

Tuesday Bible Class
The Miracles in John's Gospel
September 29, 2008

Intro: Welcome to another Tuesday Bible Class. Circumstances have kept some who attended last year, from beginning with us this year. But hopefully most of them should be back next week. But I hope that you will let others know about the class.

Before we actually get to the Gospel of John, I want to raise and ask the question, at least in part, as to why we have four Gospels. Actually they are not four different Gospels, but they are four books which deal with the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. Actually none of them is a biography, and if we try to put them together (as some scholars have done), we still do not have what we could call, a life of Christ. I am sure that all of you know that I am speaking of the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are very similar in the way they approach their subject. That is why we call them the Synoptic Gospels. They are very much alike, even though they are also different from each other – but similar as to the order in which they speak of Christ and His life on earth. One important fact to recognize is that in no way do they contradict each other. There is perfect harmony as to what they believed about the Lord, and as to the nature of His teaching and His miraculous works. They all believed in His Deity. They all believed He lived a perfectly sinless life. They all believed in the reality of His death and in the reality of His bodily resurrection.

Two of these writers were apostles: Matthew and John. The other two did not know the Lord on earth. It is generally believed that Mark got his information about the Lord from the Apostle Peter. Luke we know was a medical doctor and a close friend and fellow-worker with the Apostle Paul. Luke wrote two of the NT books, the Gospel which bears his name, and the book of acts. Both were written by Luke after very thorough research for one man, whose name was Theophilus. Of course all four of the Gospel writers wrote under the direct inspiration of the Spirit of God.

Luke was probably the only Gentile of the four (although some think that he also was a Jew). Matthew probably wrote his Gospel for Jews, Mark for the Romans, Luke for Gentiles (especially the Greeks), and John wrote for believers, and it is probably more accurate to say the Church.

But why four records of the life and ministry of Christ on the earth?

One reason certainly was to confirm the truth about Jesus Christ. The Bible says that two or three witnesses are required to validate anything. Cf. Deut. 17:6; 19:15; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; Heb. 10:28. Here we have four witnesses in perfect agreement concerning the life and ministry of our Lord. So the evidence is overwhelming that what they wrote is the truth of God.

Another reason is to show the importance of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures. The Bible is all about Him. In John 5:39 we read that the Lord said to the Jews, “Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). The numerous quotations in the Gospels which point to Christ in the OT, show that understanding Jesus Christ is the key to all of the Word of God.

And then another reason is to endear our Lord to the readers of the Gospel. The more we know of Him, the more we want to know, and the more we know of Him, the more we love Him.

And then we have four records of the life and ministry of our precious Lord to show us, since they all conclude on the same note: the death and resurrection of the Lord, that of all that the Lord did while He was here on

earth, His death and resurrection were the main reasons for His coming.

If you got my letter, you know that this year we are going to start with the beginning of the Gospel of John. I am not going to go through the first part of John's Gospel verse by verse like we did chapters 13 through 17 last year, but first, I am going to take John's own statement as to why he wrote the Gospel as our starting point. It is found in John 20:30-31. Please turn in your Bible to those verses, and follow as I read them. I am doing the same. **(Read John 20:30-31.)**

No one that we read about in the whole Bible performed more miracles than did our Lord Jesus Christ. But we know from the OT that one of the outstanding characteristics of God is that He is a miracle worker. Creation was a miraculous work of God. Events like the birth of Isaac were miracles. To get the children of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord performed a series of ten devastating miracles upon the Egyptian. Prophecies predicted miracles would take place, like "a virgin will conceive, and bring forth a son." So if Jesus Christ was God, it is to be expected that He would be a miracle worker. And He was! John tells us in more than one place in his Gospel that the Lord did many other miracles that he had not mentioned.

Notice that in John 20:30 John mentioned that the Lord did "many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples" - and John was one of them! Our Lord had been born as a human baby, passed through the stages of a child, youth, and manhood. He had a body just like other men had. He looked like He was only a human being, but His works indicated that He was not only a Man, but also God! Jesus did His miracles usually in the presence of twelve special men who knew that He had done miraculous things over and over and over again!

Nicodemus was one who sought the Lord out because, as he said, "No man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with Him." And he was speaking for more than just himself because he said, "We know that Thou art a Teacher come from God, and he had become convinced of that by the miracles. It would be interesting to know who Nicodemus was talking for when we said, "We know . . ." This is surely evidence that the Spirit of God was preparing to do a miracle in the heart of Nicodemus – the miracle of the new birth.

So the reader of John's Gospel needs to pay attention to what the Lord Jesus did, as well as what He taught. Nicodemus had been impressed with the Lord's teaching also.

I think it was Dr. W. H. Griffith Thomas who was to have been the first theology professor at Dallas Seminary, but who died in the Spring of 1924 before Dallas opened in the Fall of that year, who used to encourage people like Nicodemus to read through the Gospel of John. And he said that he never had a person read the Gospel of John completely but what they had been saved before they finished. The Gospel of John is a powerful instrument for evangelism when a person reads it whose heart the Lord has opened.

We as Christians need the Gospel of John for the confirming and strengthening of our faith. If you can add this to your Bible reading, I would encourage you to do so. Graham Scroggie, another great English Bible teacher, used to encourage people to read any book of the Bible through three times before they began to study it.

So don't forget John 20:30 and 31. The miracles are these:

- 1) The turning of water into wine at a marriage in Cana (John 2:1-11).
- 2) The healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:43-54).
- 3) The healing of the impotent man (John 5:1-16).
- 4) The feeding of the 5,000 men (plus women and children) (John 6:1-14).
- 5) Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:15-21).

6) The giving of sight to a man who was born blind (John 9:1-38).

7) The raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46).

On the basis of John 2:18-19 we would have to say was the greatest miracle that John recorded was the raising of our Lord from the dead, which according to John 10:17-18 was what the Lord did for Himself:

8) The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 20:1-18).

I want to add also the miracle our Lord performed after His resurrection:

9) The miraculous draft of fish (John 21:1- 14).

But now let us turn to the first chapter of John's Gospel. Before we get to the miracles, I want to spend the time today on the first eighteen verses of chapter 1. And I want to read the first 18 verses while you follow it in your Bible. They are generally referred to as *the Prologue*. This is just another word for the *Introduction*, or sometimes it is called a *Preface*. It is a way that writers have of telling what their book or article is going to be about. That is what John was doing. His Gospel is all about Jesus Christ.

I. THE INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL OF JOHN (John 1:1-18).

A new reader of the Gospel of John may not realize as he, or she, begins to read this chapter that when John was writing about "the Word," he was writing about Jesus Christ. But when they get down to verse 14 it will all become very clear. The Word is Jesus.

In verse 3 we are told that He was the Creator.

In verse 4 we are told that Jesus is life, and that His life was light.

Beginning with verse 6 John the Apostle started talking about John the Baptist. He came as a prophet from God to bear testimony as to Who Jesus was: The Light. And it was his purpose, his calling, that in showing people the Light in Christ, they would believe in Him. And many did! After four hundred years in which there was no new revelation from God, John the Baptist was born, and through him countless numbers in Israel heard about and saw the Light, and were miraculously saved. But as far as the world in general was concerned, it "knew Him not" even though the world and all of the people who were in it were "made by him." Even "His own people, the Jews received Him not. So there was a universal rejection of this One Who came as "Light" in the darkness of sin which prevailed, and still prevails, in the world.

But to those who did receive Him by His divine power (authority) they became what they were not before, "the children of God," lit, *born ones*. And how were they born? "Not of blood." Many of the Jews thought that they were in the family of God because they were Jews. But salvation does not come that way. In the past, many Americans thought that they were Christians because they were Americans. We are not children of God because our parents are Christians. No person is a child of God by natural birth. "Nor of the will of the flesh." What does this mean? It means that we don't have the power in ourselves, our own sinful nature, to bring about spiritual transformation in our lives. As the Lord told Nicodemus in John 3, "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," meaning that of itself it can never be any different. We don't save ourselves. "Nor of the will of man" means that no person has the authority to confer eternal life upon us. No minister or priest has this authority. No church has this authority. We can only become the children of God by being born of God. This is why Christ came. Salvation from start to finish is a work of God, and what God's work in us produces faith in Christ. This is what it means to receive Him.

As "the Word," this is the message that the coming of Jesus into the world brings to us. Christ came into the world bring the "the Light of Life." No man could be saved by being born a child of Abraham (or anyone else).

No one can save himself. Nobody else can save us. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, is the power to become a child of God. If salvation could come in any other except Christ, then the coming and suffering of Christ was totally unnecessary.

We are saved by the grace and truth of God. Notice these two words in verse 14, and they are repeated in verse 18. This is the message of the Gospel. In verse 15 and 16 the Apostle John went back to John the Baptist and his message. He preached grace. This means that salvation is not a reward that we get for doing something good for God. We are incapable of what it would take. Although we don't deserve salvation, Jesus Christ came to die for our sins, to pay our debt, that salvation might be ours as a gift from God.

Now for a moment let's go back to the first verses of the chapter. We need to understand the truth in these verses in order to know Who Jesus is. He is the Word. The Apostle John is the only writer of Scripture who used this title for our Lord. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In verse 14 we read:

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.

And in the book of the Revelation, chapter 19, we read that the Lord at His second coming to earth will have four names. Revelation 19:13 tells us what one of them will be:

13 And He was clothed with vesture dipped in blood: and His Name is called the Word of God.

So the Word was in the beginning, and we come down to the end, and He is still there. Go back before the "in the beginning" of Genesis 1:1, and we see that the Word was without a beginning. He was "with God" which means that He was a Person distinct from God, and yet, as F. B. Meyer has pointed out, this word "with" suggests communion with and movement toward (Vol. 1, p. 9). It suggests how the Word delighted in God. Their faces were always toward each other. And then we are told that "the Word was God," always has been, and always will be. As "the Word," Christ utters God. As we learn of Christ, we are learning of God. There never has been, and there never will be any conflict between God and Christ as the Word. He came to do the will of His Father in heaven.

So our Lord is the Word. He is the Life. He is the Light. He is the Son. John 1:1-18 is a passage which we need to read frequently, and then go over it in meditation. These are all truths that need to be firmly established in our minds and hearts as we make our way through the following pages of this Gospel. What our Lord was before creation, and what He continued to be when John took his pen in his old age and wrote these glorious truths for our learning and comfort, our Lord still is. As we read of His miracles, let us pray for the Spirit's work in enabling us through the ministry of the Word, to gaze upon the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

October 6, 2008

Let us review before we take up the first miracle of John's Gospel, the Apostle John's statement concerning his purpose in writing this Gospel. It is given, as I reminded you last week, in the last two verses of the twentieth chapter: John 20:30-31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

Here the miracles are called "signs." There were other miracle workers before and after our Lord was here on earth. But these seven were specifically chosen to show that Jesus was that Son of God, and that those who believed that He was the Son of God would "have life through His Name." I particularly like the way Charles

Erdman, who was the Professor of Practical Theology at Princeton Seminary in the days when Princeton stood solidly for the truth of the Bible – I particularly like what he said about these two verses at the end of John 20. And I would preface his words by pointing out that he believed that the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ was the supreme miracle of all that the Apostle John recorded in this book. And he undoubtedly was right. But he pointed out that just before John wrote these words at the end of chapter 20, Thomas had just acknowledged by seeing the scars which the Lord had that He truly had been raised from the dead. He recognized the Lord, and said, “My Lord and my God.” So Thomas completed the number of the disciples, or apostles, who believed that the Lord had risen from the dead. And this led to John’s statement of his purpose. But this was Dr. Erdman’s comment:

To produce such faith in others is the purpose of the writer. He addresses, however, not chiefly those who are unbelieving, but evidently those who already have faith in Christ. He has given us a narrative in which we [can see] how faith can be increased and developed, and he here intimates that a like experience of an enlarging belief will be ours, if we carefully study these signs wrought by our divine Lord. Most of all he encourages his readers by this statement that his aim is practical, not speculative, moral not intellectual; he wishes them to believe in order that they might have life; he assures them that creed will affect character, that belief will result in experience, that faith will determine conduct. John has written this Gospel in order that we may know Christ, may trust Him, may commit ourselves to Him, and thus have life in all its fulness of peace and joy and beauty and fruitfulness and hope, even the life eternal which issues from a knowledge of the true God revealed in Jesus Christ His Son (*The Gospel of John*, p. 171).

I hope that Dr. Erdman’s comment will help all of us to understand that John’s purpose was not only to convince his readers that Jesus was the Son of God so that they would be saved, but that salvation means a new life which develops as we grow in our knowledge of Christ. As Dr. Erdman said so well, to know that Jesus is the Son of God brings us a new life, eternal life, which is to be displayed in us the more we know and trust and walk in fellowship with our living Savior. I hope that none of us will forget this. And so Dr. Erdman says that what he called “the three dominant themes of the Gospel,” are the three things that we ought to look for in all of the miracles:

- 1) what they tell us about Christ,
- 2) how the faith of the disciples was strengthened by them, and
- 3) how the lives of the disciples were transformed by what they heard, and what they saw.

So we ought to profit in the same three ways if we are learning what the Holy Spirit would teach us through these miracles.

Last week we considered not only John 20:30 and 31, but John 1:1-18. We saw that Jesus is the Word, and that as such He was “in the beginning,” that He was “with God,” and that He “is God. Verse 3 and verse 10 tell us that He was the Creator. He is the life and the light, or the life which is the light. We are introduced to John, John the Baptist as he was known, “a man sent from God,” as the forerunner of Jesus. And while we know that he saw great blessing in his ministry, yet on the whole our Lord was rejected. And yet those who did receive Him became the children of God, born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.”

In verse 14 we learn that this One Who was in the beginning, Who was with God, and Who was God, became a Man without ceasing to be what He had been before. Both John the Apostle and John the Baptist give their testimony of His Deity. And this brings us up through verse 18.

I should have asked all of you last week to read the rest of chapter 1 and the first 11 verses of chapter 2, in preparation for today. I hope that some of you did anyway. If not, let’s all read the first four chapters in

preparation for next Tuesday's class. Looking at John 1, verse 19 we learn more about the ministry of John the Baptist, and this goes down to verse 37. From that point on to end of chapter 1 we see how men began to be drawn to the Lord Jesus, and how He ministered to them.

The time sequence is given to us. Verses 19 through 34 seem to tell us what took place on one day, or the latter part of a day. Verse 29 tells us about "the next day." Verse 35 tells us about the day after that. In verse 43 we read of another day. And the chapter 2 begins with a third day. So the events in connection with the first miracle that the Lord performed were closely tied with what had gone on in chapter 1. Some suggest that in all it was probably about a week from verse 19 of chapter 1 until the marriage feast in chapter 2. So things were happening in quite rapid succession.

As I reminded you last week, a "sign" is a *distinguishing characteristic*. These signs were proofs that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. There were miracle workers before our Lord, and there were miracle workers during our Lord's ministry, and afterwards. But never performed as many miracles as He did, nor of such a wide variety of miracles. In the last two verses of John's Gospel we the Apostle's own testimony concerning the works of our Lord, which would have included His miracles. Cf. John 21:24-25:

24 This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true.

25 And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen.

II. THE MIRACLES IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN.

A. The changing of water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11).

We don't know the exact location of Cana, but it probably was north or northwest 4 or 5 miles from Nazareth where our Lord grew up. We are not told who the bride and groom were, or how Mary and our Lord knew them. Nor do we know why our Lord's disciples had been invited. And we are not told these things because they are not important as far as the Apostle John's account of the miracles was concerned. Maybe the Lord and His disciples had been invited as a courtesy to Mary, our Lord's mother.

The first thing that we are told is that they had run out of wine, which would have been most embarrassing for the bridal couple and their parents. The word "wanted" in verse 3 means *lacked*. The guests had consumed all of the wine that had been bought for the wedding. While their marriages were not like ours, yet this would have been very distressing for the bride and groom. Mary seems to have been the one who found out about it, and she told the Lord. What she expected Him to do, we do not know. From what the angel told Mary before our Lord was conceived in her by the Holy Spirit, Mary was fully aware of Who Jesus was. What He would do on that occasion, she did not know. But it is significant that she turned to Him to tell Him of the need.

Now His response must not be taken as unkindness toward His mother, or as a rebuke to her. Actually it was a term of tenderness, of the deepest respect. You would not expect God to tell us to honor our fathers and our mothers, and then see the Lord do just the opposite. No, our Lord was very gentle toward His mother. But it is also clear that the Lord was very aware of the reason for which He had come into the world. The Apostle John tells us that there were several times during His ministry that the Lord said this very same thing, "My time," or "Mine hour is not yet come." See John 7:8, 30; 8:20; 13:1; 17:1. It was the hour or time when His glory would be manifested, both in His death and in His resurrection. But keep this in mind as we continue through this account.

But then, obviously Mary was not offended by what the Lord said to her although she may not have fully

understood His response to her. However, she knew that Jesus would be able to do something. So she told the servants, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do."

Verse 6 tells us that there were six water pots there made of stone, containing two or three firkins each. And probably for Gentile readers it is said that the water was there because of the many times the Jews would use water for their own purification, such as washing their hands before meals. David Brown of the JFB commentary estimated that each one contains about twenty gallons of water. Some of the water had probably been used because Jewish marriage celebrations would last several days. Anyway the Lord told them to fill the water pots with water, which they did. And then He told them to pour some out, and take it to the ruler of the feast, which they also did. When he tasted it, he called the bridegroom and said what we read in verse 10. (Read.)

The governor was actually rebuking the bridegroom. The wine that the Lord had made was better than anything that had been served at the wedding before. Obviously the governor wanted to know why. But at that point the story ends. The Spirit of God had given all that we need to know in order to get the main points of the miracle that the Lord performed.

Now let's remember the three points that are important for us to get from the parables:

- 1) What does this miracle teach us about the Lord?
- 2) How does the miracle strengthen our faith?
- 3) How should this miracle affect our lives?

Well, what does this miracle tell us about the Lord?

First of all, His presence at the wedding with His disciples showed His approval of marriage. After all when we go back to Genesis 1 and 2 we learn that our Lord had a part in creating the man, and then created the woman, and the Lord is the One Who brought them together as husband and wife. In these days when marriage has been perverted by a man and a woman just living together, or when thousands have perverted the marriage relationship by calling two men living together, or two women living together, and engaging in sexual activity, it is refreshing to see that one of the first things our Lord did in His public ministry, was to go to a marriage. And He took His disciples with them to teach them that this was what was pleasing to the Lord.

But it also tells us another thing about the Lord. He is concerned about our happiness. Weddings are meant to be happy occasions, and they are to lead to greater and greater happiness. Some people have the idea that to know the Lord and to live the way He wants us to live, puts an end to happiness. But just the opposite is true. The only true happiness, the only happiness that lasts, is happiness that God gives to His people. "In His presence is fulness of joy, and at His right hand are pleasure forever more" (Psa. 16:11).

And who can miss the point that here the Lord was acting in His role as a Creator. Remember that we learned from chapter 1 that the use of our Lord's title, the Word, in verse 1, and repeated in verse 14, shows that what the Lord was "in the beginning," He continued to be when He became flesh and blood. And so in turning the water into wine, the Lord displayed His omnipotence! With God nothing is impossible. He can do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.

And we see His willingness to answer prayer, don't we? He even blesses people when they don't realize that all blessings come from Him. He gives rain on the just and on the unjust. He is a good God. And how tragic it is in our country today that most people never give Him a word of thanks for anything. And in His mercy what could have marred this whole wedding occasion, was actually turned into something that was far better than they had planned for it to be.

But what does this miracle teach about faith?

Mary gave us a good lesson when she told the servants, “Whatever He saith unto you, do?” This was a crisis time. The need was desperate. The servants had no idea what the Lord would do, and it is very doubtful if they knew what He could do. But, you know, we can never go wrong if we do what the Lord tells us to do in His Word. There was a great need. Mary did not know what the Lord would do, *but she had the faith to believe that He would do whatever it would take to meet that need.* This was not a life-threatening situation. It would have been bad if nothing had been done. But they all would have lived through it. But here you see the sufficiency of the Lord’s power, and the trustworthiness of His wisdom. How wonderful it would be if every time we pick up our Bibles we would tell ourselves, “Whatever He saith unto you, do!” If the Lord can provide the wine for a wedding, let’s not be surprised to find Him later feeding 5,000 men plus women and children, probably bringing the number up to 10,000, and to do it all with a little boy’s lunch.

Sometimes we feel that have to tell the Lord what to do. How many people do you think who knew that the wine had been used up, would have thought of telling the Lord to fill those water pots with water, and then turn it into wine. I can tell you for sure that there was not a single person at that wedding who could have told the Lord that that was what He ought to do. Trusting the Lord means that we not only trust Him to meet our needs, but we are going to trust Him as to how He is going to do it.

I could go on and on, and you probably could too, to see what this miracle teaches us about the Lord, and how it ministers to our faith. But what does it teach us about how we are to live?

Well, I have already answered that question with what we have seen about the Lord in this miracle, and about how our faith is strengthened by the miracle that He performed that day in Cana. But it all simply teaches us that we need to live, learning more and more about Him, His love, His power, His wisdom, His mercy and grace, His presence, and all of His glorious attributes. We need to love Him, trust Him, obey Him, wait upon Him, and constantly be praising Him. How different our lives will be if we will just learn what is hee for us in this miracle that the Lord performed at Cana in Galilee. And, you know, there is no evidence that I know of that He ever did this again. God varies the way He answers our prayers so that we won’t look at the method, but that we will look at Him.

But I can’t quit before I ask you to look with me at verse 11. (Read it.) What does the Apostle John tell us what the Lord was doing at that wedding when He turned the water into wine? He was manifesting His glory! What does this mean? It means that by what the Lord did that day, there were people at that wedding who were beginning to think that Jesus might really be the eternal Son of the living God. We may meet people in heaven who, when we talk about when and where we were saved, will tell us they were saved when they went to a wedding in Cana and saw, or heard, that a Man named Jesus turned water into wine. And that that was the first step that they took which led them to the Savior.

How did it affect the disciples? They believed on Him. Hadn’t they believed on Him before? Certainly. Read John 1, the latter part. But what John meant here is that their faith was strengthened when they saw this evidence that He the Son of God. It is wonderful to have faith, but it is even more wonderful to have a growing faith. I hope we all have learned a little bit more about our Savior from this miracle, and that our faith has been strengthened, and that the Lord has put in our hearts through this miracle a greater determination to live a life of faith.

October 13, 2008

B. The Healing of the Nobleman’s Son (John 4:43-54).

After the first miracle which our Lord performed in Cana in Galilee, the changing of water into wine at the marriage feast, we are told in John 2:12 that after “not many days” our Lord, with His mother, His brothers, and His disciples went down to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover. In the temple the Lord found money changers carrying on a business, and so he made a whip of small cords and drove them out saying that they were not to make His Father’s house, a house of merchandise. Then in verse 18 of chapter two “the Jews” (meaning the Jewish religious leaders) asked Him for “a sign” showing that He had the right to do what He had just done. This is the same word that the Apostle John used throughout his Gospel for *a miracle*. I doubt if they were asking for a miracle, but they wanted to know what His credential was, what right He had to do what He had done. When you stop to think about what the Lord had done, it is amazing that they did not arrest Him and order Him put to death. And so the Lord told them what His “sign” was when He said,

Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up (John 2:19).

They thought that He was speaking about the Temple that was standing then, a Temple which they said had taken forty-six years to build. But He was talking about His own body, His own death at the hands of those Jewish religious leaders, and that in three days He would raise Himself from the dead. The Apostle Paul would write later that He would be “declared to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4).

Later in John’s Gospel our Lord was talking to the Pharisees again, and He said this which is recorded for us in John 10:18, speaking of His own life:

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

This we know is the Gospel, but the Pharisees did not know what the Lord was talking about, *and neither did the disciples!* But notice how the chapter ends: (Read John 2:22-24.)

The important part of these last verses of John 2 is that it tells us that while the Lord was in Jerusalem at the Passover, He performed many miracles. And this prepares us for the account in chapter 3 about Nicodemus who was “a ruler of the Jews.” What brought Nicodemus to Christ? Obviously, the miracles! His eyes were opened to see the power of God in the miracles of the Lord. See John 3:2.

Our Lord’s words to Nicodemus take us down through John 3:21. At that point we see the final words of John the Baptist’s ministry in which he moved off of the scene in order for all of the attention might be centered on the Lord Jesus. This closes chapter 3. Note that this was outside of Jerusalem, but still in Judea. See John 3:23. We don’t know the exact location, but it had to be near the Jordan River, and not too far from Jerusalem.

John 4 gives us another amazing story of what happened as the Lord made His way back to Galilee. To get from Judea to Galilee, you had to go through Samaria which was territory which was not favorable to the Jews. But here is another story which shows the power of the Gospel. Many Samaritans were saved. It is an amazing story of the power of the Gospel which developed when the Lord Jesus asked a Samaritan woman for a drink of water. I am sure most of you know the story. But we must go on to the latter part of the chapter: Verses 43 to 54.

This is the second miracle that is given to us in detail in the Gospel of John: the healing of a nobleman’s son.

As the account begins we are told that it was after two days that the Lord had spent with the Samaritans in Samaria. The history of Samaria is long and complicated which we don’t need to go into now. They were a people of mixed blood, including with many of them some Jewish blood, but the woman of Samaria expressed the attitude of Jews toward the Samaritans and of the Samaritans toward the Jews after the Lord asked her for a drink of water. She said, “How is it that Thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans” (John 4:9). Obviously, the story of John 4

leaves no doubt but that the Gospel was for the Samaritans as well as for the Jews. It is a most amazing story which again shows the power of the Gospel. But we will have to deal with this at a later time. The Samaritans asked the Lord to spend two days with them (see John 4:40), which he did. And then we read in verse 43 that after those two days, the Lord and those who were with Him went on north into Galilee.

And so we come to the second miracle that the Apostle John, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, has given us to show that Jesus was the Son of God, and that those who believed in Him received eternal life – two points that are very important.

Now you would think that he would make his way back to Nazareth where He was brought up. But in verse 44 the Lord explained, apparently to His disciples, why He was not going there. It was “that a prophet hath no honor in his own country” (John 4:44). We were told in John 1 that the Lord “came to His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). Matthew Henry reminds us of how Joseph the son of Jacob was hated by his brothers when he told them his dreams. The men of Anathoth threatened to kill Jeremiah if he prophesied to them in the name of the Lord. See Jer. 11:21. Paul’s friends became his enemies when he started to preach the faith which once he had tried to destroy. However there is a natural aversion in the hearts of men toward the preaching of the Gospel. A part of our Lord’s humiliation in becoming a Man was that He suffered the same rejection from men that all of the Lord’s servants have suffered in one way or another. Matthew in recording this statement at the end of Matthew 13 tells that the Lord did not do many mighty words in Nazareth because of their unbelief. See Matthew 13:58. Also we need to remember what John wrote concerning the response that our Lord had gotten in Jerusalem. See John 2:23-25. In every crowd where the Word of God is taught, there are those who believe. There are those who act like they believe, but don’t. And there are those who make no attempt to hide their unbelief.

But to get back to John 4 we learn that the Galileans received Him because they had seen the mighty works which He had done when He was in Jerusalem for the Passover. This does not mean that all Galileans believed on the Lord because of the miracles, but there was evidently a sizeable group that did believe. But the Lord made His way back to Cana after evidently having come back to Cana through Sychar in Samaria and Capernaum in Galilee.

But our Lord did not go back to Nazareth, but to Cana where He had turned the water into wine. Why did He do this? We can only guess as to the reason because the Apostle John did not tell us. But some have guessed that the Lord went back to see if there was any fruit from what He had done at the wedding feast. He did not find any fruit, but it was there that a man, a nobleman, had come to Cana from Capernaum because he had a son who was dying in Capernaum, and he wanted the Lord to come to heal him.

The word “nobleman” suggests that this man was the king’s man, connected in some way with Herod. I think that we can assume that he was a Jew. Probably he was very wealthy, and we might suspect that he was a man of considerable power and influence. He was the kind of a man who, when he asked anyone to do something, they would do it. But it is not very likely that he was popular with the Jews. They may have feared him, but probably hated him as well. He had heard that Jesus had come back from Judea into Galilee. And so he made the trip from Capernaum to Cana to get the Lord to go with him to Capernaum so he could heal his son.

Now the miraculous works that this nobleman had either seen or heard about, was from those or with those who were physically present with the Lord – like raising the dead, or healing some disease, or restoring sight to someone who was blind. But he had no idea that the Lord could do what He did.

The Lord said to him according to verse 48, “Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” It is about 15 miles from Capernaum to Cana. For him to make a trip like that means that he really believed that his son

was dying. His son was very precious to him. And he had come to the Lord because he strongly believed that the Lord was the only one who could save his son from death. Money was not mentioned, but he would have been prepared to pay any amount that the Lord might require of him. He obviously felt that the Lord would be more inclined to return to Capernaum with him than if he had just sent a servant to get the Lord to come. Actions speak louder than words.

But the Lord gave him a gentle rebuke in response to the nobleman's appeal for his son. The Lord said, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." What did the Lord mean by these words? He was reminding the nobleman that He had come into the world to engage in a twofold ministry. He came to do miraculous works, but He had also come to preach. We know that He did both in Jerusalem at the Passover. It was the works of the Lord that caused Nicodemus to seek the Word of the Lord. There are many Thomases in every generation of human beings who will not believe unless they can see. The greatest blessing is for those who believe before they see. That is what the Lord told Thomas. And the Lord made it clear to the nobleman that what He, the Lord, primarily sought was faith. That is what brings the greatest glory to God. That is what the Lord's words meant, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." We know that faith is a gift from God, and yet we are responsible to believe what the Lord teaches. How it must delight the heart of our Lord, and of God Himself, when little children believe without needing to have the signs and wonders, or even having to be told the truth over and over. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

There may have been a note of impatience in the nobleman's response to what the Lord said. It was like he said, "We don't have time to talk. My son is so close to death that he will die if we don't get to him right away."

But our Lord is a God of grace, a God of compassion, a God of patience, a God of love. And so He said to this distraught father, "Go thy way; thy son liveth." This father had no idea that the Lord could do such a thing. We have no record that the father had told the Lord what the son's problem was, nor what his name was, nor even where he lived. He never expected this kind of a response from the Lord. It never had entered his mind that the Lord could heal a sick person without being with that person. How he must have been shocked by what the Lord said.

Well, what did he do? You may find it hard to believe what the Apostle John tells us here in the latter part of verse 50. Look at what John wrote. "And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." This is exactly what the Lord wanted him to do: first, to believe, and then to show that he believed by going back home by himself. We show our faith in the Lord by doing what He says even though it is not what we wanted him to do, or what we thought that He would do.

I don't know what kind of transportation that father had. I would think that it was probably a horse. But before he got home, his servants met him on the road. They were so excited that they could not wait until their master got home; they had to go to him with the news – "Thy son liveth." Then the father wanting to check what the Lord said with when it happened, said, "When began he to amend." This meant, "When did his temperature begin to drop?" Or, "When did he start to get better?" Notice their answer: "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him!" What that father was told was that his son did not begin to get better; at 1 p.m. in the afternoon he was well! The fever did not drop; it suddenly left!

Verse 53 tells us, "So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth" (John 4:53). What else happened? Speaking of the father, "and himself believed, and his whole house." This nobleman was saved, and so was everyone else in their family. This is exactly what the Lord intended to do. You see, the healing of our bodies is very important to us, but it does not begin to compare

with the healing our souls.

Last week I told you that there were three things we needed to learn from the parables of the Gospel of John. I want to repeat them this morning to point out so we can apply these points to this miracle. They are:

- 1) What does this miracle teach us about the Lord?
- 2) How does the miracle strengthen our faith?
- 3) How should this miracle affect our lives?

First, what does this miracle teach us about the Lord?

It not only teaches us about the mighty power of God, but it shows us how important it is for us to learn the ways of the Lord. The record of this miracle is only found here in the Gospel of John. Often our faith fails because we don't see the same circumstances present as when the Lord met our needs before. God loves to work in different ways so we will keep our eyes on Him, and not on the circumstances.

We see in this miracle that our Lord is no respecter of persons. It was not because this nobleman was a nobleman that the Lord healed his son. The Lord works according to His sovereign will and not because the person in need is more prominent than others. We all stand on the same ground before the Lord, and we are all unworthy of the least of His blessings, as Jacob declare to the Lord many years ago. See Genesis 32:10.

We see that the Lord is concerned not only about what He does for us, but about what He is doing in us. And He sees the needs in the high and mighty as well as He does in the lowly and weak.

It shows the omniscience of the Lord. This father was not giving news to the Lord about his son's illness that the Lord did not know before. The Lord did not express surprise, not did He ask the father to give Him the details. The Lord knows all things, and before the father got to the Lord in Cana, the Lord already knew how and when He would heal the son.

How does this miracle strengthen our faith?

It is very clear from this miracle that what the Lord is concerned about with us, is our faith. He wants us to look to Him for the supply of our needs, but He usually works so that when the answers come to our prayers, we see the importance of trusting Him for our salvation, and then that we continue to live by faith. By faith we glorify the Lord.

This miracles teaches us how our faith as parents can influence our children to trust the Lord with us. The Lord has blessed us who are parents with the power to teach our children to trust the Lord when they see how we seek the Lord and trust Him in the trials of life.

How should this miracle affect our lives?

It should show us that regardless of what our position in life may be, or what resources we have, we all have needs which only the Lord can meet. Therefore we need to walk humbly with the Lord, and praise Him faithfully for all of the blessings He gives to us each day.

October 20, 2008

C. The Healing of the Impotent Man (John 5:1-16).

The account of the healing of the one who has been called, *an impotent man*, is found only here in the Gospels. Like the other miracles in the Gospel of John, it is a story, a true story, well known and well loved, by believers of all ages and in all ages.

The margin in our Bibles, and if you are using a translation other than the KJV, tell us that after mentioning the kind of people in verse 3 who were lying around the pool of Bethesda, the rest of verse 3 and all of verse 4, are not in the better manuscripts. I am not going to get into a discussion of the Greek text because I don't think that is edifying. I am going to deal with the KJV as it is, and point out to you that the only real addition in the latter part of verse 3 and all of verse 4, is that verse 4 says that "an angel" troubled the waters. But verse 7 indicates that the water was troubled at certain periods of time, and it is not outside of the realm of possibility that it was an angel who did it at the Lord's command. But with that exception, the latter part of verse 3, and all of verse 4, do not introduce anything that is not indicated in verse 7. So I don't think this should be a problem to us, or make us suspicious of the text. God has taken care of His Word, and will always do so.

What might be an even greater problem to some people is that this was a means by which people were healed of their diseases in the days during our Lord's ministry on earth. When this started, and how long it continued, we do not know. But God has always exercised His power in unusual ways. All miracles are unusual. And our Bibles tell us of many things that have been done in the past which we are not seeing today. So let's read our Bibles with full confidence in it, and seek the Holy Spirit's help in learning what we are supposed to learn.

Chapter 4 closes with our Lord in Galilee, actually in Cana. Chapter 5 begins with Him again in Jerusalem, attending one of the feasts of the Jews. The latter part of chapter 2 tells us that the Lord was in Jerusalem for the Passover. In chapter 6, verse 4, we read that "the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh." I think we all know that the Passover was an annual feast. So, if the Apostle John is writing in a chronological order, he must have selected miracles widely separated from each other, or the feast here in chapter 5 was not the Passover. Actually, what feast it was makes no difference in the account of the miracle. The fact that it was on a feast day, of which there were three main ones every year, merely explains to us why our Lord was in Jerusalem.

On this occasion He was near the pool which was called Bethesda, which means *a house of mercy*. The place was crowded with sick people. They were all waiting, as verse 7 confirms, for the troubling of the water. The first one to get into the water after it was troubled, was healed of whatever disease they had.

The Lord saw there a man who had had his infirmity for thirty-eight years. The Lord with His infinite wisdom and understanding knew how long he had been there. Going up to him, the Lord asked him a question. It was, "Wilt thou be made whole?" At first the question seemed to be superfluous. Of course he wanted to be healed, or he would not have been there. But let us remember that our Lord never asked a ridiculous question. And when we think about this man's condition, and how long he had been there, it makes a lot of sense. We don't really know how long he had been there at the pool, that is, how much of those thirty-eight years, but we know that because of his condition, as he told the Lord, when the water of the pool was troubled, someone always got into the pool before he could. So, let me ask this question: *How much hope do you think this man had that he would ever be healed?* The text does not indicate that at that moment he had any hope of being the first to get into the pool when it was troubled. How pathetic are his words, "I have no man . . ." We don't know what he knew about God. He must have been a Jew. But at this point he was not hoping that God would help him; his complaint was that there was no man, no relative, no friend, no passer by, who would have mercy upon, who would wait for that uncertain time when the water would be troubled, and then make sure that he would get into the pool *first*.

I can imagine that he was so discouraged, had been so disappointed so many times, that he could have been

like many others, *and have give up any hope that he would ever be healed!*

It is like we can be about prayer. We have been praying, perhaps for years for a certain person, perhaps their salvation, or regarding some physical problem, but all to no avail. Plenty of people would tell us that if the Lord hasn't answered in what to us would be a reasonable amount of time, that means He is not going to answer. Thirty-eight years is a long time. We don't know how old this man was, but we can be sure that he was far from being as strong then as he had been thirty-eight years before.

Well, what happened? The Lord didn't say, "I will help you get into the pool." He certainly could have done that. The Lord by His sovereign power could have made sure that no one got into the pool before this man. No, He didn't say that! But notice what He did say! "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." The Lord told him to do what he had tried to do hundreds of times, but hadn't been able to do for thirty-eight years.

Well, what did happen? Read verse 9. The man did not struggle as he had tried to get on his feet many times before. The Apostle John, who probably was right there, wrote, "Immediately the man was made whole." I take this to mean that not gradually, but as the text says, "Immediately," he was in full health. He got to his feet like he had never been down, picked up his bed (which shows the strength that he had), and he walked.

You and I know that someone who has been sick for thirty-eight years is not normally going to be able to do all three of these things, one right after the other – to get up, to pick up his bed, and walk. Under normal conditions this probably would never take place. But if they did, it would take months, or even years, to do what the Lord told him to do. But he did it in less time than it takes to read about it.

Did he do it on his own? We know that he didn't. He couldn't have done it on his own. The Lord said, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk." Then the Apostle John went on to say, "And immediately the man was made whole." It was not something that he did for himself; the Lord had healed him. In a moment of time he went from being hopelessly sick to be able to pass any physical exam with flying colors. It was not like some of our modern day healers say when they pray for a person and the person obviously remains the same. They say, "But he, or she, will get better." The fact that healing was immediate and complete shows that the miracle worker was the Son of God. Remember? "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God."

I am sure that none of us can imagine what joy filled this man's heart. After thirty-eight year of sickness which left him waiting and hoping that someone would come along to help him get into the pool. We don't know how often the water was troubled, but it was probably days. So to think that someone would come along, wait with him for an indefinite period of time until the water was troubled, was not really reasonable. But he had no idea that the Son of God would come and heal him, not by helping him get into the water first, but simply by saying the words, "Rise, take up thy bed, and walk" – all three utterly impossible to that sick man, but not with God, for all things are possible with Him!

But a problem developed from the last part of verse 9: "And on the same day was sabbath." What was the problem, and with whom?

It came from the men who sought to hold the people of Israel in bondage. They are called in the Gospels, "the Jews," as they are here. This expression does not mean *the Jewish people*. It means the leaders of the Jews, the scribes and Pharisees, the council, or the Sanhedrin. They were always on the lookout for any of the Jewish people who had violated their laws. I say "their laws" because over the year several hundred laws had been added to the Law which God had given to Moses, and the Jews enforced the added laws as though they had been given to Moses by God. Now the Law did forbid people to work on the Sabbath, but there was nothing about declaring that carrying your bed was work!

So in verse 10 they confronted this man and told him that he was breaking the Law by carrying his bed. The man responded by saying what we have in verse 11. (Read.) I am sure that you could tell by looking at this man, the condition of his clothes, his hair, and beard, that he appeared like someone who had been sick, or something had been wrong with him. In verse 12 these Jews did not express surprise that this man had been sick and was healed. They did not marvel at what had happened to the man so that they wanted to know who the healer was. They wanted to find the man who had told this man to take up his bed and walk.

Now let's ask the question, Did the Lord Jesus encourage the man whom He had healed to violate the Law that God had given to Moses? What if He had, because they were still under the Law in those days. It would have meant that our Lord was guilty of sin. And we have to go on to say that, if the Lord had encouraged the man to sin, our Lord would have been guilty of sin, and therefore disqualified to be our Savior. The whole idea is ridiculous, isn't it? Our Lord would have nothing to do with causing another to sin. To violate the traditions of the Jews was not sin! To have violated the Law of God, would have been sin.

Lucille's great grandparents on her father's side were Roman Catholics, devout Roman Catholics. Lucille's mother witnessed to her mother-in-law constantly, but when her mother-in-law came to stay with them several weeks at a time, Lucille's mother would take her to Mass. One day in Mass the priest announced that if their children were not in a parochial school, their family members could not be buried in the church's cemetery. This was like sending them to hell. Lucille's grandmother was shocked by this, and told Lucille's mother that she was thankful that such a law had not been in effect when her children were small because she could not have afforded to send them to the parochial school. Lucille's mother explained to her that such a law had nothing to do with God and His Word. And then would go over the Gospel with her again. Catholics are not the only ones who have set up their condition for salvation, but a lot of Protestant churches have done the same thing.

But, as verse 13 tells us that the Lord had gone away at that time, and it would have been impossible to find Him because of the crowd of people in Jerusalem at that time.

But the Lord found him! They were both in the Temple. Whatever the feast was, the Lord was there, *and the man he had healed was there too* (which says a lot for him, especially because of what the Lord had to say to him. Notice the Lord's words to the man whom He had healed.

Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee (John 5:14).

This makes this story even more amazing. *We learn from this statement that this man had been in the condition he was in for thirty-eight years because of sin.* We don't know what the sin was, and it is really none of our business. But it was not just something that happened by chance. It was a judgment from God. When the Lord went to that pool that day, and saw all of those people, He knew this particular man who was there. He knew why he was there. He knew how he had sinned against God. But I think that we can also say that He knew the man's heart. He knew that there had been repentance because God had given him a repentant heart. That is where repentance comes from. And so his sin, whatever it had been, and however long he had engaged in the sin, was forgiven. And in this case at least he was restored.

Now not all sickness is due to sin. But in this case it was. And it ought to make us wonder in how many instances people's troubles are due to sin. When we look at our own country today, there can be no question in the minds of the people of God but that our troubles as a nation are due to years and years of sin, and if we are not careful, we are going to put in power those who will lead us farther and farther into sin. There is no doubt but that we have overwhelming problems of all kinds, but none can begin to compare with our sins.

This miracle certainly glorifies the grace of God. Israel was a sinful nation when the Lord Jesus was here on

earth, and they came under the judgment of God in A.D. 70. But this miracle teaches us that while God deals with us as a nation, He deals with us primarily as individuals. While this miracle exalts the grace of God, it also should come to us as a warning, a warning against sin in our own lives, a warning from God Himself. We as a nation are guilty before God for the way we have been killing our babies, for the way we have accepted homosexuality as an acceptable way of life, for the way we have made adultery a part of American life, for our failure to punish crime, for our denial of creation and widespread acceptance of not only the theory of evolution, but the abominable heresy of evolution, refusing to give God the glory as our Creator. Churches have to go the ways of the world to be full, and it is almost impossible to find churches where the Word of God is faithfully believed, and taught, and lived. We shouldn't wonder that we have chaos in America; we ought to marvel that we are still here.

But this needs to be a time for us as Christians to look at our own lives, and to search our own hearts. Are we tolerating sins just because nothing has happened to us so far? Just our failure to trust the Lord, to love Him, our failure to obey Him down to the smallest details of our lives, is where we need to look. If our thoughts could be projected on a screen, our thoughts about God and His dealings with us in our lives, how would we feel about that. Or it might be that we rarely think of Him except when we are in church.

I don't know what the past relationship was that the impotent man in this miracle had with the Lord, but I am sure that he had one. And the blessed thing about this man was that the Lord would not let Him go. We don't know how many ways the Lord sought to minister to him over those years, and finally the Lord took over and we have the story of a man who was not only physically impotent, but he was spiritually impotent. And He would have continued that way had it not been for the grace of God, and the power of God, and a love that would not let him God. The Lord Jesus Christ had to be the Son of God, with all of the glorious attributes of God, or this miracle would never have taken place.

As I finished preparing my notes for this lesson, I found myself praying David's prayer found in Psalm 139:23-24:

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

How gracious the Lord is in His dealings with us! Continuance in sin can only lead to worse things. His word to all of us today is, "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more (continuously, habitually), lest a worse thing come upon thee." As Luther used to say, "We are all the Lord's Onesimi." If you see sin in your heart this morning, confess it, and forsake it, and look to the Lord to make you strong in the Lord to do His will, first, for His glory, and second, for your own blessing.

October 27, 2008

D. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (John 6:1-14).

This is the one and only miracle that our Lord performed which He was here on earth that is recorded for us in all four of the Gospels. You will find it in:

- 1) Matthew 14:13-21.
- 2) Mark 6:30-44.
- 3) Luke 9:10-17.

The miracle which follows this record of the feeding of the five thousand, where our Lord walked on the water, is included in Matthew and Mark, but not in Luke. These are the only duplication that John made with the other Gospel writers. The fact that it is recorded by all four of the Gospel writers is, as Bishop Ryle

observed, “a miracle demanding special attention” (I, 326).

We can see from the latter part of John 5 that the Lord had been embroiled in a controversy with the Jews who, according to John 5:16, were intent on killing Him. From the other Gospels we learn that Jesus had just learned of the death of John the Baptist, and also that the disciples had just returned from a ministry upon which the Lord had sent them, so there are many things to indicate that this was a time when both our Lord and His disciples were tired and in great need of rest. Verse 2 of John 6 tells us a great multitude had followed the Lord, not particularly because of His teaching, but “because they saw His miracles which He did on them that were diseased.” So the Lord “went up into a mountain” (actually one of the high hills around the sea of Galilee) with His disciples apparently for physical rest and also for the spiritually refreshing fellowship that meant so much both to the Lord, and to His disciples. We are also told that it was near Passover time. And this was a period each year when the Jewish people sought to prepare themselves at least a week ahead, for the observance of the Passover itself.

But we learn from verse 5 that the people, here called “a great company,” were not about to leave the Lord alone. At this point there had been a considerable amount of time since the people had had anything to eat. And so the Lord turned to Philip, asking him where they could buy bread to feed all of the people. We need to note that the Lord did not manifest any frustration or anger at the way the people followed Him wherever He went, but instead showed great compassion on them because most of them had been without food for many hours that day. In fact, Mark tells us in his account of this miracle,

34 And Jesus, when He came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd: and He began to teach them many things (Mark 6:34).

The apostles wanted to send them away, but instead the Lord told the apostles to feed them. That is where the Apostle John tells us that the Lord addressed Himself to Philip. In John 1:43 we learn that Philip was one of the first of the twelve apostles that the Lord called to Himself. Philip was from that area, and he would have been the best one to ask about where they could buy food. But, in addition, the Apostle John tells us that the Lord asked Philip “to prove him.” This means that the Lord was testing him. The Lord knew what He was going to do, but he was giving Philip the opportunity to express what he was thinking.

Now we need to remember that the apostles had seen the Lord perform many miracles. Probably on this one occasion there had been hundreds of sick people who had been healed. In addition, Philip like the others, had seen the Lord turn water into wine. But Philip failed to take what he had seen the Lord do in other situations and apply it to the present situation. Philip answered the Lord’s question like a person would who did not know Who the Lord was, or like a person who had never seen the Lord do anything above the purely human level.

In verse 7 Philip did not answer the Lord’s question. Instead, he said that it wouldn’t make any difference if he told the Lord where they could buy bread because somehow he knew that they didn’t have that kind of money. It is not really possible for us to know how much money two hundred denarii was, but it had to be ridiculously inadequate in comparison with what it would take to feed such a large group of people. This shows that even among those of us who are the Lord’s people, it is easy for us to forget Who the Lord is, or to think that He might be getting ready to do something that they had never yet seen Him do. It should not have been surprising to Philip or any of the other apostles that, speaking of the Lord, “He Himself knew what He would do” (v. 6).

At this point Andrew, Peter’s brother, said what we read in verse 9. How Andrew knew about this boy and his lunch, we are not told, but Andrew spoke up as though this boy’s lunch might be part of the answer, but then it apparently sounded like a foolish suggestion to him because he went on to say, “But what are they among so

many?” (v. 9b).

It seems certain that the apostles would have known the story about the Israelites in the desert who had gotten tired of manna, and wanted meat to eat. The mixed multitude among them remember the fish and other good things that they had to eat in Egypt. Moses went to the Lord actually blaming the Lord because the people had blamed him for their diet of food. Well, as you know that Lord promised them meat for a whole month. But then we have this added conversation between the Moses and the Lord which we find in Numbers 11:21-23:

21 And Moses said, The people, among whom I am, are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh, that they may eat a whole month.

22 Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them, to suffice them? or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?

23 And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? thou shalt see now whether my word shall come to pass unto thee or not.

So with the background that the apostles had in the Old Testament, plus their own experiences with the miracles of the Lord Jesus, it is disgraceful to see how pathetic the comments of Philip and Andrew were in the light of the need they faced in those days. But we can't throw stones at them because we have been guilty many times of feeling hopeless when with God all things are possible. We need to stop and think about situations like we are facing here in John 6, and see if we are not rebuked when we have doubted the Lord's power, or His love for us.

Well, what did the Lord do? Verse 10 says that the Lord said, “Make the men sit down.” I can imagine that most of them were saying in their hearts, “Why?” Why should they make the men sit down as though they were going to get something to eat, when all they had was a boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish. But apostles evidently did what the Lord told them to do, and the men responded, and sat down.

Matthew tells us that there were many more than 5,000 men. He said that in addition to the 5,000 men, there were women and children. So this could mean that to total crowd numbered at least 10,000, and possibly more than that.

Now was the critical time. What would the Lord do? Well, you all know the story. The Lord took that boy's lunch, and the first thing that He did after that was to give thanks. To whom? To the lad, or to mother who had prepared his lunch for him? Well, there may have been some explanation to the boy and an expression of thanks that he was willing to give his lunch to the Lord. *But the main One to Whom our Lord gave thanks, was God the Father!* A farmer had planted barley seed. It was harvested, and then milled. That boy's mother had baked it. But none of that would have happened apart from what God had done, even creating the barley to begin with. Barley loaves was known as the loaves of poor people. But think of our Lord Who is to be worshiped along with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit as the Creator of the heavens and the earth, bowing in His humanity like a creature giving thanks to God.

And then the Lord began to break of parts of the loaves which were transformed into complete loave, gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples gave to the people. And he did the same with the two fish. And all of those people ate. Those who wanted more had seconds and thirds. Everybody ate until they were full. No one went home hungry.

But that is not the end of the story. The Lord told the apostles to gather up what was left over, and each apostle came back with a basket full of barley loaves and fish. Many expositors have raised the question, what about the lad who gave his lunch to the Lord. Nobody really knows, but we can be sure that he had the best lunch that he had ever had!

But that is not the end of the story. Look at verse 14. (Read.) What prophet were they talking about? Please listen as I read Deuteronomy 18:15 where Moses prophesied the coming Messiah which the Lord would raise up for the people of Israel.

15 The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken.

A better translation is “the Prophet.” There was One coming by God Who would meet the needs of the people. They were right, and they were wrong, at the same time. The Lord Jesus Christ was that Prophet. But the Jews were looking for a Prophet who would, as Charles Erdman said in his commentary, who “would relieve physical and social distress and secure for them political independence” (p. 61). Who could do that better than One Who could perform miracles of healing and such a provision of food as they had seen that very day. But they were wrong in that the Lord Jesus had not come to deliver them from Rome, but to deliver them from their sins. John the Baptist had presented Jesus of Nazareth to Israel with the words, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). The miracle that the great multitude of Jews saw that day, was a part of a series of miracles by which the Apostle John was proving that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, “and that believing they might have life through His Name.” To this day “the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:4). And this blindness is upon the minds of Gentiles as well as Jews. This is why we are in so much trouble in our country today. We are spiritually blind. How can that blindness be turned to sight? Paul went on in 2 Corinthians 4 to tell us:

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (2 Cor. 4:5-7).

Now what does this miracle teach us about our Lord Jesus Christ?

It is very clear that this miracle emphasizes the truth that we had in the changing of water into wine. The Lord Jesus is portrayed in His creative power. This is not a fairy tale; this is history, divine history. The Lord took a lunch that was only large enough to satisfy the needs of a lad, a little boy, and multiply it so as to feed possibly even more than 10,000 people of all ages.

But it was not only a miracle of divine power, but it was a miracle of divine grace. The Lord was not obligated to feed the people. They pursued Him, and they neglected to prepare their own food. But the Lord is rich in mercy, and full of compassion. We know that the Lord taught them, but we know that they did not profit from what He told them. They continued to look for a deliverer from Rome, not a deliverer from their sins.

And yet while we see in this miracle much evidence of the Deity of our Lord, we also see evidence of His humanity. We see Him in prayer to the Father. He obviously was weary and in need of rest, when Isaiah reminds us that God “fainteth not, neither is weary.”

How was this to strengthen the faith of the Apostles?

We learn from this miracle that the Lord was teaching His disciples by His compassion toward the people. We know the great love that the Lord had a great love for the Apostles, and all of this was as much for the Apostles to learn more about the ways of the Lord.

The Apostles were clearly faced with a situation that was beyond them. They had no answers as to how to

meet even the physical needs of the people, but they were learning that nothing was impossible to the Lord. They were to learn that God had a purpose for them in all of the circumstances they were involved in as they accompanied the Savior. The Lord sought to “prove,” or test, Philip. The Lord does not tempt us to sin, but He tests us to show us how quickly things can get beyond what we are able to do, so we need to trust the Lord when in all of our ways and to constantly learning from Him.

We can believe that this was a real miracle because:

- 1) The hunger of all of the people was satisfied.
- 2) We have thousands of witness as to what happened.

There is a lesson in the true nature of our ministry from the way the Lord used the Apostles, even though there are some MSS that do not include that the Lord gave the bread and the fish to the apostles, and that they gave the food to the people, we know that they gathered up the remains so it is reasonable to think that they served. Think how long it would have taken even the twelve apostles to serve a crowd which probably numbered even more than 10,000. But the way we minister to people is by receiving the Word from the Lord, and then we take it and give it to the people.

The Lord’s prayer before serving the people teaches us the importance of preparing to serve the Lord by prayer.

This account teaches us to be faithful in ministering to people even when we see no results. There is not on record a single person who was saved as a result of this amazing miracle. But we can’t say that there were none to turned to Christ for salvation as a result of this ministry. It may be that afterwards, as the people thought of the miraculous work that they had seen, that they were convinced that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and that they trusted Him for the gift of eternal life.

November 3, 2008

E. Jesus Walking on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:15-21).

The is the only other miracle that the Apostle John recorded that is found in the other Gospels. The feeding of the five thousand is recorded in all four of the Gospels, as we saw last week. The miracle of the Lord Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, is not found in Luke, but it is found in Matthew and Mark. So I would like to do what I did last week with the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, i.e, read Matthew and Mark’s accounts of our Lord walking on the water.

So let us turn first to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 14, verses 22 through 33. (Read.)

Now turn to the Gospel of Mark, chapter 6, verses 45 through 52. (Read.).

Now let us go to our text for this morning: John 6:15-21.

We can see that the Apostle John’s account is the shortest of the three. He is the only one who mentioned that the crowd was ready to take the Lord by force and make him King. John did not say that the Lord “constrained” His disciples to get into the ship like Matthew and Mark reported. Matthew and Mark said that after the Lord had seen the disciples get in the ship, that He went into a mountain to pray. John said that our Lord went into a mountain, but he did not mention prayer. All three that the Lord walked on the sea of Galilee, but only Matthew mentioned that Peter also walked on the sea to go to the Lord. Matthew mentioned that when the Lord calmed the sea, and they were back on shore that the disciples “came and worshiped Him, saying, Of a

truth Thou art the Son of God” (Matt. 14:33). But Mark says that after the wind ceased, the disciples “were sore amazed in themselves beyond measure, and wondered. For they considered not the miracle of the loaves: for their heart was hardened” (Mark 6:51b-52). Mark was talking about the disciples’ immediate reaction, but Matthew, their realization after they had some time to think about what had happened.

When Lucille and I were in Israel many years ago now, we were told that wind storms could come up very suddenly on the Sea of Galilee. You could start across it on a calm day, and be caught in a storm before you got to the other side. And the waves could be dangerously high. On another occasion you will remember that the Lord was with the disciples when a storm came up suddenly, but He was asleep in the rear of the boat. They woke Him up as asked Him if He didn’t care if they all perished. These men, most of whom were fishermen by trade, thought that they were going to die. So such a situation that we are reading about in connection with this miracle, could be life-threatening! When fishermen are afraid for their lives during a storm, everybody else needs to be afraid too.

But now let’s turn to the Apostle John’s account of this miracle, which actually was two-in-one, wasn’t it, although we are not told specifically that the Lord stilled the storm, but we know Who controls the weather. And I might add that it is not Mother Nature, whoever she is.

John 6:15 ties this miracle of Jesus walking on the water with the feeding of the five thousand. The people who had been fed on a little boy’s lunch, were very sure that Jesus must be the prophet that Moses had predicted would come into the world, as we read in Deuteronomy 18:18, and so as we read in verse 15 of our text they were preparing to take our Lord and make Him a king!

Now I think I can truthfully say that most of the people in that large crowd were unsaved Jews. Nevertheless, they had experienced much teaching of the OT. At that time in world history Israel was dominated by Rome, Caesar and the Roman Empire. They were taxed heavily by the Roman government. Actually they were a nation under divine judgment. The people longed to be free, but they did not understand that their greatest need was not for political freedom, but for spiritual freedom – freedom from sin, a restored fellowship with God. They did not understand what their greatest need was. So when our Lord came along with power to heal all kinds of diseases, and to be able to feed a great multitude of people like they were with just five barley loaves and two fish, they reasoned that this had to be the prophet that they had been told would come.

They were a lot like Americans are today. Thank God, we are not under bondage to another nation, but we are experiencing a lot of trials which have been brought upon us by God. We have had more trouble with storms than at any time on record – floods, tornadoes, forest fires. Our economy is in great trouble. We are at war with an enemy that would like to see our nation completely destroyed, and Israel along with us. Adultery has become a way of life. Marriage is being perverted by homosexuality. Our children are being taught that such is OK, to have two Daddys or two Mommies. Our prisons are so full that we have to release some prisoners in order to make room for others. Our judicial system is riddled with judges who close their eyes to what is really wrong. *But our greatest problem is sin. God is not in the thoughts of most people today. We insist on having our rights, but very few voices are being raised to point out that our need is to recognize the will of God, and do it. Evolution has replaced creation in our schools. Our need is to turn to God, and we can’t turn to God apart from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Jewish leaders in the days when our Lord was here on earth were doing all they could to silence the preaching of the Gospel. Remember what they did to our Lord.*

We have multitudes of needs in our country today. The solution is not in politics; it is in Christ. And until we realize that, things are not going to get better; they are going to get worse.

The Jews in this crowd that had followed the Lord, were very interested in anybody who could heal their

diseases and feed their bodies. The Lord could do both, but that was not the main reason He came. Staying well and having food to eat, is important to all of us, as it was to the Jews. But we are all sinners before God, and we are responsible to Him. The wages of sin is death. The greatest need for all people in all ages and in all nations, and the greatest need of the people we are reading about in our Bibles today, was, and still is, for a Savior! Things can never be right for us if things are not right with God. The Apostle John says that those people were going to take Jesus “by force, to make Him a king.” Jesus didn’t need anybody’s help as He was ready to be a King. Some day He will be the King of kings and the Lord of lords. But in the wisdom and providence of God, He had come to be a Savior, a Savior from the wrath of God, and a Savior from the dominion of sin.

What did our Lord do? Was he happy with such a turn of events? No! Matthew and Mark tell us that the Lord went back up on that high hill where He had fed that great multitude, but He went up there to pray. You will notice that the Apostle John simply says that our Lord “departed again into a mountain Himself alone” (John 6:15b).

One expositor I read said that when we are alone, that is when we are the most not alone. The Lord was not accompanied by His disciples, nor by any of the crowd. Only God could have kept that crowd from following the Lord. What do you think our Lord talked to the Father about? I don’t know for sure because we are not told in any of the three Gospels. But we do know, as I reminded you last Sunday, that our Lord was “a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). I believe that the Lord Jesus went up that mountain weeping over the spiritual blindness and hardness of the hearts of the people. The Lord had been teaching them that day, but the people just did not get it. The Lord had never faced such a condition in heaven. The Apostle Paul wrote later in 1 Corinthians 2:14,

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.

This passage in John 6 is also an illustration of the truth which Paul presented in 2 Corinthians 4:3-6:

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We see evidence of spiritual blindness all around us every day. It is a judgment of God upon sin. The only One Who can give us eyes to see is the Spirit of God.

When Matthew and Mark used the word “constrained” (the very same word used by both of them), as we might imagine, means that He compelled them to get into the boat. There seems to have been at least two reasons for the Lord’s urgency in doing this. One was that He felt compelled Himself to get alone with the Father as soon as He could. And the other was that He intended to put the disciples into a test in order that He might prove their faith.

The Apostle John is the one who gave us some idea of the sequence of time. We don’t know exactly when it was that the Lord dismissed the crowd, and went back up on the mountain to pray. But we know that it was at the end of the day, when it was dark, that the disciples got into the boat to go across the Sea of Galilee. Evidently it was not long after they left that “the sea arose by reason of a great wind that blew” (John 6:18). This means that it was a bad storm. Usually They would depend on gentle breezes to move their boat across the sea, but if there were no breeze, they used oars. And they would use oars also in a storm to keep their boat on course. This night they were using their oars. When they had rowed twenty-five or thirty furlongs, that

was when the Lord appeared to them, walking on the water. But they did not know that it was the Lord. They thought it was a spirit of some kind, and they were afraid.

Remember that it was dark. We don't know if they had any light, but it seems apparent that there must have been some kind of a glow, or possibly a glory in connection with the Lord's presence on the water.

The Sea of Galilee is actually a large lake. The ISBE says that it is 7 miles wide at its greatest width, and some 13 miles from where the Jordan flows into it in the north and where the Jordan flows out of it in the south. Calvin quoted Josephus who said that the Sea of Galilee was a hundred furlongs long and 40 furlongs wide. So the disciples must have been a little over half way across the Sea of Galilee when the storm hit, or when the Lord appeared to them. So if it was twenty-five or thirty would have been a little more than half way. I doubt if the Lord had walked all of that way, but we do not know. What we do know is that all of a sudden the Lord appeared. The disciples did not recognize Him. They had never seen anything like this before, and so they were afraid. And they continued to be afraid until the Lord spoke to them saying, "It is I; be not afraid."

Verse 21 tells us that "Then they willingly received Him into the ship: and immediately the ship was at the land whither they went."

Actually we have three miracles here:

- 1) Jesus walking on the water.
- 2) The storm stopped.
- 3) The Lord and His disciples were immediately at their destination.

This was truly an amazing series of events in the life of our Lord here on earth.

Now what are some of the lessons that we are to learn from this series of events in the life of our Lord and in His ministry to His disciples?

First, we see our Lord's faithfulness to the will of the Father. Popularity often proves to be one of the greatest problems that we have to deal with. The crowd wanted the crown for our Lord without the Cross. Their time was always ready. Even with us who are true believers in Christ, we have to learn that our ways and God's ways are always different, and that His ways are always best. But if we try to follow the ways of the world, that is when we really get ourselves into trouble. If we read on down in John 6 to verse 38 we will see that the Lord declared that He was not guided by the will of the people, nor of His own will, but He said, "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me." This ought to be our objective in our lives too. We can always make big mistakes when we do our wills. Our wisdom is so limited, and we are inclined to be blinded when we make our own decisions. It often takes time for us to know the will of God, but it is better to wait until the Lord makes our way clear. Waiting on the Lord, and doing His will, keeps us from doing now what we will regret that we have done later.

Secondly, we see our Lord's dependence in His humanity on the Father. His strong action to dismiss the crowd and to dismiss the disciples as well so He could get to His Father in prayer, showed His great desire to seek the blessing of the Father for His own reassurance of the way the Father wanted Him to go.

And thirdly, in this connection, we see in our Lord's actions the importance that He placed upon prayer. And as we often hear it said by godly people, if the Lord felt His need to get alone with His Father to pray, how much greater is our need. And yet prayer often is not given a place of priority in our daily living. It is extremely important for us to study our Lord in His humanity. If He was touched with all the feeling of our infirmity, and He was, we need to realize how He struggled with the weakness of humanity, and follow His example as to how to cope with it.

Fourthly, we need to see in our Lord's life, how great blessing (as He experienced it in His ministry) often is the very place where we face great trials.

In the fifth place, I would show you that the Lord often is the One Who personally designs the trials that He wants us to experience. It is not always other people who are our problem, nor is it always the Devil. It is often in our trials that we learn the most and in which we experience the greatest blessings. The Lord compelled His disciples to get into that boat fully knowing how hard they were going to have to work, how fearful they would be, but what precious lessons we learn when we are brought to realize how little we can do, but how sufficient the Lord is to meet our needs.

In the sixth place, the Lord was teaching His disciples that they could never be any place where He could not get to them, and help them. Think how families and friends suffer when those they love are in danger in a storm at sea, or in war, or in any other time of danger. The disciples were going to face numerous trials and be in constant danger because of the message they were sent to proclaim. But the Lord has promised never to leave us nor forsake us. A storm may keep others from coming to help us, but the storm on deep water is no problem for the Lord.

As a seventh suggestion, could I ask a question about the Apostle John's report of this event since He had nothing to say about Peter's walking on the water. Do you think he was jealous of Peter, and that John wished that he had tried to walk on the water too? No, I think that the Apostle John was so intent on fulfilling the purpose that he had in mind in writing his Gospel, that he did not want his readers to get sidetracked by showing that Peter had done what the Lord did – up to a point!

Why then didn't he say that his purpose in writing had been fulfilled like Matthew did? See Matthew 14:33: "Then they that were in the ship came and worshiped Him, saying, Of a truth Thou art the Son of God." John wanted the Word to speak for itself.

Dr. Charles Erdman, whom I have quoted before, said of this miracle (or of these miracles),

It reveals, not a political leader, with power in a restricted, earthly sphere, but a divine Creator Who has supreme authority in the universe. . . He does not suspend the law of gravitation, but shows Himself superior to natural forces and independent of space. He enters the ship, and instantly it has reached its desired haven . . . [This miracle also] draws a parallel between the picture of Jesus as He prays alone upon the mountain and then appears to rescue the disciples, and the prediction that the divine Savior, Who is now interceding for us on high, will some day reappear to bring blessedness to His followers and peace to the storm-tossed nations of the world (pp. 61, 62).

It apparently was not long after this that the Lord took His disciples up to Caesarea Philippi where the Lord asked the disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matt. 16:13). He got various answers. "Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets" (Matt. 16:14). But then the Lord said, "But whom say ye that I am?" (Matt. 16:15). Then Peter spoke up and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). And then do you remember the Lord's response? "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 16:17).

Nobody ever has figured out who Jesus Christ is by themselves. God has to reveal to us personally what has been revealed in the Word, or we would never know Who the Lord is. How do you answer that question: Who do you say that Jesus is? If you can say from your heart what Peter said, you can only say it because the Father has revealed it to you from the Word; you didn't figure it out by yourself. Nobody ever does.

If we know Him, let us worship Him. And let us thank the Father over and over again that He has shown us from the Word that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and that believing in Him we have life through His Name.

November 10, 2008

F. The Giving of Sight to the Man Who was Born Blind (John 9:1-38).

Let us do as we have done with the previous miracles, and that is to read it again. I am grateful for all of you who have taken the time to read this chapter, and I know that it will be a blessing to you to hear it again. This is the only place where this miracle is recorded in the Gospels. (Read John 9.)

I want you to know that we are not going to get through this whole chapter today. It is going to take us at least one more session to cover all that we have concerning this miracle in which a man who was born blind received sight by the mighty power of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

The ability to see is a most wonderful gift from God. As we thank the Lord for our blessings, we need to include the blessing of being able to see. The Lord, while He was here on earth, gave sight to many who were blind. And He probably gave sight to many like this man who were born blind. But the Apostle John was led by the Holy Spirit to write about this particular man because here we see strong evidence that the Lord Jesus, by His Deity, or as the Son of God, did for this man what no other man could possibly have done, unless they had been given the power to cause "the blind" to "receive their sight" (Matt. 11:5) as the apostles were given power to do.

Bishop J. C. Ryle in his commentary on John made a very important statement about sin. He said that this passage before us reminds us of the sorrow that sin has brought into the world. Think about how the parents of this blind man had looked forward to his birth, only to be devastated when they learned that their baby could not see. That was something that they would never get over. We don't know what understanding they had about God, but it is very likely that they were like the majority of Jews in those days. They were religious, but they did not know anything about a personal relationship with God. That would have made their grief that much worse.

But then Bishop Ryle went on to say this, and I want to give it to you in his words:

Let us learn to had sin with a godly hatred . . . Let us fight against it, mortify it, . . . , and abhor it both in ourselves and in others.

Then listen to this:

There cannot be a clearer proof that man is a fallen creature, that the fact that he can love sin, and take pleasure in it (I, 576, 577).

That was a new thought to me, and one that all of do well to give give serious thought to. If there had been no sin, that man would have been born with perfect sight that never would have deteriorated in any way. It ought to make us long for the day when we will be with the Lord where there is no sin, and so there will be no sickness, no sorrow, no death. And as the only hope that this blind man had was in Jesus, so our only hope for perfection is in Christ. So the end result should be that we lift our hearts and our voices in the deepest praise for what is ahead for all of us who know the Lord.

But now let's get to the Biblical account.

The Lord was in Jerusalem as this story begins. He had had another encounter with "the Jews" which ended, as we can see in the last verse of chapter 8, with them taking up stones to stone the Lord. As the Lord passed through the busy streets of Jerusalem, we are told by the Apostle John, speaking of the Lord, that "He saw a

man which was blind from his birth” (9:1). Whether or not this was a case of divine omniscience, or He had seen the man before who could have been well-known because of his condition – we don’t know. But His disciples also had some knowledge of the man, and they had one question to ask the Lord. It was, as you can see in verse 2, “Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?”

The first thing that we face here is the idea which seems to be in most people’s minds, that a person who was afflicted in this way must have been a very bad person, or the child had been judged because of the sins of his parents. What the disciples meant asking about the man’s sins before he was born, we can’t say for sure. There were many strange ideas circulating among the Jews in those days, like reincarnation, or that it was possible for a baby to sin in his mother’s womb before he was born. Probably there were other weird ideas also. But what is clear is that the disciples thought that all sickness or afflictions were due to sin.

Matthew Henry reminds us that the Lord was “apt to teach.” Instead of rebuking the disciples for their attitude, He took advantage of their interest to teach them.

The Lord answered them very quickly in verse 3, saying it was neither. Now He did not say that such things were never the result of sin, but He simply indicated that that was not the reason in this case. Behind their question was certainly the idea God is involved in our trials in some way. In this case it was “that the works of God should be made manifest in Him” (v. 3). The Lord was not saying that neither this man nor his parents were sinners. We know that they were, like anyone else. But He was saying that their sins were not the cause of their son being born blind. So let us be careful about jumping to the worst conclusion when we see others in any trouble.

It should be of interest to us that this blind man was not seeking help from the Lord. He was not like Bartimaeus in another story that could not be quieted by the crowds he was so desperate to have his sight restored. Here in John 9 this blind man was not seeking the Lord, but the Lord noticed him, knew his plight, and obviously intended to help him. The Lord always seeks those He intends to save, or to help in some way, but in some cases, as in this, it is obvious that the Lord was taking the initiative.

One big lesson, important lesson the Lord brought to the disciples out of this. I once heard Dawson Trotman, the founder of the Navigators, say that he never met a person who did not teach him something. We can learn from God’s dealings with others just as much as we can learn from God’s dealings with ourselves. That was what the Lord was doing when He said in verse 4, “I must work the works of Him that sent me. while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” The disciples were looking for the person to blame for this tragic situation; the Lord looked upon it as an opportunity to serve. Ryle said,

This blindness was allowed and ordained by God, not because he was especially wicked, but in order to furnish a platform for the exhibition of a work of Divine mercy and power (I, 584).

Let me call your attention to that little word, “must.” It is the translation of that little Greek word, δεῖ, which denotes “the constraint which arises from divine appointment” (Thayer, p. 126). The Lord looked upon this as the sovereign will that He do something about this man’s blindness. It is the word that the Lord used with Nicodemus when He said to him, “Ye must be born again.” John the Baptist used it when he said with reference to the Lord, “He must increase, I decrease.” So it was obvious to the Lord that his contact with this man who had been blind all his life, was not an accident, but it was a clear leading of the Father, the Father’s appointment for Him to give this blind man sight for the first time in his life. And when the Lord added, “while it is day,” He meant that the Father intended for Him to give the blind man sight immediately.

The Father often puts opportunities in our way because He intends for us to do what we can about it. It may

be an opportunity to talk to someone about the Lord. Or it may be some task, even a very simple one, that He wants us to do. Often to delay is to lose. "Today is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). "Boast not thyself of tomorrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth" (Prov. 27:1).

A man whose name was Jones of Nayland made this comment on the situation we have leading up to this miracles, was this:

The best way to answer the great question of the origin of evil, is to consider the end of it. . . Why was this man born blind? That the works of God might appear, and Christ might cure him. Why did man fall? That God might save him. Why is evil permitted in the world? That God may be glorified in removing it. Why does the body of man die? That God may raise it up again (Quoted by Ryle, I, 584, 585).

Even when troubles are not removed God is glorified in showing the sufficiency of His grace in enabling us to bear our afflictions and trials for His glory.

In connection with the man who was blind from birth, his blindness was ordained by God in order that our Lord might have this occasion to show that He was the Christ, the Son of God. We don't know what condition his eyes were in, that is, how well developed. But it goes without saying that we see our Lord's power as the Creator in giving this man sight who had never seen the light of day before. The "day" that the Lord spoke of was probably the comparatively short period of His public ministry. For us it is the opportunity to serve the Lord by serving people which is before us. How many times have we let slip away the possibility of speaking to another person about the Lord, but we didn't do it, and we never had that opportunity again. We need to train ourselves to see the Lord's hand in all of the days of our lives so as to take advantage of service which is before us. It is much easier to criticize than it is to serve by taking the opportunities that the Lord places before us.

At the present time when we finish studying the miracles of John's Gospel, I hope to go back through the Gospel of John and pick up the I am's of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have one here in verse 5 where it is recorded that the Lord said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." He not only came to give light in a world darkened by sin, He is the Light. His words were light, but His very Person was Light! And until people realize Who our Lord is, study Him, learning not only from Him, by learning Him, they walk in darkness and in the shadow of death. That is where most people are in these days because they have no time for Christ or His Word. It is wonderful to see in this story that this man not only received His sight physically, but what was even more miraculous and wonderful beyond words, he came to know Him who is the Light of the world, the only Light of the world.

Now up through verse 5 we have our Lord's ministry to His disciples in connection with the condition of this man who was born blind. In verse 6 the focus turns to the Lord and this blind man.

John doesn't tell us that this blind man asked to be given his sight. When a person was blind from birth he probably had given up a long time before that he would ever be able to see. His parents, or someone else, would have had to describe for him what sight was.. In verse 21 his parents said that he was "of age," which probably means that he was at least thirty years of age.

As I have mentioned, we are not told the condition of his eyes except for the fact that he had never seen anything. As we read the Gospels we see that the Lord used various methods to give sight to blind men. We, of course, are not told how he gave sight to all of the blind men to whom He gave sight, but with some our Lord just spoke the word to them. Sometimes He would touch their eyes. This is the only recorded case where He took some clay, mixed it with His own spittle, or saliva, put it on the eyelids of the blind man, and told him to go wash it off in the pool of Siloam.

I don't know how physicians in those days treated their patients, but I am quite sure they would never have done what the Lord did. Anyone would have known that there was no healing power in dirt, or clay, as it called. Sceptics would have laughed at the Lord scornfully. But we are dealing here with the wisdom of God, not with the wisdom of the world, or of men. After the Lord applied the clay to the eyes of the blind man, he told him to go wash it off in the pool of Siloam. As far as the Scripture is concerned, the Lord did not even say that this was how he would be healed. But he went, washed the dirt off of his eyes, and what happened? For the first time in his life *he could see!* What a moment that must have been for him! And what a wonderful picture this is of salvation.

The clay did not give him sight. The Lord did that. What the blind man did was to believe the Lord, and to do what the Lord told him to do. The Bible speaks of this as "the obedience of faith." As Paul concluded the greatest exposition of the Gospel that we have in the Bible, the book of Romans, he wrote this in Romans 16:25-27:

25 Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began,

26 But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:

27 To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen.

At the beginning of Romans Paul described the Gospel in these words found in Romans 1:3-6:

3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.

As we will see in the following verses, this miracle is an amazing picture of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are saved grace is given to us enabling us to obey the Gospel message by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died to give us life and to deliver us from the dreadful spiritual blindness in which we were born. How unlikely it was from a human standpoint that this man who had been born blind, had never seen the light of day, to get physical sight by going to wash some mud off of his eyes at the pool of Siloam. But it was the Lord who told the blind man what to do, and it was the Lord who gave the blind man the faith to be obedience to the Lord's command. And what was the result? SIGHT! "He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing!"

We are reading here in John 9 about a real miracle in which a man who had been blind from birth, who had never seen anything, was given sight, not gradually, but immediately, and he didn't even have to wear glasses!

That was a most amazing physical miracle. Believe that it happened just like the Apostle John has told us here in chapter 9. And the testimony of John is given overwhelming support because:

- 1) His neighbors believed it.
- 2) The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders knew it.
- 3) The blind man's parents knew it.
- 4) The former blind man was living evidence of it.

Now let us turn to 2 Corinthians 4 where we can clearly see that this miracle of the blind man who received his sight is an illustration of the Gospel. I want to read to you the first seven verses of 2 Corinthians 4:

1 Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not;

2 But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.

3 But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

5 For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us (2 Cor. 4:1-7).

November 11, 2008

At this point, in verse 8, the Apostle John began to give the evidence that this miracle had really been performed. And who would have been better witnesses than his neighbors?. These were the people who knew him the best, and from there the Apostle John went on to the man himself who now was able to see, and then on to the Pharisees, who, in turn, consulted the parents. So you can see why, as I have said, there is overwhelming evidence that this miracle really happened. And we must add the Apostle John to the list of witnesses because he never would have written this chapter if he had not believed firmly that all he has written was absolutely true. But most important of all, this report was written by the Apostle John under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit.

November 17, 2008

9:8 Note from the question at the end of this verse that this man, who had been born blind, was also a beggar. He had no money. His parents, for whatever reason, were not able to support him. So he had two strikes against him. In both ways he was typical of all of us as sinners. And John seems to have chosen the miracles that he did in order that salvation might be a second way in which the miracles could be applied, and, therefore, from which we can draw some excellent lessons.

He was blind, and he was a beggar. What a great picture of all of us by nature! We were born spiritually blind, blind from birth, and without the resources to do anything about it. We are blinded by nature, and that blindness has been intensifying by the Devil, as we learn from 2 Corinthians 4:3-4. And just as this blind man in John 9 could do nothing about his blindness, and neither could anyone else, even those neighbors who knew him the best, and who probably were the most concerned about him, so the same is true of us spiritually. But how thankful we can be that the Lord did not charge for making people well. Salvation is “without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1). His one hope for sight and a different life was in Jesus Christ. And just as what the Lord did for this blind man was a miracle, a great miracle, that had everyone talking, so salvation is the greatest of all miracles. This man’s healing from blindness was instantaneous, and so is salvation. And our Lord gave him riches in salvation which were not only for the rest of his life on earth, but they were riches that would be with him for all eternity. Paul, in speaking of his own salvation and appointment as an apostle said in Ephesians 3:8,

8 Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Now, as I have already explained, this miracle was so amazing, that it needed confirmation. I think that the fact that this man was born blind, made it appear to be more impossible to those who knew him than if he had

been blinded by some accident, or some disease. So some of his neighbors said, expressing their amazement, “Is this not he that sat and begged?” Even those who recognized him because they had known him, and had seen him so many times sitting along the road begging, had difficulty believing that this man who obviously could see, could have been the same blind man they had seen begging day after day for years, totally blind!

9:9 And so they were divided in their opinions. “Some said, “This is he”: others said, “He is like him.” And by this they probably meant that he looked like the blind beggar that they had seen so many times, but because he could see, he couldn’t have been the same man.

But the former blind man settled their differences. He said, “I am (*he*, understood). He knew best that he had formerly been blind, but now he could see. He had experienced the creative power of the Creator, like 2 Corinthians 5:17 says,

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

The same creative power was used to give sight to this blind man that our Lord had used in the creation of the world. And that is the same power that God exercised in saving you and me. I am not going to be dogmatic about this, but this may suggest that this blind man didn’t have any eyes at all until the Lord gave them to him in performing this miracle.

9:10 So the question then was, “How were thine eyes opened?” They were convinced that he was the man whom they had known as a blind beggar, but now they wanted to know how such a thing could possibly be. Their question was not, “Who did it?,” but, “How . . .?” He couldn’t have told them *how* [except for the external circumstances, but he could, and did, tell them *who*.

9:11 Note how simple and direct and clear his answer was. (Read.) At this point he really did not know who Jesus was, but he did recognize our Lord’s true humanity. It amount to what the Lord did to him, and what the Lord told him to do, and what he did, and that immediately when he did what the Lord him to do, he received his sight. It all sounded so simple and so easy, but in reality the divine power of the Almighty God-Man was exercised in his behalf.

9:12 Immediately they wanted to know where this miracle worker was, but all he could tell them was, “I know not.” The Lord had not stayed around to receive the adulation of men, although we know from verse 35 that the Lord had every intention of seeking this man out again.

9:13 Now at this point we learn that the man’s neighbors did a very foolish thing. “They brought to the Pharisees him that aforesaid was blind.” Now we must realize at this point that those neighbors, however many they were, were convinced that they had seen real evidence that a miraculous work had been done. And they probably expected that the Pharisees would be just as happy about this incident as they were. But they were wrong.

This miracle must have stirred widespread attention, causing people to marvel at what had been done. The blind man himself seems to have cooperated fully with his neighbors. He may not have known about the Jews, in this case the Pharisees, hated Jesus. What had happened is what they feared, that such a miraculous work would persuade many people to accept the claims that our Lord had made for Himself. And they were right – it did! But they also knew that they had to show that no such miracle had been performed. But this they could not do.

9:14 But there was one point that seemed to be in their favor. The miracle which the Lord had performed

was done of the Sabbath Day, and according to the traditions of the Jews, not the Law of God, they would charge the Lord with, or the man who now had his sight, or both of them, with having broken the law, their law. Let me emphasize that the Law of God had not been broken.

In the Gospel of Matthew we have recorded another miracle which the Lord performed on the Sabbath Day. Just before He performed the miracle He had been teaching a group of Pharisees who objected to the disciples who had plucked some ears of corn to eat because they were hungry. And the Lord concluded His teaching by supporting His disciples by saying that “the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day” (Matt 12:8). Then we read in the verses which follow:

9 And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:

10 And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.

11 And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?

12 How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.

13 Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.

14 Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him (Matt. 12: 9-14).

This shows the deeply enmity the Jewish leader had against the Lord because He was a threat to the way they held the Jewish people under their authority, which was a man-made authority.

9:15 There was not much that the Jews could say about denying that the blind man had received his sight because he was no longer blind, and all of the neighbors who had brought the man were witnesses that he had been blind, but now he could see. So the Pharisees asked him how it had happened. And we have what he told the Jewish Pharisees what had happened in the latter part of this verse. (Read.)

9:16 At this point there was a division among the Pharisees themselves. Some said that Jesus could not have been “of God” because He had broken the Sabbath Day by what He had done which they interpreted as working, but it was according to their traditions.

We ought to note here that when people, even church leaders, turn away from the sole authority of Scripture, they begin to add their own rules, and over time, neither they nor the people who are under them know the difference between what is Scripture and what are the rules which they have added to the Word of God. When I was asked for my resignation from the church I was the pastor of before we started Trinity, the charge against me was not that I wasn’t teaching the Scripture, but that I was in violation of their doctrinal statement which really did not say anything about election. I heard later about a lady in the congregation who said that she had been listening to me for many years, and never heard me teach anything that was not in her Bible. But there you have it. This going on in a lot of churches. Today in many churches they are not encouraged to read their Bibles, and they don’t hear much teaching from the pulpit. These Pharisees were charging the Lord with sin because He did not support their traditions.

But there was some Pharisees there who said, indicating that if our Lord were not “of God,” “how can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?” That was a key question, wasn’t it? They all probably should have been asking why *they* were not able to perform such miracles.

9:17 But then the Pharisees turned to the man who had been given his sight and asked him, “What sayest thou of him, that he hath opened thine eyes?” This was obviously to put the man on the spot so as to

bring charges against him. He quickly answered, "He is a prophet." What did he mean by that? Well, I don't think any of us could say for sure. He was not ready to say that Jesus was the Son of God, as he would learn later, but he must have felt that Jesus was more than an ordinary man, that He was "of God," and had come from God. He had to know that there was something about Jesus that was different from all others because he had never met anyone else who even pretended to be able to do what Jesus had done for him.

9:18 At this point the Pharisees who had denied that our Lord was "of God," took the only position that was open to them, that this man had never been blind and so there really had been no miracle. But the Apostle John tells that they only said this "until they called of him that had received his sight." As we read in the following verses when the Pharisees called the parents they received further testimony that this man was their son, that he had been born blind, and had somehow received his sight.

9:19 Tells us the questions that the Pharisees asked the parents. (Read.)

9:20 Verses 20 through 23 tells us about the response of the parents.

Here in verse 20 they told the Pharisees two things: "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind." But then they went on according to verse 21.

9:21 They were not perfectly honest is what they said here: "But by what means he now seeth, we know not." They surely had been told by their son, and must have been present when their son was talking to the Pharisees. But they had not been eyewitnesses of the miracle. And so we can say that they were honest in saying, "or who hath opened his eyes, we know not." They may have heard their son say that His Name was Jesus, but they didn't know anything else about the Lord except that Jesus had given sight to their son.

9:22 At this point the Apostle John tells us why the parents were so fearful in answering the questions that were directed to them by the Pharisees. They knew enough about Jesus to know that the Jews, the leaders of the Jews, the scribes and Pharisees, had determined that anyone who confessed that Jesus was the Christ, that is, the Messiah, would be put out of the synagogue. To be put out of the synagogue was the equivalent of being put under the eternal judgment of God. This was the big club that those Jewish leaders held over the people in order to maintain their own power over them. Actually, as we all know, or should know, no such power was in the hand of these false teachers. God had not given them such authority. In fact, these men did not even know God. They were false teachers, enemies of the truth.

The final word of the parents are given in the next verse.

9:23 So to escape further questions, the parents said, speaking of their son, "He is of age; ask Him." As I mentioned last week, this probably meant that their son was probably in his thirties. He was old enough to have his testimony accepted by the Jews.

At this point the Pharisees turned back to their son, and this takes us down to verse 34.

9:24 Arthur Pink says in his commentary that the Pharisees tries to give the man who had born blind new evidence that had come to them to prove that there was no connection between God and Jesus, but that Jesus was a sinner who had no relationship with God. So you see that the Pharisees were denying the very truth that the miracle revealed. They wanted the man who had received his sight to think that he had been deceived about Jesus. They were denying that our Lord was even a prophet.

9:25 Here the man who had received his sight admitted that he did not know whether Jesus was a sinner or not, but he did know one thing, and he stated the fact even stronger than before. “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.” Regardless of what the Pharisees might say, or do, the man who had received his sight could not be forced to deny this fact regardless of the pressure that the Pharisees were putting upon him.

We need to notice here that the truth imparts a certain boldness, a fearlessness, in the hearts of those who have experienced any evidence of the work of God. This man who had been blind was able to stand up to the Pharisees when his parents gave in to their fears of the Pharisees. The man who had been blind knew that Jesus had some connection with God, possibly as a prophet as he had told the Pharisees before, and he would have been willing to give God the praise, but not if it meant leaving Jesus out of the picture. We see increasing evidence in the man who had been blind that our Lord had not only given him physical sight, but he was beginning to see more and more clearly that there was some connection between God and Jesus.

9:26 Pink mentions that the Latin Vulgate indicates that the former blind man was actually saying that he knew that Jesus was not a sinner. This confession would indicate even further that he was coming to a clearer understanding of who Jesus actually was. At this point the Pharisees reverted to the question as to what our Lord did to Him, and how His eyes were opened, as though there would be something in that to prove that the Lord was a sinner. They wanted to emphasize anything that might draw attention from the fact, the very obvious fact, that this man had been born blind, and that even after he got into his adult years, Jesus had given him the ability to see which he had never had before. It was the end result that proved the uniqueness of Jesus, not the method that He used in performing the miracle.

9:27 This man who had received his sight realizes how foolish the Pharisees are in asking for information that had already been given to them. He manifested a great deal of discernment in refusing to go over the facts again. But perhaps he was given the Pharisees the benefit of the doubts that were beginning to fill his mind concerning them when he added, “Will ye also be his disciples?” He felt that it was time for them to answer some questions that he had. But being put on the spot like that infuriated the Pharisees.

9:28 Here we are told that the Pharisees “reviled” him. This was verbal abuse. They were slandering him. They used language that was completely unbecoming to men who were supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the Jews. This is what the Jews would do when they were faced with the truth for which they had no answer. This is what they did to the Lord Jesus when He was hanging on the Cross. It shows how hard even supposedly religious men can become when their arguments are overcome with the truth.

What is most surprising about the Pharisees in this account is that there was no indication whatsoever that they rejoiced in the fact that a man who had been born blind had miraculously been given his sight. They had been told this by the blind man’s neighbors. The one who had been blind told them what had happened to him. His parents had admitted that he had been born blind, and that for the first time in his life he had been able to see. According to the Law of God, events like this were established by two or three witnesses. The Pharisees refused to believe it in spite of all of the evidence. Their hearts were hardened against the truth, and it appears that the Lord was hardening their hearts even more by their steadfast rejection of the truth. They claimed to be Moses’ disciples, but they were applying pressure on this man who had received his sight, such pressure as Moses had never exercised on others. Moses received the truth from God, and taught the truth to the people of Israel, and applied the truth to the Israelites. But he did it as the Lord’s servant. The Pharisees were definitely not in Moses’ camp, but they were enemies of the truth and enemies of God. It is not wonder that the Lord repeatedly called them *hypocrites* – men who acted the part, but whose hearts were far from God.

It is not unusual for men in the pulpit today to say that Jesus was a good man, that He was a great teacher, and yet say that He deceived his disciples into believing that He could give sight to the blind, that He walked on the Sea of Galilee, and especially that He died and arose from the dead. But the evidence is overwhelming that He did all of this. How could He be good if He was a deceiver? How could He be a great teacher if He taught a bunch of lies?

The truth is that Jesus did change water into wine. The truth is that He healed the nobleman's son when the son was several miles away. The truth is that the Lord suddenly enabled a man to walk who had not walked for thirty-eight years. The truth is that the Lord fed approximately ten thousand people with a little boy's lunch of five loaves and two fish. The truth is that Jesus went walking on the sea of Galilee to rescue His disciples who were caught in a storm, and that when He got into their boat, the storm stopped, and immediately they were at their destination. And the truth is that Jesus gave sight to a man who had been blind from birth. And the truth is that each one of these miracles, and all of them combined, proof beyond any doubt that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that believing you and I have life through His Name. But with all of the evidence we have, even religious leaders are not able to see the truth because the Devil has blinded their eyes to the truth of the Gospel.

9:29 How pathetic is the confession of the Pharisees which is given here. They knew that God had spoken to Moses. That much is true. But the God was speaking through His Son Jesus Christ, was totally foreign to them. They did not get the message.

But the man who was born blind had been to see much more than can be seen with the human eye. The Lord had enabled him to see the unseen, and he expressed what he had seen to those ungodly Pharisees. And this is what we have in verses 30 to 33. And these are the words of a babe in Christ.

9:30 The man who had been born blind was amazed at the blindness of the Pharisees. He was amazed that the miracle that the Lord had performed had not caused the Pharisees to find out where He, Jesus, had come from, and Who He was.

9:31 This man knew that God does not hear sinners. He was using "sinners" here not in the way it applies to all of us by nature, but of people who are not of God. But the fact that God heard Jesus, and that Jesus worshiped God as He did in His flesh, and that Jesus did God's will, showed that Jesus was truly "of God."

9:32 Jesus remind the Pharisees that since the beginning of the world there never had been a person's eyes opened and given sight who had been born blind. That alone should have awakened the Pharisees that there was something very unique, something very special about Jesus.

9:33 And finally this man told the Pharisees that if Jesus were "not of God." He could not have done anything that He did.

9:34 But all that the man said, meant nothing to the Pharisees. They charged him with a greater degree of sinfulness than what applied to them. What arrogant hearts they had. They did not realize that what they were charging the blind man with, was equally true of them. But the truth was that this man who was born blind had been enabled by God not only to see the light of day, but the Lord had opened His eyes to see that Jesus was of God. And just shortly after this His eyes were opened to see even more about Jesus.

The Pharisees cast him out of the synagogue, but they did not understand that they had been excluded from the

kingdom of God and from eternal life. They had the authority to cast him out of the synagogue, but they did not have the authority to turn the former blind man away from Jesus.

This wonderful story ends on the highest level possible.

9:35 In verses 35 through 38 we see the Lord and the man who had been born blind. At last they are together without the Pharisees to interfere.

This, too, is a wonderful picture of salvation.

Although the Lord had not been physically present when the former blind man was being ridiculed by the Pharisees, “but the Lord heard that they had cast him out.” And the Lord sought him out, and found him, and asked him a question. There had been many question directs toward the man who is at the center of this story, but no question like this: “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” The Lord was bringing to completion the work that He had already done in this man’s heart.”

9:36 What was his response? “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” Notice how his heart had been prepared by all that the Lord had done for him up to this point. Not everyone is ready to answer this question, but he certainly was.

9:37 The Lord answered, “Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.” How clear everything is when the Lord is dealing with us.

9:38 The man who had so recently received his physical sight, gave evidence that he was able to see things clearly regarding his soul. His answer was, “Lord, I believe.” And then we are told that he worshipped Him. And the picture is complete.

You will remember that in the past miracles which we have studied that there was often more than one miracle which the Lord performed. Here we have two as I have emphasizing throughout our study of this chapter. The first was physical healing. The Lord gave him sight after having been totally blind from birth – probably for at least thirty years and maybe more. But then, although the Pharisees did all that they could to stand in the way between this man and the Lord Jesus Christ, they were not successful. The Lord prevailed. And He always will with His elect.

I trust that all of us can say from our hearts that we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and that we, too, love Him and worship Him Who is the Son of God, and believe that through Him we have eternal life. The evidence of true faith is that we worship Him.

November 24, 2008

A brief exchange followed between the Lord and “some of the Pharisees.”

9:39 This miracle has presented to us the reality of physical blindness, but also the reality of spiritual blindness. The Lord Jesus actually worked two miracles in the life of this man who was born blind. He gave the blind man physical sight who had never seen anything before. He had been “born blind.” But he also had been “born blind” spiritually. And the Lord gave him that sight also, sight which he did not have before. At this point the Lord declared that which was a part of His mission in the world: “For judgment I am come into this world.” The Lord came to make it increasingly clear that there are two kinds of people in the world.

There are those who are spiritually blind, and those who have spiritual sight. Those who have spiritual sight are those who have received that sight from God, or from the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who are spiritually blind are still like they were when they were born – even though they might think themselves to have sight, like the Pharisees did. Matthew Henry said about our Lord’s words at the end of this chapter, that “He spoke not as a preacher in the pulpit, but as a King on the throne, and as a Judge on the bench.” I would say that He spoke especially as a Judge.

The man who was born blind was in the category of those who “see not might see,” both physically and spiritually. The Pharisees were those who claimed to be the representatives of God on earth when in actuality they were blind, and the intensity of their blindness was the result of having seen and heard Christ, but who rejected Him.

9:40 “Some of the Pharisees” seemed to get the point that the Lord was making. And so they asked, “Are we blind also?”

9:41 This verse is not easy to explain. But it seems that the Lord was saying that if they knew that they were blind, they would have been like the man born blind, who, when he was told what to do, did it, and his blindness was gone. But instead they did not recognize that they were blind, totally blind, blind from birth, so their blindness (which here represents sin), remained.

The water in the pool of Siloam was like the Gospel. And the Lord as the Judge of all the earth was here declaring that there was only one way for those who were spiritually blind to receive sight, and that was through Christ Himself. There is nothing else, there is no one else, who can bring us to God. Cf. John 14:6; 1 Peter 2:9-10:

9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Cf. also 1 Peter 3:18

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

When the Lord told the man who was blind from birth to go to wash in the pool of Siloam, He was indicating that doing that, nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else, would take him out of the darkness he had been born in, and would bring him into the world of light.

This miracle was a perfect illustration of the Gospel of Christ.

G. The Raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46).

Although every miracle that the Lord performed, was evidence that He was “the Christ, the Son of the living God, this, it would seem, was the greatest of all of the miracles that John has recorded for us because the Lord raised Lazarus from the dead after he had been dead four days. However, as amazing as this was, it could not be compared with (although it anticipated) that future day when our Lord will descend from heaven with a shout, and with the archangel of God, to raise from the dead those who had died, if He should come today, over a period of two thousand years, many of whose bodies are no longer existent at all. So this story should be an encouragement to all of us that nothing will hinder the Lord in the announced prediction in Scripture that “the dead in Christ shall rise first,” and that we living “shall be changed.” Talk about miracles! Nothing that had ever happened before will have been able to surpass that.

11:1 At the beginning of the chapter we are introduced with the three most well known inhabitants of Bethany, which we are told in verse 18 “about fifteen furlongs off,” or, as Brown said in his commentary, less than two miles from Jerusalem. Evidently people would say about Bethany that “that was the place where “Mary and her sister Martha” live.

11:2 And then to further identify this brother and his sisters, we are told here that this was the Mary who “anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair. But both in verse 1, and again here in verse 2 we are told that Lazarus was sick. This emphasis, along with the fact that he died, stresses the fact that this was more than a bad cold; he was really sick; as it turned out, sick unto death.

11:3 The appeal which Mary and Martha sent to the Lord, “he whom Thou lovest is sick,” speaks of the fact that there was a very close fellowship between Lazarus and the Lord. The Lord loves all of His people, but those who live in obedience to the will of God enjoy a special fellowship with the Lord. But Mary and Martha did not appeal to the Lord on the basis of Lazarus’ love for the Lord, but on the basis of the Lord’s love for Lazarus. Even though Lazarus’ love for the Lord must have been exceptional, yet it could never compare with the Lord’s love for him. So this was a very strong appeal that Mary and Martha were making to the Lord. But we should note that with the wonderful relationship that this brother and sisters had with the Lord, it did not mean that they would escape from the trials and testings that are so common in everyone’s life.

We don’t know what other avenues of help Mary and Martha could have turned to, but it is important for us to see that, according to the record, they appealed to the Lord first.

Bishop Ryle would call our attention to the word, “behold,” in the message that the sisters sent to the Lord. Perhaps it was an expression of amazement that Lazarus was sick, or that he was so very sick. Whatever the situation was, it showed how deeply concerned they were for the health, and even for the life, of their brother.

11:4 We are not told who the person was to whom the Lord gave this message, but it is certain that the Lord was not surprised with the information that this unnamed person brought to Him. Obviously when the Lord said, “This sickness is not unto death,” He did not mean that Lazarus would not die. We know that he did die. But the story was not to end in death. This, like the miracle which we have just studied in John 9, was both “for the glory of God,” and “that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” For the Lord to be glorified meant that through this miracle there would be definite evidence that Jesus was not just a Man, but He was the Son of God in human flesh, as He claimed to be and which became and continued to be the main reason for the Jews intention to kill the Lord. They charged Him with blasphemy, which it would have been if it had not been truth. But it was true, and the Lord by these miracles we have studied was giving to the people of Israel positive evidence that His claim was true.

11:5 Situations like this usually cause great turmoil in our lives. The way the Lord handled this was designed for the blessing of Mary and Martha as well as for Lazarus. This verse is a divine statement of the reality of the Lord’s love, not only for Lazarus, but also for “Martha” especially because it seems from the way we read of Mary first, and then Martha, that Martha, although the older of the two, was not as popular as Mary. The Lord loved the three to the same degree, and they needed to hang on to this truth, not only for the comfort of their hearts, but for their strengthening in this time of need. The Lord was fully aware of the sorrow and anxiety that filled the hearts of these two sisters.

Perhaps these words are here for everyone who reads this story. We need to remember verses that have to do with God’s love for us when it seems that the Lord doesn’t care when we look at our circumstances. But nothing can ever affect our Lord’s love for us. We need to be convinced of this, not by looking at our circum-

stances, but by looking at the Lord. In our case, where the Lord is not physically present where we can see Him, our comfort must come from the Word of God which is the way that God speaks to us today. The Lord gave Jeremiah a message of love which applies just as much to us today. It is found in Jeremiah 31:3 where we read,

3 The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

If Jeremiah had looked only at his circumstances, he might have questioned God's love. But God's Word was given to him to give him the comfort and courage to carry on.

11:6 The message that Lazarus' sisters had sent to the Lord was in fact, a prayer. The latter part of chapter 10 tells us that the Lord "beyond the Jordan" to get away from the Jews who were intent on stoning Him. So even after the Lord got the message, He stayed two days where He was instead of laying everything aside to get to Lazarus as quickly as He could.

11:7 And then when He announced to His disciples that He wanted to go back to Judea again, we see in **11:8** that they reminded Him of why they were where they were. (Read v. 8.)

11:9 The words of our Lord in this verse and in **11:10** are not easy to explain. He knew that the will of the Father was for Him to go to Mary and Martha. The Lord was never careless about His own safety, but here He seemed to be expressing His confidence in God. As the Lord said earlier in this Gospel that "men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil" (John 3:19). The Lord knew that nobody could cut His life short before the time appointed by the Father. So when He faced the need to go to Mary and Martha, He believed that with care the Father would take care of Him in the day, The night, however, was a different matter, in those days especially. There were no lights like we have now at night. The Father always takes care of us until our time is finished here on earth, but, as many before have said, "we are immortal until our job is done." But then look at what He told His disciples in verse 11.

11:11 He announced to His disciples, "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep."

What was the disciples' response. See verse 12.

11:12 The disciples took the Lord literally. And so they said, "Lord, if he sleepeth, he shall do well."

In verse 13 the Apostle John in writing about this tells us what the Lord meant.

11:13 The Lord was telling them that Lazarus was dead, but the disciples thought that the Lord meant that Lazarus was resting in sleep, which would have been beneficial for him in most cases.

11:14 Here the Lord tells the apostles in words so that they would know what had happened. How the Lord knew this, we are not told. But this must be evidence that He was omniscient even in His humanity because we have no evidence in Scripture that He had received a second message from Mary and Martha.

11:15 These words almost sound like there was no compassion with the Lord. But we see from His words to His disciples that this whole experience was meant for the disciples, who were still learning about the Lord. As an explanation to them, He said, "To the intent ye may believe."

From this statement we learn that faith is not constant. Faith is a growing experience for all of us as the

people of God. Even the disciples' understanding of Who the Lord was, needed strengthening. Our faith can grow through our trials, but it can also grow as we witness the people of God under trial. Even reading about the trials of the Lord's people mentioned in Scripture, like Job, and Jeremiah, and Paul, just to name a few is strengthening to our faith. Reading Christian biographies also strengthens our faith. The disciples must have wondered how the news that Lazarus was dead could be used to help them in their relationship with God, and in understanding His ways. So be sure to notice in this verse "your" and "you."

From what I have learned, it is usual in most languages to speak of death as sleep. We even have it in the OT as well as in the NT. For example, in Deuteronomy 31:16 the Lord told Moses what the children of Israel after he, Moses, slept with his fathers. We find David saying in Psalm 13:3 when he was concerned that his enemies might kill him, "Consider and hear me, O Lord my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death." In the NT we have verses like 1 Thessalonians 4:13 where Paul wrote, "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep." He was writing about those saints who had died before the Lord returned.

But the disciples were not acquainted with this figure of speech. They saw no reason to go to Lazarus in view of the danger which faced them if Lazarus was sleeping! So the Lord was educating them in the things of God. I have wondered if in these passages which speak of death as sleep, and then go on to speak of the resurrection, as Paul did in 1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18, if it were not because for God to raise the dead is no more difficult for Him than for us to awaken someone out of their sleep.

11:16 The Apostle Thomas always seemed to be a slow learner of the things of God. His response seems to be that they were not going to be able to talk the Lord out of returning to Bethany, so they might as well go with Him so that they could all die together. Probably the Lord experienced grief instead of discouragement, but He must have been grieved that Thomas, and probably most of the others also, were so slow to take in the truth and to put their complete trust in the Lord.

11:17 Here we see a possible evidence of the humanity of our Lord. It seems that He did not know how long Lazarus had been dead until He got to Bethany. He had been in his tomb for four days. From the Scriptures we cannot see that the Lord had ever faced a situation like this. He had raised people from the dead, but not those who had been dead for four days!

11:18 I am indebted to Bishop Ryle for his comment on this verse. He said this:

According to his manner [the Apostle John] gives a show how very near to Jerusalem the wonderful miracle he relates was worked – within a walk to the Temple, and almost within view; and partly to account for the number of the Jews who came from Jerusalem to comfort Martha and Mary (II, p. 82).

11:19 We have seen that in the Gospel "the Jews" usually means the Jewish leaders, the scribes and Pharisees, or other members of the Sanhedrin. But that is not the case here. This means *the Jewish people*, friends of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. They evidently had many friends. But it was into this situation that our Lord and His disciples arrived. Their arrival would have caused a great deal of attention.

11:20 From this verse down through verse 27 we see our Lord ministering to Martha. Verses 28 and 29 seem to indicate that Mary did not know that the Lord had come until Martha told her. But before we get to that let us see what the Lord said to Martha. We don't know if Mary was with some of her friends, or if she had sought some place to be alone to grieve. Verse 30, like verse 20, tells us that Martha had gone a short distance from their home meet the Lord before He and the disciples got to their home.

11:21 I have often wished when I have taught this chapter before what was the tone of voice that Martha used when she greeted the Lord. When we get down to verse 32 we find that Mary greeted the Lord with exactly the same words that Martha had used in greeting Him. “Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.” I can’t believe that either of them spoke in anger. Obviously they had said this, probably many times as they waited for the Lord to come, only to be disappointed. Martha was glad to see the Lord, and comforted that He had come, but still she did not understand why He had not come earlier. She knew that the Lord had a reason, but it now appeared too late for the Lord to do what she had hoped that He would do. It must have touched the Lord’s heart deeply as she spoke these words to Him.

But then she quickly added the words we find in verse 22.

11:22 Several expositors have pointed out two things from this verse. One was that Martha really believed in prayer. She was certain that God would answer the prayer of the Lord Jesus. But the other point is that she spoke to the Lord as though He had no more power with God to work a miracle than any prophet might have. She may have thought that the Lord’s prayers would be more effective than anyone else’s prayers, but it seems that she had forgotten, at least for the moment, that the Lord did not need to pray to the Father in order to perform a miracle, but that the Lord had power in Himself to work miracles. In verse 21 she had indicated, as Mary would also a few minutes later, that the Lord could have kept Lazarus from dying, but what she was thinking now that he had died, we cannot say.

But no rebuke came to her from the Lord. Instead, He went on to minister to her.

11:23 Notice what Jesus said: “Thy brother shall rise again.”

11:24 Martha knew the glorious truth of the final resurrection of the saints “in the last day,” but for the present she needed to take comfort in the One Who was Himself “the Resurrection and the Life.” (Read verses 24 and 25.)

Previously the Lord had said:

- 1) In John 6:35, “I am the bread of life.”
- 2) In John 8:12, “I am the light of the world.” And He repeated this in John 9:5. See also John 12:46.
- 3) In John 8:58, “Before Abraham was, I am.”
- 4) In John 10:7 and 9, “I am the door.”
- 5) In John 10:11 and 14, “I am the good shepherd.”
- 6) Here in John 11:25, “I am the resurrection, and the life.”
- 7) In John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.”

In addition to all of these, there are those times that our Lord claimed, like in John 10:36, that God was His Father, making Himself the Son of God.

When we have completed the study of our Lord’s miracles in the Gospel of John, I want to go back to study with you these titles which the Lord claimed for Himself, the I am’s of John’s Gospel.

All of these titles indicate that the Lord Jesus Christ was “the LORD,” or Jehovah of the OT, the ever-living, never-changing God, which is formed from the Hebrew verb, *to be*. But to the Jewish people of the OT it was such a sacred name that when they came to it in the Scriptures, they said, Adonai, which means LORD, because they did not want to run the risk of taking the Lord’s Name in vain. This title also belongs to God the Father, showing the Deity of both the Father and the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But what does it mean that the Lord Jesus Christ is “the resurrection and the life:?”

December 1, 2008

The first statement in the Gospel of John about life is in John 1:4-5:

4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

5 And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

The word “comprehendeth” does not mean that the darkness does not understand it (which, of course, would also have been true). The darkness of this world has never been interested in understanding the life and light that are in Christ. The word which the Apostle John used here expresses the idea of taking hold of the truth, and eliminating it. The world is the enemy of the truth, opposed to the truth. And to this day the world is seeking to eliminate the truth from the minds of men. The substitution of evolution for creation is a good example. The idea that our country is under judgment because of sin, draws ridicule and scorn from people in the world. The world lives in darkness. Christ brought life and light in His very Person, and the world has never been able to extinguish it, and it never will.

We read in John 5:24-26 that our Lord said,

24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

25 Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

26 For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;

David Brown in the JFB commentary said, and I think he was quoting someone else, that our Lord was saying, “The whole power to impart, maintain, and restore life, resides in Me.” This is true of physical life, and it is also true of spiritual life. And the bodily resurrection of Lazarus was an illustration of spiritual life. The Apostle Paul said in Colossians 3:4,

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.

And the Apostle John stated it clearly in 1 John 5:11-12:

11 And this is the record [witness], that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

12 He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.

The Apostle Paul was stating the same truth when in Galatians 2:20 he wrote, “Christ liveth in me.” Eternal life is a Person. We have life through our living union with our risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then the Lord went on to say, “He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:” And then He continues in verse 26,

11:26 “And whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.” The word “never” here is the translation of two Greek words, and both of them mean, NO! They are οὐ μὴ. When they are put together like this they mean, as we often say, *in no way, not the slightest possibility*. We have this same double negative in John 10:27-28:

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never (οὐ μὴ) perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

All of this adds us to, once saved, always saved. Eternal life is eternal life!

And he followed this with a question for Martha: “Believest thou this?”

Notice the order of “liveth and believeth.” We would be inclined to say, “believeth and liveth” because we have been taught that it is our faith that produces life. But the Lord gives life, and our faith is an evidence that

we have life. And that truth will be illustrated in the resurrection of Lazarus.

11:27 In one way she answered the Lord's question, but in another way she didn't. She believed in the Deity of the Lord Jesus, but she did not really understand the true nature of life, especially the truth about eternal life. This miracle displayed the sovereign power of our Lord over physical life, but it was in itself an amazing picture of eternal life.

It is important to note that Martha answered the Lord, when she said, "I believe," that she did not use the present tense, but she used the perfect tense, which in addition to meaning that she had believed in the Deity of the Lord before all of this happened, but that she still believed in the Deity of the Lord. And this, even though the Lord had not come immediately to them, but waited until Lazarus died. Her faith in the Lord was still in tack. Her faith may have been shaken, but it was still there. And this is because her faith had been a gift from God, a gift which He never takes away. She believed that He was the One to come, i.e., the Messiah, and she still believed it.

With this answer, she turned away to go tell Mary that the Lord had come.

11:28 Remember that Martha had left their home to go what was probably a short distance to meet the Lord. After her conversation with the Lord, she went back home to tell Mary the good news. And she said to Mary, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee." We have no record that the Lord said this, but obviously some things were said by Martha and the Lord which are not recorded for us.

Notice the word "secretly." There evidently were some of the Jewish leaders who were still around, and so Mary was wisely using the greatest caution not to make our Lord's enemies aware that He had come.

11:29 The words "as soon as" and "quickly" show how rapidly Mary responded to the message that Martha had given to her.

11:30 The Lord still had not come into Bethany.

11:31 Here again, "the Jews" must not mean, as it does in most instances in the Gospels, the Jewish leaders. It must mean Jewish friends who had come to comfort Mary and Martha when Lazarus died. So when Mary left so quickly, her friends thought that she had gone to the tomb where Lazarus' body was, to grieve for him.

11:32 This is the second of three times that we find Mary at the feet of the Lord. Luke is the one who gave us the first instance (Luke 10:38-42). The third, as I have mentioned before, is in John 12. Here, the Lord still was not in Bethany, but he had to be very near.

When Mary got to the Lord, she fell at His feet, but there is no statement here that she touched Him. What she did do was to say to the Lord exactly what Martha had said to Him: "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

There is no way that Mary and Martha could have known all of the miracles that the Lord performed, but going through these miracles in John, I wondered from Martha and Mary's words if they had known about the healing of the nobleman's son which we studied in John 4. Probably not. But if they had, they would have known that the Lord would not have had to come in order to heal Lazarus. He could have just spoken the word from a distance, and Lazarus would have been healed. The Lord knew that He could have healed Lazarus the same

way that He had healed the nobleman's son. Distance is no problem with the Lord. However, we know that the Lord does not always work the same way. The Lord varied the ways that He healed people, and He had His own purposes for doing so. Probably the reason was that He wanted people to focus their attention on Himself, not upon the methods.

We need to remember how the Lord provided for the people of Israel on their way from Egypt to Canaan. He gave them manna the same way every day, Sunday through Thursday. On Friday He gave them twice as much as He had given them the other days. And then on Saturday He gave them nothing. They had received and gathered on Friday for them to have food on the Sabbath. With water it was different. Twice He gave them water out of a rock, although the first time Moses was told to strike the rock; the second time, to speak to it. Once they put a tree at the Lord's command into bitter water to make it sweet, and then on another occasion the Lord led them to where there were twelve wells of water. His purpose must have been the same with His miracles. Man gets occupied with the method. Men are always looking for better methods. The Lord seeks to develop us in our walk with Himself by varying the methods, but to keep His people looking to Him.

Martha and Mary felt that the Lord had to be there. And in this case He did. But the problem was that He didn't come until it was, they thought, too late. But He finally came to show them that it was no too late. But instead of rebuking either Martha or Mary, the Lord entered with them into their suffering and their grief.

11:33 Mary was weeping when she fell at the Lord's feet. Her friends who came with her were also weeping. And the Lord Jesus was obviously deeply moved by their tears. The Apostle John, in writing about this many years after it had happened, still remembered in great detail the circumstances of His meeting the Mary and her friends. John says that our Lord "groaned in the spirit, and was troubled." What an illustration this was of what we are told about the Lord in Hebrews 4:15 that He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities." This was a visible display of the Lord's true humanity. The Apostle John's words indicate that the Lord was deeply moved within Himself. He was not putting on just an outward display of emotion, but He was deeply moved in His spirit, not the Holy Spirit, but His human spirit. He was deeply moved by their sorrow, and especially with Mary's sorrow as she was grieving at His feet.

11:34 There must have been several minutes as the tears flowed. Finally, the Lord was able to get out the words, "Where have ye laid Him?" Now let us remember that the Lord knew what He was going to do. He knew that in just a few minutes their sorrow would be turned into joy. And yet when they responded with the words, "Lord, come and see," that is when it is recorded that . . .

11:35 "Jesus wept."

How right the translators were to set these words by themselves in order that we might be properly impressed by the tenderness and love of the Savior. It was no easy thing for Him to have taken on our humanity. His weeping was undoubtedly quiet, and yet totally sincere. With the others their grief seems to have caused expressed with wailing.

David Brown's comment on this emotional scene suggests a sorrow on our Lord's part that went deeper than all of the rest. Listen to his words:

Is it for nothing that the Evangelist, some sixty years after it occurred, holds up to all ages with such touching brevity the sublime spectacle of the Son of God in tears? What a seal of His perfect oneness with us in the most redeeming feature of our stricken humanity! But was there nothing in those tears beyond sorrow for human suffering and death? Could these effects move Him without suggesting the cause? Who can doubt that in His ear every feature of the scene proclaimed that stern law of the

Kingdom, "The wages of sin is death," and that this element in His visible emotion underlay all the rest?

We get so accustomed to death and funeral that we probably overlook the fact that for believers, as well as for unbelievers, death is the wages of sin, that if there had been no sin, there would not have been death – physical, spiritual, and eternal. And the Lord also knew that this was where He was headed, not for His own sins, but for yours and mine. And yet what a tragedy it is that people can sit in the presence of death and not be moved to the depths of their being, urgently asking the question, Why? The Lord Jesus saw it all, as did the Father in heaven. And over and over again in the Gospel of John we read the word, "sent," where "the Father" is the subject, and "the Son" is the object. See it, for example in John 6:38-40:

38 For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.

39 And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.

40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Every detail of the Lord's life was an outworking of *the will of the Father Who had sent Him*, but nothing more than when He would taste of that death in order that all who had been given to Him by the Father might live.

11:36 The words of the Jews in this verse shows how completely they had missed the message they all should have received from the death of Lazarus. How easy it is to miss the message that death has for us! In fact, we would have missed it also if the Lord had not opened the eyes of our hearts to the Gospel of Christ.

11:37 There are always the critics, and the Lord had His critics. The Lord was not to blame for Lazarus' death, but the Father had charged Him with that which brought about Lazarus' death in order that Lazarus might know, as he evidently did, the indescribable blessings of salvation.

11:38 Jesus approached the tomb, still grieving.

11:39 Then Jesus said what surprised everyone, but Martha in particular. He said, "Take ye away the stone." He was speaking of the stone which closed the mouth of the cave where the body of Lazarus was.

Martha strongly objected. Lazarus' body had been in the tomb for four days, and Martha knew that the inevitable decay of the body had already set in.

Note the Lord's response to her in verse 40:

11:40 The Lord had not actually said the words that are recorded here. At least we do not find them in our Lord's previous conversation with Martha. But the essence of these words was spoken by the Lord, and recorded in verses 25 and 26. (Re-read.) The Lord *is* "the resurrection, and the life." He is life. He gives life, and restores life, and sustains life. The "I am" declares that He is the Lord, the ever-living and never changing God. And the very glory of God was about to be displayed by Him, showing Himself to be the Son of God. He had raised the dead before, but never one who had been dead for three days. Where Lazarus had been those four days, we don't know. What the actual condition of His body was, we don't know. But what we do know is what we are about to read was a manifestation of the glory of God, positive evidence that Jesus was the Son of God.

11:41 The stone was taken away. And the Jesus began to pray. This was surely a part of His humiliation. In verse 37 when criticism was raised and directed toward the Lord some of the people had talked about

the Lord using the same them by which they referred to Lazarus: “this man . . . this man . . .” So they looked upon our Lord as only a human being like Lazarus was, and like they were. The prayer continues through **11:42**. And the burden of the Lord’s prayer, in accordance with John 20:30-31 was that the people might believe that He was the Son of God to be able to do the miracles, the signs of His Deity, which He had done before the eyes of men.

11:43 His prayer concluded, “He cried with a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth.’”

Now let us think about what the Lord said at this moment when the Lord was performing this miracle. What must we say about Lazarus before he would know what the Lord wanted him to do, and how He could do it? Before Lazarus could hear the Lord, he had to be alive. And so Lazarus had to be alive before he could hear the Lord, and before He could come forth. This is in agreement with what I said when we were back in verse 26. And it is a truth that we need to apply to salvation. I am referring to the words in verse 26 where the Lord said, “liveth and believeth.” It was not, “believeth and liveth.” Lazarus had to have life before he could hear the Lord, and he had to have life before he could know what the Lord wanted him to do. Life preceded his hearing. Life preceded obedience. In salvation life precedes faith, and just as Lazarus’ obedience followed the gift of life, so when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we already have life, otherwise our faith would be the means of salvation. This is a most important point.

Well, what happened?

11:44 Lazarus walked out of the tomb. He still had his grave clothes wrapped around him. Even his face was covered. Then the Lord said to the people, “Loose him, and let him go.”

Think of those who were witness of his resurrection from the dead. No one denied that Lazarus had died. No one denied but that he had been in the tomb for four days. They all would have agreed with Martha that, after being dead for four days, it was too late to do anything for him. But it was not too late for Him who is “the resurrection and the life.” The human possibility that Lazarus could live again was non-existent.

We are not told about the reaction of Martha and Mary. But we can be sure that they were overjoyed to have Lazarus back with them again. But the results are given to us in verses 45 and 46: some good; some bad. The good in verse 45; the bad, in verse 46.

11:45 The good: “Then many of the Jews . . . believed on him.”

11:46 The bad: “But some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done.”

But both of these were of God. God did a work spiritually in “many of the Jews.” But He did not do the same work in others. They became messengers against the Lord to tell them things that the Lord did which caused the Pharisees to be more determined to put the Lord Jesus to death.

The rest of the chapter gives us the details of the opposition against the Lord by “the Jews,” the work mainly of religious men, not ordained of God for salvation, but men who in spite of their religious profession, were a part of the forces of the Devil to do away with Jesus, and to suffer the judgment of God forever.

Let me close with an appropriate warning from Bishop J. C. Ryle:

Let us beware of supposing that miracles alone have any power to convert men’s souls, and to make them Christians. The idea is a complete delusion. To fancy, as some do, that if they saw something

wonderful done before their eyes in confirmation of the Gospel, they at once cast of all indecision and serve Christ, is a mere idle dream. *It is the grace of the Spirit in our hearts, and not miracles, that our souls require* (emphasis mine). The Jews of our Lord's day are a standing proof to mankind that men may see signs and wonders and yet remain hard as stone. It is a deep and true saying, "If men believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither would they be persuaded though one rose from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

The end of the seven main miracles

December 8, 2008

H. The Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 2:13-22).

Ordinarily when dealing with the signs mentioned in John 20:30 and 31, those who have taught or written on the Gospel of John deal with the seven miracles which we have just studied. Let me remind you of what they are:

- 1) The turning of water into wine at a marriage in Cana (John 2:1-11).
- 2) The healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:43-54).
- 3) The healing of the impotent man (John 5:1-16).
- 4) The feeding of the 5,000 men (plus women and children) (John 6:1-14).
- 5) Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee (John 6:15-21).
- 6) The giving of sight to a man who was born blind (John 9:1-38).
- 7) The raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1-46).

But after studying the first of these miracles, in our reading (not in our study), we came across the passage which I have just read to you in which the Jews used this word "sign." See John 2:18. The Lord is the One Who gave the answer indicating that His resurrection was a "sign."

The word "sign" (**σημεῖον** in the Greek, or **σημεῖα** in the plural) is the word that the Apostle John used for our Lord's miracles. Trench in his *Synonyms of the New Testament* said that this word declares that "the prime object and end of the miracle is to lead us to something out of and beyond [the miracle] itself" (pp. 342, 343). Or to state it another way it shows the miracle as demonstrating not only the grace and power of the Lord, but His connection with God. It was a mark of identification. It indicates, especially in this case, that the authority of our Lord was a divine authority!

And so, in view of its usage by the Jews by the Jews, they wanted to know what right He had to drive the money changers out of the Temple, like He did. Every miracle was evidence, as the Apostle John indicated in chapter 20, verses 30 and 31, that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, but also that this would lead to faith in Christ for salvation. Our Lord here indicated that the greatest of all the miracles, and the most convincing of all the signs, would be in His resurrection from the dead.

Paul said this in the opening verses of his epistle to the church at Rome. Listen to what he wrote in Romans 1:1-7:

- 1 Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- 2 (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
- 3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

Now notice in particular what Paul wrote in verse 4:

- 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead:

5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

6 Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ:

7 To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was by the miracle of the resurrection that, among many other things, Jesus Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

Now others were raised from the dead before the resurrection of Christ, but the unique thing about the resurrection of Christ was *raised from the dead, never to die again!* We also have that in Romans. In Romans 6:9-10 we are told,

9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.

10 For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God.

And then we see from Romans 8:11 that our resurrection is linked and guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ:

11 But if the Spirit of Him thaa raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you.

In Romans 8:33 and 34 we have another reference to the resurrection of our Lord:

33 Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.

34 Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

Faith in the resurrection of Christ is absolutely essential to a true confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we are told in Rom 10:9-10

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The Apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15 made it very clear that the resurrection of Christ is an essential part of the Gospel. Let me read that to you beginning with the first verse of the chapter:

1 Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand;

2 By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

5 And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve:

6 After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep.

7 After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles.

8 And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:1-8).

The two main points of the Gospel are that “Christ died for our sins,” and that He rose again the third day. And both events were in accordance with Scripture both as to the prediction of them and as to the record that they

really took place. The fact that the Lord died was proven by the fact that “He was buried.” The fact that He rose from the dead is established as an historical fact because “He was seen.” These three words are recorded four times and implied three other times. (Re-read.)

Some in the church at Corinth were denying that there was such a thing as resurrection from the dead. Paul charged those who were spreading such error with how could they who apparently had professed faith in Christ deny that there was such a future event as the resurrection of the dead. It was a part of the Old Testament in many places that there will be a resurrection, not only of the saved, but also of the unsaved. If you are reading your Bible through according to the schedule that we give out every year, you just finished reading the prophecy of Daniel yesterday. Do you remember what you read? Daniel was predicting what will be the time of Great Tribulation. This is what he said, and you will find these words in Daniel 12:1-3:

1 And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book.

2 And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

3 And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.

But going back to 1 Corinthians 15, Paul did not leave any doubt as to the reality of the bodily, physical resurrection of Christ, and so we go on reading from verse 13 in 1 Corinthians 15:

13 But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

14 And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.

15 Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

16 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:

17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.

22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:13-26).

A reading of the Gospels tells us that even the apostles did not believe in the death of Christ. They were filled with the expectation that the Lord would overthrow Rome, set up His kingdom, and reign forever on the earth. But as conditions for the Lord grew worse, and they began to realize that He was going to die, their hearts were filled with grief. They were ready to do anything to keep the Jews, and the Romans, from putting Him to death. They were ready to die with Him. They did not understand Him when He told them that they could not follow Him then, but that they would see Him again, and yet after that He would leave them again.

A strange situation developed. The disciples were willing to do anything to keep the Lord from death. After He died, the Jews did everything to keep Him in the tomb. But neither group was successful. As we all know, the Lord Jesus was crucified, but three days afterward He was raised from the dead. We have the record of our Lord's arrest, crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection in all four Gospels. Matthew and John were apostles,

and were eyewitnesses of the final days of our Lord on earth, as well as having been with Him throughout His public ministry. It is thought that Mark wrote getting his information mainly from the Apostle Peter. Luke was a medical doctor, and a very close friend of the Apostle Paul, who carefully researched what we have in the Gospel which bears his name, as well as the book of Acts which gives us the history. And he wrote both books especially for one man, named Theophilus.

It is generally thought that Mark was the first to write. Matthew was the second. Luke the third. And John's Gospel was the last and the latest, written toward the end of the first century. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were written in a very similar way. The Gospel of John is completely different, mainly written to show that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, with the purpose of leading people to faith in Christ. But the Gospels are united in their teaching concerning Christ, and their four books give us overwhelming evidence of the absolute Deity and the true humanity of Jesus Christ, and of His mission of salvation in the world.

The fulfillment of our Lord's mission on earth is given to us in John, chapters 18, 19, 20, and 21. What we are concerned about in the Gospel of John, as you all know, that His miracles showed that He, Jesus, was "the Christ, the Son of God, and that people reading his Gospel might believe that Jesus was Christ, the Messiah, "and that believing . . . might have life through His Name." This statement of the Apostle John's purpose came at the end of chapter 20, the chapter which deals with Christ's resurrection.

The last few verses of chapter 19 tell us about the burial of our Lord. All four of the Gospels tell us that Joseph of Arimathea requested the body of the Lord for burial. Matthew says that he buried the Lord in a tomb that he had prepared for himself. Mark tells us that Pilate made sure that the Lord was dead before he gave Joseph permission to take the Lord's body for burial.

Now let us read John's account of the discovery of the resurrection of the Lord. In order to get the setting, I will begin reading at John 19:31 just after where in verse 30 we are told that Jesus had died. Notice the word-ing at the end of verse 30 John said about the Lord Jesus, that "He bowed his head, and gave up the spirit."

Do you remember that back in John 10:17 and 18 the Lord had said this:

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

People die, but it is said of our Lord that nobody took his life from him, but He had the power to release His spirit, lay down His life, and He had power to take it again. He had the power to lay down His own life, and He had the power to raise Himself from the dead. Only One Who is God could do that. We know that the Lord was also "quicken by the Spirit," that is, the Holy Spirit had a part in the resurrection of Christ. We learn this from 1 Peter 3:18:

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.

And just so we will have a complete picture of the resurrection of Christ, let me read to you what the Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the resurrection of Christ. You will find this in 1 Thess 1:9b-10:

9 . . . how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

Here Paul declared the God the Father raised His Son from the dead. So all three Members of the Godhead were active in a united way in raising our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead. Add to this last verse what Paul said about the Father raising our Lord from the dead as it is recorded in Rom 6:4:

4 Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Now reading from John 19:31 through 20:29 where we have the Apostle John's record of the resurrection of our Lord. (Read.)

John tells us that Mary Magdalene was the first to get to the tomb (to which the other Gospel writers agree). She found the stone moved out of the mouth of the tomb, and the tomb empty. The body of the Lord Jesus was not there. Luke tells us that two men were inside the tomb. Matthew says that it was an angel. Mark mentioned just one man. Matthew tells us that the angel had moved the stone away from the entrance to the tomb. No one saw the angel do this, nor do any of the four Gospels say that anyone saw the Lord come out of the tomb alive. There were no actual witnesses of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. From what the Lord was able to do after His resurrection, by suddenly appearing to His disciples behind closed doors, we must realize that the angel did not move the stone away from the entrance to the sepulcher to let the Lord Jesus out, but it was to let the apostles in. We are not told that Mary Magdalene went into the tomb, but that when she saw that the stone had been moved away, she assumed that someone had entered to take the body of her Lord away. So she went immediately to tell the eleven disciples what she had discovered.

January 5, 2009

Peter and "that other disciple" (which was the Apostle John's way of referring to himself), ran immediately to the tomb. Both men ran to the tomb, but John, being younger, got there first.

John 20:5 tells us that John did not go into the tomb, but he simply "saw the linen clothes that had been wrapped around the body of the Lord for burial. Verse 6 tells us that Peter came right away and went into the tomb. He also the linen clothes, but verse 7 indicates that he was in a position to see the linen clothes in a clearer way. Reading verse 6 and all of verse 7 this is what we are told:

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie,
7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself (John 20:6-7).

Peter was mystified by what he saw. He couldn't understand. But then we read in verse 8 that the Apostle John came into the tomb, "and he saw, and believed." The linen clothes were not unwrapped. They were exactly as Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus had wrapped them around the body of our Lord, but it was just like the body had been mysteriously slipped out, leaving the clothes undisturbed, and in a separate place the napkin that had been wrapped around our Lord's head, in a separate place. The body had been removed, and the grave clothes undisturbed, were flattened out, but left in the same condition that they had been when the Lord's body was there.

Concerning the Apostle John we are told at the end of verse 8, that when he came in, "he saw, and believed."

Now the Apostle John in recording the events of this chapter used three different verbs which are translated into English either "seeth" or "saw." The first is **βλέπω** in verses 1 and 5. The second is **θεωρέω** in verse 6. And the third is **εἶδω** in verse 8. Now it seems that the Apostle John must have had a special reason for using three different words, all of which mean, to say, when he probably could have used the same word in each place otherwise. I believe that he did have his reasons.

The first of these three words is used in verses 1 and 5. The second word is used in verse 6. The third word is used in verse 8.

The first word means basically just to notice something, like you may have looked out the window this morning to see if it had snowed again. Or, like you would notice something in your house that you needed to put away, but hadn't done it yet. It is the most common of the word for seeing anything. That is the way that Mary Mag-

dalene saw that the stone was moved out of the entrance to the tomb. She immediately thought that someone had gotten in there and had removed the body of the Lord. This is in verse 1 of chapter 20

This same word is used when John got to the tomb. We are told in verse 5 he looked in “and saw the linen clothes,” but he didn’t go in. Your guess is as good as mine as to why he didn’t, but he just didn’t. Perhaps he was shocked to find things that way, and decided to wait for Peter.

You might expect that Peter would rush right in to the tomb when he arrived, and he had the opportunity to see the situation as it was. The grave clothes that had been around the body of the Lord Jesus were just like they had been when the Lord’s body was placed there, *but the body was gone*. “*The napkin*.” or face cloth, as it was called in the NASB, was wrapped and in the same position where the Lord’s head had been. But the body was gone. The Apostle John used the second word in verse 6 where we read that he “seeth the linen clothes lie . . .” This word for “seeth” is a word which means to look intently at anything, to look at something trying to figure it out. He wondered how that could be. He didn’t understand it.

Then the Apostle John came in, and he used a third word when in verse 8 we read that “he saw, and believed.” What did he believe? He believed that the Lord Jesus had been raised from the dead. “He saw” means that he suddenly perceived, he understood, he was sure that the Lord Jesus was alive. Nobody had to say, as the Lord said concerning Lazarus, “Loose him, and let him go.” Our Lord in His resurrection body came right out of the grave clothes without disturbing them at all!

Do you remember the story of recorded for us by Luke when the Lord after his resurrection joined two of his disciples who were returning to Emmaus from Jerusalem after the crucifixion. They were both sad and confused. They knew that the Lord had been crucified and were sad because they, like many, many other Jews thought that our Lord had come to set Israel free from Rome and establish His own kingdom. But they were confused because they had heard the report that He was alive. Luke reported in Luke 24:16 that “their eyes were holden that they should not know Him.” But, since it was late in the day when they got to Emmaus, they insisted that the Lord spend the night with them, still not knowing Who He was. But as they were eating, their eyes were opened and they knew that He was the Lord, but then suddenly “He vanished out of their sight” (Luke 24:31). He could do this because He was in His resurrection body.

Right here in John 20 we have another special post-resurrection appearance of our Lord. Look with me at verses 19 and 20. (Read.) I think that we are safe in assuming that the disciples were not only hiding behind closed doors, but that those doors were locked. But suddenly the Lord appeared before them, and He did not come through the door. He just appeared. The Lord in His resurrection body was not kept out by walls or locked doors.

Now let us go to John 20:24. When the Lord appeared to His disciples in verses 19 and 20, for some reason Thomas was not with them. Let us read the record beginning with verse 24 and read on down through verse 29. (Read.) Notice especially that it was eight days later that the disciples were all together again, behind close doors, and suddenly the Lord appeared before them all. After greeting them, the Lord addressed Himself to Thomas and met Thomas’ condition that he would not believe unless He could see the print of the nails in the Lord’s hands, and the place where the Roman soldier had driven a spear into His side, He would not believe. Immediately Thomas said, “My Lord and my God.” Then notice the Lord’s words in verse 29. Thomas had believed in the Lord before, but at this point he was firmly convinced of the Lord’s resurrection in the same body in which He had been crucified, but now it was glorified. You and I firmly believe in the resurrection of Christ, not because we have seen Him, but because the Spirit of God has given us the faith to believe that He lives. And as I read to you at our last class before today from Romans 6:9-10:

9 Knowing the Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him.

10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, he liveth unto God.

But now let us go to Acts 1 and let me give you some more evidence of His resurrection. It was at our Lord's ascension. He did what you and I can't do – yet! Follow as I read verses 1 through 3, and then verses 6 through 11. “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.”

All of this is very encouraging and strengthening to our faith. But let me take you a step further for even more encouragement. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi while he was a prisoner in Rome, he had every reason to be discouraged and downcast, but his letter was just the opposite. It is obvious that he had perfect peace in his heart. He was rejoicing in the Lord, and he wanted the believers in Philippi to rejoice with him, not in his circumstances primarily, but in the Lord. And one of the most important of the truths that he mentioned to them had to do with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. But it also had to do with them! I am referring to the last two verses of the third chapter, verses 20 and 21. This is how it reads in the KJV:

20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:20-21).

We have learned that the word “conversation” in the KJ NT usually means *conduct*, or *way of life, our lifestyle*. But in this verse it means *citizenship*. Those of us who are saved, who know the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, are citizens of heaven. And we are looking for Him to come back from heaven. And when He comes He is going to do a most wonderful thing for us. He is going to change what he called, “our vile body.” And that is a good description of our bodies. We all grieve because of the morally low and sinfully defiled bodies of ours. They are “prone to sin,” as we often sing. But the Lord is going to change our bodies so that they will be like His glorified body, no longer subject to sickness, or to death, or to sin of any kind. We will even no longer be subject to temptation. We are going to have bodies like His body as it is now – glorified! And this is all going to be His work when He comes again. The Apostle John tells us that this will be His work. The Lord's body was changed when He was raised from the dead, and ours will be too when the Lord comes. “We shall be like Him!”

The Apostle Paul described what will happen to us in 1 Corinthians 15, beginning with verse 51:

51 Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

52 In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53 For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54 So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:51-54).

How will it all happen? We learn about that in 1 Thessalonians. These words are familiar to most, if not all of you. Let me read them to you again.

13 But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15 For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16 For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17 Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the

Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.
18 Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Do you see how very important it is for all of us to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was actually, physically, raised from the dead? By our Lord's resurrection, we not only have evidence that He had finished the work which the Father sent Him to do, but we have evidence that God had accepted His work. Furthermore, we have secured for us the eternal and living hope that we shall be raised, and changed, and made like our Lord Jesus Christ with a body just like He has. If Christ was not raised from the dead, then we have no hope and are to be of all people the most to be pitied. But He was raised from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of all of us who have been saved by His grace. At death we leave our bodies behind, but when the Lord comes, if we die before that time, we will come back for our bodies, not mortal as they are now, but immortal, made like the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we live until He comes, we too will be changed. Hallelujah! What a Savior! And we pray with the Apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

January 12, 2009

I. The Miraculous Draft of Fish (John 21:1-14).

A "draft," or as it is sometimes spelled, "draught," means, *a drawing*. It speaks of the way the fish were caught, but it also refers to the fish themselves. When they pulled the net to the shore, there was in it was a draft of one hundred and fifty-three fish. We would call it today, *a catch*. So you can see why we speak of horses that have been trained to pull a load as *draft horses*. A *draftsman* is a person who draws plans. It is a word that is used in many different ways. You probably remember that Peter and Andrew, and then James and John were called to be fishers of men early in our Lord's ministry while they were either casting their nets in to the sea of Galilee, or were mending their nets after they had completed their fishing for the day. The Lord called these fishermen to be His disciples by saying, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). See also Mark 1:17.

21:1 The location of this event had been very prominent in the ministry of our Lord. The Sea of Tiberias is just another name for the Sea of Galilee. It was here that the Lord had called His first disciples. Many of our Lord's miracles had been performed here. And we are told that the purpose of this event which we are now going to consider was that the Lord was *showing Himself* to them. This verb is used twice in this first verse, and surely is the keynote especially of the first fourteen verses. "Sheweth Himself" means that what took place here was a further manifestation of the Person of Christ, and probably also of the power of Christ in what He is able to do. The miracles which we have studied were recorded for that purpose, as the last two verses of the preceding chapter indicates. And the same is true of the I am's of Christ which, the Lord willing, we will study in the coming weeks. It is all revealed to increase our knowledge of Christ, and our knowledge of Christ is intended to increase our dependence upon Christ, which leads to greater fellowship with Christ. So verse 1 shows that chapter 21 is really a continuation of what has been the Apostle John's purpose from chapter 1 on. This answers the people who say that chapter 21 was not written by John, but was added at some time later.

Actually this reveals to us the purpose of the whole Bible. The Lord Jesus according to John 5:39 told a group Jews that the Scriptures, at that time meant the OT, testified of Him. That being true, a reading of the NT certainly shows that the NT does exactly the same thing; it testifies to us of Christ. And what the Apostle John wrote in this first verse of chapter 21 expresses in the strongest way that our Lord wants us to know Him. He certainly wanted to assure His disciples over and over in unmistakable ways that He was alive, risen from the dead!

The word "manifested" means more than just that they saw the Lord. It means that they were even more deeply

convinced that He was the Son of God.

21:2 John tells us who were involved at this time, There were seven of the apostles: Peter, Thomas, Nathanael (whom many think was Bartholomew), James and John, and two others whom he did not name. And it is a waste of time for us to guess who they were. If it was important for us to know, we would have been told.

21:3 Peter was the one who said, “I go a fishing.” Many different comments have been made upon Peter’s words at this time. He obviously influenced the other six to go with him even though there is no indication that he tried to get anyone to go with him. Some feel that he was so discouraged and ashamed by what he had done in denying the Lord, that he intended to go back to his fishing business. I doubt if this is true. The Apostle John certainly would not have been inclined to go back and to leave the Lord.

On the other hand, we must remember that going fishing did not mean to them what it means to us today, that is, to most of us. Fishing to most people is recreational. It is a sport which some people enjoy like others enjoy golfing, or travel. But we know that to Peter and Andrew and James and John, fishing was work, hard work. To them it was a means of livelihood. So it would seem that Peter was thinking of the need that the disciples had for food. They had no resources. Fishing to them was like tent making was to the Apostle Paul. Many people who have felt called to serve the Lord work on the side to put food on the table.

It seems to me that what the situation was, was that these seven saw the need that they all had, and they were going to take whatever time was necessary to get food for all of them. Notice the word “immediately.” That seems to indicate that was a certain urgency that they felt in their hearts. They spent all night long, moving from place to place, probably from one side of the ship, and then from the other. Remember that this was not like throwing a line out; this meant maneuvering a great, heavy net. But the result was “nothing.” “They caught nothing.” All of their labor was in vain.

Now let me repeat: I don’t think it was wrong for them to go fishing. In fact, in many respects it was commendable. But I am inclined to think that the Lord was seeking to teach them about living a life of faith. Now living by faith does not mean that you can’t, or don’t, work at some job. But these men were to be leaders in the church. They were to be shepherds of the sheep. They were to be examples to the people of God about how it is that we are to trust the Lord.

There is one thing that is obviously absent in this story so far. If they were seeking to meet a need which the Lord Himself and all of the other apostle had, wasn’t the first thing that they needed to do was to go to the Lord about the need that they had? To apply it to ourselves today, doesn’t the Lord want us to come to Him to bring our problems to Him *first*? He might have told Peter to go fishing. But Peter didn’t ask Him. Peter took matters into his own hands, and he did what seemed reasonable to him. But, you see, the Lord wants us to be looking first of all to Him. Life has many burdens. Sometimes they come in bunches. And the first thing that we need to learn to do, is to take our burdens to the Lord. That is what pleases Him, not that we do our own thing and then turn to Him for help when things don’t work out for us. How many times have you tried to work things out for yourself only to learn that the result was “nothing”?

I am not saying that when we are faced with a need, an emergency of some kind, that we just pray and pray and pray, but don’t do anything else. I think that the Lord was teaching these apostles that we don’t do all that we can first, and then when things don’t work out, then we turn to the Lord in prayer and ask Him for help. No, when you get bad news like King Hezekiah did in a letter, you take that letter to the Lord, spread it out before the Lord, and let Him read the letter. That is what pleases the Lord. Sin has made us feel that we are self-sufficient, that we don’t like to bother the Lord with things that we feel we can take care of ourselves. Perhaps

this was one experience what Peter wrote later in 1 Peter 5:7, “Casting ALL your care upon Him; for He careth for you.” Not just some of it. Not just the big ones. But ALL of them! Don’t think you are going to bother the Lord by taking your problem to Him; He wants you to bother Him. He wants you and me to live with the realization that there isn’t a moment of any day that we don’t need Him. He wants us to feel our need of Him. I am sure that Peter had had other times when he had caught nothing, but this was one time when the Lord wanted Peter to learn to look to Him for guidance. When the Lord let a professional fisherman like Peter fish all night and catch nothing, you can be sure that the Lord was exercising His role as a Teacher, and He wanted them to take their place as disciples, as learners!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Ev’rything to God in prayer.

But let us go to verse 4.

21:4 Now this is the morning after. Jesus was on the shore. He knew where they had gone. He knew how long they had been fishing, but they didn’t know Him. It is important to know that they weren’t expecting Him, but He was there waiting for them. The Lord is always present with us. We can’t see Him, but He is there. He knows what is bothering us, and is there to minister to us.

21:5 He knew that they did not have any fish, but He asked them anyway. He used a title in addressing them that means *a little child*, perhaps one who is just ready to start school, or who is right at the beginning. He was addressing them where they were spiritually. They were grown men physically, but even after having been with the Lord throughout His ministry, they were still spiritually little children. The Lord’s question could be translated, “Children, you don’t have any fish, do you?” They had worked all night long, and did not have a single fish to show for all of the time they had been fishing. And so they had to say, “No.” I don’t know if there are some times when the fishing is better on the Sea of Galilee than at other times, but the disciples answer seems to suggest that this was a good time to fish, but that it hadn’t been good for them. They were surely disappointed, and probably even embarrassed.

21:6 Well, the Lord, Who had been a carpenter by trade, told these professional fishermen to cast their net on the right side of the ship, and that they would catch fish in their net.

Doesn’t this remind you of the account in Luke 5 where the Lord had been teaching from one of the fishing boats? When He finished ministering to the crowd that had gathered, our Lord said to Peter, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your net for a draught” (Luke 5:4). But they had just finished an all night of fishing and hadn’t caught a thing. But this was Peter’s response:

5 . . . Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy Word I will let down the net,
6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake (Luke 5:5b-6).

Peter and probably Andrew called for their partners to come to get the fish in the boats, and both of the boats began to sink. This was the time when Peter fell down before Jesus and said, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8b). You would think that the experience we are witnessing in John 21 would have made Peter remember what had happened in those early days of our Lord’s ministry. Maybe it did, because Peter immediately did what the Lord said, and I am sure that the fish they caught then was far more than they had ever caught before.

Here in John 21:6 the apostles did what the Lord told them to do (before they knew Who He was), and their net was so full that they could not draw it in.

21:7 At that point, the Apostle John who from what we read in John 20:8 was the first to understand that the Lord had risen from the dead, here told Peter that the man on the shore who had been speaking to them was the Lord! Peter then grabbed his fishing coat which he had taken off when he was trying to bring the fish into the boat, jumped into the water, to get the Lord as quickly as he possibly could.

21:8 This verse tells us that John and the other disciples stayed with the ship which was about a hundred yards from the shore, and they were dragging the net to shore full of fish.

21:9 At this point we have the revelation of the Lord that the Apostle John had spoken of in verse 1 where he mentioned that in this experience the Lord was manifesting the fact that He was more than a mere man; He was the Son of God in human flesh. Where did the Lord get the fish that He was cooking? We are not told. Let me ask another question: Where did the Lord get the fish to feed a crowd of probably more than 10,000 people with two small fish? Under His mighty power He continued to multiply the fish as long as the people continued to eat. We don't know where the Lord got the fish. Whatever the source, it was another miraculous provision for the apostles. The disciples did not need to have wasted a whole night fishing because the Lord had breakfast waiting for them when they came back with no fish. The point is that the Lord was not dependent upon the apostles to provide fish for Him; He provided fish for them without any assistance from them. I am sure that none of the apostles had ever had a breakfast like the Lord had prepared for them that morning. Many of the commentators who have written on this subject believe that the fish that the apostles ate that morning, which the Lord was cooking even before they caught their fish, must have been provided by the Lord as a special act of creation.

21:10 The Lord told the apostles to bring in the fish that they had caught. But they would have had nothing to bring if the Lord had not miraculously provided their catch. What we bring to the Lord is what He has already provided for us. He gives; we gather. What we bring to Him is what He has already provided for us. We don't need to take care of the Lord; He is the One Who is taking care of us. As the Apostle Paul the believers at Corinth,

19 But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19).

21:11 After fishing all night and catching not a single fish, the Lord in a moment of time provided 153 fish. I don't know if they always counted the fish which they caught, but they did this time so surprising it was that so many fish were caught after a fruitless night of fishing. One hundred and 153 fish! This meant that the Lord and His eleven apostles each could have almost thirteen fish a piece, plus all that the Lord had already prepared for them when they got back. What an illustration this is of Ephesians 3:20-21:

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

21:12 The Apostles spent the night on the Sea of Galilee so that they would have something to give to the Lord, but instead they learned that instead of our providing anything for the Lord, He is the One Who is continually providing for us. Such an amazing cluster of miracles left no doubt but that their Host was the Lord.

21:13 There have been some who raised the question, Did the Lord eat food following His resurrection. Luke 24:41-43 gives us our answer:

41 And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any

meat?

42 And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb.

43 And he took it, and did eat before them.

The fact that He ate food after He was raised from the dead, is confirmed. What we don't know is that He needed to eat food.

21:14 This, it seems, was the third time that the Lord appeared to the apostles as a group. We know that He appeared to over five hundred believers on another occasion. But the Apostle John seems to have been primarily concerned about what the Lord was teaching His apostles in preparation for the work that would be committed to them after the Lord returned to heaven. The Lord did not despise the efforts of the apostles to provide for Him food. But they needed to learn that, while our service for Him is extremely important, yet it is His work for us and in us that needs to be our main concern.

And so for the present, this concludes our study of our Lord's miracles as they are recorded in John's Gospel. Let me close by reading again John 20:30-31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.