Lord's coming in fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham.

Abraham never claimed to have been able to save himself, but he looked for the coming of his Saviour -- so, YES, Christ is the greater of the two! He is greater than any man you can compare Him with.

III. A SCORNFUL REJECTION -- AND OUR LORD'S ANSWER (John 8:57, 58).

A. The rejection (v. 57).

Notice how again they "wrest" His words -- placing a merely human interpretation on words that were given to convey the most wonderful spiritual truth!

B. The Lord's answer (v. 58).

Now the Lord speaks of Himself -- and we have from His own lips a positive affirmation of His Deity.

This is the key verse for all of the I AM's of the Gospel of John.

This statement links our Lord with the God who spoke to Moses in Ex. 3:13, 14 -- "I AM THAT I AM: and he (that is, the Lord) said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."

We could translate the words of our Lord, Before Abraham was born, I was always in existence. Abraham had a beginning; I did not.

How this must have staggered their minds! They were speaking to One who claimed to be over 2,000 years old -- and actually timeless with respect to His existence.

This is how John began His Gospel. See John 1:1-3.

Concl: See v. 59.

Our Lord's escape was like that in Luke 4:30.

Why did they want to kill Him?

- 1) Because they believed that He was guilty of blasphemy -- naming Himself God!
- 2) Because they did not like the place He gave Himself in the Scriptures.
- 3) Because they did not like the place He gave Himself in the salvation of all men -- that He was the only Saviour, and that His message was the only Gospel.

WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSE?

Will you believe this and turn to Christ this morning, or will you close the door on yourself, just like these men did after listening to the Lord speak so graciously and patiently and truthfully to them?

THE WORK OF GOD ON DISPLAY

John 9:1-12

Intro: The whole 9th chapter of John deals with the miracle of sight for the man born blind, and the consequences that it had.

We take up just the first 12 verses this morning which give us the account of the healing.

The chapter begins with:

- I. AN OBVIOUS EMPHASIS ON THE LORD. This goes down through the first part of v. 7.

We are concerned with what the Lord was doing,
what the Lord "saw,"
what the disciples asked the Lord,
the answer that He gave to them,
what the Lord did to the blind man,
what He told the blind man to do.

The Lord is the center of it all.

But, out of these, note three things in particular:

- A. John tells us that our Lord "saw a man which was blind from his birth" (v. 1b).

It is obvious from what follows that this was more than a casual glance, or a chance meeting.

And, if we add to this what we were told in John 1 about the Lord and Nathanael, we can see that the Lord had a special reason for seeing this particular blind man. The Lord said to Nathanael, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee." Cf. John 1:48b.

This is clarified by the question that was raised by the disciples in which we see:

- B. The evidence of a divine purpose for this particular blind man.

The disciples wanted to know, "Who did sin . . . ?"

There are many interesting things about this question that we really do not have time to deal with, i.e., relative to the cause of suffering in the world. BUT THE IMPORTANT THING ABOUT THE DISCIPLES' QUESTION WAS THAT IT REFLECTED AN IDEA THAT KEPT THEM FROM SEEING

THE REAL ISSUE HERE.

This was not a case where disease was a judgment for sin but where this man ("of age" according to v. 21, meaning probably 30 years of age or older) had been "born blind . . . that the works of God should be made manifest (i.e., openly displayed, put on exhibition) in him."

And note: This does not mean that this would have been true of any blind man, but of this particular blind man. Some diseases are due to sin (see John 5:14), BUT NOT THIS ONE!

The blindness of this blind man had been ordained of God for the purpose of displaying the mighty power and glory of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we are concerned with when the Lord "saw" him.

But notice another thing:

- C. The initiative taken by the Lord -- without any evidence that the blind man himself made any request. See v. 6.

Commentators on the Scriptures down through the history of the Church have recognized with few exceptions that the miracles of our Lord, while being real, are typical in character in that they contain many lessons pointing to the greatest of all miracles: salvation itself!

Such is the case here.

Here is a very great truth relating to salvation. It is this: The work always begins with God, not with us.

We sing it in the hymn,

"I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
No I was found of Thee."

The blind man did not ask for it. He could not have really known what he was missing. And what a parallel there is between this and salvation -- a truth that is brought out again when Peter and John in Acts 4 healed a man who had never walked!

No person without salvation can possibly know how wonderful it is, or that even such a thing exists!

- II. THE UTTER HOPELESSNESS OF THE CASE -- "a man which was blind from his birth."

Maybe he did not even have any eyes at all. If he did, they

had never been able to give him sight. THUS (and here is the point), THE LORD HAD TO GIVE HIM SOMETHING WHICH HE HAD NEVER HAD BEFORE! He could not help himself. His parents had not been able to help him. His neighbors could not help him. The scribes and Pharisees has not done anything for him. His sightless eyes had made him a beggar -- with no prospect that he would ever be anything else!

How important it is for every person to learn this about his spiritual need!

But let us look at a third feature of this account:

III. THE UNLIKELY, EVEN OFFENSIVE MEANS THAT THE LORD EMPLOYED FOR THE RESTORATION OF HIS SIGHT. See v. 6.

There is a certain repulsiveness to this -- our Lord spitting and then putting that with the clay on the blind man's eyes. Did the blind man think that it might be a joke? Did it not even make his appearance worse, and, if anything, make it more impossible for him to see?

Do you see the lesson in this? It has a very definite application to the Gospel.

Listen to 1 Cor. 1:18, 23, 24:

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. . . But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Do you remember the reaction of Naaman the Syrian when Elisha sent word to him to go wash in the Jordan seven times if he wanted to be healed of his leprosy? Cf. 2 Kings 5.

How foolish the Gospel sounds to people until they know what their real need is!

But, then, we see the faith of the blind man tried even more by:

IV. THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST -- WHEN HE TOLD THE BLIND MAN WHAT TO DO. See v. 7a.

Spurgeon (Vol. 33, pp. 453) says several things about our Lord's words to the blind man.

- 1) They formed a command.
- 2) They were words which were "exceedingly specific."
- 3) They were "intensely simple."
- 4) They were "distinctly personal."
- 5) They were words "for the present time."

Each of these points applies to the Gospel.

And note how John writes: "He (i.e., the blind man) went his way therefore, and washed."

Why did he go? Because the Lord said for him to do this -- and yet (AND NOTICE THIS IN PARTICULAR) at this point he really did not know who the Lord was except by Name. He did not know if He were a sinner or not. And so he obviously did not understand that our Lord was Deity, the Son of God!

But all of that did not make any difference at this point. Those things were to be clarified later. THE IMPORTANT THING IS TO SEE THAT "FAITH COMETH BY HEARING, AND HEARING BY THE WORD OF GOD," OR OF CHRIST, EVEN WHEN YOU DO NOT KNOW THAT IT IS THE WORD OF GOD!!!

Let us remember this when we use the Word, or when we are inclined to back away from using it. The Word of God is powerful even when men do not know what we are using, or even if they deny that it is the Word of God!

WHAT HAPPENED?

V. THE RESULT: He "came seeing" (John 9:7b).

A. It was instantaneous -- not a process.

B. It was recognized:

1. By the blind man himself. The Apostle John in his first Epistle gives us the evidences.

Cf. John 9:25 for the blind man's testimony, and v.11.

2. By some of his neighbors. See John 9:9. Cf. 2 Cor. 5:17. You cannot be spiritually healed without becoming "a new creature."

C. It was permanent. And so is salvation.

Concl: May I ask a question as I close?

Do you suppose there is any possibility that the Lord is seeing anyone here this morning as He "saw" that man that day? Do you suppose there is a spiritually blinded sinner here this morning to whom the Lord intends to give spiritual sight. As you have listened to this story, have you seen yourself?

Then listen one more time. The Word of God says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" -- a command, very specific, as simple as it can be, very, very personal, and for you NOW! Believe and be saved, as the blind man went, and washed, and came seeing!

"AND THEY CAST HIM OUT"

John 9:13-34

Intro: In going through the Gospel of John we need to remind ourselves every once in a while of John's main purpose in writing this Gospel. See John 20:30, 31.

Of the signs, or miracles, this miracle in John 9 is #6.

The others are:

- 1) The changing of water into wine -- John 2.
- 2) The healing of the nobleman's son -- John 4.
- 3) The healing of the man who had been crippled for 38 years -- John 5.
- 4) The feeding of the 5,000 -- John 6.
- 5) Jesus walking on the water -- John 6.
- 6) The giving of sight to the man born blind -- John 9.
- 7) The raising of Lazarus -- John 11.

These are His pre-resurrection miracles.

In John 9 we have three divisions:

- 1) The miracle performed (John 9:1-12).
- 2) The trial of the former blind man (John 9:13-34). This led to his excommunication.
- 3) The salvation of the man who had been given sight (John 9:35-41).

What we have in our text this morning is actually a trial -- a trial of the man to whom the Lord had given sight.

There are three stages to the trial:

- 1) First, we have the man himself on the stand (so to speak). See vv. 13-17.
- 2) Second, the former blind man's parents are called to the stand (vv. 18-23). It is apparent that they perjure themselves.
- 3) Finally, the man is called back to the stand a second time (vv. 24-34).

He is being tried before the Sanhedrin. No other group would have the authority to take the drastic action which they did. The verdict: EXCOMMUNICATION!

Let us look at these three phases to the trial.

I. THE MAN ON THE STAND (John 9:13-17).

We see first that we have . . .

A. The time of the miracle noted (v. 14).

It was on a Sabbath Day!

This was to be a major factor. The Lord had deliberately chosen this day, as He often did.

B. The two questions he was asked:

1. How did it happen? Cf. v. 15.
2. What do you say about the One who performed the miracle? Cf. v. 17.

The answer: "He is a prophet" -- by which he would not only mean a miracle worker like Elijah and Elisha, but a man of God like Isaiah and Jeremiah and the other prophets -- a man with a message from God!

Bishop Ryle cites the following passages to show that this was "the first idea about our Lord which the Jewish mind seemed ready to embrace" (I, 599).

See:

- 1) Matt. 21:11, at the time of the triumphal entry, "And the multitude said, This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."
- 2) Matt. 21:46, regarding the Sanhedrin, "But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."
- 3) Matt. 16:14, we have what the disciples told the Lord just before Peter's great confession, "And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." All were prophets who were mentioned.

There are several others, but I cite one more:

- 4) Luke 24:19, the disciples with the Lord on the road to Emmaus. When our Lord asked them what they were bothered about, they said, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."

II. THE PARENTS ON THE STAND (John 9:18-23).

They were asked two questions:

- A. "Is this your son, who ye say was born blind?" (v. 19).
- B. "How, then, doth he now see?" (v. 19).

They answer the first; they avoid answering the second for the reason given in v. 22. Several writers have indicated that the Jews feared excommunication as much as they feared death.

III. THE MAN ON THE STAND THE SECOND TIME (John 9:24-34).

It is apparent now that the Sanhedrin has lost the case.

There are three choices they have:

- 1) To prove that the whole thing is a hoax. This has failed.
 - 2) The last resort: to throw him out -- excommunication.
 - 3) To tell him what he must do. This is what they now are going to try.
- A. The pressure of the Sanhedrin: "Give God the praise; we know that this man is a sinner" (v. 24).

By this they meant, not just that he should tell the truth (as the NIV suggests), but that he should give God the glory but leave the Lord Jesus Christ out of it!

Many religious leaders are still like this today. They say they believe in God, but they want nothing to do with Christ! This is impossible.

- B. The boldness of the blind man (vv. 25-34).

1. In his testimony (v. 25).

He may not have known all that he needed to know, or should have known about Christ, but they could not keep him from saying, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

2. In his answer (vv. 26, 27). Quite facetiously he asked them (because he could see no reason for getting the same question again), "Will ye also be his disciples?"

3. In his comments (vv. 30-33).

- a. Pointing out their ignorance (v. 30).

- b. Exposing their inconsistency (v. 31).

He must have had such Scriptures in mind as:

- 1) Prov. 28:9, "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination."
- 2) Psa. 66:18, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

The Lord often answers the prayers of sinners, but He does not promise to, and especially when in their sin they are defying His will.

- c. Showing them how historically unique this miracle was (v. 32).
- d. Drawing the only logical conclusion (v. 33).
Without declaring our Lord's Deity, he does affirm that such a work proves that the one who did it has to be "of God."

Boldness always results from knowing that a change has taken place in your life. The person who can easily forget or set it aside is the person who is not conscious of any change.

This was true of this miracle, and, in its application, it is true also of salvation.

Concl: What was the outcome? "And they cast him out." He was excommunicated. This meant that they were claiming to shut the door between this man and God -- shutting him out from the Temple, from the sacrifices, from the forgiveness of sins, from the Kingdom of God, from any and everything that had to do with God!

For your encouragement: No man can do this! The only way the door to heaven is barred is by your refusal to believe in Christ.

But why did the Sanhedrin seek to do this? Why do certain religious systems want to do this to men?

As I close, let me give you 5 reasons from our text which still apply in many instances today:

- 1) Because he had been healed of his blindness -- and merely religious men are very uncomfortable in the presence of something which God has obviously done.
- 2) Because the healing had been done on the Sabbath Day. How zealous we can be for our systems, or for a part of the truth, and never stop to question the possibility that we might be wrong -- that we might only have a distorted view of the truth.
- 3) Because he refused to turn against Christ. This was probably the man's greatest mistake in the eyes of the Sanhedrin. And yet the more he talked about Christ, the stronger he got.
- 4) Because he would not do what the Pharisees demanded that he do. See v. 24. This and the point before go together.
- 5) Because of his boldness and his claim to be able to understand the truth on his own.

Can you see in yourself, spiritually, this blind man? No one ever sees spiritually, nor can they see, until Christ gives them sight.

(Close with 2 Cor. 4:3-6.)

THE SON'S TWOFOLD MISSION

John 9:35-41

Intro: Humanly speaking, the worst had happened to the man born blind while at the same time the best had happened. He had received his sight, but the price for that had been that he was cast out of the synagogue!

It amounted to being banished from his people. He was in disgrace.

We learn no more about him after we leave John 9, but it is evident from the last 7 verses that the Lord did not leave him alone. And we can safely assume that the Lord continued to meet his needs.

Note in passing how differently the Lord worked with him. We would have made him the leading celebrity of the day, but in Scripture we hear from him no more! God's ways and our ways are certainly poles apart!

As John concludes the passage we find him emphasizing again, in a slightly different way, our Lord's mission in the world. We have had statements like we find in John 3:17. We shall also have John 10:10 and 12:47. Also Luke 19:10. But here His mission is stated in v. 39 as being twofold. (Read it.)

So we can make that the second part of our outline: Our Lord's mission to the world (vv. 39-41).

But in the verses which immediately precede we have an illustration of one of those two ministries in our Lord's mission to the man who had been born blind (vv. 35-38).

One statement of our Lord's purpose for coming into the world does not contradict any other statement. We need them all. And it is apparent that His purpose is stated differently because of the different situations which arose in His ministry here on the earth.

Here He describes it as a "judgment." The Greek is . It means a determination, a decision, a verdict. It is the work of a Judge when he distinguishes between two parties -- like Solomon did when he had to decide which prostitute was the mother of the living baby.

Another illustration would be that of a jeweler going through a box of jewels to determine what was genuine and what was only an imitation.

The Sanhedrin claimed to have this right of "judgment." They had judged the man born blind as an impostor -- and they had

thrown him out! Then it was that the Lord came!

Let us pick up the story at v. 35 where we have . . .

I. OUR LORD'S MISSION TO THE MAN WHO HAD BEEN BORN BLIND
(John 9:35-38).

These are 4 very wonderful verses -- full of encouraging truth.

Look first at:

A. The Lord.

1. What He knew: "Jesus heard that they had cast him out" (v. 35a).

It probably had been made public, but it is also evident that we are dealing here with an all-knowing Lord!

Cf. Heb. 4:13. Also Psa. 139:1-6.

2. What He did: "and when He had found him."

Will you note who was doing the looking, the searching? This is the true picture of salvation.

Note also the timing: The Lord let this whole process of excommunication take its course before He went looking for the man, and found him.

3. What He said: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

A textual problem here: Is it "the Son of God," or is it the Son of man?

The MSS are not conclusive. From the emphasis of John's Gospel (John 20:30, 31), I am inclined to believe that the KJV is right.

This would not only mean Messiah, but also Deity, and along with Deity, sovereignty. "Son of God" is a title which continues to open up to us with wonderful truths!

But then notice:

B. The man.

1. How he responded -- his receptiveness (v. 36). What a contrast with the others who were there!

After the Lord's answer in v. 37, we see:

2. What he said: "Lord, I believe" (v. 38a).

And then notice that, without any instruction that he should do so, we have him doing something very significant:

3. What he did: "And he worshipped him."

Now the story is complete as far as the wise man is concerned. He has not only received physical sight, but he has received spiritual sight as well -- which is the most important of the two!

We also learn that the man who was rejected and excommunicated by the Jewish leaders is received, never to be excommunicated by the Lord Jesus Christ, for He said in John 6:37,

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;
and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

But let us look finally at . . .

II. OUR LORD'S MISSION TO THE WORLD (John 9:39-41).

A. His claim (John 9:39).

He is the Judge. Cf. John 5:22, 23.

He is the issue. Men are considered blind or seeing as they understand "the Son of God."

Those who have no light at all will be given sight, and those who have some knowledge of the truth will by their rejection of the Lord Jesus Christ be plunged into the depths of eternal darkness.

B. The Pharisees' response (John 9:40): "Are we blind also?"

How wonderful it would be if more people asked that question! Have you ever asked it?

One commentator has said,

"There is no person so blind as the man who will not see UNLESS it is the man who does not know that he is blind."

C. The Lord's answer (John 9:41).

Cf. John 15:22-24. Men are not totally blind as to their sin. God has done much to give us understanding of our

sin -- conscience,
the Word of God, especially the Law,
the coming of Christ.

Paul teaches us in Rom. 5:13 that "sin is not imputed where there is no law." That is, the full charge of our sin is not laid upon us if God has not pointed out our sin by giving His Law.

These men could not rightfully claim to be totally blind as to their need, but they were totally blind as to the remedy for their need. And so for them to claim sight, and to actually have a certain amount of understanding, but for them not to come to Christ, meant that they continued on in their sin -- and that they were responsible for the judgment that was to be theirs!!!!

Concl: The big question facing every man is the question that Pilate posed to the Jews when our Lord was on trial:
"What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?"

What will you do?

Are your eyes being closed for the darkness forever by
-- religion,
-- personal pride,
-- the idea that you have lots of time,
-- your unwillingness to believe that salvation from sin
is through Christ, and Christ alone?

Do you believe on the Son of God?

If not, will you -- this morning -- right now?

To turn away from Christ is to have your darkness increase, and to leave without Christ this morning may mean that you will never again be as impressed with your need of Him as you are at this very minute! Turn to Him now, and be saved!